

CHAPTER XVII - JIMMY ON THE JOB.

As Jimmy left the office he discovered that those last words of Bince's had made a considerable and a rather unfavorable impression on him. He was sure that there was an underlying meaning, though just what it portended he was unable to imagine.

From the International Machine Company Jimmy went directly to the restaurant where he and Little Eva had dined the night before. He found her waiting for him, as they had agreed she would.

"Well, what luck?" she asked as he took the chair next to her.

"Oh, I landed the job all right," said Jimmy, "but I feel like a crook. I don't know how in the world I ever came to stand for those letters of recommendation. They were the things that got me the job all right, but I honestly feel just as though I had stolen something."

"Don't feel that way," said the girl. "You'll make good, I know, and then it won't make any difference about the letters."

"And now," said Jimmy, "tell me where you got them. You promised me that you would tell me afterward."

"Oh," said the girl, "that was easy. A girl who rooms at the same place I do works in a big printing and engraving plant and I got her to get me some samples of letterheads early this morning. In fact, I went down-town with her when she went to work and then I went over to the Underwood offices and wrote the recommendations out on a machine--I used to be a stenographer."

"And you forged these names?" asked Jimmy, horrified.

"I didn't forge anybody's name," replied the girl. "I made them up."

"You mean there are no such men?"

"As far as I know there are not," she replied, laughing.

Slowly Jimmy drew the letters from his inside pocket and read them one by one, spreading them out upon the table before him. Presently he looked up at the girl.

"Why don't you get a position again as a stenographer?" he asked.

"I have been thinking of it," she said; "do you want me to?"

"Yes," he said, "I want you to very much."

"It will be easy," she said. "There is no reason why I shouldn't except that there was no one ever cared what I did."

As she finished speaking they were both aware that a man had approached their table and stopped opposite them. Jimmy and the girl looked up to see a large man in a dark suit looking down at Eva. Jimmy did not recognize the man, but he knew at once what he was.

"Well, O'Donnell, what's doing?" asked the girl.

"You know what's doing," said the officer. "How many toimes do the capt'in have to be afther isshuin' orrders tellin' you janes to kape out uv dacent places?"

The girl flushed. "I'm not working here," she said.

"To hell ye ain't," sneered O'Donnell. "Didn't I see ye flag this guy whin he came in?"

"This young lady is a friend of mine," said Jimmy. "I had an appointment to meet her here."

O'Donnell shifted his gaze from the girl to her escort and for the first time appraised Jimmy thoroughly. "Oh, it's you, is it?" he asked.

"It is," said Jimmy; "you guessed it the first time, but far be it from me to know what you have guessed, as I never saw you before, my friend."

"Well, I've seen you before," said O'Donnell, "and ye put one over on me that time all roight, I can see now. I don't know what your game was, but you and the Lizard played it pretty slick when you could pull the wool over Patrick O'Donnell's eyes the way ye done."

"Oh," said Jimmy, "I've got you now. You're the bull who interfered with my friend and me on Randolph and La Salle way back last July."

"I am," said O'Donnell, "and I thought ye was a foine young gentleman, and you are a foine one," he said with intense sarcasm.

"Go away and leave us alone," said the girl. "We're not doing anything. We ate in here last night together. This man is perfectly respectable. He isn't what you think him, at all."

"I'm not going to pinch him," said O'Donnell; "I ain't got nothin' to pinch him for, but the next time I see him I'll know him."

"Well," said the girl, "are you going to beat it or are you going to stick around here bothering us all evening? There hasn't anybody registered a complaint against me in here."

"Naw," said O'Donnell, "they ain't, but you want to watch your step or they will."

"All right," said the girl, "run along and sell your papers." And she turned again to Jimmy, and as though utterly unconscious of the presence of the police officer, she remarked, "That big stiff gives me a pain. He's the original Buttinsky Kid."

O'Donnell flushed. "Watch your step, young lady," he said as he turned and walked away.

"I thought," said Jimmy, "that it was the customary practise to attempt to mollify the guardians of the law."

"Mollify nothing," returned the girl. "None of these big bruisers knows what decency is, and if you're decent to them they think you're afraid of them. When

they got something on you you got to be nice, but when they haven't, tell them where they get off. I knew he wouldn't pinch me; he's got nothing to pinch me for, and he'd have been out of luck if he had, for there hasn't one of them got anything on me."

"But won't he have it in for you?" asked Jimmy.

"Sure, he will," said the girl. "He's got it in for everybody. That's what being a policeman does to a man. Say, most of these guys hate themselves. I tell you, though," she said presently and more seriously, "I'm sorry on your account. These dicks never forget a face. He's got you catalogued and filed away in what he calls his brain alongside of a dip and--a"--she hesitated--"a girl like me, and no matter how high up you ever get if your foot slips up will bob O'Donnell with these two facts."

"I'm not worrying," said Jimmy. "I don't intend to let my foot slip in his direction."

"I hope not," said the girl.

Thursday morning Jimmy took up his duties as efficiency expert at the plant of the International Machine Company. Since his interview with Compton his constant companion had been "How to Get More Out of Your Factory," with the result that he felt that unless he happened to be pitted against another efficiency expert he could at least make a noise like efficiency, and also he had grasped what he considered the fundamental principle of efficiency, namely, simplicity.

"If," he reasoned, "I cannot find in any plant hundreds of operations that are not being done in the simplest manner it will be because I haven't even ordinary powers of observation or intelligence," for after his second interview with Compton, Jimmy had suddenly realized that the job meant something to him beside the two hundred and fifty dollars a month--that he couldn't deliberately rob Compton, as he felt that he would be doing unless he could give value received in services, and he meant to do his best to accomplish that end.

He knew that for a while his greatest asset would be bluff, but there was something about Mason Compton that had inspired in the young man a vast respect and another sentiment that he realized upon better acquaintance might ripen into affection. Compton reminded him in many ways of his father, and with the realization of that resemblance Jimmy felt more and more ashamed of the part he was playing, but now that he had gone into it he made up his mind that he would stick to it, and there was besides the slight encouragement that he had derived from the enthusiasm of the girl who had suggested the idea to him and of her oft-repeated assertion relative to her "hunch", that he would make good.