

How Idaho Ike Organized the King Manufacturing Company

By Frank N. Stratton

IS Mr. Irick in?"

The red-shirted clerk in the local office of the Lucky Fall mine raised his eyes from a column of figures and stared at the interrogator, who had slipped through the open door with the noiseless stealth of a shadow.

He saw a short, florid person with suspiciously black side-whiskers, and small red eyes that peered, half-closed, through steel-rimmed glasses, and a corpulent figure, tightly encased in a suit of reverberating checks, pedestaled by enormous patent-leather shoes and domed by a tall and glossy silk hat.

With a contemptuous grunt, the clerk pointed to a tall, lank man reclining in the shadow of an immense boulder, and snarled, "That's him."

The little red eyes blinked dubiously at the prostrate and unkempt figure, then glared indignantly at the scornful clerk.

"I am inquiring, my young sir, for Mr. Ike Irick, manager of this mine."

"That's him," the clerk repeated. "He's It."

"But—I think—it appears that he is slumbering," said the florid gentleman.

"Wake him up," suggested the clerk, with an anticipatory smile. "He don't mind. He likes it."

In the ears of Idaho Ike the monotonous murmurs of whirring wheels, the regular rhythmic crash of crushing stamps, had formed a melodious symphony that had lured and lulled him

into Dreamland, wherein he once more wandered, foot-sore, hungry, discouraged and disowned, prospecting for the golden root of all evil.

Once more he was taking that fortunate tumble down the slope that had resulted in the discovery of the Lucky Fall mine, when he was rudely awakened from the dream of bliss by the insistent visitor.

Slowly and drowsily he drew himself to a sitting posture and wrathfully regarded the disturber of his repose.

"Well," he growled, "what do *you* want? What's th' graft this time? 'Nuther orphun 'sylum? Libury? Home for Chine widders? Say yer piece. Don't stand thar a-blinkin' like I wuz th' sun. Who air ye, anyhow?"

The corpulent gentleman seated himself ponderously upon a cool and convenient boulder, pushed back the glossy silk hat, wiped the perspiration from his bald and knobby brow, and carefully flicked the dust from the patent-leather shoes.

"Mr. Irick," he said, pompously, "I have not come here to be insulted, and I shall not tolerate disrespectful language, sir. Let us understand that at the beginning.

"My name is Philander P. Pipkins. I have called, sir, for the purpose of presenting to you a matter involving the welfare of the struggling masses, the uplifting of oppressed humanity, the ——"



"Idaho Ike"

"Ye're off th' trail," interrupted Idaho Ike. "Ye're prospectin' in th' wrong gulch. They haint no strugglin' masses nor 'pressed humanity about this plant."

"You err, sir, you err," said Mr. Pipkins, incisively. "Like all employers of labor you are blinded by prejudice and greed. Here, in this mine, down in the bowels of this very

mountain, human slaves, moulded in the image of our common Creator, sir, are toiling hopelessly for a mere pitance, that this company may declare dividends and revel in luxuries."

"Th' only revelin' we've had round here," remarked Ike, reminiscently, "was last Chewsday night, when Buster Williams an' Pinto Phil wuz on a toot. Got buckeyed an' shot up th' town, an' wound up by fallin' down th' shaft, two hundred an' eighty feet. They won't do it no more."

"This is no laughing matter, sir," snapped Mr. Pipkins, shaking a pudgy fist in the air. "Let me warn you that present conditions cannot, shall not, continue. The giant will rise in his wrath, will shatter his fetters, will hurl the oppressor from his throne, and clad in the glittering panoply of justice, will himself be anointed and crowned monarch of all he surveys."

"When he duz," observed Ike, "you let me know. I want to 'tend th' corynashun cerymonies. You kin put me down now fer six tickets."

The little red eyes glared fiercely; the bulging brow contracted into what was intended to be an intimidating scowl.

"Persist in your levity if you will, sir. I have warned you. Do not forget that when Chaos follows in my path——"

"I hope he'll ketch up with ye purty soon, an' take ye back. He'd orter lose his job fer ever lettin' ye escape," said Ike seriously.

Mr. Pipkins recoiled, horrified.

"Is it possible, sir," he gasped, "that you imagine me insane? Why, sir, I am the traveling representative of The Compulsory Confederation, the grandest organization on earth, an organization, sir, founded by true philanthropists, a confederation whose mission is to gather within its protecting fold all

who toil for others, and to compel all employers to make a fair and equitable division of profits, the only practicable solution, sir, of the labor problem."

"How about losses?" inquired Ike.

"Losses, sir, are always occasioned by bad judgment or poor management on the part of the employer. We cannot be responsible for the employer's incapability."

"Where d'ye git the grease to ile th' macheen?"

"Our expenses, sir," answered Mr. Pipkins, "including officers' salaries, are provided for by an entrance fee and monthly assessment of each member."

"It's a good thing," said Ike, thoughtfully. "I reckon I'll jine— ef they's a vacant office."

"Employers are ineligible, sir. Only wage-earners are accepted, honest horny-handed sons of toil——"

"Like yerself,," Ike suggested.

"I am a charter member, sir," retorted the corpulent gentleman, "and I have ever been, shall ever be, a friend to labor——"

"Ez long ez th' suckers keeps sendin' in them monthly contrybushuns," Ike interjected.

"Mr. Irick," exclaimed the corpulent gentleman, rising to his feet, "I shall no longer listen to your insulting comments. I now depart. You shall be given an opportunity to accede to our demands. If you refuse, your men——," here Mr. Pipkins paused, folded his arms, and glowered majestically upon his recumbent auditor.

"Well," demanded Ike, "what'll th' boys do?"

"Strike!" thundered Mr. Pipkins.

"Strike?" repeated Mr. Irick.

"Strike!" reiterated Mr. Pipkins, less confidently, the little red eyes noting Idaho Ike's rising color.

"Now, don't be hasty, Mr. Irick. Don't be rash. Take time. Think it over. We'll be reasonable."

"Enny uv our boys j'ined yer outfit?" queried Ike, anxiously.

"If they haven't they will, when I present my unanswerable arguments. Consider, Mr. Irick, what a loss to your company would be entailed by the closing of the mine, even for one



" Mr. Philander P. Pipkins "

month. Remember, too, what excesses are committed. Property is destroyed, mine flooded, perhaps bloodshed."

Idaho Ike slowly stroked his moustache and meditated, while Mr. Pipkins, pretending to be absorbed in contemplating the glory of the setting sun, watched him furtively from the corners of the little red eyes. One might have thought that Mr. Pipkins was waiting for something; Ike did.

"Looky here," he finally drawled, "I don't want no trubble. Our boys gits union wages, an' a leetle bonus besides. We don't hire only good men, an' ef they gits sick, er hurt, er killed in our sarvice, we help take keer uv their famblies. They like me, an' I like them, an' they hain't never bin no kick. But ye kain't tell what fool noshun sum uv 'em might take ef a smooth talker like yerself went a-nosin' round amungst 'em. A mine's mighty easy ruined."

"Exactly, Mr. Irick! Exactly! You've hit the nail on the head."

Ike looked up at the corpulent gentleman and winked significantly.

"Couldn't this thing be fixed somehow, on th' q. t., confidenshul-like?"

Mr. Pipkins assured himself that no one was near. Then he resumed his seat, leaned forward, and said, pleasantly:

"I have authority, Mr. Irick, to arrange these matters in the manner you suggest, if I deem it best for the interests of the Confederation.

"Of course," he added, sternly, "whatever I receive is placed, inviolate, in the treasury of the Confederation, for the benefit of labor."

"That's all right, Pip, ol' boy," said Ike, winking industriously. "I hain't a-goin' to send no tracer after th' money. You jest slide out an' let th' boys alone. Thet's all I want."

"I can leave on the eleven-twenty, Mr. Irick, if this matter can be adjusted in time."

"It kin," asserted Ike, confidently. "How much?"

"Well, five hundred wouldn't be unreasonable, would it, Mr. Irick, considering——"

"Be here at ten-fifty," interrupted Ike.

"No check, Mr. Irick; cash, but in such form as I can easily carry."

"I'll fix it so's ye kin carry it, easy," said Ike. "You jest be here."

"I shall be here, promptly. Good-day, Mr. Irick. Complete secrecy, remember, and ten-fifty, sharp."

Idaho Ike watched the waddling figure as it descended the slope and crossed the gulch into the little town.

"'Hurl th' 'presser frum his throne, an', clad in th' glitterin' panoply uv jestic, will hisself be 'nointed an' crowned monark uv all he surveys,'" he quoted. "I remember when I wuz a kid, uv readin' 'bout a feller named Warwick, what had a barrel uv fun a-makin' kings, an' I guess I'll jest organize a Monark Mannerfackshurin' Kumpanay, fer a short time only."

At ten-forty-five that night Mr. Philander P. Pipkins halted, half-way up the slope, to recover his breath, and to murmur something about "soft mark" and "easy money," when a revolver-shot rang out, Mr. Pipkins' silk hat flew from his head, and a sepulchral voice commanded, "Hands up," a behest which Mr. Pipkins promptly and tremblingly obeyed.

Three masked men emerged from the shadows of the rocks into the moonlight. One of them carried a bucket containing a large brush and a mixture which to Mr. Pipkins' quivering nostrils smelled very much like a combination of linseed oil and glue. Another poured from a sack a heap

of small, glittering scales, which Mr. Pipkins' observant eyes recognized as mica.

"Stranger," said the sepulchral voice, "havin' fractured th' rules an' regulashuns uv this here community by appearin' in a plug hat, patent-leather shoes, an' a b'iled shirt, ye air now about to suffer th' penalty. Sum

'nointed an' crowned monarch uv all ye surveyed, we have concluded to accommodate ye, bein' allers anxious to please. Th' Lord Bishop will now apply th' ointment. Shut yer mouth an' eyes, tight."

A few flourishes of the large brush deluged Mr. Pipkins from head to foot.



"Three masked men emerged from the shadow of the rocks in the moonlight"

uv us is in favor uv droppin' ye down th' shaft."

Mr. Pipkins fell on his knees.

"Howsumever," continued the voice, "this bein' yer fust offense, an' understandin' that ye wuz here fur th' purpose uv arrangin' to be clad in th' glitterin' panoply uv jestic, an' bein'

"Th' Royul Guard will now apply th' glitterin' panoply," commanded the voice.

Mr. Pipkins was vigorously rolled, dragged and rubbed in the mica, and then stood on his feet, encased cap-a-pie in shining scales.

"Prepare th' crown."

Mr. Pipkins' silk hat was soused in the bucket, rolled in the mica, and poised over his glittering head.

"King Filander th' Fust," announced the sepulchral voice, "we air about to crown ye monark uv all ye survey. Don't be too long a-survey-in', kase we're a-goin' to fire a saloot uv five shots apiece, after which we're all a-goin' to take a few shots at that crown. That's th' 'leven-twenty now, whistlin' round th' bend. You kin ketch her at the stashun ef ye fly fast enuff, an' sumbody down in town don't wake up an' wing ye fer a strange bird. Apply th' crown."

Mr. Pipkins' hat was jammed down over his head as far as the protruding ears would allow.

"Stand by to saloot. Saloot!"

As the revolvers roared, a streak of flashing scales shot down the moon-lit slope. Mr. Philander P. Pipkins had departed.

"Mister Irick," said Dutchy, next morning, in a confidential tone, as he produced Ike's favorite bottle from beneath the bar, "I vill sell mine sá-loon cheap—fery cheap. I vas goin' to leaf der town right away off already."

"What's th' trubble, Dutchy?" asked Ike.

Dutchy leaned over the bar, guard-

ed his mouth with both hands, and whispered, huskily:

"Say noding, Mister Irick, or I kannicht sell me oudt. A galamity iss to der town comin' soon—yah! Last night, vile I vas der 'leven-twenty train vatchin' pull oudt, rushes down from der mountain ein horrible beast, like von pig golden dragon in der Pible, mit shiny scales all ofer, und ein head dot long, mit wavey yeller gills on der sides. It puffed der schmoke like ein locomotif, und beat der air mit its fore-legs, so—yah! So fast it coom it touch der ground swei maype drei times, und light on der hint blatform mit der train, und laid down und cough leetle fiery schpecks vile der train pull oudt.

"Ach! Laff away, Mister Irick, but dot vas der solum truth. It vas a varning, und I gets me oudt of der town shust so soon as I kan sell me oudt."

"Dutchy," drawled Ike, "I seen it, too. It wasn't no draggin—it was a monark."

"A vat?"

"A monark, Dutchy—a king. Pufectly harmless in this here country. Sumbody's jest ben a goin' into th' king-makin' bizness—fer a limited time only."

