

# JIM'S SECOND FORGERY

By Jessie L. Schulten

ILLUSTRATION BY KARL ANDERSON



THE office of the prison was very quiet. It was never quite like other offices; the hum and bustle of hope and achievement were ever lacking; but to-day the flies droned lazily on the window-pane and there was no other sound save the scratch of a pen on a ledger and the click of a typewriter.

Jim sat by the window. A bundle of outgoing letters from the prisoners, which he had been going over, lay forgotten in his hand, and his thoughts were far away from the grim stone pile which held so many aching hearts, so many cropped heads bending over a work they loathed, giving the State their most unwilling labor. Even the genial warden could not make it home to them, but it was home to Jim.

Jim's whole heart had gone out to the warden when he had first been kind to him in the old days when, with shaved head, and plaid suit, Jim had been thrust into the colony of the lock-step. When his friends had turned from him, the warden had let him hope for better things; and when Jim had served his term he had found the world an alien spot and out of tune, and he had come back to the prison as better men would seek a cloister. He had put behind him the world and its temptations, and the warden, who knew men, had looked deep into his appealing dog-like eyes, and had given him light work in the office. He had now been made usher.

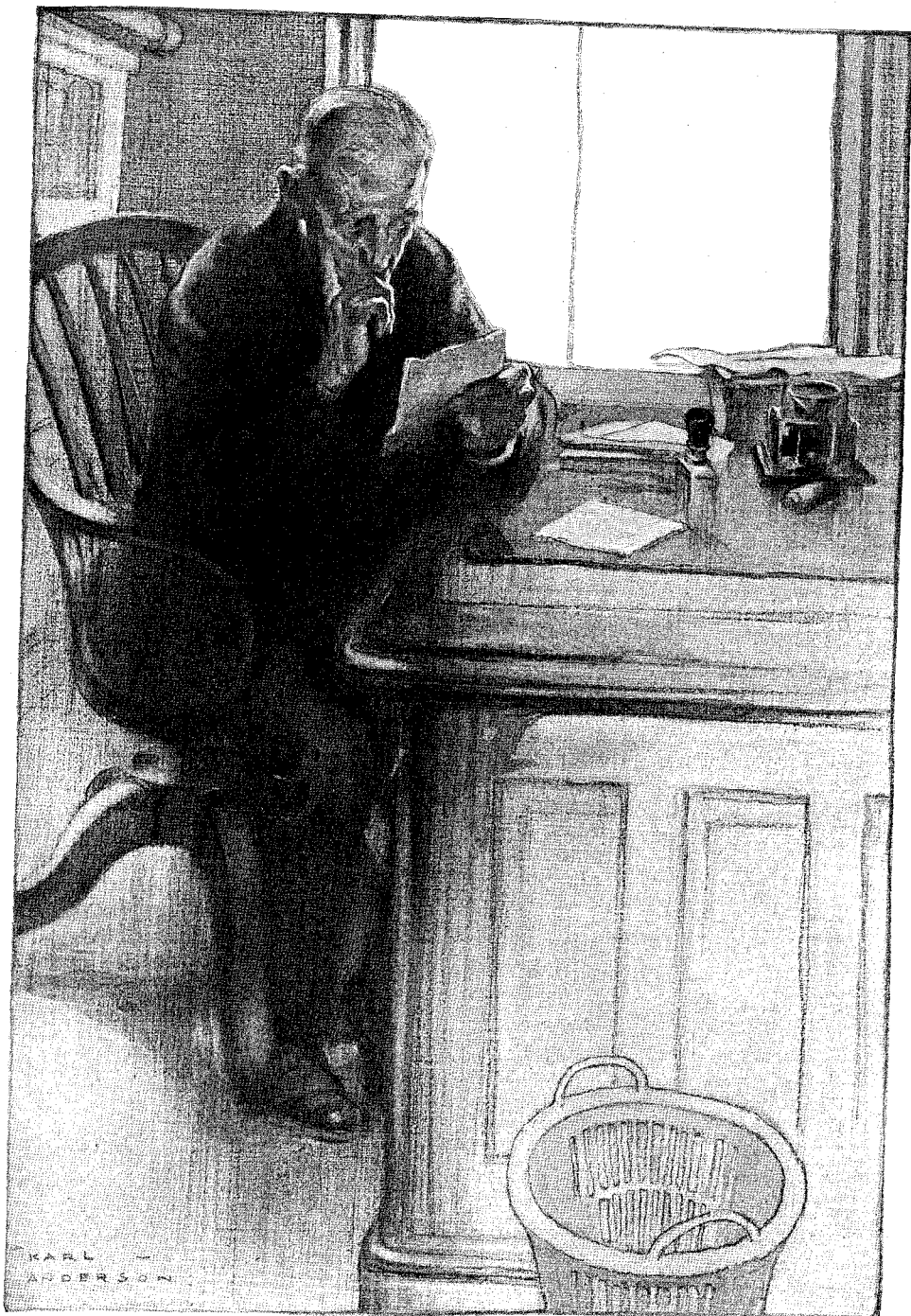
He showed curious, tip-toeing visitors over the prison, he proudly conducted dressy women, who held their skirts high from contamination, and men of irreproachable business integrity, through the rooms of dogged workers, once his fellows. When there were no visitors, Jim opened the prisoners' mail. The papers he glanced at to make sure they were not upon the black-list of forbidden publications, and that they contained no writing; the letters he read carefully and dispassionately, and

folding them the opposite way to prove that they had been examined, stamped them and threw them into the pile of accepted mail, diligently recording each in a ledger—address, date, place, and superscription.

Some of the officers had laughed when Jim came into this position, and had suggested that he was well fitted to copy the signatures in the writer's own hand. Jim laughed, too, and often copied them so, just for a joke. There are many strange jokes in a state's prison, but a sexton, they say, comes to laugh at tombstones.

The prison colony learns to see things with new eyes. All the horror, the loathing of the place had long since vanished from Jim's mind. He had forgotten the cold drops which once stood out upon his forehead when he awoke in the black night and realized where he was. All that was over, now. To him the forbidding-looking building offered shelter from an over-strained world, he loved the long, clean, silent corridors, the military organization, the regular hours. Outside, right and wrong were in confusion, and Jim had come to look out upon the noisy, struggling, money-getting world with something of the same fear and shuddering with which the world looked in.

Out there men's selfish brutality was uncurbed, here all natures were under restraint. There, if a man stood balanced on the edge of a precipice, a dozen hands went out to thrust him over, and two dozen clutched at the goods he left behind. Men's passions were writ large upon their faces. Perhaps in his weakness, Jim was artistic, and the portrayal of strong feeling offended him in nature as it had the Greeks in art; at all events, he had fled from the hurly-burly of a life of business or of social dissipation, back to this clean life, where he became once more a part of the State's great throbbing, human machine. Here men came and went, and if strong feeling ebbed and surged beneath the stolid faces, no one knew.



*Drawn by Karl Anderson.*

Jim held the man's answer in his hand.—Page 494.

As the long lines clanked down the corridors, no man could tell who or what his neighbor was, how long he had been there, or how long he was to tarry, save when the new ones behaved strangely and seemed nervous, or when the old ones began to grow beard or mustache, in token of a coming liberation.

Jim examined their mail and probed into their inner lives in the same disinterested way that a biologist vivisects, one for the State, the other for Science. Jim prided himself upon being the watch-dog of the prison. He read everything, but noted only that which concerned him as an officer. At least this had been his attitude, but nine months ago, a little, blue, broken-hearted note had stirred something within him which had slumbered since the time when the iron bars had first shut upon him and his own disgrace. He had stamped it and passed it in, but the memory of a girlish, tear-stained face had lingered, and he found himself singling out G. S., number 765, from the other parts of the great machine, and wondering who he was, and if the note had touched him.

He was thinking of all this to-day, as the flies buzzed on the window and the prisoners' letters lay unopened on his desk. He was fingering one letter thoughtfully. It was from G. S., number 765, to Miss Mamie Gray. From him to her. The last chapter had come, and Jim fumbled the letter nervously, almost afraid to open it, just as a devoted reader hesitates before beginning the closing scene of a much-loved novel, feeling that it must end well—it must, and holding his breath in fear that it will not.

The little blue note had been followed at regular intervals by others in the same hand; letters so full of a deep womanly sympathy, so keen to search out a crumb of comfort and lay it alluringly before the man she sorrowed for and with, that Jim's heart ached for her, and he almost envied the man who had such a hand stretched out to help him, such a memory to look back upon, even though he must look wistfully and through prison bars. As time passed, Jim noticed that the keen edge of the disgrace was less sharp. The wound was healing. She seemed less sensitive, better able to cope with the people and things of an everyday life. She sent him bits of news. Sometimes her letters seemed almost happy, as

her buoyant, girlish nature asserted itself; but beneath it all was the undercurrent that told of deep waters, and one could not forget that when the man first went down she had gone with him, and for his sake had sounded the depths of woe, and grovelled in the sands of utter despair and disillusionment. All this Jim realized, and even when her letters seemed to dance on the crest, he knew that the sound of the black waters still rang in her ears, and he wondered if G. S., 765, knew too.

Her letters were never answered. They came as a free gift from a heart that could not forget. On the days upon which G. S., 765, was allowed to write his bi-monthly letter, Jim searched in vain for a word to her, it never came. The man wrote to friends, relatives, lawyers, alert, practical letters, seeking means by which he might be freed. They were letters which pulled wires, made promises, and sometimes threatened revenge. They were cold business letters, and they were never to her. Jim could not understand.

She had written less frequently herself, of late, and her words came less directly from the heart, he fancied; her hopes were no longer living, breathing hopes, they were dead things, as though she wrote with a conscious effort.

Last week a letter, THE letter had come. Jim could never forget the day he read it; never had he been so much a man, so little an officer. He forgot G. S., 765, he forgot the capacity in which it was his duty to examine the letter, he forgot everything but the burning words before him, everything save the woman pleading for life and happiness, and through it all trying by word and phrase to make cruel truths seem kind.

After he had stamped it with the sign manual of approval, and passed it in, Jim had felt utterly unfit for duty. His pulse beat fast with excitement. G. S., 765, could not write for nine days, he would have nine days to think it over, surely his better self would conquer and he would set her free! She had asked what most women would have claimed as a right. She had told him how the first shock had broken her, how the whole universe had seemed to crash and quiver, and how in spirit she had gone willingly with him to a life of bitter humiliation, glad only that

she could comfort him and help, hopeful only that she could make his future less hard. But the gifts she had to give had meant little to him; she had not heard from him, and what she had heard of him had made her doubt, and doubt is a great love-destroyer. Then out of the chaos of his making she had been led by kind hands back to the free air, back to a life of ideals and possibilities; and though at first her lips smiled while her heart ached, she had come to feel some of the old gladness, some of the old joy of living—and she asked him for her freedom.

She offered him friendship, help such as she could give, everything but herself. She did not reproach him for a black past, but she asked him for exemption from a black future. Was it right, she asked, since she could not raise him up, that he should drag her down? Could she in honor smirch her family's name with dishonor and force her friends to cast her off? Should a promise given in all faith in the blind days of long ago stand now between her and a new happiness, which had crept into her life and softly, gently, led her through the deep waters until she had come to see that life was not over, and that youth, and love, and joy, still were?

To-day Jim held the man's answer in his hand. Fearfully he opened it—and read. When he had finished he involuntarily crumpled the cringing, crawling thing in his hand with the instinct which has come down to us strong from Eden to smite the creeping things which Heaven declared accursed.

"The snake!" he muttered.

For the letter had cried out to her for mercy, had pleaded with her not to withdraw his one hope, his one hold on life. Every word leaned on her and sapped her strength. He claimed her with memories of a fond past, he claimed her by right of need, by right of promise, and last, he told her that the deed he had done, the act which wrecked his life, had been done for her sake—for her sake, and that his burden by moral right was partly hers.

"The snake!" Jim hissed again.

The flies buzzed on, the typewriter clicked, and the pen scratched on the ledger.

Jim was thinking hard, and into his mind came persistently the memory of an odd conceit which had come to him in the first dark days of his own trouble, as he sat on his bench and lasted shoes. Of all the raw material that came in to be cut, and slashed, and remodelled, nearly all of it was destined to be sent out in a shape fit for some sphere of usefulness; but now and then some piece of wood or leather was too weak to stand the test, and broken and torn, was cast out as quite useless. At the time Jim had resolved that he would be good leather, and he had been, but to-day, when the figure recurred to him, he knew in his heart that G. S., 765, was destined for the scrap heap, that he would never make a good shoe.

"And if the little girl tries to wear him," he thought, "he'll pinch her, and he'll tear and give way when she ain't expecting it."

Jim's brows were knit, his mouth worked, but his eyes were steady. Deliberately he spread out the letter and carefully studied the writing, then he took a fresh sheet of prison paper and wrote rapidly for a few minutes, adding the scratch of his own pen to the few noises of the sultry afternoon. With a flourish he signed it, the full name of G. S., number 765, then he folded it hastily, enclosed it in the original envelope, and thrust it among the outgoing mail.

He had set her free. But he had not been heroic enough about it to rouse her admiration. He had whined a little, he had been weak and selfish; there was a suggestion that he was doing it for his own good, not hers; there was almost a note of relief in the dismissal. It was a masterpiece.

The flies were still buzzing. Jim tried to bring his mind back to his work. "There is only one hell, anyway," he told himself, "and if forgery leads there, I reckon I'm trekking that trail already." Then he opened another letter. "And the little girl will be so happy," he murmured.

# SOME PHASES OF TRADE UNIONISM

By Walter A. Wyckoff



THE meaning of trade unionism has only begun to make itself known. Now, that its history is being written, there is a dawning sense of its significance. But there are few, even among its members, who fully realize its nature and its possible relation to a future development of society. Even its present ends and aims are but feebly understood within its circles. There are those among unionists who do understand, and the mass of the membership is permeated by great ideas, vaguely held as ideas, but believed in and acted upon with tremendous force in relation to certain concrete facts. The very absence of self-consciousness in growth is itself evidence of vitality.

When the local trade clubs, which sprang up in England during the eighteenth century, began to coalesce into national organizations, simultaneously with the growth of the business unit in point of capital and organization, no one dreamt that the course of industrial progress was being outlined. Everyone sees it clearly to-day. Nothing could be more obvious than the fact, in the business world, that the centralization and organization of capital have been paralleled by a centralization and organization of labor. And nothing could be farther from the truth than to suppose that this process of centralization is evidence of hostility on the part of either form of organization for the other. One is essentially an organization for peace and not for war. The centralization of capital has been effected largely for the purpose of doing away with the war-like features of competition, and so increasing the productiveness of industry by putting an end to the waste of war. It would be difficult to prove that labor has ever suffered seriously or permanently from organization on the part of capital, and it would be easy to show that it has already benefited greatly, and is likely to realize increasingly great benefits in the future.

The organization of labor does not imply a necessary hostility to capital; it does imply a readiness to make use of organized power to secure certain ends and to retain them, but its main purpose is to maintain the standard of life among its members; and one has only to analyze this purpose to see that it also results in increased productiveness; for a well-nourished, well-housed body of wage-earners is thoroughly established as a prime factor in industrial efficiency.

By no means is it true that a desire for greater productive power has been the ruling motive impelling to either form of organization. Here is one of the anomalies of long standing in the world. Industrial organization is not begun or continued in the spirit of service, but in that of gain. Incidentally the world is served; for those who fail to make money at business soon lose the chance of serving the world in that particular way.

Both types of organization have been essentially natural and inevitable. Once begun under conditions which admitted of their development, it became impossible to forecast the results; local organization of both capital and labor might spread to national boundaries and even become international in scope.

The naturalness and inevitability have, however, not always been apparent. Both forms of organization have had to make way against enormous obstacles. The difficulties which beset the early trades unions in industrial countries are now nearly incredible. They would be entirely so but for the fact that there are still persons to whom trade unionism has something of the sound of a conspiracy against society, and for whom the right of working people to combine in their own interests is still an open question.

There is much that is legendary and much that is apocryphal in the traditions of the persecutions of the early trade unions, but there remains a sufficient body of truth to make clear that trade unionism