

"The Grip of Evil"

Author of "The Wings of the Morning," "The Pillar of Light," "The Terms of Surrender," "Number 17," Etc.
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CAST OF CHARACTERS.
JOHN BURTON, foreman at the Plainfield Steel works, heir to a large estate and tenth marquis of Castleton.
MARY TEMPLE, daughter of the president of the Plainfield Steel company.
MR. REEVES, manager of the Plainfield Steel company, engaged to Mary.
REV. THOMAS BRANTON, minister.
BILL THOMPSON, friend and fellow worker of John's.
FLORA, girl friend of John's.

FIRST EPISODE.
"FATE."

CHAPTER I.
"The Casting of the Ingot."

"Stand by!"
A group of men surrounding a monstrous pot of molten metal heard the warning shout. Each took up his appointed position, a skilled hand touched a lever, and the huge crucible tilted slowly on its axis, discharging a torrent of fluid steel into the waiting mold. So piercing was the vomit of flame, so intense the heat, that it seemed as though the flesh must shrivel and the eyes melt if any human being remained in close proximity, yet the man who had uttered the order, and was evidently superintending the operations, peered calmly into the depths of the shimmering mass in the mold after the crucible was empty and had swung back on its pivot.
He was young, not more than thirty, tall, sinewy, splendidly built, with a face in which tenacity of purpose and strength of will blended with an almost feminine tenderness. Though clad in the rough and soiled clothing necessarily affected by the employees of the Plainfield Steel company, he had the bearing of a born leader of men. When he spoke the words came with decision and good humor. He might have been a genial czar marshaling his cohorts. At times he would be content with a regal gesture; thus, he merely signed now to a quartet of begrimmed satellites, who wheeled away the mold to another section of the factory.

Wiping the perspiration from his forehead with the back of one hand, with the other he caught the shoulder of an undersized, pallid, intellectual-looking mechanic who had been in charge of an electric winch during the casting.
"There goes another block of good American steel to blow men like you and me into smithereens in Europe, Bill," he said.
"Right you are," came the answering growl. "Why do we workingmen stand for it? I tell you, we're a lot of fools—"

The shriek of a factory whistle announcing the hour of noon and the instant rush of all hands for their lunch pails, cut short the imminent flood of radical sentiments, because Bill Thompson was the recognized mouthpiece of the labor world in Plainfield, whereas the stalwart, cherry-faced young man who had unwittingly given him his cue was its leader in most matters pertaining to hard work, lighthearted badinage and every rough game demanding physical fitness.
But there was a serious side to John Burton's character. Though his experience of life hitherto had supplied but little reason for belief in anything outside the crude facts of existence, in his unoccupied hours he was by way of being a reader, a thinker, almost a student of men and things. By chance this element in his nature was brought to the surface before the laughing, jolly crowd of which he formed a noteworthy unit had ended the meal they were consuming in the open air of the factory yard.

A billsticker came in, clearly by permission of the management and pasted a heavy type poster on a wall near the gate. It read:

HIT THE SAWDUST TRAIL WITH REV. THOMAS BRANTON, WHO IS WORKING NIGHT AND DAY TO BEAT THE DEVIL, COME AND HEAR THE REVIVALIST TELL ABOUT PRACTICAL RELIGION IN THE BIG TENT, ELM AND LOCUST STS. DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?

This bizarre appeal flared its message to the motley gathering. Its effect varied. Some of the men laughed, some criticized, a few frankly swore. Finally one tousle-haired Hercules smote an empty box with a sledge-hammer fist.
"Up you get John!" he bellowed. "Sling us some hot stuff! Guess you can put as much pep into an oration as any Rev. Branton."

Now, Burton was a born speaker, and there was nothing he liked better than holding forth to his mates on any topic which he had really mastered. "Oddly enough," those words, "Practical religion," vibrated some chord deep-seated in his soul. He mounted the box at once and began a fluent harangue on the forging of a steel ingot in an American factory, with its probable infernal outcome in the killing and maiming of men, and it might be, of women and children in some beleaguered city or stricken battlefield of far-away Europe.

At the outset he was lightly humorous, at the expense of the emperors and kings in those old world lands of which he really knew so little. But soon his tone grew grave and impassioned; his audience was mute and spellbound when a turning of elbows on the part of several of the men standing near the gate drew his glance to three people who had just entered the factory yard.
The most striking personality among them was undoubtedly a young woman—a petite, self-possessed young person, dressed in the height of fashion, who carried herself with that air of distinction which seems to be the birthright of every American girl whose purse permits her to disprove the old adage that "Beauty unadorned is adorned the most."

With her was a smartly dressed, debonair young man, whom Burton recognized as Mr. Reeves, the manager of the company. The benevolent features and clerical attire of a second and older Thomas Branton whose man-

ifesto had provided a text for the orator.
John guessed that the lady was Mary Temple, daughter of the president of the Plainfield Steel company, and rumor, which in this instance was well founded, had it that she was engaged to Reeves.
As the dinner hour had not yet expired, Burton saw no reason why he should discontinue his speech, but there could be no doubt that the latest and most unexpected addition to his audience affected him powerfully. He chose his words with greater care. He spoke earnestly. Half unconsciously, he began addressing every phrase to Mary Temple; she, on her part, was evidently drawn by the man's magnetic power, because she advanced closer to the edge of the crowd and listened with unrestrained interest.

He was dealing with the advantages of democratic control, which, he contended, if fully established in Europe, would have prevented the war, now so ruthlessly outraging the oldest of civilizations. He was not afraid, however, to point out that democracy had its weakness as well as its strength, and instanced the power wielded by trusts in America, which had been permitted by the carelessness of the people to grow into an octopus.
Mary followed the argument intently. Even Mr. Reeves, the manager, discontinued his conversation with the clergyman and paid close heed to the enunciation of principles which he necessarily regarded as harmful and incendiary.
Now, it is probable that Burton would not have gone so far had he not been fascinated, perhaps even somewhat flattered, by the attention given him by the president's daughter. As it was, he rather forgot himself, and handled his subject in no measured fashion, though with an earnestness that commanded respect, and a skill that was distinctly remarkable in a man of no education.

But the factory whistle broke in on his thoughts, and incidentally brought the meeting to an abrupt close. With rapid transition from grave to gay, Burton laughed and jumped down from the box. The men applauded him for what they regarded as the greatest speech they had ever heard him deliver, and hurried back to work, whereupon Mary Temple turned to Reeves and asked the name of the speaker.
"That's John Burton," said the manager, smiling to hide his annoyance. "He can talk like a book, is a first-rate worker and the most popular man in the factory plant."

Mr. Branton called Mary's attention to the poster, which she surveyed with approval, and the girl's thoughts were momentarily taken off the good-looking young workman whom she had just seen and listened to.
She did not mention him again, though she sought for him with her eyes when Reeves brought their elderly companion into the factory and began explaining the operations of the various machines. John, too, saw her, and did not scruple to give her a more'stew than she could handle. In fact—and then had some little difficulty in conquering the self-conscious blush which admitted the fascination she was exerting over such common clay as one of the employes in her father's works.

When their visitors passed out of sight John asked Thompson if he knew who the girl was.
"Of course I know her," said he. "She is old Temple's daughter, one of the goody-goody, psalm-singing sort, too, though she doesn't look it with those fine duds of hers. She's a supporter of Branton, the revivalist. An ardent church worker, they call her. I call her a thief, walking around with enough furs and clothes on her back to pay for a year's keep for a dozen men like you and me. And we're the boobs that put up with it, more's the pity!"
"Oh, stow that rubbish!" said John, good naturedly. "You and I are just worth the figures on the payroll, Bill. If we had brains and ability to get other men to work for us, maybe we would start a fine line of kids just like that one and rig them up to beat the band."

Singularly enough the topic cropped up again on the following Saturday afternoon, when Bill Thompson and Burton happened to receive their pay envelopes at the same time, and turned into the street simultaneously. Each man counted his money. John slipped his few dollars carelessly into a pocket, but Bill snapped a contemptuous remark as to the smallness of the amount, wherein his tall companion agreed with him in an offhand way. Truth to tell, the matter did not worry him greatly. At that moment he had seen across the street his friend Flora, a somewhat garishly vatted girl—of the loud-mouthed, slangy, gum-chewing type—who was passing with a companion. Flora smiled and shouted a friendly greeting, which John returned with his customary cheerfulness.
"Can we come along?" he cried.
"Sure!" giggled Flora. "Bring your friend, too, and then we'll be real company."

This hearty reception led to an invitation to a drink; the two couples entered a saloon and seated themselves at a table, while John signaled a waiter to bring "four." Burton, who was out for a good time, kissed Flora, without the least hesitation, a personal attention which she seemed to regard as her due, John being her "fella" for the time being. But Bill Thompson was not minded to indulge in any such amatory passages. Ever a moody, brooding creature, he was still vindictive concerning the smallness of the amount he had earned during the week.
"We work like dogs for next to nothing," he was saying to the other girl. "But something's going to happen soon. See if it don't. We didn't form a union for fun. What do you think of it, John? I Temple and his crowd are rakin' in big profits, why should n't you and I have share? Why shouldn't these girls be togged up as fine as Mary Temple?"
"Why not?" laughed John. "Flora here is as good looking as Mary."
Flora bridled at that.
"As good looking, indeed!" she cried. "Do you compare me with that little thing? What sort of figure has she? I'd like to know, by the side of me?"

John guessed that the lady was Mary Temple, daughter of the president of the Plainfield Steel company, and rumor, which in this instance was well founded, had it that she was engaged to Reeves.
As the dinner hour had not yet expired, Burton saw no reason why he should discontinue his speech, but there could be no doubt that the latest and most unexpected addition to his audience affected him powerfully. He chose his words with greater care. He spoke earnestly. Half unconsciously, he began addressing every phrase to Mary Temple; she, on her part, was evidently drawn by the man's magnetic power, because she advanced closer to the edge of the crowd and listened with unrestrained interest.



MARY TEMPLE ORDERS BURTON FROM HER HOME.

"She don't amount to a row of beans," he chuckled.
Bill Thompson, however, though a persistent person, was by no means self-seeking. The mere fact that Burton seemed to be popular with his fellow-workers caused Thompson to make use of him. Thus, when the union decided that shorter hours and an increased rate of pay should be demanded from the company, Burton, actually without his own knowledge or consent, was appointed spokesman of a deputation which was to wait on President Temple. He was surprised when the selection was made known to him, but, in the happy-go-lucky way which cloaked his real strength of character, he entered into the project more as an adventure than as a serious undertaking which might affect the whole course of his future life.

Thompson, together with the other moving spirits in the union, decided to strike while the iron was hot. A messenger was sent to the president's office to say that some of the men wanted to see him. Naturally Mr. Temple wished to know their business, but the boy who brought the message was unable to state it, though he added, on his own responsibility, that the crowd looked "ugly."
Greatly surprised, the president sent for Mr. Reeves, and, after a brief consultation with his manager, decided to hear what the men had to say, whereupon the deputation entered the office and John was thrust forward to formulate their demands.

The president was very angry and told Burton and the others point blank that he would not yield to any of their requests, whereupon the workers, in turn, lost their temper and began breathing threats. Thompson, being a little man, was hidden by his more stalwart mates, but he had the wit to choose the psychological moment when to utter the ominous word, "Strike!"
Burton, glib as ever, took it up and put the matter into plain English. This was the one small spark needed to fire a mine charged with high explosives.

While, with rage, Temple ordered the deputation out of the office, storming at them as if they were so many dogs. In consequence, they left him in the worst possible frame of mind, and Burton was so carried away by the situation that when he faced the main body of workers, gathered in the factory yard, and recited the unsatisfactory result of the interview, he was almost as keen as Thompson or any of the others to urge a strike in behalf of their rights.
Transition from spoken threats to overt actions is perilously easy in such conditions. Almost before the leaders of the union well knew what was happening, some irresponsible youths in the crowd threw stones through the office windows. Mr. Reeves chose that unfortunate moment to gaze out at the mob, and a heavy missile covered him with broken glass and narrowly missed his head. He took shelter hurriedly. The president, filled with fury against these disobedient "slaves," grabbed the telephone and called for the police station. The riot developed rapidly. Nearly every pane of glass in the office was broken within a few minutes. John, supported by his saner-minded comrades, had great difficulty in saving the factory itself from being fired.

Burton was using all his eloquence to persuade the crowd to go home and await the outcome of a meeting to be held that night, when the tumult in the street outside the factory gate reached such dimensions that he, with others, ran out to see what new development had taken place.
He plunged into an extraordinary and painful scene. Mary Temple, wholly unconscious of the sudden developments at the works, had come in her car on a visit to her father, and was now surrounded by a mob of several hundreds of wildly excited women. Unfortunately, in the confusion, the chauffeur had not noticed a small child in the way of the car. The child, a girl, was knocked down and rendered unconscious, and was now lying wan and limp in her friend's arms.

Explanations or regrets were worse than useless. A number of enraged women, mostly mothers, leaped at the car and attacked Mary Temple viciously. They struck at her, tore her clothing, smashed her hat and evidently meant to pull her into the roadway. The chauffeur endeavored to save his mistress by starting the engine, whereupon he, too, was grabbed and very roughly handled. The unhappy girl's shrieks served

BURTON LEARNS HE HAS INHERITED MILLIONS AND AN EARLDOM.

only to rouse her assailants to a pitch of ungovernable frenzy, and soon, wholly overcome by fear and exhaustion, she became almost unconscious.
Indeed, she was in very real peril, when Burton forced his way through the mob, tore open the door of the car and lifted her in his arms.
CHAPTER II.
"Hitting the Trail."
Burton was barely able to snatch Mary to safety when the car caught fire, the gasoline tank blew up and the costly vehicle became a mass of fire. A few of the angry women tried to bar the rescuer's path, but John hugged the girl to his breast with his left arm, while, with the right, he swept aside some half-hearted assailants, and carried the scape-goat of the accident to the child into her father's office.

Mary, who had never quite lost consciousness, was almost paralyzed with terror until she found herself in the strong embrace of a man whose dauntless manner brought with it a sense of security. She half opened her eyes and listened to what he was saying, though John was not in the habit of mincing his words. Then, with a sigh of relief, she nestled closer. For the moment she forgot the difference of station. She was only aware of being a weak and helpless woman and that this big, strong man was protecting her, like some ancient knight of chivalry daring the dragon which would slay an innocent maid.
The two had just reached the door of the office when a police wagon dashed into the street and the representatives of law and order began dispersing the crowd, partly by persuasion, partly by the vigorous use of their sticks. The police did not stop to inquire who was in fault. There was a mob, some windows were broken, and a car was in flames—these obvious items sufficed!
"It was a singular fact that neither the girl's father nor her fiancé had the slightest inkling of the peril she had incurred. The stone hurtling through the window had forced them to seek shelter in a corner of the room, so they did not even know of the car's presence. They were, therefore, very much surprised when Mary entered, leading John Burton by the hand.
John had set her down in the lobby and was turning to go, when she had held him and pulled him into the office after her. Rushing to her father, the girl told him of the terrible occurrences of the past few minutes and expiated on her rescuer's heroism.

"Those fearful creatures outside would have left me to burn to death," she cried impulsively, "if this brave man had not swept them aside and brought me in here to safety. I had the narrowest of escapes. I was just lifted clear of the car when the gasoline took fire and the limousine burst into flames."
"You forgot that the women were excited by the injury to the poor little girl," put in Burton, almost timidly.
"Oh, no, I don't. It wasn't my fault—the child ran right under the wheels!"
The president was greatly shaken by the dramatic developments of the hour, but he was naturally thankful for the preservation of his daughter

from a terrible death, and thanked John warmly.
"You must forget what I said to you just now, my lad," he said. "You are a cut above those idiots outside. Don't waste yourself on them any longer. They are nothing but cattle, fit only to drive. You can make something of yourself, if you want to. You're the right sort of metal. Look at me! I was a messenger boy once; today I'm a millionaire, self-made. In this world a man is just what he makes himself. That is the law. There is nothing else to it."
Burton, notwithstanding his usual readiness of speech, was now quite tongue-tied. He took the president's outstretched hand bashfully and shook hands with Reeves and Mary, not failing to notice that the girl clasped his work-hardened fingers in both of her small, well-manicured hands; then, after a moment's hesitation, he hurried out.

By this time the police had cleared the street. Burton, his head in a whirl, walked to his humble rooms and there dressed himself in a better suit of clothes than that which he wore while at work. Anxious to avoid his comrades for the time, and in the belief that a novelty might distract his thoughts, he made his way to the great tent in which Rev. Thomas Branton was conducting his religious service.
Near the entrance he encountered Flora, who also was attired in her holiday best. With the fickleness of her sex, she greeted John with much disdain. Hardly taking this attitude as personal, he asked if she would go with him to the revival meeting, whereupon Flora sniffed and tossed her head.
"Huh! I should say not!" she cried. "Be seen with you? Nothin' doin'! I'm going out with a fella that ain't on strike. He's workin' an' willin' to spend his money shovin' me a good time. I ain't got any use for idle bums like you."
Here, then, was a new point of view for John. One of the very people whom he meant to benefit by the demand of shorter hours and better pay was annoyed with him because of his own self-sacrifice. Indeed, he had the mortification of seeing the girl stroll in with her new man, a grocery clerk, who, by the way, seemed little pleased with the situation when he discovered the size and quality of his displaced rival. John, however, was more amused than piqued, and laughingly shrugging his shoulders strode away in the direction of the tent.
Burton was discoursing with real fervor, and John watched the effect of the preacher's eloquence in persuading people to "hit the sawdust trail" until his own attention was distracted from the more serious purpose of the gathering by the thrilling discovery that Mary Temple occupied a seat on the platform. From that moment he took no great interest in anything but the girl.
He hung about until the meeting was closed, and contrived to meet Mary who was being escorted home by the minister. She greeted him warmly and introduced him to Mr. Branton. John, more for the sake of saying something than because of any active zeal, asked the revivalist how

he managed to sway an audience so effectively.
"My dear young man," said Mr. Branton, "it is not I who make people believe. I am only an humble instrument in the hands of that Higher Power which rules us all and controls our destinies. Deny or ignore it though we may, the Divine Influence is there all the time. Sooner or later, it makes its presence felt in the life of every man and every woman. Some day—soon, perhaps—it will stir your spirit, and then I hope to see you with us in service and prayer."

For some reason, which one at least of her hearers could not fathom, Mary Temple seemed to be disturbed by the minister's words. She broke off the conversation rather hurriedly, and John felt that he had been effectually, if tactfully, dismissed. He sought a quiet restaurant and ate a much-needed meal, sauntering home afterwards and sitting down to a book and a pipe.
Those who knew Burton only at work or play might have been vastly surprised had they peered over his shoulder and learned the nature of the philosophical work that now engaged his attention. He was a slow and careful reader, allowing no passage to escape his attention until its meaning was thoroughly mastered. He had the habit, too, of marking sentences which appeared to invite subsequent reflection. On this occasion, he took the trouble to underline a few lines which read:
"The observant man, seeing wrong so often triumphant—or seemingly so—is plunged into a maze of doubt and can be forgiven if he asks himself: 'Is humanity in the grip of evil?'"
John frowned over the phrase. It would seem that Temple, the steel magnate, and Branton, the preacher, were utterly at variance on the chief issues of life. Which was right?

On the one hand, it was surely fitting that a man should endeavor to improve his position in the world. On the other, had not the revivalist quoted the divine mandate: "Sell what thou hast and give it unto the poor, and follow me." Was there no right middle way between these two extremes?
Burton was chewing his pipe over this knotty problem when his landlady, a slatternly woman, entered and announced in a voice of awe:
"There's a lady to see you. She's come here in a car."
"A lady?" said John, with a sudden throb of hope that it might be Mary. "Yep, I put her in the parlor," John wriggled into his coat, trying to dust his clothes and smooth his hair simultaneously, and followed the woman downstairs.

Despite his daring anticipation, he was nevertheless surprised at finding Miss Temple actually awaiting him. She, of course, was completely at ease, and lost no time in making known the object of her visit.
"I am glad you are home," she said, and her voice sounded strangely sweet in the ears of a man accustomed only to the raucous accents of the factory and the street. "I have just been to the homes of some of the poor people. You know how they live, never saving a cent. They will soon be in desperate want. Oh, Mr. Burton, they ought to go back to work!"
John hardly knew what to say. Mary was the last person in the world whom he wanted to contradict, but his innate candor conquered.
"It is only fair to point out that the people themselves voted for the strike," he said.
"Oh, yes," agreed Mary, earnestly. "I am well aware of that, but the truth is that they do not know what is best for them. They need leading, directing. I believe you have influence with them. You could make them go back to work at once, and I am convinced it is your duty to do so."

The girl's presence was very fragrant in that frowsy room. She brought with her a breath of new and exotic life. Her big eyes looked up into the man's appealingly. Seeming to sense her power, she drew nearer and whispered:
"You must do this for their sakes and for mine!"
John capitulated. For her sake he would do almost anything. But the first real service he could render her, he thought, would be to strangle that smug-looking person, Reeves, to whom she was supposed to be engaged.
Having gained her point, Mary Temple hastened out, and was seated in the car before John had time to open the door for her. He had intended not to go to the meeting of the union that night, but the promise just made rendered his presence there necessary. With a sigh—for he hated all this turmoil and angry discussion—he went to the hall and faced his fellow workmen.

And he surpassed himself. Quite unconsciously he adopted some of the revivalist preacher's phrases and ideas, welding them into his own rugged and forcible expressions. Bill Thompson, a level-headed fellow, soon realized that some extraordinary influence was at work or Burton would never have gone back to the factory so strongly. He tried, therefore, to get the men to postpone a decision till next day. But the young orator's eloquence was more powerful than the older man's experience. The strike was declared at an end and John and his mates went back to work; but never sight or sound of Mary Temple was vouchsafed during a week or more, to the man whose waking thoughts and nightly dreams were ever of her.

At last Burton could bear the tension no longer; he dressed in his good clothes one evening after leaving work and resolved to call on Miss Temple, with the pretext of inquiring as to whether or not she had completely recovered from the effects of the riot. Outside his boarding house he encountered Bill Thompson and another workman.
"Hello!" he said cheerfully.
"Comin' to the union meetin'?" inquired Bill.
Burton shook his head.
"No," he said. "Not just now, anyhow. I may drop in later. See you then, perhaps."
His abstracted manner, no less than his spruce attire, puzzled Thompson. "What's wrong wi' John?" inquired the other man.
"The same old story," said Thompson sadly. "He's being fooled by a woman, I guess."
John walked straight to the fash-

ionable quarter of the town, in which the Temple mansion occupied one of the largest and most exclusive sites. It was not John's way to abandon an enterprise once he had undertaken it, so he rang the bell without hesitation, gave his name and was admitted by a doubtful-eyed maid when he asked to see Miss Temple.
After a slight delay, he was ushered into a richly furnished drawing room, and found Mary there with her fiancé. The girl was in evening dress. A superb diamond necklace flashed from the white silk of her throat. There were diamonds in her hair, in her corsage and on her fingers. The glitter of them seemed to dazzle John. It was with a positive effort that he forced a halting tongue to announce the purpose of his visit.

The girl heard him with chilling indifference that soon merged into a supercilious smile.
"Really, Mr. Burton," she said, "it is presumption on your part to pay a social call here. I fear you must have misunderstood both the extent of the service you rendered me and the nature of the appeal I made subsequently. I like to be outspoken in such matters. That strike had to be ended. Father's clients were howling for steel, and I thought that a woman's tongue might prevail where man's logic was at fault. Moreover, father promised me a \$50,000 necklace if I succeeded. Here it is. It was worth trying for, wasn't it?" And she touched the glittering gems on her throat, with those delicate fingers whose clasp had once thrilled John Burton's being to its innermost fiber.
He was literally struck dumb. He heard, as one in a dream, Mary's next words to Reeves:
"I am under certain obligations to this man, dear. Will you see that he is rewarded?"

John could only stare after her in blank amazement as she swept out of the room. He was quite unaware that Reeves had thrust some bills into his hand. He almost staggered in the effort to win clear of the house, but halted in the hall to gaze at the bills in his hand. When his benumbed brain understood what they meant he threw them from him savagely. He laughed, too, not in his wonted cheery way, but with the harsh cynicism of a man who had suddenly and irrevocably lost faith and hope and reverence.

On the way to his poor lodging he remembered the union meeting, and turned to go there, resolved now to cast his lot wholly with his brethren. Suddenly, he halted in the road, and his well-tanned cheeks blanched at the thought which came to him. What right had he to pose among his mates as one who was wholeheartedly with them in the never-ending struggle between capital and labor? Had he not betrayed them. Had he not sold their trust for a fickle woman's smile? How might he stand up among these honest comrades and confess that he had persuaded them to call off the strike not, as he had put it, because of the resultant misery to thousands in the city, but because he was cozened into the belief by Mary Temple?
Sick at heart he went to his poor lodging. He felt beaten and disgraced. Literally, he dared not face his comrades!

Next morning, when John arrived at the factory, he was greeted by a foreman and told that his services were no longer needed. This was Reeves's mean revenge. John did not go to work. He didn't care. At any other time he would have sought the aid of the union, but he now regarded himself as a traitor to his boarding house and did not stir out again that day. Towards night a visitor was announced, not a lady this time, but a man, who, to John's surprise, entered the parlor. John was confronted by a short, dapper-looking man, who said in a friendly tone: "I am Mr. Branton. I am a solicitor in London. John did not know what was always wanted the man meant to sell himself. This minor difficulty soon vanished when the stranger, who was John's father, told him that he was a member of the family and that he was to be called John as to his birth and parentage. Burton answered as best he could and gave such references as he could give. Those yet living who might be connected with his youth.
The man and his father died soon after he was born and his mother had been killed by an accident within a few hours of Mrs. Burton's death. John had been told that they had come from England upon a business matter and that his father was a man of distinguished appearance and refined speech. "Since then I am all alone in the world," he said. "I was dragged up by the scruff of the neck. Here I am, just as you see me. What do you want with me, anyhow?"
The stranger did not answer for a few moments. He took some accounts from a bag and consulted them, comparing certain statements therein with the notes he had made of John's dim but fairly accurate recollection.
At last he lifted his eyes and said: "I must prepare yourself for a shock. Mr. Burton, but I hope it will be a pleasurable one. You are the tenth marquis of Castleton, heir to an immense fortune of 2,000,000 sterling, an estate worth 100,000 a year."
"You mean on earth are you talking about, anyhow?" gasped John.
"I am telling you the literal truth," said the other, solemnly. "About the year ago—1886, I think, the ninth marquis of Castleton, your uncle, quarreled with his brother, your father, Lord Richard Burton, because he left to an illegitimate son, a poor maid whom he was in honor bound to wed. The marquis had never married, having lost the woman he loved, and at the time of his death, he left his estate to the girl whom he was in honor bound to wed. Your father contracted an alliance with the illegitimate son, and his boys should be passengers on a liner which was torpedoed in the Mediterranean. They were lost. There can be no doubt of it, because their bodies have been recovered and identified. You come of good stock, my lord; your uncle and cousins died like English gentlemen, and you are the legal heirs to the estate, possessed some vague information as to your father's whereabouts when he came to this country. That is why I am here. I assure you I am not a romantic. You are undoubtedly the tenth marquis of Castleton."
"It is said that all the scenes of a crowded life pass through a man's mind when he is in imminent danger of death by drowning. Some such experience befell John Burton now."
He reviewed the years of his youth, his introduction to the factory, the gradual acquisition of manual skill and the knowledge of mechanics, the influence of his father's influence among his mates, his friendship with work, laundry Flora, the dawn of a real love for the first time, that, to all appearance, social warfare, Mary Temple, and the complete collapse of his brief sordid record was succeeded by the fairy tale just related, an unbelievable romance, indeed, yet one which appeared to have the sanction of law and society!
John began to laugh ardently. He was on the verge of hysteria. More than once he seemed to mutter a strange question:
"Is this humanity in the grip of evil?"
The stranger did not pretend to understand, so, being a discreet little man, he kept silence, and, after a few minutes, he left.
(To Be Continued.)

John could only stare after her in blank amazement as she swept out of the room. He was quite unaware that Reeves had thrust some bills into his hand. He almost staggered in the effort to win clear of the house, but halted in the hall to gaze at the bills in his hand. When his benumbed brain understood what they meant he threw them from him savagely. He laughed, too, not in his wonted cheery way, but with the harsh cynicism of a man who had suddenly and irrevocably lost faith and hope and reverence.

On the way to his poor lodging he remembered the union meeting, and turned to go there, resolved now to cast his lot wholly with his brethren. Suddenly, he halted in the road, and his well-tanned cheeks blanched at the thought which came to him. What right had he to pose among his mates as one who was wholeheartedly with them in the never-ending struggle between capital and labor? Had he not betrayed them. Had he not sold their trust for a fickle woman's smile? How might he stand up among these honest comrades and confess that he had persuaded them to call off the strike not, as he had put it, because of the resultant misery to thousands in the city, but because he was cozened into the belief by Mary Temple?
Sick at heart he went to his poor lodging. He felt beaten and disgraced. Literally, he dared not face his comrades!

Next morning, when John arrived at the factory, he was greeted by a foreman and told that his services were no longer needed. This was Reeves's mean revenge. John did not go to work. He didn't care. At any other time he would have sought the aid of the union, but he now regarded himself as a traitor to his boarding house and did not stir out again that day. Towards night a visitor was announced, not a lady this time, but a man, who, to John's surprise, entered the parlor. John was confronted by a short, dapper-looking man, who said in a friendly tone: "I am Mr. Branton. I am a solicitor in London. John did not know what was always wanted the man meant to sell himself. This minor difficulty soon vanished when the stranger, who was John's father, told him that he was a member of the family and that he was to be called John as to his birth and parentage. Burton answered as best he could and gave such references as he could give. Those yet living who might be connected with his youth.
The man and his father died soon after he was born and his mother had been killed by an accident within a few hours of Mrs. Burton's death. John had been told that they had come from England upon a business matter and that his father was a man of distinguished appearance and refined speech. "Since then I am all alone in the world," he said. "I was dragged up by the scruff of the neck. Here I am, just as you see me. What do you want with me, anyhow?"
The stranger did not answer for a few moments. He took some accounts from a bag and consulted them, comparing certain statements therein with the notes he had made of John's dim but fairly accurate recollection.
At last he lifted his eyes and said: "I must prepare yourself for a shock. Mr. Burton, but I hope it will be a pleasurable one. You are the tenth marquis of Castleton, heir to an immense fortune of 2,000,000 sterling, an estate worth 100,000 a year."
"You mean on earth are you talking about, anyhow?" gasped John.
"I am telling you the literal truth," said the other, solemnly. "About the year ago—1886, I think, the ninth marquis of Castleton, your uncle, quarreled with his brother, your father, Lord Richard Burton, because he left to an illegitimate son, a poor maid whom he was in honor bound to wed. The marquis had never married, having lost the woman he loved, and at the time of his death, he left his estate to the girl whom he was in honor bound to wed. Your father contracted an alliance with the illegitimate son, and his boys should be passengers on a liner which was torpedoed in the Mediterranean. They were lost. There can be no doubt of it, because their bodies have been recovered and identified. You come of good stock, my lord; your uncle and cousins died like English gentlemen, and you are the legal heirs to the estate, possessed some vague information as to your father's whereabouts when he came to this country. That is why I am here. I assure you I am not a romantic. You are undoubtedly the tenth marquis of Castleton."
"It is said that all the scenes of a crowded life pass through a man's mind when he is in imminent danger of death by drowning. Some such experience befell John Burton now."
He reviewed the years of his youth, his introduction to the factory, the gradual acquisition of manual skill and the knowledge of mechanics, the influence of his father's influence among his mates, his friendship with work, laundry Flora, the dawn of a real love for the first time, that, to all appearance, social warfare, Mary Temple, and the complete collapse of his brief sordid record was succeeded by the fairy tale just related, an unbelievable romance, indeed, yet one which appeared to have the sanction of law and society!
John began to laugh ardently. He was on the verge of hysteria. More than once he seemed to mutter a strange question:
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(To Be Continued.)

He managed to sway an audience so effectively.
"My dear young man," said Mr. Branton, "it is not I who make people believe. I am only an humble instrument in the hands of that Higher Power which rules us all and controls our destinies. Deny or ignore it though we may, the Divine Influence is there all the time. Sooner or later, it makes its presence felt in the life of every man and every woman. Some day—soon, perhaps—it will stir your spirit, and then I hope to see you with us in service and prayer."
For some reason, which one at least of her hearers could not fathom, Mary Temple seemed to be disturbed by the minister's words. She broke off the conversation rather hurriedly, and John felt that he had been effectually, if tactfully, dismissed. He sought a quiet restaurant and ate a much-needed meal, sauntering home afterwards and sitting down to a book and a pipe.
Those who knew Burton only at work or play might have been vastly surprised had they peered over his shoulder and learned the nature of the philosophical work that now engaged his attention. He was a slow and careful reader, allowing no passage to escape his attention until its meaning was thoroughly mastered. He had the habit, too, of marking sentences which appeared to invite subsequent reflection. On this occasion, he took the trouble to underline a few lines which read:
"The observant man, seeing wrong so often triumphant—or seemingly so—is plunged into a maze of doubt and can be forgiven if he asks himself: 'Is humanity in the grip of evil?'"
John frowned over the phrase. It would seem that Temple, the steel magnate, and Branton, the preacher, were utterly at variance on the chief issues of life. Which was right?
On the one hand, it was surely fitting that a man should endeavor to improve his position in the world. On the other, had not the revivalist quoted the divine mandate: "Sell what thou hast and give it unto the poor, and follow me." Was there no right middle way between these two extremes?
Burton was chewing his pipe over this knotty problem when his landlady, a slatternly woman, entered and announced in a voice of awe:
"There's a lady to see you. She's come here in a car."
"A lady?" said John, with a sudden throb of hope that it might be Mary. "Yep, I put her in the parlor," John wriggled into his coat, trying to dust his clothes and smooth his hair simultaneously, and followed the woman downstairs.
Despite his daring anticipation, he was nevertheless surprised at finding Miss Temple actually awaiting him. She, of course, was completely at ease, and lost no time in making known the object of her visit.
"I am glad you are home," she said, and her voice sounded strangely sweet in the ears of a man accustomed only to the raucous accents of the factory and the street. "I have just been to the homes of some of the poor people. You know how they live, never saving a cent. They will soon be in desperate want. Oh, Mr. Burton, they ought to go back to work!"
John hardly knew what to say. Mary was the last person in the world whom he wanted to contradict, but his innate candor conquered.
"It is only fair to point out that the people themselves voted for the strike," he said.
"Oh, yes," agreed Mary, earnestly. "I am well aware of that, but the truth is that they do not know what is best for them. They need leading, directing. I believe you have influence with them. You could make them go back to work at once, and I am convinced it is your duty to do so."

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