

The Gibson Upright eBook

The Gibson Upright by Booth Tarkington

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Contents

The Gibson Upright eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	8
Page 4.....	10
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	14
Page 7.....	16
Page 8.....	18
Page 9.....	20
Page 10.....	22
Page 11.....	24
Page 12.....	26
Page 13.....	28
Page 14.....	30
Page 15.....	32
Page 16.....	34
Page 17.....	36
Page 18.....	38
Page 19.....	40
Page 20.....	42
Page 21.....	44
Page 22.....	46

Page 23.....	48
Page 24.....	50
Page 25.....	52
Page 26.....	54
Page 27.....	56
Page 28.....	58
Page 29.....	60
Page 30.....	62
Page 31.....	64
Page 32.....	66
Page 33.....	68
Page 34.....	70
Page 35.....	72
Page 36.....	74
Page 37.....	76
Page 38.....	78
Page 39.....	80
Page 40.....	82
Page 41.....	84
Page 42.....	86
Page 43.....	88

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
Title: The Gibson Upright		1
The		1
By		1
HARRY LEON WILSON		1
THE STAGE PRODUCTION OF		1
THIS PLAY IS BY STUART WALKER		
CAST OF CHARACTERS		1
ACT I		1
ACT II		15
ACT III		28
CURTAIN		43



Page 1

Title: The Gibson Upright

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*** Start of this project gutenber EBOOK the Gibson upright ***

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The

Gibson Upright

By

BOOTH TARKINGTON

and

HARRY LEON WILSON

1919

**THE STAGE PRODUCTION OF THIS PLAY IS BY
STUART WALKER**

THE GIBSON UPRIGHT

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANDREW GIBSON, a piano factory owner

Nora Gorodna, a piano tester and socialist labor organizer



Mr. Mifflin, a socialist journalist

Carter, an elderly factory worker

Frankel, a young Jewish factory worker

Shomberg, a factory worker

Simpson, an elderly factory worker

Salvatore, an Italian factory worker

Riley, a truck driver

Ella, Mr. Gibson's housemaid

Mrs. Simpson, wife of Simpson

Mrs. Commiskey, wife of a worker (offstage voice)

Polenski, a worker

First wop and *second wop*, workers

ACT I

Andrew Gibson's office in his piano factory where he manufactures "The Gibson Upright." A very plain interior; pleasant to the eye, yet distinctly an office in a factory, and without luxuries; altogether utilitarian. Against the wall on our right is a roll-top desk, open, very neat, and in the centre of the writing pad a fresh rose stands in a glass of water. Near by is a long, plain table and upon it a very neat arrangement of correspondence and a couple of ledgers. Against the walls are a dozen plain cane-seated chairs. Near the centre of the room is a sample of the Gibson upright piano in light wood. There is a large safe, showing the word "Gibson," and there are filing cases. In the rear wall there is a door with the upper half of opaque glass, which shows "Mr. Gibson" in reverse; and near this door is a water filter upon a stand. In the wall upon our left is a plain wooden door. The rear door opens into the factory; the other into a hall that leads to the street. Upon the walls are several posters,

Page 2

one showing “The Gibson Upright”—a happy family, including children and a grandparent, exclaiming with joy at sight of this instrument. Another shows a concert singer singing widely beside “The Gibson Upright,” with an accompanist seated. Another shows a semi-colossal millionaire, and a workingman of similar size in paper cap and apron, shaking hands across “The Gibson Upright,” and, printed: “\$188.00—The Price for the Millionaire, the Same for Plain John Smith—\$188.00.” This poster and the others all show the slogan: “How Cheap, BUT How Good!”

Nothing is new in this room, but everything is clean and accurately in order. The arrangement is symmetrical.

As the curtain rises_ Nora Gorodna is seen at work on the sample “Gibson Upright.” The front is not removed; but through the top of the piano she is adjusting something with a small wrench. Nora is a fine-looking young woman, not over twenty-six; she wears a plain smock over a dark dress. As she is a piano tester in the factory she is dressed neither so roughly as a working woman nor perhaps so fashionably as a stenographer. She is serious and somewhat preoccupied. From somewhere come the sounds of several pianos being tuned. After a moment Nora goes thoughtfully to the desk and looks at the rose in the glass; then lifts the glass as if to inhale the odour of the rose, but abruptly alters her decision and sets the glass down without doing so. She returns quickly and decisively to her work at the piano, as if she had made a determination.

A bell at the door on our left rings. Nora goes to the door and opens it.

Nora: Good morning, Mr. Mifflin.

Mifflin [entering]: Good morning, Miss Gorodna.

[Mifflin is a beaming man of forty, with gold-rimmed eyeglasses and a somewhat grizzled beard which has been, a week or so ago, a neatly trimmed Vandyke. He wears a “cutaway suit,” not much pressed, not new; a derby hat, a standing collar, and a “four-in-hand” dark tie; hard, round cuffs, not link cuffs. He carries a folded umbrella, not a fashionable one; wears no gloves; and has two or three old magazines and a newspaper under his arm.]

Mifflin: I believe I’m here just to the hour, Miss Gorodna.

Nora: Mr. Gibson has been very nice about it. He told me he would give you the interview for your article. He’s in the factory—trying to settle some things he can’t settle. I’ll let him know you’re here.

Page 3

[She goes out by the door into the factory. Mifflin, smiling with benevolent anticipation, places his umbrella and hat on a chair, then takes his fountain pen and a pencil from his pocket, smilingly decides to use the pencil, sharpens it without going to a wastebasket over by the desk; then beamingly looks about the room. He is about to strike a chord on the piano, seems alarmed by the idea, moves away from it, dusts the lapel of his coat, adjusts his collar, studies the posters, shakes his head over them as if they were not to his taste, goes to the desk, and after studying it smiles at the rose and gives it a kittenish peck with his forefinger. Nora comes back and MIFFLIN turns to her with his benevolent smile.]

NORA *[going back to her work at the piano]*: He'll be right here.

[GIBSON appears in the open doorway, speaking with crisp determination to someone not seen.]

GIBSON: That's my last word on it; that's in accordance with the agreement you signed two weeks ago.

A HARSH VOICE: We don't care nothin' about no agreement!

GIBSON: That's all!

[He comes in. He is a man of thirty-something; well but not clubbishly dressed; an intelligent, thoughtful face; a man of affairs. Just now he is exercising some self-control over irritations which have become habitual, but he is not uncordial, merely quiet, during his greeting of MIFFLIN.]

NORA: This is Mr. Mifflin, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON: How do you do, Mr. Mifflin.

MIFFLIN *[heartily, as they shake hands]*: I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Gibson! I hope you don't mind my not writing to you myself for this interview.

GIBSON: Not at all!

MIFFLIN *[taking a chair]*: I heard Miss Gorodna speak at a meeting two nights ago—

GIBSON: Yes?

MIFFLIN: And learning that she was one of your employees I asked her to speak to you about it for me.

GIBSON: I see.

MIFFLIN: Now, in the first place, Mr. Gibson—

[There is a telephone on GIBSON'S desk; its bell rings.]

GIBSON: Excuse me a moment!

[At the telephone]: Hello!... Yes—Gibson.... Oh, hello, McCombs!... Yes. I want you to buy it.... I want you to buy all of that grade wire you can lay your hands on. Get it now and go quick. All you can get; I don't care if it's a three years' supply. There'll be a shortage within a month.... No; I don't want any more of the celluloid mixture.... No, I don't want it. They can't make a figure good enough. I've got my own formula for keys and we're going to make our own mixture.... I'm going to have my own plant for it right here. I can make it just under fifty per cent, better than I can buy it.... Wait a minute! I want you to get hold of that lot of felt over in

Page 4

Newark; the syndicate's after it, but I want you to beat them to it. Don't go to Johnson. You go to Hendricks—he's Johnson's brother-in-law. You tell him as my purchasing agent you've come to finish the talk I had with him the other night. You'll find that does it.... All right. Wait! Call me up to-morrow afternoon; I'm on the track of a stock of that brass we've been using. We may get three-eighths of a cent off on it. I'll know by that time. All right!... All right! [*Then he hangs up the receiver and turns to MIFFLIN.*] Where do you propose to publish this interview, Mr. Mifflin?

MIFFLIN [*cheerily*]: Oh, I shall select one of the popular magazines in sympathy with my point of view in these matters. You probably know my articles. Numbers of them have been translated. One called "Coooperation and Brotherhood" has been printed in thirteen languages and dialects, including the Scandinavian. But I expect this to be my star article.

GIBSON: Why?

MIFFLIN: Because your factory here is so often called a model factory. "*The model factory!*" [*He repeats the phrase with unction.*]

GIBSON [*wearily*]: Yes, model because it has the most labour trouble!

MIFFLIN [*enthusiastically*]: That is the real reason why it will be my star article. As you may know from my other articles this problem is where I am in my element.

GIBSON: Yes; I understood so from Miss Gorodna.

[*Giving him an inimical glance, NORA closes the top of piano, and moves to go. GIBSON checks her with a slight gesture.*]

GIBSON: Would you mind staying, Miss Gorodna? Miss Gorodna knows more about one side of this factory than I do, I'm afraid, Mr. Mifflin. We may need her for reference, especially as she seems to be the ringleader of the insurgents.

MIFFLIN [*with jovial reproach*]: Now, now! Before we come to that, Mr. Gibson, suppose we get at the origin of this interesting product. [*He waves to the sample piano.*] Let's see! I understand it was never your own creation, Mr. Gibson; that you inherited this factory from your father.

GIBSON: Oh, no, I didn't.

NORA [*challenging*]: *What!* [*She checks herself.*] I beg your pardon!

GIBSON: The piano factory I inherited from my father was about one third this size.

MIFFLIN [*genially; always genial*]: Nevertheless, you inherited it. We know that everything grows with the times, naturally. Let us simply state that it was a capitalistic family inheritance.

NORA [*under her breath but emphatically*]: Yes!

MIFFLIN: Up to the time of your inheriting it, you, I suppose, had led the usual life of pleasure of the wealthy young man?

GIBSON: I'd been through school and college and through every department of the factory. That wasn't hard; it was a pretty run-down factory, Mr. Mifflin.

Page 5

MIFFLIN: And then at your father's death the lives and fortunes, souls and bodies of all these workmen passed into your hands?

GIBSON: Not quite that; there were only forty-one workmen, and nineteen of them didn't stay when father died. They got other jobs before I could stop them.

MIFFLIN: And how many men have you now?

GIBSON: I believe there are one hundred and seventy-five on the pay roll now.

MIFFLIN: One hundred and seventy-five [*with gusto*] labourers!

GIBSON: Some of them are; some of them are orators.

MIFFLIN [*jovially*]: Ah, I'm afraid that's hard on Miss Gorodna.

GIBSON [*quietly*]: She's both.

MIFFLIN: I understand you are *not* fighting the labour unions?

GIBSON: No. The workmen themselves declined to unionize the factory.

MIFFLIN: Mr. Gibson, when your father began manufacturing "The Gibson Upright"—

GIBSON: He didn't. He made a very fine piano—and only a few of them. It was "The Gibson Upright" that saved the factory. You see, with this model we began to get on a quantity-production basis. That's why the business has grown and is growing.

MIFFLIN: You mean that "The Gibson Upright" is the reason for the present great prosperity of this plant?

GIBSON: Yes.

MIFFLIN: Now be careful, Mr. Gibson; I'm going to ask a trap question. [*Wagging his pencil at him.*] What is the reason for "The Gibson Upright?"

GIBSON: Do you mean who designed it?

MIFFLIN: Oh, no, no, no! I mean who *makes* them? If someone asked you if you're the man that makes "The Gibson Upright" wouldn't you say "Yes?"

GIBSON: Certainly!

MIFFLIN [*triumphantly*]: Ah, there you fell into the trap!

GIBSON: What's the matter?

NORA [*with controlled agitation*]: It's the same old matter, Mr. Gibson. It's those men out there that make the piano.

GIBSON [*a little sadly*]: Do they?

NORA: With their *hands*, Mr. Gibson!

GIBSON: Is there anything more, Mr. Mifflin?

MIFFLIN: You couldn't possibly imagine how much you've given me, Mr. Gibson, in these few little answers. It is precisely what I want to get at—the point of view! The point of view is all that is separating the classes from the masses to-day. And I think I have yours already. Now I want to go to the masses if you will permit me.

GIBSON: Then you might as well stay here.

MIFFLIN: Ah, but I want to hear the workers talk!

GIBSON: Well, this is the best place for that! Some of them are waiting now just outside the door. I'll let you hear them.

[*Goes to the factory door and opens it; two workingmen come in. One is elderly, with gray moustache and beard—CARTER. The other, FRANKEL, is a Hebraic type, eager and nervous; younger.*]

GIBSON: What do you and Frankel want, Carter?

Page 6

CARTER [*moving his jaw from side to side, affecting to chew to gain confidence*]: Well, Mr. Gibson, to come down to plain words—there ain't no two best ways o' beatin' about the bush.

GIBSON: I know that.

CARTER: The question is just up to where there ain't no two best ways out of it. The men in our department is going to walk out to the last one, and if there was any way o' stoppin' it by argument I'd tell you. We're goin' out at twelve o'clock noon to-day, the whole forty-eight of us.

GIBSON: Why?

FRANKEL: "*Why*," Mr. Gibson! Did you want to know *why*?

GIBSON: Yes, I do. You men signed an agreement with me just eleven days ago—

FRANKEL [*hotly protesting*]: But we never understood it when we signed it. How'd we know what we was signing?

GIBSON: Can't you read, Frankel?

FRANKEL: What's reading got to do with it, when it reads all one way?

GIBSON: Didn't you understand it, Carter?

CARTER: Well—I can't say I did.

GIBSON: *Why* can't you say it? It was plain black and white.

CARTER: Well, I was kind o' foggy about the overtime.

GIBSON: The agreement was that you were to have time and a half for overtime. What was foggy about that?

CARTER: Well, I don't say you didn't give us what we was askin' right *then*; but things have changed since then.

GIBSON: What's changed in eleven days?

FRANKEL [*hotly*]: What's changed? How about them men in the finishin' department that do piecework?

GIBSON: Well, what's changed about them?

FRANKEL: Well, something *is* goin' to change over there.

GIBSON: We're talking about your department not understanding the agreement. What's the finishing department got to do with that?

FRANKEL: Well, they're kickin', too, you bet!

GIBSON: I'm dealing with your kick now.

CARTER: Well, o' course we got to stand with them; if they do piecework overtime they don't get no more for it.

GIBSON: I'll deal with them separately.

FRANKEL: My goodness, Mr. Gibson, you got to deal with us, too! Not a one of us understood what our last agreement with you was. It's just agreements and agreements and agreements—you might think we was living just on agreements! By rights we ought to have double time instead of time and a half!

GIBSON: Time and a half eleven days ago; now you strike for double time! Where does this thing stop? You want double time for overtime; your working day has been reduced; it won't be long till you want that cut down again.

FRANKEL: Sure! We want it cut down right now!

CARTER: Yes, Mr. Gibson; that was another point they told us to bring up before we walk out.

GIBSON [*with growing exasperation*]: I suppose you want a six-hour day so you'll have more overtime to double on me! Then you'll want a four-hour day, won't you?

Page 7

MIFFLIN [*beaming and nodding*]: Well, why not, Mr. Gibson?

GIBSON: What?

NORA: Why shouldn't they?

GIBSON: Why shouldn't they? But what's their limit?

NORA [*oratorically*]: When the workman shall own his tools!

MIFFLIN: Of course that means *all* the tools, Mr. Gibson. You may not know our phrase: "The workman shall own his tools." It means not only the carpenter's bench, the plane and the saw, the adze and the auger, but the shop itself. It means that the workmen shall own the factory. It means the elimination of everything and everyone who stands between him and the purchaser, to take toll and unearned profit from the worker, who is really the sole producer of wealth.

NORA: It means the elimination of capital and the capitalist!

MIFFLIN: It means that not only should the worker own tools and factory but should sit here in the persons of his chosen and elected fellow workers, as arbiter of his own destiny.

GIBSON: That is to say, it means the elimination of me.

MIFFLIN [*jovially*]: Precisely! Precisely!

GIBSON [*as another workingman strides into the room*]: What do you want, Shomberg?

SHOMBERG: Them new windows in the assembling room—they're no good.

GIBSON: We've just spent twelve hundred dollars fixing them as you said you wanted them. What's the matter with them?

SHOMBERG: They don't give no light.

MIFFLIN: None at all?

SHOMBERG: It's right next to none at all! The men are goin' to lay off if they got to work in that room. They're goin' out anyway at twelve o'clock.

FRANKEL: Now look here, Mr. Gibson, if I was running this factory—

GIBSON: You're not, Frankel!

SHOMBERG: Well, why can't you listen to him? Don't we even get no hearing? I guess if I was running this factory once, the first thing I'd do I'd anyhow try to listen what the troubles is and make my men contented.

GIBSON: What would you do if you were running the factory, Carter? You haven't said.

CARTER: I ain't had the chance to say. Now what I'd do, first I'd settle all the grievances so there wouldn't be no more complaints.

GIBSON: Well, here's one coming I might leave to you on that basis.

*[Enter SIMPSON, an elderly worker in overalls and jumper;
and SALVATORE, a New Yorkized Italian type, a formerly
lighted cigarette dangling from his lips.]*

SALVATORE: Our department's goin' to walk out at twelve, noon, Mr. Gibson. We ain't satisfied.

GIBSON: Why not?

SALVATORE: Well, we ain't satisfied, Mr. Gibson; we ain't satisfied at all.

GIBSON: You got every demand answered yesterday, Salvatore.

SALVATORE: Oh, I ain't talkin' about no demands. If all them other departments walks out we're going to stand by 'em! We got plenty to do with our time. Workin' all the time ain't so enjoyable.

Page 8

GIBSON: So you people are going out again, are you?

SIMPSON: I guess it's a general strike, Mr. Gibson. I'm afraid if you don't give the boys satisfactory answers the place will close down at noon.

GIBSON: Have satisfactory answers ever satisfied you?

SALVATORE: Ain't we got no right to stand up for our rights?

FRANKEL: Don't you get all you can from *us*? Well, you bet your life we're goin' to keep on gettin' all we can from *you*!

GIBSON: Then life isn't worth anything to either of us—if it's all fight! Is that to go on forever?

NORA: No, Mr. Gibson; it's to go on until the abolition of the wage system!

MIFFLIN: Good!

NORA: The struggle with capitalism will continue till the workers take possession of the machinery of production. It is theirs by right; the wealth they produce is morally their own. The parasites who now consume that wealth must be destroyed.

[Great approval from workmen; almost a cheer. MIFFLIN chuckles and noiselessly claps his hands.]

GIBSON: I'm the parasite!

SHOMBERG: Well, do we get any answer?

GIBSON: Does any one of you men here think he could answer all of these demands satisfactorily?

SALVATORE: Sure! *[All acquiesce: "Sure, sure!"]*

FRANKEL: You can't put us off any longer with just no little bunch of funny talk!

GIBSON: I'll have an answer for you in fifteen minutes. *[Turns to his desk.]* That's all.

SHOMBERG: Better have it before twelve o'clock.

CARTER *[as they go]*: Do what you kin, Mr. Gibson. All the departments is worked up pretty unusual.

GIBSON *[wearily dropping back into his chair]*: Oh, no, Carter; pretty usual; that's the trouble.

MIFFLIN: A splendid manifestation of spirit, Mr. Gibson! I'll just take advantage of the
—

[GIBSON *waves his hand, assenting. MIFFLIN overtakes the group at door, puts his hands on the shoulders of two of the workers; and goes out with them talking eagerly. NORA follows. GIBSON sighs heavily; the telephone bell rings. He takes up the receiver.*]

GIBSON: Who is it?... Wait a minute! [*He takes a pad and writes*]: "Central Associated Lumber Companies." ... Wait a minute. [*Looks at a slip in a pigeonhole of his desk.*] Oh, yes, you called me yesterday.... This is Mr. Ragsdale?... No, no, Mr. Ragsdale, I don't think I'm going to do any business with you. You asked me forty-eight dollars a thousand on 200,000 feet.... No, your coming down half a dollar a thousand won't do it.... I say seventeen cents won't do it.... Hold the wire a minute. [*Looks for letter in pigeonhole, but finds it in his inside pockets. Then he holds it open, looking at it beside the telephone as he speaks.*] Hello!... No; I was right; there's nothing doing, Mr. Ragsdale, I know where I can get that 200,000 feet at forty-five dollars.... I say I know where I can get that lumber at forty-five dollars.... No; I can get it. There won't be any use for you to call up again.... Good-bye!

Page 9

[He paces the floor again thoughtfully, then abruptly goes to the factory door; opens it and calls.]

GIBSON: Miss Gorodna!

[NORA appears in the doorway. She looks at him with disapproving inquiry; then walks in and closes the door. He goes to his desk and touches the rose.]

GIBSON: Why didn't you take it this morning? That poor little rosebed in my yard at home; it's just begun to brighten up. I suppose it thought it was going to send you a June rose every day, as it did last June. You don't want it?

NORA *[gently, but not abating her attitude]*: No, thank you!

GIBSON: *[dropping the rose upon his blotting pad, not into the glass again]*: This is the fourth that's had to wither disappointed.

NORA *[in a low voice]*: Then hadn't you better let the others live?

GIBSON: I'd like to live a little myself, Nora. Life doesn't seem much worth living for me as it is, and if your theories are making you detest me I think I'm about through.

NORA: It's what you stand for that my theories make me detest—since you used the word.

GIBSON: Well, what is it that I stand for?

NORA: Class and class hatred.

GIBSON: Which class is the hatred coming from?

NORA: From both!

GIBSON: Just in this room right now it seems to be all on one side. And lately it has seemed to me to be more and more not so much class as personal; because really, Nora, I haven't yet been able to understand how a girl with your mind can believe that you and I belong to different classes.

NORA: You don't! So long as capital exists you and I are in warring classes, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON: What are they?

NORA: Capitalist and proletariat. You can't get out of your class and I don't want to get out of mine.

GIBSON: Nora, the law of the United States doesn't recognize any classes—and I don't know why you and I should. We both like Montaigne and Debussy. You've even condescended to laugh with me at times about something funny in the shop. Of course not lately; but you used to. In everything worth anything aren't we really in the same class?

NORA: We are not. We never shall be—and we never were! Even before we were born we weren't! You came into this life with a silver spoon. I was born in a tenement room where five other people lived. My father was a man with a great brain. He never got out of the tenements in his life; he was crushed and kept under; yet he was a well-read man and a magnificent talker; he could talk Marx and Tolstoi supremely. Yet he never even had time to learn English.

GIBSON: I wish you could have heard what *my* father talked for English! Half the time I couldn't understand him myself. He was Scotch.

NORA: Your father wasn't crushed under the capitalistic system as mine was. My father was an intellectual.

Page 10

GIBSON: Mine was a worker. They both landed at Castle Garden, didn't they?

NORA: What of that? Mine remained a thinker and a revolutionist; yours became a capitalist.

GIBSON: No; he got a job—in a piano factory.

NORA: Yes, and took advantage of the capitalistic system to own the factory.

GIBSON: Before he did own it he worked fourteen hours a day for twelve years. That's why he owned it.

NORA: How many hours a day do you work, Mr. Gibson?

GIBSON: I *have* worked twenty-four; sometimes fourteen, sometimes two; usually six.

NORA: In other words, when you want to work.

GIBSON: I've learned to do things my father never learned to do, and it commands a higher return.

NORA: You *take* a higher return!

GIBSON: You mean I don't deserve it?

NORA: Can it be possible that you think you deserve as much as any of these *workers*? You don't so much as touch one of these pianos that bring you your return. I do! I work on them with my hands. Do you think you deserve as much as I?

GIBSON: No; I don't go so far as that.

NORA: Don't talk to me as a woman! My work is pleasant enough now; but what work did I have to do before I got this far? I worked sixteen hours a day, and when I was only a child at that! Twelve hours I was sewing, and four I studied. If my father hadn't known music and taught me a little your capitalistic system would have me sewing twelve hours a day still!

GIBSON: Yes, Nora; when we learn how to do something we get better pay for it.

NORA: We do? Do you really think that? That we get paid for what we do?

GIBSON: Yes; that's what I think.

NORA: Then what do you get paid for? For nothing in the world but owning this factory. You're paid because you're a capitalist!



GIBSON: Is that all?

NORA: Why, look at the state the factory's in! The discontent you saw in those men—that's the fault of the capitalistic system! There aren't twenty workmen in the place that are contented.

GIBSON: You're right about that; and they never will be.

NORA: Not until the system's changed. What are you going to do about it?

GIBSON [*with quiet desperation*]: They've driven me as far as they can. If they walk out I'll walk out. I can stand it if they can.

NORA: You'd close down? Your only solution is to take the bread out of these men's mouths?

GIBSON: If they walk out I'll walk out!

NORA [*trembling*]: You coward!

GIBSON: That's fair?

NORA: You'll let us starve because you haven't the courage to come to the right solution! Don't you mind starving us?

GIBSON: You mean you'd starve if I quit.

NORA [*vehemently*]: No; but because you'd close the factory.

Page 11

GIBSON: Oh, the factory could run if I quit, could it?

NORA: That's the capitalist! They think it's capital that runs the factories!

GIBSON: And I'm the capital, am I?

NORA: What in the world else? [*Touches the piano.*] You think you produce this wealth because you've got your money in it? You pass out a pittance to those who do produce it, and when they ask for more than a pittance you take their tools away from them! If they rebel you set the police on them. That's capital—and that's you, Mr. Gibson!

GIBSON: Nora, you told me not to speak to you as a woman.

NORA: I mean it!

GIBSON: I'm going to disregard it. Couldn't you get your theories out of your mind for a while and make a little room there for me?

NORA: My theories! I haven't any theories! I'm talking about the truth, and the truth is my whole life. I can't find room for anything but the truth.

GIBSON: Couldn't you?

NORA: Ah, that's a man's egoism! With the whole world seething so that its wrongs should fill every mind—yes, and every heart—until they're righted, you ask me—

GIBSON: I think you needn't make it any clearer, Nora; I understand.

NORA [*turning away, agitated*]: I am glad you do.

[The factory door opens to the impetuous arrival of a workingman of extraordinary size and vehemence, RILEY, a truck driver.]

RILEY [*as he opens the door*]: See here, Mr. Gibson, fer the love o' heaven, don't the truck drivers fer this factory git no consideration?

GIBSON: I don't know! What do they want?

RILEY: Look here, Mr. Gibson, man to man, every department in this factory is makin' demands and goin' to walk out if they don't git 'em. Ain't we got no chance fer no demands?

GIBSON: I said: What do you want?

RILEY: Why, we got grievances been hangin' over I don't know how long!

GIBSON: What are they?

RILEY: Why, all them other departments is going to git raises. You don't think fer a minute the truck drivers ain't going to—

GIBSON: How much raise do you want?

RILEY: Sir?

GIBSON: How much raise do you want?

RILEY: I can't jest say right this minute. We jest heard what was goin' on in the other departments, and we ain't had no meetin' to settle just what raise we *are* goin' to git. Now, Mr. Gibson, if I was runnin' this factory—

GIBSON: Well, what would you do?

RILEY: The first thing I'd do, I'd see that the truck drivers didn't have no more discontent than nobody else. What becomes of your freight if you can't run no trucks? You got to look out, Mr. Gibson! It's us got the upper hand.

GIBSON: Go call your meeting and find out what raise you're going to strike for.

RILEY: Yes, sir; I'll do it. [*He goes out quickly.*]

Page 12

NORA: [*amazed and rather gentle*]: Are you going to give them what they want?

GIBSON: No; I only wanted to get rid of him a minute to think—or try to.

NORA [*in a low voice, offended*]: Oh, excuse me! [*She is going out.*]

GIBSON: Stay here! [*He seems to approach a decision—one of desperation and anger. Then he speaks crisply, but more to himself than to NORA.*] All right—they get it! [*Looks up at NORA, gives her a frowning stare of some duration.*] Tell Riley to call off his meeting, please. I want all those spokesmen for the departments here. I'll give them their answer now.

[*NORA looks at him, puzzled, bites her lip, and goes out quickly into the factory. GIBSON'S expression is determined; so is his action. He goes to the wall, brings two chairs, one in each hand, places them at the large table. Repeats this until he has chairs placed at the table on both sides and at the head as if for a directors' meeting. The door opens and SALVATORE, MIFFLIN, CARTER, RILEY, SHOMBERG, FRANKEL, and SIMPSON enter. They come in, speaking together; most of them talking somewhat ominously.*]

CROWD: Well, he better!... We ain't workin' for our health.... My whole department'll walk out!... You bet your life we're goin' to!... He needn't kid himself about our not meaning business!

FRANKEL: Well, Mr. Gibson, we'd like to know what conclusion you come to.

GIBSON: I'm going to tell you. Simpson, please ask Miss Gorodna to step in.

[*SIMPSON merely looks out of the door, and NORA comes in quickly.*]

Carter, take that chair at the head of the table. Frankel, Salvatore, Shomberg, sit there, and there, and there! Riley, sit there. Simpson, there! Miss Gorodna, will you please sit here? [*They take the seats he indicates, but they look puzzled, somewhat perturbed; whisper and murmur to one another.*] Thank you! There! That looks like a directors' tables doesn't it?

SALVATORE: What's this all about?

GIBSON: I want to ask you people if any of you ever knew me to break my word to you?

FRANKEL: Oh, no, Mr. Gibson, we know you never break your agreements!

GIBSON: I want to ask you people: Haven't you found my word as good as my bond?

CARTER: Why, yes, Mr. Gibson.

SIMPSON: Sure! We know you'll do what you say.

GIBSON: Do you all agree to that?

SALVATORE: Soit'nly! You're a gentleman.

RILEY: Sure, we agree to it!

SHOMBERG: Oh, well, prob'ly so.

Page 13

GIBSON: All right! I'm going to do something you don't expect, and I want you to know I mean it. But before I do it I want to tell you something. Probably you won't understand it, but for a long time I had a pride in this factory. Building up The Gibson Upright was really the pride of my life. To do that I knew I had to have a loyal staff of workmen, and for that reason if no other I have given you shorter hours and more pay than the men get in any other factory of this kind that I know of. I've done everything that can be done to make the shops healthy and light and clean. I certainly haven't been unfriendly to you personally. Any man in the factory was free to come in that door to talk to me any time he wanted to. I've done my best and we've been called the model factory. I've done my best but—it isn't enough. It never has been enough. And I've been told it never will be enough [*with a glance at NORA*] until the wage system has been abolished—until capital has been abolished and the parasite destroyed! I say I took a pride in the factory for years! Now I am no longer able to. I can't take a pride in a squabble, and that's all this factory has come to be. And I'll tell you frankly—you men feel you'd like to get rid of me; well, I want to get rid of you. And I intend to!

SHOMBERG [*fiercely*]: You goin' to close this factory down?

GIBSON: No; I'm going to give it to you!

SEVERAL WORKMEN: What!

GIBSON [*emphatically*]: I'm going to give it to you! I turn it over to you, here and now. This property is mine, but the use of it is yours. Don't you understand? You've said yourselves my word is as good as my bond. Well, the factory is yours. I'm going to get away from it. You take it and run it.

[*He gets his hat and coat.*]

SIMPSON: What in thunder does he mean?

SALVATORE: Say, what's the game?

GIBSON: There it is! Take it and run it yourselves, for yourselves. It belongs to every workman in the factory on equal shares. [*Throws keys on table.*] There are the keys of the safe, and the combination's in the top drawer of that desk. It's all yours as it stands, down to the very correspondence on that table, without any let, hindrance, or interference from me.

FRANKEL [*hoarsely*]: Say! He means it!

SALVATORE: All the money ours?

GIBSON: The money for every piano you make and sell is yours—every cent of it.

MIFFLIN [*rising transfigured*]: Gentlemen, a glorious time has come! This is an example to every employer of labour in our land. I thank that power which destined all men to be equal both in service and reward that I should have chanced to be present to see such a splendid band of forward-looking fellows—of brothers, of comrades—come into their own! Let us hope that this great moment but marks the beginning of an epoch when every capitalist and manufacturer shall see the light as Mr. Gibson has just done.

Page 14

As spokesman for these—these men, Mr. Gibson, I would congratulate you for anticipating the inevitable and certain world future! You have done well for yourself to perceive it. I am sure on that account you leave here with their respect. And to you I should think it might be some relief—

GIBSON: Relief? I should think it might! And you can translate that into your nineteen languages and dialects—including the Scandinavian! As for you men—you wouldn't work for me—now see if you can work for yourselves! Good-bye, Miss Gorodna!

[NORA, *who has been looking at him tensely, inclines her head slightly. He opens the door that leads to the street and goes out decisively. There are exclamations from everyone, loud but awed. "Say, look here, look here, look here!"*

"Give it to us!" "Equal shares! Did you hear what he said?"

"Gosh! Is this the end of the world?" "My wife won't believe it!"

MIFFLIN: Gentlemen, this factory comes into the possession of every workman in it on equal terms; each has a like share in the profits. At last the workman owns his tools.

FRANKEL [*suddenly, as if light had just come*]: Gibson's crazy!

MIFFLIN: No, no! He saw the writing on the wall!

NORA [*as if entranced, her eyes to heaven*]: Isn't it wonderful—wonderful!

MIFFLIN [*beaming*]: But we mustn't forget that it entails responsibilities.

NORA: We mustn't forget that.

[*The telephone bell rings. They all turn their heads in silence and look at it, MIFFLIN watching them, benevolently chuckling. The bell rings again.*]

CARTER [*blankly*]: The telephone is ringin'.

MIFFLIN: Well, answer it, answer it!

SIMPSON: Who?

MIFFLIN: Why, you—any of you. It's yours—it's your telephone.

SIMPSON: You answer it, Carter.

[CARTER *goes to the telephone and picks it up in a somewhat gingerly way.*]

CARTER: Hello!... Yes.... Yes, it's The Gibson Upright.... No, he ain't here.... What? Wait a minute. [*Puts his hand over the mouthpiece.*] He wants to know who it is talking.

FRANKEL: My goodness! Can't you tell him it's you?

CARTER: He wouldn't know who that was.

MIFFLIN: Tell him it's one of the owners of the company.

CARTER [*looks at MIFFLIN solemnly; then in a hushed voice*]: It's one of the owners of the company.... Wait a minute; let me get that. "The Central Associated Lumber Companies?" I hear you. Wait a minute. [*Looks round.*] This here company says they want to lower their bid for a couple hundred thousand feet o' lumber to forty-seven dollars a thousand. They say that's a dollar lower than they offered yesterday and a half a dollar lower than they offered this morning—says got to know now.

Page 15

FRANKEL: Says they come *down* to forty-seven, do they?

CARTER: Yes; says so!

SIMPSON: Well, tell 'em that's good; we'll take it.

THE OTHERS: Sure, that's right!... That's a good offer.... Sure, we'll take it!

CARTER [*at the telephone*]: We'll take it. [*Pause.*] You're welcome.

[Puts down the telephone amid general buzz from all the others. They rise somewhat dazedly, but relaxing, beginning to take in their surroundings in the new life.]

SHOMBERG and SIMPSON *shake hands*. FRANKEL goes over and examines the safe. SALVATORE picks up a basket of correspondence from the desk as if it were a strange bug. SHOMBERG opens a drawer in the table. There is a buzz of congratulative, formless talk. They spread over the stage, looking at everything.]

MIFFLIN [*transfigured, his right hand lifted*]: Gentlemen, this is the New Dawn!

ACT II

The yard beside GIBSON'S house. Upon our left is seen the porch or sun-room wing of a good "colonial" house of the present type. A hedge runs across at the back, about five feet high, with a gateway and rustic gate. Beyond is seen a residential suburban quarter, well wooded and with ample shrubberies. A gravelled path leads from the gate to the porch, or sun-room, where are broad steps. Upon the lawn are a white garden bench, a table, and a great green-and-white-striped sun umbrella, with several white garden chairs.

Autumn has come, and the foliage is beginning to turn; but the scene is warm and sunlit.

After a moment a young housemaid brings out a tray with a chocolate pot, wafers, and one cup and saucer and a lace-edged napkin. She places the tray on the table, moves a chair to it, looks at the tray thoughtfully, turns, starts toward the house—when GIBSON comes out. He wears a travelling suit and is bareheaded.

ELLA: The cook thought you might like a cup of chocolate after a long trip like that—just getting off the train and all, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON: Thank you, Ella, I should.

ELLA: I'll bring your mail right out.

[She goes into the house and returns with a packet of letters.]

GIBSON: Thanks, Ella!

ELLA: Everything is there that's come since you sent the telegram not to forward any more.

GIBSON: It's pleasant to find the house and everything just as I left it.

ELLA: My, Mr. Gibson, we pretty near thought you wasn't never coming back. Those June roses in that bed round yonder lasted pretty near up into August this year, Mr. Gibson. For that matter it's such mild weather even yet some say we won't have any fall till Thanksgiving.

GIBSON: Yes, it's extraordinary.



Page 16

ELLA: Shall I leave the tray?

GIBSON: No; you can take it. [*She moves to do so.*] Wait a minute. Here's a letter from John Riley, up at the factory. Don't I remember his son Tom coming here to see you quite a good deal?

ELLA: Yes, sir; Tom's one of the factory truckmen like his father. He still comes to see me quite a good deal, sir. There isn't anything about that in the letter, is there, sir? [*She knows there isn't.*]

GIBSON [*absently*]: No, no! [*With faint irony.*] He only wants to know about where to get a stock of truck parts that had been ordered before I broke connections with the factory. He thinks four months is a long time for them to be on the way and doesn't know where to write.

ELLA: He's a terrible active man, Mr. Riley. Always pushing.

GIBSON: So Tom comes round more than ever, does he?

ELLA [*coyly*]: He does, sir!

GIBSON: I'm not going to lose you, am I, Ella?

ELLA: Well, sir, up to the time of that change in the factory we hadn't expected we could get married for maybe two years yet, but the way things are now—not that I want to leave here, sir—but it does look like going right ahead with the wedding!

GIBSON: Tom feels that prosperous, does he?

ELLA: I guess he *is* prosperous, sir!

GIBSON [*gravely digesting this*]: Well, I suppose I'm glad to hear it.

ELLA: Yes, sir; everybody's glad these days up at the factory, sir. I don't mean about just Tom and me, they're glad.

GIBSON: You mean they're all in a glad condition?

ELLA: Oh, *are* they, sir! Even the Commiskeyes got an automobile last month!

GIBSON: Well, I suppose that's splendid.

ELLA: Didn't you know about it, sir?

GIBSON: No, not a word. I've been pretty deep up in the Maine woods this summer. Have you been over to the factory at all yourself, Ella?



ELLA: Yes, sir; visitors can go round just as they like to. They're glad to have you.

GIBSON: When you've been over there, Ella—you know which one is Miss Gorodna, don't you?

ELLA: Oh, yes, sir! She's one of the best in managing, Miss Gorodna.

GIBSON: You—did you—have you happened to see her?

ELLA: Yes, sir, once or twice.

GIBSON: Did she—ah—did she look overworked?

ELLA: Oh, I shouldn't say so, sir.

GIBSON: She looked well, then?

ELLA: Yes, indeed, sir! Everybody's so happy up there; I don't suppose none of 'em could look happier than she is, sir!

GIBSON: They are all happy, then?

ELLA [*laughing joyfully*]: You never see such times in your life, sir! [*A bell rings in the house.*] I'll answer the bell.

GIBSON: I've finished this, Ella.

ELLA: Yes, sir. [*She takes the tray and goes into the house. GIBSON opens another letter, reads it. ELLA returns.*]

Page 17

ELLA: It's Mr. Mifflin, sir.

GIBSON: All right.

[MIFFLIN, *beaming and bubbling, more radiant than in Act 1, but dressed as then except for a change of tie, comes from the house. He carries his umbrella and hat and the same old magazines and a newspaper.*]

MIFFLIN: Ah, Mr. Gibson, you couldn't stay away any longer!

GIBSON: How de do! Sit down!

MIFFLIN [*effervescing, as they sit*]: It's glorious! I heard from your household you were expected back this Sunday. Now confess! You couldn't stay away! You had to come and watch it!

GIBSON: Well, I've not had to come and watch it for four months. I don't expect to watch it much, now.

MIFFLIN: You don't mean to sit there and tell me you don't know anything about it!

GIBSON: No; I don't know anything about it.

MIFFLIN: Mr. Gibson, you're an extraordinary man!

GIBSON: No, I'm not. What I did was extraordinary, but I was only an ordinary man pushed into a hole.

MIFFLIN: Oh, no; surrendering the factory was merely normal. What's remarkable is your staying away from watching the glorious work these former hireling workmen of your factory are doing, now they've won their industrial freedom. Myself, I've taken rooms near by: I started to do one article; now I have a series. And oh, the glory of watching these comrades with their economic shackles off! Haven't you heard anything of our success?

GIBSON: Only a word from my housemaid.

MIFFLIN [*delightedly, pinning him*]: Aha! There! What did she say? "Only a word"; but what was IT?

GIBSON: It indicated—prosperity.

MIFFLIN: Ah! Immense prosperity, didn't it?

GIBSON: I suppose so. Success, at any rate.

MIFFLIN: Success? It's so magnificent that now it's inevitable for every factory of every kind all over this country.

GIBSON: All over the country?

MIFFLIN: Not only all over this country! The world must do it. Ah, they've done it in a country larger than this already! And these comrades right here are showing our country what it means. I don't begrudge you some credit for having begun it, Mr. Gibson. But you only anticipated what all owners everywhere are going to have to do before the workmen simply *take* the factories. They're going to take them because they have the inherent right; and they're going to take them *now*, either by direct action or by the technical owners, like yourself, seeing the handwriting on the wall.

GIBSON: What do you mean by direct action?

MIFFLIN: Why, just taking them!

GIBSON: By force?

MIFFLIN [*deprecatingly but affably*]: Oh, we hope the theoretical owners won't reduce them to such extremes. There might be a few cases that law-abiding citizens would regret; but that isn't the big thing. Our work here is so far perhaps on the small scale, but it shows—it shows—that everything must be on a coöperative basis!

Page 18

GIBSON: Everything? My house, too?

MIFFLIN [*beaming*]: Your house, too.

GIBSON [*amiably*]: How about your gold eyeglasses?

MIFFLIN [*laughing*]: Those will be given me by the state. But seriously, aren't you coming to pay us a visit at the factory?

GIBSON: Since you ask me—what's the best time? I suppose the whistle doesn't blow as early as it used to.

MIFFLIN [*laughing pityingly*]: Whistle! Oh, my dear sir! This only confirms me in my old idea that the technical owners didn't have practical minds. You don't suppose we abolished you, and then didn't abolish the whistle? That whistle hurt self-respect. Really I'm sorry it's Sunday and I can't take you over there this minute to see the great changes. Talk about collectivism! That factory is the most interesting place in the world to-day. When the men were working eight long hours a day under a master it was all repression, reserve; their individualities were stifled. Now they expand!

GIBSON: You mean they talk a good deal?

MIFFLIN: I never have been in a place where there was so much talk in my life. They talk all the time; it shows they are thinking.

GIBSON: Isn't it noisy?

MIFFLIN [*delighted*]: It is! Every man has his own ideas and he expresses them. It means a freshness and originality in the work that never got into it before.

GIBSON [*worried*]: Originality? You don't mean to say they've changed any of the features of The Gibson Upright.

MIFFLIN: Oh, no; it's the same piano—and yet different! I almost feel I could tell the difference by looking at one. There's no change; yet now it has character. And those men—those men, Mr. Gibson—it's brought out *their* character so! They're thinking all the time.

GIBSON: They're working, too, of course?

MIFFLIN: Working! You never saw men work under the old capitalistic regime, Mr. Gibson! Don't think that this work is the driven, dogged thing it was when they had to. This is work with dignity, with enthusiasm, with spontaneity!

GIBSON [*rising, very thoughtful*]: Well, I ought to hope that it is, of course!

[He walks to and fro a moment, then comes and rests his hands on the back of a chair, looking at MIFFLIN.]

Mr. Mifflin, I went into this with open eyes. I was angry at the time, but I had thought of it often. And when I went out I went out! Now I've kept away and I don't intend to do any prying—as a matter of fact, I'm only back here for two or three days—but I have some natural curiosity, especially about certain particulars.

MIFFLIN: Everything is as open as the sunlight—no capitalistic secret machinations. Ask anything you like!

GIBSON: Well, then, do you happen to know what are the profits for these four months?

Page 19

MIFFLIN: Frankly, that's a detail I don't know. But I do know that everyone is delighted and that the profits have been large.

GIBSON: And no friction among the men?

MIFFLIN: No—I—no, none at all; no friction; nothing that could be called friction at all.

GIBSON: Then it's a complete success?

MIFFLIN: Absolutely! Why, just let me picture it to you, Mr. Gibson. Don't you understand, these men are not hirelings now; they're comrades, a brotherhood! You should see them as they come from the factory in the warm afternoon sunshine. They stop in groups and continue discussions of matters of interest that have come up during the day. You hear the most eager discussion, such spirited repartee; and in the factory itself these groups gather at any time. When there may be some tiny bit of friction it is disposed of amicably, comrade to comrade. And some of the wives of the workmen have taken the greatest interest! Imagine under the capitalistic regime a wife coming and sitting at her husband's side and taking up little matters of importance with him, as a wife should, while he worked! Oh, the wives have caught the idea, too! They're proprietresses just as much as their husbands are proprietors. And you can see how keenly they feel the responsibility and want to share in settling all questions that come up. Then they walk home with their husbands, talking it all over. Mr. Gibson, I tell you, sometimes it has moved me. More than once I have found my eyes moistening as I watched it.

GIBSON: And do you happen to know—well, haven't the men felt the need for a certain kind of general management of the institution's affairs?

MIFFLIN: Oh, that's all met—all met by meetings of the governing board, the committee.

GIBSON: No; I meant, hasn't any need been felt for a man with a certain specialized knowledge? Say, for instance, to deal with the purchasing of raw materials?

MIFFLIN [*somewhat vague and puzzled*]: I think they did do this through an individual for a time. I think the head bookkeeper was given charge of such matters; at least I think so. But probably they found that the creation of such an office was unnecessary. Purely clerical work. At least I haven't seen him about for several weeks.

GIBSON: Was he there on just one share of the profits?

MIFFLIN: Why, of course! That is the *sine qua non*.

GIBSON [*thoughtfully*]: I see. [*Paces up and down and halts again.*]
So you say everybody is happy?

MIFFLIN: Radiant!

GIBSON: Everybody?

MIFFLIN [*beaming*]: Come and see!

GIBSON: Ah—Miss Gorodna seems to like it all, does she?

MIFFLIN: *Does* she!

GIBSON [*a little falsely*]: None of them are happier than she is, I suppose?

MIFFLIN: Miss Gorodna is the radiant, joyous sunshine of the whole place!

Page 20

GIBSON [*somewhat ruefully*]: Well, that's pleasant news.

[*ELLA appears from the house.*]

ELLA: It's that old Ed Carter from the factory, Mr. Gibson. He heard from Tom Riley you was expected back and he's come to call on you.

GIBSON: Tell him to come right out. [*Sees CARTER beyond ELLA.*] Come out here, Carter! Glad to see you!

[*They shake hands. CARTER is unchanged as to head and whiskers, but wears a square-cut black frock coat, or "Prince Albert," with trousers and waistcoat of the same material; old brown shoes, a derby hat, a blue satin four-in-hand tie.*]

CARTER: How do you do, Mr. Gibson! I just thought I'd pay my respects, as Tom Riley passed the word round the factory you was coming back.

GIBSON: Sit down, sit down!

MIFFLIN [*exuberantly*]: How do you do, Carter, how do you do! [*They shake hands and MIFFLIN pats CARTER on the shoulder.*] Look at him, Mr. Gibson! Look at him! Don't you see what the New Freedom has done for him? It's in his eye! That pride of liberty! It's in his step, in every gesture he makes. [*CARTER strokes his whiskers.*] You're old friends—equal now, equal at last. I won't disturb you! [*Picks up his hat, magazines, and umbrella.*] He can give you more than I can, Mr. Gibson. Good afternoon! Good afternoon!

[*He goes out through the gate.*]

GIBSON: Sit down, Carter. Sit down! [*They sit.*] Well, is everything fine?

CARTER [*heartily*]: Yes, sir! It is, Mr. Gibson! Indeed it is! [*Glances with some little pride at his clothes.*] I couldn't of expected no finer. Fact is, I never could of asked for anything like this, even if I'd been a praying man.

GIBSON: Well, I'm glad to hear it, Carter!

CARTER: I knowed you would be, Mr. Gibson. It's all just wonderful the way things are working out!

GIBSON: Everything is working out just right, is it?

CARTER: Oh, I don't say everything! They's bound to be some little mites here and there. You know that yourself.



GIBSON [*grimly*]: Yes, I do! What are *your* little mites, Carter?

CARTER: Well, what mostly gits my goat is this here Simpson's wife, Mrs. Simpson.

GIBSON: What bothers you about Simpson's wife?

CARTER: Well, what I says, woman's place is the home, and this here Mrs. Simpson—I—I never could stand no loud, gabby woman!

GIBSON: You're not neighbours, are you?

CARTER: No! She spends all her days at the factory; you might think she was running the whole place! What's worse'n that, you know they elected me chairman o' the governing committee, and she's all the time trying to 'lectioneer me out. What she wants is to git Simpson in for chairman; that'd be jest same's her bein' chairman herself, the way she runs Simpson! That's the only thing that worries me. Everything else is just splendid, splendid!

Page 21

GIBSON: I understand you don't blow the whistle any more. What hours are you working now?

CARTER: Well, first we thought we ought to work about six; but we got on such a good basis a good many of them are talkin' how they think that's too much. It'd suit me either way. *That* ain't the trouble over at that factory, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON: What is the trouble over at that factory?

CARTER [*with feeling*]: Mr. Gibson, it's the inequality. Look at me now, and look at Simpson. Simpson and his wife haven't got a child, and I got seven, every one of 'em to support, and my married daughter lost her husband and got a shock, and I got her and her three little ones pretty much on my hands. And Simpson draws down every cent as much as what I do; just exactly the same. And if the truth was told he don't work as much as what I do. Then, look at them bachelors; they ain't got *nobody* to support! Well, that's got to be settled!

GIBSON: How are you going to settle it?

CARTER [*cheerfully*]: Oh, the committee meetin' settles everything by vote. I'd of put a motion about these matters at some o' the meetings long ago except I'm chairman and they worked a rule on me the chairman can't put motions. But some of us got it fixed up to git it put over at the meeting to-morrow. That's the *big* meeting to-morrow—the monthly one. Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Gibson; I ain't makin' no complaint about these here details, because everything else is so splendid and prosperous it seems like this here New Dawn Mr. Mifflin called it in his article.

GIBSON: Nothing else worries you then, Carter?

CARTER: Nothing else in the world, Mr. Gibson. Except there might be some of 'em don't take their responsibilities the way I could wish. Fact is, there's so much talkin' gits to goin' over there sometimes you can't hear yourself work. Me? I'm an honest worker, if I work for you or work for myself. But I can't claim they're all that way. Some that used to loaf, you can't claim they don't loaf more than they did; yes, sir!

GIBSON: They get just the same as you do, though, don't they?

CARTER: Oh, yes! That's the *sinee que none*; it's the brotherhood between comrades. I don't mean to complain, but they's one thing that don't look to me just fair. It took me four years to learn my trade and I'm a skilled workman, and now some Hunnyacks that just sends strips along through a chute—and it's all they do know how to do—they used to git two and a half a day to my six, but this way we both git just the same. I says something about it didn't seem right to me, and one them Hunnyacks called me a boor-jaw. Well, then I talked to Miss Gorodna about it.



GIBSON: What did Miss Gorodna say?

CARTER: Miss Gorodna says: "But you both get enough, don't you?"

GIBSON: Well, don't you?

CARTER [*scratching his head*]: Yes, plenty; and it *sounds* all right, them and me gittin' the same; but I can't just seem to work it out in my mind how it *is* right. [*Cheering up.*] Mr. Mifflin says himself, though, it's just wonderful! And we certainly are makin' great money!

Page 22

GIBSON: Then all you poor are getting rich?

CARTER: Yes; looks like we will be.

[During these speeches NORA has appeared, or rather her head and shoulders have, above the hedge. She has come along the hedge and now stands halting at the gate. She wears a becoming autumn dress and hat, in excellent taste; carries a slim umbrella. She has a beautifully bound book in her hand.]

NORA *[opening the gate]*: Do you mind my coming in the side gate, Mr. Gibson?

[GIBSON, startled by her voice, turns abruptly from CARTER to stare at her, speaks after a pause, slowly.]

GIBSON: No, I don't mind what gate you come in.

NORA *[coming down to join them]*: How do you do! *[Gives him her hand.]*

GIBSON: How do you do!

CARTER *[on the other side of her]*: How do you do, Miss Gorodna!

NORA *[for a brief moment confused that she has not noticed Carter]*: Oh—oh, how do you do, Mr. Carter! *[Turns and shakes hands with him. She turns again, facing GIBSON.]* I just heard you were here. I wanted to bring you this copy of Montaigne—if you'll forgive me for keeping it a year.

GIBSON: I gave it to you. Don't you—remember?

NORA: Yes, I—remember. But things were different then. Please. I think I oughtn't to keep it now. *[He takes it, places it gently upon the table; they sit facing each other; she speaks more cheerfully and briskly.]* I came to see you on a matter of business, too.

CARTER: Well, then, I'll just be—

NORA: Oh, no! Please stay, Mr. Carter! It's a factory matter. *[CARTER coughs and sits. NORA continues, not pausing for that.]* It was about that great stock of wire you had your purchasing agent buy just before the—before you went away, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON: I'm glad to see you looking so well, Miss Gorodna.

NORA: Thank you! If you remember, you must have ordered him to buy all the wire of our grade that was in the market at that time. At any rate, we found ourselves in possession of an enormous stock that would have lasted us about three years.

GIBSON: Yes. That's what I wanted.

NORA: As it happened it turned out to be a very good investment, Mr. Gibson, because in less than a month it had gained about nine per cent. in value, and three weeks ago a man came to us and offered to take it off our hands at a price giving us a twenty-two per cent. profit!

GIBSON: Yes; I should think he would.

NORA: So of course we sold it.

GIBSON [*checks an exclamation, merely saying*]: Did you?

NORA: Naturally we did! Twenty-two per cent. profit in that short time! Now it just happens that we've got to buy some more ourselves, and we can't get hold of any, even at the price that we sold it, because it seems to have kept going up. I thought perhaps you might know where to get some at the price you bought the other, and you mightn't mind telling us.

Page 23

GIBSON: No; I wouldn't mind telling you. I'd like to tell you.

NORA: You think there isn't any?

GIBSON: I'm sure there isn't any.

NORA: Then I'm afraid we'll have to get some back from the people we sold to. Of course I'm anxious to show the great financial improvement as well as other improvements. That's partly my province and Mr. Carter's, our committee chairman, besides our regular work.

GIBSON: Mr. Mifflin tells me that you had a sort of general manager for a while at first.

CARTER: Oh, that was Hill, the head bookkeeper. He left. He was a traitor to the comrades.

GIBSON: Hill? He knew quite a little about the business. Why did he leave?

CARTER: Why, that Coles-Hibbard factory went and offered him a big salary to come over there; more than he thought he could get cooeperatin' with us.

NORA: Hill was always a capitalist at heart. We certainly haven't needed him!

CARTER: Oh, everybody was glad to get rid of Hill! Better off without him—better off without him!

GIBSON: I suppose it was really an economy, his going?

NORA [*smiling*]: It resulted in economy.

GIBSON: Have you made many economies?

NORA: Oh, a great many!

CARTER: Oh, my! Yes!

NORA: Economies! [*Her manner now is indulgent, amused, friendly, almost pitying.*] Mr. Gibson, have you any realization of what you threw away at that place? Don't be afraid, I'll never bring you the figures. I wouldn't do such a thing to anybody!

GIBSON: Do you think I was too lavish?

NORA: We couldn't believe it at first. Just what was being thrown away on advertising, for instance. The bill you paid for the last month you were there was five thousand dollars!

CARTER: That was the figger! It's certainly a good one on you, Mr. Gibson.

NORA: We cut that five thousand dollars down to *three hundred*! That was one item of forty-seven hundred dollars a month saved. Just one item!

CARTER [*hilariously*]: Quite some item!

NORA [*seriously and gently*]: Five thousand dollars a month to advertise a piano that sells for only a hundred and eighty-eight dollars!

CARTER: That's the facts!

NORA: Mr. Gibson, did you really ever have any idea what you were paying in commissions to agents?

GIBSON: Yes, I did.

NORA: Why, I can't believe it! Did you know that you paid them twenty per cent. on each piano? Over thirty-seven dollars!

GIBSON: Yes.

NORA: But wasn't it thrown away? I can't understand how you kept the factory going so long as you did, with such losses. Why, don't you know it amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars a year? When we found it out we couldn't see how you made both ends meet, and we thought there must have been some mistake, and you'd never realized what advantage these agents were taking of you.

Page 24

GIBSON: Yes, I knew what they got.

NORA [*triumphantly*]: We cut those commissions from thirty-seven dollars—to *twelve*! And that's just one more item among our economies. Now do you wonder at the success we're making?

GIBSON: And your profits have been—satisfactory?

NORA: The very first month our profits were *four thousand dollars* more than the last month you were there!

GIBSON: That's the month you say you cut out four thousand seven hundred dollars' worth of advertising.

NORA: And the next month we cut down the commissions, and the profits were *five* thousand more!

GIBSON: But those were returns under the old commissions.

NORA: But last month, with new economies, we showed a larger profit than you had!

GIBSON: And this month?

NORA: We shan't know that until the report's read at the meeting to-morrow. I think it will be the largest profit of all.

CARTER: That bookkeeper's workin' on it to-day. Talked like he was going to cut us down two or three thousand, mebbe. [*Laughing.*] That's the way he always talks.

NORA: He isn't a good influence.

CARTER: No—too gloomy, too gloomy to suit me!

GIBSON: What about the two other bookkeepers?

CARTER: The committee voted them into the packing department; and they ain't much good even there. It's a crime!

NORA: They weren't needed. Our bookkeeping is so simplified since you left!

GIBSON: It all seems to be simplified, Miss Gorodna.

NORA: Yes; and whatever problems come up, they're all settled at our meetings.



[A sound of squabbling is heard upon the street, growing louder as the people engaging in it approach along the sidewalk.]

CARTER: There's one we got to bring up and do something about at the meetin' to-morrow.

GIBSON: What is it? *[CARTER goes up to the gate.]*

NORA: It's that Mrs. Simpson; she's a great nuisance.

CARTER: Yes, it's her and Simpson and Frankel. The Simpsons moved into a flat right up in this neighbourhood. Quite some of the comrades live up round here now.

[FRANKEL and MRS. SIMPSON are heard disputing as they approach: "Well, what you goin' to do about it!" "I'll show you what we're goin' to do about it!" "You can't do nothing!" "You wait till to-morrow and see." "I got my rights, ain't I?" and so on.]

SIMPSON *[heard remonstrating]*: Now, Mamie, Mamie! Frankel, you oughtn't to talk to Mamie that way.

[GIBSON, interested and amused, goes part way up to the hedge. NORA is somewhat mortified as the disputants reach the gate. GIBSON speaks to them.]

GIBSON: How do you do, Simpson! How do you do, Mrs. Simpson! How do you do, Frankel! Won't you come in and argue here?

Page 25

MRS. SIMPSON: Wha'd you say, Mr. Gibson?

GIBSON: I said come in; come in!

SIMPSON [*uncertainly*]: Well, I don't know.

GIBSON: Come in! Nobody here but friends of yours. Sit down. I'd like to hear what the argument was about.

[MRS. SIMPSON *is a large woman, domineering and noisy, dressed somewhat expensively. She is proud of some new furs and a pair of quite fancy shoes. SIMPSON has a new suit of clothes and a gold-headed cane.*

FRANKEL *wears a cheap cutaway suit and is smoking a cigar.*]

MRS. SIMPSON: I don't care who hears the argument! Right's right and wrong's wrong!

FRANKEL: You bet right's right, and so's my rights right!

MRS. SIMPSON: You ain't got any rights.

FRANKEL [*hotly to everybody*]: Do you hear she says I ain't got no rights at all?

MRS. SIMPSON: You ain't got the rights you claim you got.

FRANKEL: She comes down there and tries to run the whole factory. Ask any of 'em if she don't. Ask Carter!

MRS. SIMPSON: I own that factory just as much as anybody does.

SIMPSON: Now, Frankel, you be careful what you say to Mamie!

FRANKEL: I got shares in that factory and by rights ought to have as many votes at the meetin' as I got shares—let alone your talking about trying to root me out of my profits!

GIBSON: What's this about Frankel having shares?

FRANKEL [*violently*]: You bet your life I got shares! And I'm going to have my shares of the money at that meetin' to-morrow!

MRS. SIMPSON: You bet your life you ain't!

SIMPSON: You think we're goin' to vote all our profits away to you?

CARTER: Wait a minute! Ain't I the chairman of that—

MRS. SIMPSON: You may be chairman yet—but not long!

FRANKEL [*sharply to CARTER*]: You just try to rule me out once!

GIBSON: What's it all about?

MRS. SIMPSON: I'll soon enough tell anybody what it's about!

FRANKEL: You couldn't tell nothing straight!

CARTER [*deprecatingly*]: Now, now, this here's just one of our little side difficulties, you might say. What's the use to git huffy over it, we're gittin' along so well and all? The trouble is, some o' the men and their families ain't been used to so much prosperity and money in the house that way, all of a sudden. Of course some of 'em got to living too high and run into some debt and everything.

FRANKEL: Well, what business is that of yours? The factory ain't a Home, is it? And you ain't the Matron, are you?

CARTER: I don't claim such!

FRANKEL: It's my business, ain't it, if I take and live on the cheaps and put by for a rainy day, and happen to have money when other people need it from me?

SIMPSON: *That* much may be your business, but I reckon it was our business when you come blowin' round the factory, first that you owned seven shares besides your own; then, a week after, you says seventeen; then—

Page 26

GIBSON: Well, how many shares has he got?

SIMPSON: He was claimin' twenty-four yesterday.

MRS. SIMPSON [*violently*]: He's bought two more since last night. Now he claims twenty-six!

FRANKEL: Yes; and I *own* twenty-six!

CARTER: That ain't never goin' to do! I don't say it's a condition as you might say we exactly see how to handle right now, but the way it is, you certainly got us all disturbed up and hard to git at the rights of it. You claimin' all them shares—

FRANKEL: Well, my goodness, you git the *work* fer them shares, don't you? What you yelpin' about?

CARTER: I don't say we don't git the same amount o' work, but—

FRANKEL: Well, *how* you git it, that's my lookout, ain't it, so it's done?

CARTER: But you claim you got a right to draw out twenty-six profits!

FRANKEL: Sure I do when I furnish the labour for twenty-six. Am I crazy?

CARTER: But that way you're makin' more than any ten men put together in the whole factory!

FRANKEL: Ain't it just? What you goin' to do about it?

[During this speech SHOMBERG has come along the street and stands looking over the gate.]

CARTER: Well, so fur, we ain't been able to see how to argue with you. It don't look right, and yet it's hard to find jest what to say to you.

FRANKEL: You bet it is!

CARTER: 'Course, that's one of the points that's got to be settled at the meeting to-morrow.

FRANKEL: You bet it'll be settled!

MRS. SIMPSON: If we had another kind of a chairman it'd been settled long ago, and settled right!

CARTER: Now look here, Mrs. Simpson—

FRANKEL [*passionately*]: I got twenty-six shares, and I earned 'em, too! [*To GIBSON.*] Look at the trouble they make me—to git my legal rights, let alone the rest the trouble I got! [*Fiercely to CARTER and to SIMPSON*]: Yes, I had twenty-four shares yesterday and I got twenty-six to-day! and I might have another by to-night. Don't think I'm the only one that's got sense enough not to go smearin' his money all round on cheap limousines and Queen Anne dinin'-room sets at eighty-nine dollars per! [*Dramatically pointing at SHOMBERG*]: There's a man worth four shares right now! He had three and he bought Mitchell's out last night at Steinwitz's pool room. Ask him whether he thinks I got a right to my twenty-six profits or not!

SHOMBERG: You bet your life!

MRS. SIMPSON: I guess that Dutchman hasn't got the say-so, has he?

FRANKEL: No. *You* run the factory now, Mrs. Simpson!

CARTER: Now look here; this ain't very much like comrades, is it, all this arguin'? Sunday, too!

FRANKEL: Oh, I'm tryin' to be friendly!

CARTER [*to GIBSON*]: This buyin' of shares and all has kind of introduced a sort of an undesirable element into the factory, you might say. That's kind of the bothersome side of it, and it can't be denied we would have quite a good deal of bothersomeness if it wasn't for our meeting.

Page 27

NORA [*to everybody except GIBSON*]: Don't you all think that these arguments are pretty foolish when you know that nothing can be settled except at the governing committee's meeting?

SIMPSON: That's so, Miss Gorodna. What's more, it don't look like as good comrades as it ought to. I don't want to have no trouble with Frankel. He might have the rights of it for all I know. Anyways, if he hasn't I ain't got the brains to make out the case against him, and anyways, as you say, the meetin' settles all them things.

NORA: Don't you think you and Frankel might shake hands now, like good comrades?

FRANKEL [*with hostility*]: Sure, I'll shake hands with him!

SIMPSON: Well, I just as soon.

MRS. SIMPSON: Don't you do it, Henry!

SIMPSON: Well, but he's a comrade.

MRS. SIMPSON: Well, you can't help that! You don't have to shake hands with him.

SIMPSON: Well, consider it done, Frankel. Consider it done!

CARTER: That's right, that's right! We can leave it to the meeting.

SHOMBERG: You bet you can! You goin' my way, Frankel?

[FRANKEL, *joining him, speaks to* MRS. SIMPSON.]

FRANKEL: I s'pose you're going to come to the meetin', Mrs. Simpson?

MRS. SIMPSON: Ain't my place where my husband is?

FRANKEL: Well, you don't git no vote!

MRS. SIMPSON: There's goin' to be a motion introduced for the wives *to* vote.

FRANKEL: Watch it pass! Good-bye, Mr. Gibson!

[GIBSON *nods*. FRANKEL *goes away with* SHOMBERG.]

SIMPSON: Good-bye, Mr. Gibson! All this don't amount to much. It'll all be settled to-morrow.

MRS. SIMPSON: Good-bye, Mr. Gibson! [*And as they go out the gate*]: You bet your life it'll be settled! If that wall-eyed runt thinks he can walk over *me*—



CARTER [*looking after them, laughing*]: Well, she's an awful interfering woman! And she ain't the only one. If they'd all stay home like my wife things would be smoother, I guess. Still, they're smooth enough. [*Going*]: If you want to see that, Mr. Gibson, we'll be glad to have you look in at the meeting. You're always welcome at the factory and it'd be a treat to you to see how things work out. It's at eleven o'clock if you'd like to come.

GIBSON: Thanks, Carter.

CARTER: Well, good afternoon, Mr. Gibson and Miss Gorodna. Good evening, I should say, I reckon.

GIBSON: Good evening, Carter.

[*The light has grown to be of sunset. CARTER goes.*]

NORA [*going toward the gate*]: I'm glad to see you looking so well. Good evening!

GIBSON: Oh, just a minute more.

NORA: Well?

GIBSON: It looks as if that might be a lively meeting to-morrow.

NORA: Is that the old capitalistic sneer?



Page 28

GIBSON: Indeed it's not! It only seemed to me from what we've just heard here—

NORA [*bitterly*]: Oh, I suppose all business men's meetings and arguments, when their interests happen to clash, are angelically sweet and amiable! Because you see that my comrades are human and have their human differences—

GIBSON: Nora, don't be angry.

NORA: I'll try not. Of *course* it isn't all a bed of roses! Of *course* things don't run like oiled machinery!

GIBSON: But they do run?

NORA: It's magnificent!

GIBSON: Do you want me to come to that meeting to-morrow?

NORA: Yes; I'd like you to see how reasonable people settle their differences when they have an absolutely equal and common interest.

GIBSON [*in a low voice*]: Aren't you ever tired?

[For a moment she has looked weary. She instantly braces up and answers with spirit.]

NORA: Tired of living out my ideals?

GIBSON: No; I just mean tired of working. Wouldn't you rather stop and come here and live in this quiet house?

NORA [*incredulously*]: I?

GIBSON: Couldn't there even be a chance of it, Nora? That you'd marry me?

NORA [*amazed and indignant*]: A chance that I would—

GIBSON: Well, then, wouldn't you even be willing to leave it to the meeting to-morrow?

[Already in motion she gives him a look of terror and intense negation.]

NORA: Oh! [*She runs from the gateway.*]

ACT III

The scene is the same as the first, the factory office—with a difference. It is now littered and disorderly. Files have been taken from the cases and left heaped upon the large table and upon chairs. Piles of mail are on the desk and upon the table. The safe is open, showing papers in disorder and hanging from the compartments. Hanging upon the walls, variously, are suits of old overalls and men's coats and, hats. The chairs stand irregularly about the large table; a couple of old soft hats are on the water filter. The former posters have been replaced by two new ones. One shows a brawny workman with whiskers, paper cap, and large sledge hammer leaning upon an upright piano. Rubrics: "The Freedom and Fraternity Coooperative Upright." "The Piano You Ought to Support." The other poster shows a workman with a banner upon which is printed: "No Capital! The Freedom and Fraternity Coooperative Upright The Only Piano Produced by Toilers Not Ground by Capital. Buy One to Help the Cause!"

NORA is busily engaged at GIBSON'S desk. Her hat and jacket hang on the wall.

Page 29

CARTER *enters, smoking a pipe; he wears overalls and jumper. He carries a heavy roll of typewritten sheets. Tosses this upon the table, glances at NORA, who does not notice him, divests himself of overalls and jumper, and puts on the black frock coat which he wore in Act II. He looks at his watch and at the clock on the wall.*

CARTER [*straightening out his coat*]: I thought it might look better to get on my Sunday clothes for the meeting, as you might say, Miss Gorodna. Being as I'm chairman it might look more dignified; kind o' help give a kind of authority, maybe.

NORA [*absently, not looking up*]: Yes.

CARTER [*looking at his watch and at the clock again*]: It ought to be wound up for meetings. [*He steps upon a chair; moves the hands of clock.*] There, doggone it, the key's lost! I believe Mrs. Simpson took that key for their own clock. [*He goes to the table; sits, unrolls the typewritten sheets, puts on his spectacles, and studies the sheets in a kind of misery, roughing his hair badly and making sounds of moaning.*] Miss Gorodna, can you make this figure out here for me? Does that mean profits—or what?

NORA: Oh, no; that's only an amount carried over.

CARTER: They's so many little puzzlin' things in this bookkeeper's report. I don't believe he understands it himself. I don't see how he expects me to read that to the meeting. Some parts I can't make head or tail of. Others it looks like he's got the words jest changed round.

NORA: Oh, we'll work it all out at the meeting, Mr. Carter!

CARTER: My, we got a lot to work out at this meeting.

NORA: We'll do it, comrade!

CARTER [*cheering up*]: Sure! Sure we will! It's wonderful what a meeting does; I'm always forgettin' all we got to do is vote and then the trouble's over.

[Instantly upon this a loud squabbling and women's voices are heard outside, in the factory.]

NORA [*troubled*]: I was afraid this would happen. Of course after Mrs. Simpson came other wives were bound to.

CARTER [*uneasily moving toward the door to the street*]: Well, I guess I better—

[The door into the factory is flung open by MRS. SIMPSON, in a state of fury. Another woman's voice is heard for a moment, shouting: "Old Cat! Old She-Cat! Wants to be a Tom-Cat!"]

MRS. SIMPSON: See here, Carter, if you still pretend to be chairman you come out here and keep order!

CARTER: Now, Mrs. Simpson, you better go on home!

MRS. SIMPSON [*raging*]: *Me!* My place is right here, but I'm not going to stand this Commiskey woman's insults! She come down here this morning with her husband and started right in to *run* this factory. My heavens! Ain't she got five children at home? As long as you still pretend to be chairman I demand you come out and tell this woman to go about her business.

Page 30

SHREWISH VOICE: *It is my business!*

MRS. SIMPSON: I'll show you! I was here first; everything was going all right. Carter, are you going to come out here and do your duty like I said?

CARTER [*attempting sternness and failing*]: You shut that door! I got to get this report in order before the meeting. I'm not comin'.

MRS. SIMPSON: Then I won't be responsible for what happens! She ain't the only one. Mrs. Shomberg is out here messin' things up, too. If you won't do your duty there'll be direct action took here! [*She goes out violently.*]

CARTER: That's got to come up in meeting. It certainly has. These here wives! For example, my wife's an awful quiet woman, but you s'pose she's goin' to stand it when she hears about all these others? I'd like to keep her at home.

NORA: I just wonder—

CARTER: What was you wondering, Miss Gorodna?

NORA: Well, if that's something the meeting can settle?

CARTER [*doggedly*]: Well, it's got to vote on it.

NORA: We did vote on Mrs. Simpson last meeting.

CARTER: Well, we got to vote on her and all the rest of 'em this time.

NORA: It didn't seem to settle Mrs. Simpson, did it?

CARTER: Well, it hadn't got so bad then. Now it's got to be settled! We got to git everything fixed up now.

[*A frightful dispute is heard in numerous male voices; some speaking Italian, some Yiddish, and some broken English. This grows louder as FRANKEL rushes in, throwing the door shut behind him and leaning against it, wiping his forehead.*]

FRANKEL: Life ain't worth livin'! Life ain't worth livin'!

CARTER: Serves you right, Frankel!

[*At the filter FRANKEL pours water from the glass upon a dirty handkerchief and passes the handkerchief over his forehead.*]

FRANKEL: I got to git some peace! I got to collect myself.



CARTER: That shows you ain't got no rights like you claimed. You can't control your labour element.

FRANKEL [*bitterly*]: I'll control 'em all right! I'll show 'em who's their master!

[A man's head with shaggy hair and ragged whiskers is thrust in at the factory door. This is POLENSKI.]

POLENSKI [*ferociously*]: Are you goin' to come out here like a man?

FRANKEL: You *bet* I'm comin' out there, Polenski! I'll show you who's the man here! You Hunnyacks try to browbeat me!

[As he goes out, babbling fiercely, the howls of a Roman mob are heard greeting him.]

CARTER: I don't feel no sympathy with him.

NORA: No; I should think not!

Page 31

[A more distant outbreak of the mob is heard, brief but fierce, and just a moment before it ceases MIFFLIN enters, beaming. He is dressed as usual, with his umbrella and the same old magazines and newspapers under his arm.]

MIFFLIN: Everything is lovely! How do you do, Miss Gorodna! Carter, old fellow! It's a great morning, a great morning! Mr. Gibson drove me down in his car. It's wonderful to feel the inspiration it's going to be for an ex-capitalist to see this place and its harmony. My phrase for it is "harmonized industry." It will mark an epoch for him.

[GIBSON comes in. MIFFLIN greets him.]

MIFFLIN: Ah, Mr. Gibson! You'll see a difference! You'll see a difference!

GIBSON: Yes, I do. Good morning, Miss Gorodna!

NORA *[just barely looking round]*: Good morning, Mr. Gibson.

MIFFLIN: I was just saying what an inspiration it's going to be for you to see what we're doing down here. *[Pats CARTER'S shoulder.]* These noble fellows are teaching us intellectuals a lesson. I keep going among them; what they're doing here keeps flowing into me. You'll get it, Mr. Gibson. You'll get it, too!

[Beamingly he goes out into the factory.]

CARTER *[cordially]*: Take a chair, Mr. Gibson. Make yourself right at home!

GIBSON: Thanks!

[He makes a grave tour of inspection of the place, his expression noncommittal; goes about casually without making a point of it; he writes his initials in the dust on a filing case. He turns and looks at NORA thoughtfully; she has not seemed to notice him.]

Do you think I will, Miss Gorodna?

NORA *[not looking up]*: Do I think you will what?

GIBSON: That I'll get what Mifflin meant? That it will be an inspiration to me to see this meeting?

NORA: I don't know what will be an inspiration to you.

GIBSON: I know one thing that is—a brave woman!

[The only sign she gives is that her head bends over her work just a little more.]

Carter, do you think this meeting is going to be an inspiration to me?

CARTER: Well, Mr. Gibson, since the time you give up our rights to us, as Mr. Mifflin says, we're an inspiration to the whole world. All the time! Yes, sir; and we *would* be, too, if we could jest git these dog-goned inequalities straightened out. We got this Frankel trouble on our hands, and them wives, and one thing and another, though they ain't botherin' me so much as my own rights. But they're goin' to git brought up in the meeting. You'll see!

GIBSON: Is the safe usually kept open?

CARTER [*heartily*]: Why, yes, sir; open to each and all alike.

GIBSON: Oh, yes, of course! Seems to be some business mail left over here.

Page 32

CARTER: Oh, yes. But you'll find every one of 'em's been opened; we never miss opening a letter. You see they's checks in some of 'em.

GIBSON: I see. Then everything is running right along, is it, Carter?

CARTER: Oh, sure! Right along, right along!

[The uproar breaks out again. FRANKEL bursts in, wiping his forehead as before. He hurries to the water filter for more water.]

FRANKEL: By golly! The bloodsuckers! They want my life! They don't get it! Hello, Mr. Gibson! Well, I am pleased to see you! Say, Mr. Gibson, lemme say something to you. Look here a minute. *[He draws GIBSON aside.]*

GIBSON: What is it, Frankel?

FRANKEL *[hastily, in a low voice]*: Mr. Gibson, keep it under your hat, but I got a pretty good interest in this factory right now. What date I'm goin' to own it I won't say. But what I want to put up to you: How much would you ask me to manage it for me?

GIBSON: What?

FRANKEL: I wouldn't be no piker; when it comes to your salary you could pretty near set it yourself.

GIBSON: I'm afraid I've already had an offer that would keep me from accepting, Frankel.

FRANKEL: When the time comes I'll git a manager somewhere; no place like this can't run itself; I seen that much.

GIBSON: Even if I didn't have an offer, Frankel, I doubt if I'd accept yours. You know I used to have some little trouble here.

FRANKEL: You got my sympathy now! I got troubles myself here. *[Hastily drinks another glass of water.]* Well, where's that meeting? They're late, ain't they?

CARTER: If they are it's your fault. Them wops of yours won't hardly let a body git by out yonder.

[SALVATORE and SHOMBERG come in from the factory, SALVATORE pausing in the doorway to shout in the direction of an audible disturbance in the distance.]



SALVATORE: Oh, shut up; you'll git your pay!

[Following SALVATORE come SIMPSON and his wife and RILEY. They all speak rather casually but not uncordially to GIBSON. MIFFLIN is with them, his hand on SIMPSON'S shoulder. The outbreak outside subsides in favour of a speech of extreme violence in a foreign language. Italian, Yiddish, or whatever it is, it seems most passionate, and by a good orator. It continues to be heard as the members of the committee take their seats at the big table. MIFFLIN beams and nods at GIBSON; and takes his seat with the committee.]

SHOMBERG [*hotly, to MRS. SIMPSON*]: Here, you ain't a member of this committee! Git her chair away from her there, Salvatore! She's got no right here!

MRS. SIMPSON: Oh, I haven't?

SHOMBERG: Already twice this morning I got hell from my own wife the way this woman treats her tryin' to chase her out the factory. You think you're on this committee?



Page 33

MRS. SIMPSON [*taking a chair triumphantly*]: My husband is. I was here last time, and I'm goin' to keep on.

CARTER [*referring to the speech in the factory*]: My goodness! We can't do no work.

RILEY: Frankel, that's your business to shut 'em up.

FRANKEL: Talkin' ain't doin' no harm. Let 'em talk.

RILEY: Yes, I will! [*Goes to the door, and roars*]: Cut that out! I mean business! [*Shuts the door and returns angrily to his seat.*]

CARTER [*rapping on the table with a ruler*]: The meeting will now come to order! Minutes of the last meeting will now be read by the secretary.

MIFFLIN [*to GIBSON, beaming*]: You see?

NORA [*rising, minute book in hand*]: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Carter, Monday, the—

SALVATORE: Aw, say!

FRANKEL: I object!

SIMPSON: What's the use readin' all that? It's only about what we done at the last meeting.

SALVATORE: We know that ourselves, don't we?

SHOMBERG: What'd be the use? What'd be the use?

RILEY: All we done was divide up the money.

SALVATORE: Cut it out, cut it out! Let's get to that!

CARTER: All right, then. I move—

MRS. SIMPSON [*shrilly*]: You can't move. The chairman can't move. If you want to move you better resign!

CARTER: Well, then, somebody ought to move—

MRS. SIMPSON: Cut out the moving. She don't *haf* to read 'em, does she?

CARTER: All right, then. Don't read 'em, Miss Gorodna.

SALVATORE: Well, git some kind of a move on.

CARTER: I was thinkin'—

NORA [*prompting*]: The next order—

CARTER: What?

NORA: The next order of business—

CARTER: Oh, yes! The next order of business—

NORA: Is reports of committees.

CARTER [*in a loud, confident voice*]: The next order of business is reports of committees. [*Takes up some papers and goes on promptly.*] The first committee I will report on is my committee. I will state it is very difficult reading, because consisting of figures written by the bookkeeper, and pretty hard to make head or tail of, but—

MRS. SIMPSON: Oh, here, say! We got important things to come up here! 'Fore we know how much we're goin' to divide amongst us we got to settle at once for all and for the last time how it's goin' to be divided and how much each family gets.

SALVATORE: *Family?*

CARTER AND SHOMBERG [*together*]: Yes—family!

RILEY: You bet—family!

CARTER: Yes, sir!

SIMPSON: You *bet* we'll settle how it's goin' to be divided!

SALVATORE: Why, even, of course; just like it has been. Ain't that the principle we struggled for all these years, comrades?

Page 34

MRS. SIMPSON: Well, it's not goin' to be divided even no longer.

SALVATORE [*violently*]: Yes, it is!

SIMPSON AND CARTER [*hotly*]: It is not!

SALVATORE: You bet your life it is!

SHOMBERG: I'd sooner wring your neck, you sporty Dago!

SALVATORE: Now look here, comrade—

SHOMBERG: Comrade! Who you callin' comrade? Don't you comrade me!

MRS. SIMPSON: You dirty little Dago! You got no wife to support! Livin' a bachelor life of the worst kind, you think you'll draw down as much as my man does?

SALVATORE [*fiercely*]: Simpson, I don't want to hit no lady, but if—

SIMPSON [*roaring*]: Just you try it!

MIFFLIN [*rising in his place, still beaming, and tapping on the table with his fountain pen*]: Gentlemen, gentlemen! This is all healthy! It's a wholesome sign, and I like to see these little arguments. It shows you are thinking. But, of course, it has always been understood that in any such system of ideal brotherhood as we have here we, of course, cling to the equal distribution of all our labours. We—

SALVATORE [*fiercely*]: We? How do you git in this? Where do you git this we stuff?

FRANKEL: Yes; what you mean—we?

SALVATORE: *You* ain't goin' to edge in here. Your kind's done that other places. Some soft-handed guy that never done a day's work in his life but write and make speeches, works in and gits workingmen to elect him at the top and then runs 'em just the same as any capitalist.

MIFFLIN [*mildly protesting*]: Oh, but you mustn't—

SALVATORE [*sullenly*]: That's all right; I read the news from Russia!

MIFFLIN [*firmly beaming*]: But I was upholding your contention for an equal distribution.

SALVATORE [*much surprised and mollified*]: Oh, that's all right then; I didn't git you!

MIFFLIN: Right comrade! I'm always for the under dog.

SHOMBERG: Call *him* an under dog! He's a loafer and don't know a trade!

RILEY: He was gettin' three and a half a day, and now he draws what I do!

MRS. SIMPSON [*attacking* RILEY *fiercely*]: Yes, and you're gettin' as much as my husband is, and your wife left you seven years ago and you livin' on the fat of the land; Steinwitz's pool parlour every night till all hours!

SHOMBERG [*attacking her*]: Yes, and you and your husband ain't got no children; we got four. I'd like to know what right you got to draw down what we do—you with your limousine!

CARTER: What business you got to talk, Shomberg? When here's me with my seven and the three of my married daughter—eleven in all, I got on my shoulders. Do you think you're goin' to draw down what *I'd* ought to?

ALL [*shouting*]: "Here! We got rights, ain't we?" "Where's the justice of it?" "I stand by my rights." "Nobody's goin' to git 'em away from me." "I bet I git *my* share." "Oh, dry up!" "You make me laugh!" And so on.

Page 35

RILEY [*standing up and pounding the table, roaring till they are forced to listen*]: You ain't any of you got the rights of it! The rights of it is—Who does the most work gets the most money. Look at me on that truck!

CARTER [*pounding on the table with a ruler*]: You set down, Riley! The rights of it ain't who does the most work; but I'm willin' to leave it to who does the *hardest* work.

SIMPSON: No, sir! It's who does the *best* work.

CARTER: There ain't only three men in my department out there that ain't soldiering on their job. I do twice as much skilled work as any man at this table, and I do it better. [*Shouts of "Yes, you do!" "Rats!" "Shut up!"*] I'll leave it to Mr. Gibson; he knows good work if he don't know nothing else.

[*Shouts of "Leave it to nothing!" "How'd he get in this?" "You're crazy!"*]

CARTER [*bawling*]: Get back to business! We're running a meeting here!

FRANKEL: For goodness' sake, we ain't getting nowhere!

SALVATORE: No, and you ain't never goin' to git nowhere long as you try to work big business and privilege on me! We got to keep it like Mr. Mifflin says; it's a sacred brotherhood, everything divided equal. Let's get to business and count that money.

FRANKEL: Well, for goodness' sake, let's get some system into this meeting!

RILEY: How you goin' to get any system into it before you settle what's going to be done about Frankel's twenty-four shares?

CARTER: Twenty-four? He's got twenty-six; he got two more yesterday!

MRS. SIMPSON: He's got thirty-five; he got nine more this morning!

FRANKEL [*hotly*]: You bet I got thirty-five!

ALL: What! Thirty-five shares!

FRANKEL: Well, ain't I got thirty-five men workin' out there?

SIMPSON: How in thunder we goin' to settle about him holdin' all them shares?

SALVATORE: Are we goin' to let him take all that money? Thirty-five—

FRANKEL [*leaping up, electrified*]: How d'you expect I'm goin' to pay my men if I don't get it? Are you goin' to *let* me take them thirty-five shares' profits? No, I guess you ain't! You ain't got no say about it! The money's mine right now! I get it!

SIMPSON: I object!

RILEY [*pounding the table*]: Look at the ornery little devil! He took advantage of the poor workingmen's trustfulness, got 'em in debt to him, then went and begun buying over their shares, so they had to leave the shop because he wouldn't hire 'em to do their own work, but went and hired cheaper men. Listen to the trouble *they* make among us!

SIMPSON: It's an undesirable element.

RILEY: He had no right to buy them workmen out in the first place.

SIMPSON: And on top of that we can't git no work turned out because the fourteen skilled men he's got in there have gone and started striking just like the unskilled and they tie up everything.



Page 36

RILEY: I claim he hadn't no right to buy them shares.

FRANKEL: I didn't?

ALL [except SHOMBERG]: No, you didn't!

FRANKEL [*hotly at RILEY*]: You look here. S'pose you needed money bad? Ain't you got a right to sell your share?

RILEY: Sure I have!

FRANKEL: What you talkin' about, then? Ain't I got a right to buy anything you got a right to sell?

RILEY: No, you ain't, because I object to the whole system.

FRANKEL: You do! [*Points to SHOMBERG.*] Look there! Ask him what *he* says. He's got four.

RILEY: I don't care who's got what! All I say is I object to the system, and this factory'll git burned up if them wop workmen stay here jest because he holds them shares!

SIMPSON: You're right about that, Riley!

SALVATORE: Why, you can't hear yourself think out in the shops when you might be havin' a quiet talk with a friend.

RILEY: When them wops gits to talkin' strike it sounds more like a revolution to me!

SIMPSON: Why, they're all inflamed up. They know what's what, all right.

FRANKEL: What do they know?

SALVATORE: They know you're drawing down on them shares about five or six times the wages you pay 'em. What I claim is that extra money he makes ought to be divided amongst *us*.

[*Emphatic approval from CARTER, SIMPSON, and RILEY. "Yes sir! You bet! That's what!"*]

FRANKEL: Just try it once!

SIMPSON: Them men ain't workin' for you, they're workin' for us. Ain't we the original owners?

FRANKEL: Y-a-a-a-h!

RILEY [*pounding the table*]: That's the stuff! We're the original owners! Any money made on them wops' wages is ours. We'll tend to business with them!

[*The noise outside has increased deafeningly; there is a loud hammering on the door, which is now flung open, and POLENSKI in patched overalls, a wrench in his hand, enters fiercely, slamming the door behind him. He begins an oration at the door.*]

POLENSKI: Don't we git a *hearing*? We got to take direct action in this rotten factory before we even get a word in. [*Shouts from the committee: "Get out of here, you wop!" "You ain't got no business here!" "This a committee meeting!"*] Committee meeting, my nose! [*Shakes his fist at FRANKEL.*] Do you know what you're up against? You're up against the arm of labour! You monkey with labour a little more the way you have, and you'll be glad if it's only a little nitroglycerin that gits you. Hired us for two and a half, did you?

FRANKEL: My goodness, I rose you to three this morning!

POLENSKI: Yes; rose us to three! What do we care you rose us to four, to five, to six. Look what the rest you loafers here at this table is gittin'!

Page 37

SALVATORE: Here, don't you bring us in this!

POLENSKI [*half screaming*]: I won't? Every one of you is in his class. [*Points at FRANKEL.*] You sit up here and call yourself a committee, dividin' up the money and runnin' this factory that belongs just as much to us men he hired as it does to you! It belongs to us *more*—because we're the real workin'men! [*Beats his chest.*] My God! Don't the toilers' wrongs *never* git avenged? Are we *always* goin' to be wage slaves? We demand simple justice. We been workin' here two dollars and a half a day, now we want the wage scale abolished and double profits for each of us for every day we worked here before we found out what was goin' on, with you sittin' up here like kings in your robes, tellin' the poor man he should have only two dollars and a half a day—sittin' up here in your pomp with your feet on the neck of labour! [*To CARTER*]: You, in your fine broadcloth, ridin' up and down the avenues in limousines with never a thought for the toiler! Don't think for a minute we deal with this little vampire here. You're all in the same boat, and the toiling masses will hold every single one of you just as responsible as it does him, you—you capitalists!

[Instantly upon this the door is opened enough to admit the heads of two wops very similar to POLENSKI.]

FIRST WOP: Parasites!

SECOND WOP: Bloodsuckers!

POLENSKI: Capitalists, parasites, bloodsuckers, bourgeoisie! Do you think we expect any justice out of *you*? Do you think I come in this room ever dreaming you'd grant our demands? No! We knew you! And if we do assert our rights, what do you do? You set your hellhounds of police on us! Haven't we been agitatin' for our rights among you for days? We've got our answer from you, but you look out for ours, because as sure as there is a hell waitin' for all parasites, we'll send you there, and your factory, too! [*Looks up at the clock.*] My God, is that clock right? [*He runs out at top speed.*]

SIMPSON: They don't seem to know their place!

SHOMBERG: Them fellers think they own the earth.

RILEY: Next, they'll be thinkin' they own our factory!

CARTER [*solemnly*]: Well, sir, I wonder what this country is coming to!

[Here there is a muffled explosion in the sample piano, which rocks with the jar, at the same time emitting a few curls of smoke. General exclamations of horror and fright as all of the committee break for shelter.]

SHOMBERG [*his voice rising over the others*]: Send for the police!

SALVATORE [*shouting*]: Wait! We ain't divided up the money!

NORA: It's over; it hasn't done any harm!

FRANKEL [*on his hands and knees under the table*]: It was in that piano. [NORA goes across to the piano.] Look out, he's probably got another one in there.

Page 38

[MIFFLIN *helps NORA to take off the front of the piano, which is still mildly smoking; a wreckage of wires is seen.*]

MIFFLIN [*smiling*]: It must have been an accident!

FRANKEL AND MRS. SIMPSON [*coming out from under the table*]: Accident!

MIFFLIN: Of course it's unfortunate, because it might be misconstrued.

RILEY: Yes, it might.

MIFFLIN [*confidently*]: Let me go talk to these new comrades!

RILEY: Comrades? Frankel's wops? Ha, ha!

SALVATORE: Aw, them ain't comrades; them's just Frankel's hired workers.

MIFFLIN: They are comrades in the best sense of the word. I am in touch with all the groups. A moment's reasoning from one they know to be sympathetic—

[*He goes out into the factory.*]

SALVATORE: Hey, let's get that stuff divided up. I got an engagement.

FRANKEL: Yes; let's hurry. You can't tell *what* they got planted round here.

CARTER [*rapping*]: The meeting will please come to—

SALVATORE: Here, cut that out! We ain't got no time to—

SHOMBERG: No. Come to business; come to business!

NORA: The only way, comrades, to know how much we have gained since the last division is to read the bookkeeper's report.

FRANKEL: Well, for heaven's sakes, go on—read it!

CARTER: Well, I did want to a long while ago, when we first set down and begun the meeting. I says then, I report on my committee and—

VARIOUS MEMBERS: Oh, for heaven's sake! Go ahead! Cut it out!

CARTER [*picking up the sheets*]: On the first page is says Soomary.

RILEY: What's that mean?

MRS. SIMPSON: Oh, my goodness!

FRANKEL: Git to the figures!

CARTER: Well, here, on one side it says gross receipts—

SHOMBERG [*rubbing his hands*]: Ah!

CARTER: What?

SIMPSON [*shouting*]: Read it!

CARTER: Gross receipts \$2,162.43. On the other side it says: “Cash paid out \$19,461.53.”

[*All are puzzled.*]

It didn’t sound right to me, even the first time I read it. Looks like he’s got the wrong words, crossed over.

FRANKEL: Why, gross receipts last month was over twenty-four thousand dollars!

SHOMBERG: Yes, and that was a fall off from the month before.

CARTER [*rubbing his head*]: Well, I don’t pretend to understand it, but he told me all them was mostly payments on old sales anyhow.

RILEY: Read it again, read it again!

SIMPSON: Yes, let’s see if we can’t get what the sense of it is.

CARTER: It says “Gross receipts, \$2,162.43”—that’s over here. “Cash paid out, \$19,461.53.”

[*All seem dazed.*]

RILEY: What else you got there?

Page 39

CARTER: As near as it seems to me, just a lot of items.

SALVATORE: Well, we must have a lot of money in the bank; what's the matter we draw that out and divide it?

RILEY: Wait a minute! What's there besides them items?

CARTER: He's got a note. "Note," he says; here it is: He says: "Bank notified us this morning we're overdrawn \$59.01."

RILEY: Overdrawn?

SHOMBERG: Then we got to deposit some to our account. Who's got charge of the checks that comes in?

NORA: The bookkeeper has charge, but there aren't any checks.

CARTER: No, they ain't been any checks comin' in for some days; a week or so, or two weeks, you might say. We've looked everywhere for 'em—

FRANKEL [*aghast*]: You looked all through them letters?

CARTER: They ain't none left in 'em that wasn't took out a good while ago.

SALVATORE: You ain't looked through the safe, have you?

CARTER: They ain't a one in it; it's got me all puzzled up, I tell you. I was jest waitin' for the meeting to settle it.

FRANKEL: But heaven's sakes! There must be checks comin' in from new sales!

CARTER: It says here sales has fallen off. So fur this month they was only three instruments sold.

SIMPSON: But, my gosh, this is the *end* of the month!

CARTER: They was two sold in Council Bluffs and one in Detroit.

[*General agitation and excitement.*]

MRS. SIMPSON [*trembling with rage and fear*]: You mean to stand there and tell me we ain't goin' to git any money to-day, and my flat rent to pay to-morrow?

RILEY: Don't talk about your flat rent to me, lady! There's others of us got a few things to pay.

SHOMBERG: But, my golly, when *do* we git paid?

CARTER: I can't make out from what he's got here.

SALVATORE [*rapping fiercely on the table*]: Hey! I got to have my money!

CARTER: Well, I got to have mine, don't I?

SIMPSON: Go on. See what else it says.

CARTER: Well, here he's got this. Here it says: "Bills payable, \$17,162.48."

FRANKEL [*leaping up*]: Bills payable! My God, no money in bank, and we're \$17,162.48 in debt!

MRS. SIMPSON [*shrieking*]: Who owes it?

SIMPSON: We do!

SHOMBERG: Who's goin' to pay it?

RILEY: Who run us into debt that way?

SALVATORE: That's the man we're after!

FRANKEL: Who's the man responsible for us bein' \$17,162.48 bankrupt?

RILEY [*hammering the table*]: Who run us into debt over seventeen thousand dollars?

SIMPSON: Well, give him a chance to answer.

CARTER: What do *I* know about it? That's what the report says. That's all *I* know.

SHOMBERG: Well, somebody's got us into debt. And who is it?

Page 40

NORA: It's all of us! Haven't we all done this thing together?

FRANKEL: Well, who's got to pay it?

NORA: We've all got to!

SHOMBERG, SALVATORE, FRANKEL, AND MRS. SIMPSON: You expect to git blood out of a stone? What do you take us for? You're crazy! You helped get us into this! [SHOMBERG and SALVATORE begin shouting at each other.]

SHOMBERG: You pay me back that twenty-five dollars you got from me Friday!

SALVATORE: How I'm goin' to pay you twenty-five dollars when I'm seventeen thousand dollars in debt?

SHOMBERG: I'll have that money!

[He takes a paper weight from desk.]

SALVATORE: You throw that at me, I'll give you a little sticker where you won't like it!

[Puts his hand in the breast of his coat. Murder appears imminent. Sudden and general dispersal from the neighbourhood of the combatants, which brings NORA to GIBSON, unconsciously seeking his protection.]

SHOMBERG: Aw, I didn't mean anything serious like that. *[Puts down the paper weight.]* But I'll get the money.

SALVATORE: You'll need it—to pay your share what we owe!

MRS. SIMPSON: I'd like to see 'em get one cent out of me!

CARTER: It ain't just us here of course; they's a hundred and seventy men outside the debt belongs to as well as us. The whole factory's got to pay it.

SIMPSON: Great gosh! Do you think we can go out there, when they're expectin' a month's pay, and tell 'em they're gettin' only a seventeen-thousand-dollar *debt*?

FRANKEL: And me, me, me! Look at *me*! Do you think I can go out and tell them thirty-five bloodhounds I ain't got no money to even pay their wages?

RILEY [*vehemently*]: What's more, you owe thirty-five shares of that debt, Frankel!

ALL [*with vindictive satisfaction*]: That's it! Sure he does! He owes thirty-five shares of the debt! That's right!

FRANKEL: What?

RILEY: You owe thirty-five shares of the seventeen-thousand debt.

FRANKEL: My heavens! Ain't the meetin' just settled it I didn't have no right to them shares and it was all to be divided even?

CARTER: What we got to do, we got to go out there and tell 'em they owe this money.

FRANKEL: I can't tell mine!

SALVATORE: I know one game little fellow that ain't goin' to pay nobody nothin'. Excuse me, gents; they'll have to find me!

[He goes out hastily by the door that leads to the street.]

CARTER: Well, *somebody's* got to go out there and tell 'em.

SIMPSON: Well, I won't!

MRS. SIMPSON: It's the chairman's place.

CARTER: We all got to go!

FRANKEL: Not me!

SIMPSON: Yes, you will! *[Takes him by the shoulders.]*

Page 41

RILEY [*taking him from SIMPSON*]: Put him first!

[They begin to jostle toward the factory door.]

FRANKEL [*as they push him he waves a despairing hand at GIBSON*]: Mr. Gibson, that was a fine trick you played on us!

THE COMMITTEE [*shouting*]: You go on there! Come on! We got to take our medicine!

FRANKEL: Lemme alone! Take your hands off me!

[They jostle out, leaving NORA and GIBSON alone together. NORA has gone to the large table, sitting beside it, with her head far down between her hands. As the noise dies away MIFFLIN comes in from the factory.]

MIFFLIN: What wonderful spirits! Just great, rough boys!

[Smiles as he gets his hat, magazines, newspaper, and umbrella.]

Everything is working out. Some little inevitable friction here, some little setback there. But it all works, it all works to the one great end. I'm sorry I wasn't present for the end of the meeting to hear what success there was this month, but that's a detail. The dream has come true. It's here, and we're living it! *[At the door.]* I'll send you a copy of my next article, Mr. Gibson. *[Modestly laughs.]* They tell me the series is making a little sensation in its way. Good morning!

[He goes out jauntily. GIBSON has never moved from his chair; he turns his head, still not rising, and looks fixedly at NORA. She slowly lifts her head, meets his eye; her head sinks again. He rises and slowly walks over to her, looking down at her. Then, bending still lower, she begins to cry.]

GIBSON: Well, Nora, what was the matter with it?

NORA [*not looking up*]: I don't know. What was?

GIBSON: You needed a manager to do what I had been doing.

NORA: Couldn't we have learned? Couldn't one of us?

GIBSON: One of you did—Hill.

NORA: But he left!

GIBSON: Why did Hill leave?

NORA: Other people offered him more money.

GIBSON: Yes; he was the one man that all the rest of you depended on. He was worth more.

NORA: But were you worth all that you took? You took all that the business made.

GIBSON: Yes; and last year it was fifty thousand.

NORA: Were you actually worth that much to it?

GIBSON: Other men in the business think so. [*Shows her a letter.*] Here's an offer from the Coles-Hibbard people, out in Cleveland, of that much salary to do for them what I did here.

NORA: It isn't right; you pay labour only what you have to pay.

GIBSON: The Coles-Hibbard people offer to pay me what they'd have to, and they're pretty hard-headed men. The whole world pays only what it has to.

NORA: It isn't right! It isn't right!

Page 42

GIBSON: Last winter I saw you in a three-dollar seat listening to Caruso. Have you ever given that much to the organ grinder who comes under these windows?

NORA: Will it always be so?

GIBSON: I don't know. But it's so now.

NORA: But will the plan *always* fail?

GIBSON: I think it will until human beings are as near alike as the ants and bees are. Your system is in full effect with them, but we—we strive; even in this fellowship here of yours the striving began to show.

NORA [*looking up at him appealingly*]: But are these inequalities *right*?

GIBSON [*gently, rather sadly*]: I don't know. I only know what is.

NORA: Well—I'm whipped.

[Smiles ruefully, away from him; then she turns again to him.]

Are you going to accept that offer?

GIBSON: What do you say?

[Her head droops again. Angry voices are heard, growing louder as they approach. The door is thrown open, and the members of the committee, noisily talking, appear in the doorway.]

FRANKEL: It was a bum deal all through!

SHOMBERG: Shovin' his run-down factory off onto us!

RILEY [*fiercely*]: You never give us no deed to this plant, Mr. Gibson!

SIMPSON: They ain't a court in the land'll hold us to it!

CARTER: No, sir; and we've voted this is your factory, Mr. Gibson! We ain't responsible!

GIBSON: It is my factory and I'm going to run it! Any man of you not back at work in ten minutes on the old scale of wages will be fired!

[The members whoop with joy. FRANKEL and CARTER both try to shake hands with GIBSON at once.]

CARTER: Well, that's a relief to *me*. Thank you, Mr. Gibson!

FRANKEL: That takes a heap off my mind!

RILEY: God bless you, sir!

GIBSON: Never mind that! You go back to work.

[Whooping, the committee, in great spirits and with the greatest friendliness to one another, depart rapidly. Closing the door, GIBSON turns briskly to NORA, and speaks in a businesslike way.]

GIBSON: Nora, will you marry me?

NORA [*meekly*]: Yes—I will.

GIBSON: Will you marry me to-day?

NORA [*with a little more spirit*]: Yes, I will!

GIBSON: Will you go with me and marry me right now?

NORA [*more loudly and promptly*]: Yes, I will!

GIBSON: Well, then—

Page 43

[He gets his hat and coat, then thinks of something he wants from his desk and goes over to get it. Meantime NORA, not moving so rapidly as GIBSON, but more thoughtfully, goes up to the wall where hang her jacket and hat, takes off her apron, puts on the jacket and hat and goes to the door that leads to the street, where she stands waiting. There is a knock on the factory door, which opens without waiting, and SIMPSON comes in.]

SIMPSON: I don't want to detain you if you're goin' out, Mr. Gibson, but there's something's got to be settled. And the men in my department say it's got to be settled right now. That wage scale says we get time and a half for overtime, and the men in the finishing department, they ain't gettin' no time and a half on piecework and we never understood that agreement you claim we signed with you anyhow. So what we says, if we don't get double time instead of time and a half for overtime—why, Mr. Gibson, it looks like them men couldn't hardly be held back. Now what we demand is—

[He is still talking as the final curtain descends upon these three: GIBSON seated at his desk, looking fixedly at SIMPSON, NORA waiting thoughtfully by the door that leads to the street.]

CURTAIN