



## Ninety Cents, Please

So many of our great men in the late years have made fortunes in steel—s-t-ee-l. Therefore I felt I would be defrauding myself if I neglected my opportunities any longer. Having thus decided to do justice to myself I hastened down to an employment shark and requested him to mark down my "nom de plume" for better or worse, or both. The shark was a kindly soul and told me he wasn't charging anything for the ceremony. This was a shock to me! "What's wrong with the job?" I inquired. "Nothing at all, nothing at all, Mr. Stinnes," he made answer, "the job is all right, 36c an hour, money when you quit." Ah! Money! when! you! quit!! Could anything be more appropriate! Money when you quit. (Who would have thought it?) Right in line with my program. My fortune is as good as made.

Mr. Judge Gary, the boss of the industry, sent me an old patrol wagon he had got hold of to carry me to the "works." Now reader, that is no way to skip over this stuff. Can't you see that "hizzoner" provides this "black maria" to haul his slaves so they do not have to walk, not because he wouldn't just as soon see them walk, but because, somehow or other, the very sight of the "dear old wagon" full of slaves coming to the works, inspires great confidence and gives new life to the debilitated bulls guarding the works. "Have they bulls in the works?" There you go again. What a senseless question! Course they've got bulls. Next you will be asking are there lice on a—a—bum. Sure they've got bulls and oh, how their eyes glisten and glare when a wagon load of slaves arrive at the works. It reminds them of old times, when they were on the "force" uptown; when they molded public opinion by molding the public's head with a club. Yes, law is well represented in the steel works and Judge Gary administers its justice, no different from the famous brand we, as workers, are accustomed to.

Generally two officers (including star and harness apiece) take charge of you in the employment office (at the works); push you this way and that, treading on your toes and breathing in your face and oh, that breath \* \* two of them.

After you have been sufficiently impressed with the majesty of law and you are on the verge of getting sarcastic, a dapper young man with a Y. M. C. A. smile steps to the window and radiates Christian charity according to Gen. Order No. 7001. "Now gentlemen," he says, "if you, gentlemen will care to listen a moment I will say a few words—the wages, as you gentlemen have no doubt been informed, are 36c an hour; the work is common labor and it is outside work. No, we haven't any inside work, therefore, if there are amongst you gentlemen any who—are—not—heavily clothed, please step out of line and the officer will be pleased to direct you to the door."

(Out you go if you are not heavily clad. You've got to have plenty of clothes to start with—the trust is particular about this, insofar as it doesn't figure on paying you enough to "rag up" on. A good place to wear out your old clothes.)

"—and, gentlemen, I must inform you the company runs a restaurant, cafeteria style, where you can get anything you desire. A meal will cost you 25c, 20c, or whatever you care to pay."

Hé gets pretty sloppy toward the end of his talk; his voice grows more tender as he goes on and you feel like apologizing for the sour thoughts you entertained a while back. As hardened as I am, to the wiles of the ruling class, this young man convinced me of his sincerity and I wiped the snus off my lips feeling sure he was going to give us each a kiss before he got through with us.

A man who has gone through this ordeal knows what it is to be married to a job. You promise to love and obey the boss; your name, age, height, weight, color of eyes, hair and skin is all recorded; the address of your favorite cemetery is marked down in black and white; the place of your birth is carefully noted so that some other town may not get the credit for any glorious achievement fathered by you in the production of steel and, finally, the young man says, "If you will watch me closely I will call out the names and pass out a twenty-five-cent meal ticket to each one, as evidence of good faith on the part of the company, and after you have worked a while you can secure a regular meal book with beautiful colored coupons attached which the beautiful lady cashier will tear out (by the handfuls) and hold as evidence (against you) that you have been fed.

After you are employed in the mill, which, by the way, covers miles of ground and resembles a gigantic "still," (a bootlegger's laboratory,) a familiar sight to many of us (even Wobblies know what a still looks like,) a harness bull takes you in tow and chatters about the various good jobs you will be put at. With measured tread he leads you on and on, by furnace after furnace, by giant cranes, power houses, machine shops and finally you arrive at your appointed place of honor at the heavy end of a plank or between the handles of a cantankerous wheelbarrow. You have begun the production of steel at 36c an hour. (Note: Steel is not made "by the ton;" it is sold by the ton.)

But you are in a "purgatory of probation." So far the company has trusted you only with a 25c meal ticket. After dinner if you prove faithful the company will give you sixty cent's worth of coupons, (35c for supper, 25c for breakfast) and by and by you will get a \$2.00-book. Aint it a g-glorious feeling! And, as you grow in responsibility you will get a \$5.00-meal book and eventually—the mill is yours. Your fortune is made. God'sonestfac. If you will only stick!

As yet I am only trusted with a \$2.00-ticket, consequently I cannot know much about the steel industry, but after I get my hands on a \$5.00-book my standing will warrant a few extended remarks.

Let me wind up with a few thoughts on the company cafeteria. (We shall describe steel making on some fairer day.) This article is getting too full and I am getting too hollow.

As to the meals:

Let me spring a concrete example:

A swarthy son of Serbia was in line ahead of me. Now, Serbians as a rule are very frugal eaters, although very sincere workers. Evidently he was new to the game and hesitated miserably. I encouraged him, told him to help himself to whatever he wanted—and, when he arrived at the cashier's desk, (with his 25c-coupon) she murmured "90c please."

Joe didn't feel like eating so much. Her innocent remark had ruined Joe's appetite. I mention this merely to prove that a man cannot afford to eat at Judge Gary's table on 36c per hour. Joe unloaded over half of his meal on the counter.

No, the steel workers are organized.

T-BONE SLIM.