



JAMES HORTON RYAN & CO.

TO GEN. WILLIAM S. KNUDSEN

KNUDSEN

A BIOGRAPHY

by

NORMAN BEASLEY

with an introduction by

WILLIAM S. KNUDSEN

KNUDSEN

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Introduction

IN PRESENTING a period of forty-seven years in the United States, the picture divides itself into three periods.

The first period of twelve years might be considered apprenticeship in factory production operation.

The next twenty-eight years, or the second period, presents a development period in industry in the United States, the birth of mass production and an industrial prosperity, which is a natural sequence.

The third period, or the last seven years, presents the war and its influence on the American life and economy.

The first period was a sort of awakening. The invention and the perfection of the motor car had a tremendous influence over the whole world and procured for America prestige as the cradle of transportation.

Manufacturing was more or less, at the beginning, by the hit-and-miss method. Prices were low, wages were reasonable, and output was sufficient to obtain the necessities of life. Joys were simple and inexpensive; men were strong and had definite opinions as to what life ought to be and as to the means of obtaining it.

America was growing.

Immigrants came in by the hundreds of thousands every year. The farms were reinforced by the influx of men who had knowledge and physical strength to develop the farm and its products.

Government interference was unknown. In fact, individualism reached its zenith during that age and laid the foundation that later was responsible for the extensive development of production.

Manufacturing was helped tremendously by inventions. The American standard of living was advancing rapidly and by the time the second era of mass production was ended we were practically on top of the rest of the world. Everything was growing and everyone

was striving to do better at his daily task. Panics were few and small. Reaction to panics was quick and left but few scars on the economy.

Then came the second period, which lasted until the beginning of the Second World War, and during which much of America's work was created by the demand for comfort and better living. During this period luxuries began creeping into the productive lives of our people.

The boom market of the twenties created a desire for luxuries which was gratified to the fullest extent until the panic of 1929. Then Americans more or less stopped praying to materialism and began to take an interest in the other fellow.

With the prosperity of the twenties came an upswing in the desire for education. All young people were herded into schools of all sorts, and were taught about theoretical happiness instead of about the value of work to pay their taxes and to pay their debts.

When troublesome times came, politics took a sudden interest in what to do to live without working, and a brand new set of teachings came into the life of America. Doles, boondoggling, and government spending were tried. Although these failed utterly, they left a thought in the minds of men that there might be something to them. The family of breadwinners got constantly smaller because the youngsters had been told that manual labor was a detriment to the educational potential ability in this new and better world.

The labor movement, which had been growing steadily on a craft basis, suddenly became the father of the industrial union, where the monthly dues furnished the only qualifications needed to herd people into large numbers, and gave the agitator a chance to harangue and assure that this New Deal was something that was going to make it possible to get something for nothing.

Industry or, rather, the employers were more or less stupefied; as to the government, it took a hand in the argument and proceeded to give labor preferential treatment while the employers had no chance, even in the United States Supreme Court, to be heard or given consideration. The result was that prices went up, and the production picture was lammed when employment became

stationary and only the impetus of war brought back a semblance of prosperity.

Unemployment was cured by taking a large number of producers and placing them in the Army as well as the Navy. The resulting labor shortage raised the price and the cost of labor; and government cheerfully helped it along, using the war as a medium for getting it across.

Industry and agriculture in America responded to the tremendous impetus of fear of the war and rose to the occasion of producing a world's record in war material.

New engines of death were invented and the education of industry, which hitherto had tried to produce goods at low cost, turned right around to produce quality death merchandise at tremendous speed and at costs on a poundage basis never heard of before in American industry.

The volume made the production possible and took the sting out of the high cost, and victory ripped out the remainder of the worries on that score.

Our young men who went to war had no particular experience in war on a scale as conducted by our leaders. They were aggressive and out-of-patience with the principles by which the enemy conducted warfare and, after getting enough material, proceeded to put in a few ideas of their own in the conduct of the war, conquering the stereotyped methods of war as was known from the textbooks of warfare in other parts of the world.

The successful ending of the war and the occupation of foreign lands came. The problem is still with us as to how to clean them up as we would clean up our own land. We find there other people of other thoughts—even among the victors there is a dispute as to what to do with the conquered people. The attempt to control conquered nations with American methods has brought confusion into the picture, and there is passive resistance to everything we want to do—be it right or wrong. The orator has supplanted the soldier and the orator cannot prescribe the remedies for the situation we are in by picking one thing at a time.

Minorities over the world have a field day and, by screaming famine and sickness, complain about conditions that they would have been very happy to impose on the victors, if they had won the war. It is hard to forecast how long this period will last.

One thing is certain—America's production won the war.

American soldiers turned the aggression; and the will to win brought the victory.

We might not be as good administrators of foreign nations as we would like to be, and I forecast that we will carry on until we finally get sick of it, then go home and leave the conquered people more or less to work out their own problems.

The favorite argument is to try to create a fear of communism, which is a bugaboo. Communism can live only when people are starving or unemployed. As soon as people get prosperous and can produce their own living, communism takes on a pinkish hue instead of the red it started with, and it eventually becomes lily-white like the rest of the picture.

So far as America is concerned there is no fear of communism. It is impossible to make communists out of people who have homes and work and motor cars. Political preachers might have some effect for a while but finally, like all politicians, overpromise themselves and get replaced.

So, as long as we practice work, love a home, and bring our children up right, solely for that reason America and its government will remain a pattern for the world.

We must reinstate common labor to its rightful position as the foundation of all industry, even if we have to use college instruction in pick and shovel work rather than atomic energy, for physical work is the salt of the earth, and sound bodies produce healthy brains.

The war was a hard taskmaster, but it really acted as heat-treatment would on steel and left a nation confident of its ability to produce victory when it was really necessary, and beat off the attack of any concerted effort; and at the same time it developed resistance to teachings and ideologies foreign to American principles of life as

well as to the different forms of yoga which will be presented from time to time.

American energy, when sufficiently aroused, will always take care of whatever threat is directed against our government, our people, or our institutions.

WILLIAM S. KNUDSEN.

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CHAPTER ONE

“Hey you!—that tall fellow there!”

IT WAS A clear, cold February day in 1900 and the trip across from Copenhagen had been long and stormy. Now the end of the journey was near for the 500 immigrants on the little 6,000-ton ship, the “Norge”; near, too, was the end of what had seemed to be an endless menu of salt-water herring and rye bread.

As the ship’s engines idled to permit the pilot to come aboard at Ambrose Light off Sandy Hook, a tall, gangling youth of twenty stood watching—staring at the informality of the casual greeting to the ship’s officers, his eyes following the sturdy, derby-hatted figure of the pilot going up the steps to the bridge, his ears listening to the two sharp signals that sent the ship on its way again.

The tall, gangling youth smiled approvingly at the lack of ceremony, then turned and, leaning against a stanchion, watched as the ship came up the Narrows—watched as it came into the harbor, a harbor filled with busy little tugs and ferries waddling noisily back and forth seemingly without purpose but invariably scuttling in and out of the piers which lined the shore.

From the distance the piers were a dirty brown, as if they were of the soil from which grew the great, imposing structures that were rising before him—the Park Row Building, conceded to be “the tallest building in the world,” rising thirty-one stories, 390 feet toward the sky; the St. Paul Building, twenty-six stories, 313 feet from bottom to top; the World Building with its golden dome; the Home Life Insurance Building and its impressive tower. . . .

And he thought as he stood there that no king and no emperor had built such edifices—no king and no emperor had built this country; and he was to think then, and learn afterward, it was the sidewalk-level man who had built those towers, who would build other and greater towers and who was building the land that lay

beyond them. . . . A little later he was standing on the gangplank, looking down at his first stop in the new land—Hoboken.

“Hurry up, you square-headed Swede!” rasped a voice behind him.

Startled, the tall, gangling youth stepped quickly along and down to a pier, where, with the others, his name was checked against the ship’s manifest. Then, with them, he was ferried across the harbor to Castle Garden, at the foot of New York’s Battery. When it was his turn he identified himself to the immigration authorities as Signius Wilhelm Poul Knudsen.

“Do you speak English?” asked the official.

“Yes.”

“Let’s see your exit permit.”

Knudsen produced it.

“How much money have you got?”

Knudsen displayed a few bills, about twenty dollars in all.

“Hmmm,” cogitated the inspector, handing back the money as he finished counting. “Not much to go on. Got a job?”

“No, sir.”

“Expect to get one?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Where?”

“Don’t know, sir.”

“What do you do?”

“In Denmark I worked on bicycles.”

“Mechanic, eh?”

“Yes, sir.”

“All right. Move along. See the doctor over there,” and the inspector pointed at a medical man who was examining other immigrants, mostly for eye diseases. Within fifteen minutes Signius Wilhelm Poul Knudsen, a heavy overcoat covering a pin-striped suit, a Scotch-plaid scarf wrapped tightly about his neck, a gray cap perched on top of his head, and lugging a heavy grip, stepped out of Castle Garden and became a resident of the United States by slowly walking across the Battery to a Lutheran mission on South Street.

At the mission he presented a card of introduction that had been given him on the ship. Lodging cost one dollar a day. He paid his dollar, got himself settled, and went out to explore downtown New York.

Because a number of ships had come in that day the saloons on lower Broadway were crowded with immigrants and sailors. Making his way in and out of the barrooms and avoiding more than one brawl, the young Dane made a discovery. He discovered that for a nickel glass of beer he could help himself to free lunches of roast beef, smoked fish, pickles, bread, sliced onions—all sorts of things, depending upon the imagination and competitive spirit of the saloon-keeper.

He spent the next ten days exploring new streets, looking for work. He tried to find bicycle factories. There were none. Then one night in the mission he was slowly reading an evening newspaper when he saw an advertisement. Someone wanted a janitor. Early the next morning Knudsen was on an elevated train, hauled by a steam engine—destination, Eighth Avenue and 152d Street, far uptown.

Here he met Harry Hansen, a Norwegian who was superintendent of an eight-story apartment building covering an entire square block. A carpenter, Hansen had an outside job and offered Knudsen the janitor part of his duties. “The pay,” he said, “is fifteen dollars a month, your room, and your board.”

Knudsen took the job. His duties consisted of emptying the garbage from the dumb-waiters, sweeping the roof each day and each night, and turning off the gaslights in all the corridors.

A week of this and Hansen came home one night to say, “This is no job for you, Wilhelm.”

Knudsen agreed.

“I heard today that they are putting on help at the Seabury shipyards.”

“Where’s that?”

“Up in Morris Heights.”

“I go there first thing tomorrow.”

Hansen wrote out directions on a piece of paper, and before it was daylight the next morning Knudsen boarded a train near the Polo Grounds, not far away. After a fifteen-minute ride he arrived at the shipyards and joined a group of men at the gate.

"Hey, you!—that tall fellow there?" barked the employment manager.

Knudsen stepped forward.

"Ever work in a shipyard?"

"No, sir."

"Know anything about tools?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Go over and see Jack Sullivan, foreman on fitting," instructed the employment manager, jerking a thumb over his shoulder. "He'll take care of you. The pay is seventeen and one-half cents an hour, ten hours a day, five and a half days a week."

Knudsen reported to Sullivan and was turned over to the timekeeper who, looking up from his desk, inquired, "What's your name?"

"Signius Wilhelm Poul Knudsen."

"What the hell! Give me something I can write!"

"Wilhelm Knudsen."

"'Wilhelm?'" The timekeeper shook his head, wrote "William," then asked, "How do you spell your last name?"

"K-n-u-d-s-e-n."

The timekeeper completed his record taking. "William Knudsen," he said. "O.K., Bill, you've got a job. Get to work!"

That night Knudsen told Hansen he had been hired and made arrangements to keep his room which was off a store downstairs. Hansen proposed that Mrs. Hansen pack his lunches and that he take his other meals with the family. Knudsen agreed. He figured, now that he was making ten-fifty a week, he could afford to pay five dollars a week for room and board.

That night, too, he again wrote his mother, this time telling her he had a job reaming holes in ship plate for torpedo boats.

Signius Wilhelm Poul Knudsen was born on March 25, 1879.

The place of his birth was Voldmestergade, No. 26, Copenhagen, Denmark. A midwife was in attendance. His father was Knud Peter Knudsen, a customs inspector, but a cooper by trade from a family that had been coopers and sailors since 1660. His mother was Augusta Zollner Knudsen, from a family that since 1550 had been artisans and carriage makers.

By a previous marriage Knud Peter Knudsen was the father of four children, Semon Emil, Dagmar, George, and Ove Axel. A widower, he courted and married Augusta Zollner, daughter of a carriage maker. Six children, Signius Wilhelm Poul, Obeline, Louise, Martha, Anna, and Elna, were born to them.

The customs inspector, his wife, and their ten children lived in four rooms of a two and one-half story brick dwelling, the four rooms consisting of a kitchen, two bedrooms, and a living room. As the children grew older they graduated to sleeping cots in the attic while the babies (and, regularly, every two years for twelve years there was a new one) slept “downstairs” with their parents.

Although the family was large and the rooms were not, it was a home—a home that Knud Peter Knudsen ruled with Danish discipline and Augusta Zollner Knudsen governed with love—love of her husband, her children, and her stepchildren.

The elder Knudsen lost his cooperage business in 1873, when increasing exports of corn from the United States and Russia forced Danish agriculture into a crisis from which it did not recover until twenty years later, by which time it had shifted its concentration from corn to butter and pork. Needing work, Knud Peter Knudsen became a customs inspector. His salary was 1,400 kroner (about \$350) a year.

Judged by present standards it was very little; judged by standards of the time it was enough to support his family, give each of his children a sound education, and, by very careful handling, to pay lawyers’ fees and legal costs on his defunct business.

He stood a trifle under six feet, weighed about 200 pounds, and had wide shoulders, a dark, full beard, blue eyes, and a mop of dark, wavy hair. As corporal in the Danish Army in the war between Denmark

and Prussia, he was shot in the shoulder at the Battle of Dybbol in 1864. He was taken prisoner and removed to Posen, where despite his wound, he was put to work pushing a wheelbarrow in a labor battalion. There his diet was mostly potatoes.

Physically powerful, in spite of this arduous experience, Knud Peter Knudsen liked to demonstrate his strength by holding up his entire family on his legs, arms, and shoulders, in much the same sort of a balancing act that is familiar to circus audiences. That feat and playing checkers were his principal diversions; his official duties required that he alternate his working hours, spending two months on day shift and two months on night shift.

Augusta Zollner Knudsen was a woman above medium height. She had a generous mouth, a purposeful nose, steady, expressive eyes, and an intelligent forehead. Her heavy, dark hair was parted in the middle, piled up on top, and rolled in long curls down the back of her neck. Usually she was dressed in a blue and white gingham gown, with lace at the throat.

After her family and her home, her pride was in the little flower garden situated between the dwelling and the iron fence that shut off the property from the street. Here she minded her roses and tulips, geraniums and candytuft; here, too, she watched tenderly over a vine that, clinging to the walls, ran up the building and peeked into her kitchen before hiding away under the eaves.

She was a good manager of her husband's weekly pay of six dollars and seventy-three cents. Her thrifty needle kept the children well clothed, with each suit and each dress finding more wear by the younger children; her table was always well filled with cheeses and milk, meat and vegetables, bread and pastries. She managed the family baths in the kitchen washtub by placing each member on a schedule.

Quite early, Dagmar Knudsen married a captain in the merchant marine; quite early, too, George Knudsen and Ove Axel Knudsen went to sea. A carpenter by trade, George became discouraged by the frequent strikes which marked the gathering strength of the Social Democratic Party. He sailed as ship's carpenter on full-rigged

ships out of Hamburg to the Caribbean, as well as in and out of Antwerp. Contracting malaria, he died at the age of twenty-six and was buried at sea, off Mobile, Ala.

Directly after his confirmation in the Lutheran church, Ove Axel became a member of the Danish Coast Guard, learned practical sailing, and, on reaching his majority, began going on long trips to South America and Asia. He was lost at sea in the disappearance of his bark en route from England to Argentina with a cargo of coal.

Starting at the age of six, Signius Wilhelm Poul Knudsen attended public school in the morning and in the afternoon worked for a glazier, pushing a cart containing window glass from the shop to the place of building operations. His pay was two kroner (fifty cents) a week. The hours were from half-past one until five or longer. His employer, a man named Andersen, was a hard boss.

During this period Copenhagen was tearing out the obsolete fortifications that rimmed its outskirts, breaking up the stone, and converting it into a foundation for boulevards, and tearing down its ancient buildings and putting up new ones. Andersen often worked overtime filling his orders; the six-year-old boy often worked overtime delivering them.

He might have complained to his parents. He did not. Instead, and in common with many Danish children, at the age of six he began to learn that if he was to earn his way he had to work. Seven years in public and high schools and two additional years in a government training school gave him a schooling comparable to high school and parts of an undergraduate college education in the United States. The blackboard method was preferred in public and high schools, and a bamboo stick was used with great effectiveness on those pupils who had difficulty training their minds to remember.

Signius excelled in mathematics, history, and literature. The students had their choice of one foreign language. Because of the proximity of Denmark to Germany, he chose German but at the same time made an informal study of English and French.

His German teacher, Ove Nissen, assisted Laurite Jansen in teaching mathematics. Together, when Signius graduated and read an

original paper entitled "The Story of a Horse," they recommended him for a prize. He was summoned to the inspector's office and presented with a silver watch. Later he graduated with honors from the government technical training school, where he learned to make things with his hands.

When he was seven years old his mother, wanting him to be a musician, bought a violin. He took lessons, but music, while interesting him, had no other appeal. When he completed his schooling the question of what he should do for a living was under discussion. Signius expressed himself boldly, "I want to go to sea."

"No," snapped his father. "I have given two sons to the sea. I will give no more."

"But—"

"No!"

Signius was silent for a moment, then ventured, "If I can't go to sea, I'd like to work with Semon."

"I don't think there is any job for you with Semon's firm," surmised his father. They talked about it some more and Signius finally told his parents he would find a job. He did, as an apprentice for a wholesaler named Fritz Hennigsen. From Jacobsen, the foreman, he learned that the hours were from eight o'clock in the morning until five-thirty in the afternoon. The pay was two kroner a week for the first year, four kroner weekly for the following year, six kroner weekly the third year, and eight kroner weekly the fourth year.

Thus at the age of fifteen, Signius Wilhelm Poul Knudsen was apprenticed, on contract from his father, to Fritz Hennigsen, successor to Ernest Permin and wholesaler in hardware, crockery, and toys.

CHAPTER TWO

“Where can I learn to do this?”

STILL WANTING Signius to be a musician but knowing he had lost interest in the violin, Augusta Knudsen bought a piano. The subject of taking lessons was broached. Signius shook his head, but promised he would learn to play.

“How?” asked his mother.

“I don’t know just how,” he said, “but I will learn.”

Fifteen, and beginning as an apprentice, he was puzzled over “just how” for days. One evening he thought of a possible solution. The wholesale house was located on North Boulevard, not far from the palace of King Christian IX. Each noon the band played there, at the changing of the guard.

With a half hour off at midday for lunch Signius figured he could eat on the way—if he hurried—could listen to the band and be back at checking-in time so Jacobsen would not be able to discipline him.

The following day he tried out his plan. He ate his lunch while hurrying down the Boulevard, timed himself to the King’s palace with the watch he had been awarded in school, and allowed an equal number of minutes for his return. He saw the guard changed. He heard the band play. He got back to work on time.

That night, when he was home, he picked at the piano keys until he was able to finger the melody the band had played. Before long—and by listening to the band each day—he taught himself some of the fundamentals of harmony and was a one-piece orchestra for the family gatherings and the neighborhood dancing parties.

When his four years as an apprentice were ended, his brother told him there was an opening in the importing firm as a junior clerk. Christian Achen, owner of the business, had hit upon the idea of importing bicycle parts, as well as tubing from Germany and England, and was in need of additional help.

Signius got the job. The pay was 100 kroner monthly. Before long he was placed in charge of the warehouse in the free harbor of Copenhagen. Here began his career of making things. With a salesman, Axel Klingenberg, he built a tandem bicycle. At the time there were only a few tandems in Denmark and these were used by professionals who acted as pacemakers for distance riders.

With Klingenberg he was adopted into the fraternity of pacemakers and they participated in road races in Denmark, Sweden, and Northern Germany. Usually the winner's prize amounted to 100 kroner, which was split 75-25, the 25 kroner going to the pacemakers. If there were no winnings, there was no pay.

About this time, too, his elder brother suggested it might be a good thing if, together, they went to see the lawyers to whom Knud Peter Knudsen was making monthly payments on a business that had not been in existence for nearly twenty years. They did, proposing to the lawyers that all further payments be nullified because "our father has paid in much more than he owed when his business went into bankruptcy." After some discussion, the lawyers agreed.

In his job with the importing firm, Signius became acquainted with various manufacturers who were importing machine tools from the United States. This acquaintanceship aroused his interest in machine tools and in the country where they were made. When he was twenty he appeared before a military board for induction into the Danish Navy but was rejected because of his height (six feet two inches) and his weight (152 pounds).

Inasmuch as he was not twenty-one years old, he was instructed to appear again in two years. That night he suggested to his parents that he go back to the board, obtain an exit permit from the country for two years of travel, and go to the United States.

They consented; and that was how he became a steerage passenger aboard the "Norge," embarking from the free port of Copenhagen.

Knudsen returned to his boarding house at 152d Street and Eighth Avenue after his second day at the Seabury shipyards with

welts on his face, an eye that was swollen nearly shut, and a nose that was pounded and sore.

Without pausing to wash up he sought out Hansen. “Where can I learn to do this?” he demanded, doubling his fists, waving them, and striking a doubtful boxing pose.

“What happened to you?” ejaculated Hansen, looking at Knudsen’s battered face.

“I got in a fight—with a little fellow,” sputtered Knudsen. “If I could have got my hands on him, I would have broken his neck. But I couldn’t get my hands on him.” Arms flailing in awkward, imitating gestures, Knudsen exploded, “He just danced around and did this—and this—and this . . . and look what he did!”

Hansen’s lips twitched—but he did not laugh. He knew better. Rather he said encouragingly, “That is easy. You come with me.”

After supper Hansen took Knudsen to the Manhattan Athletic Club, at 125th Street and Eleventh Avenue, introduced him to a boxing instructor named Carlson, and explained the situation.

“Ever had on boxing gloves?” asked Carlson.

“No.”

The boxing instructor showed him how, put on a pair himself, and sticking out his chin said, “Hit it.”

Knudsen tried it and promptly got a belt on the nose; and another beating. It was a great lesson for him. It helped to teach him not to be afraid. He kept on with his boxing lessons and improved so rapidly that in a few weeks he was appearing in amateur bouts in the Manhattan Club and in other boxing arenas in and around New York.

Meanwhile, he had taken out his first citizenship papers, largely with a view to enlisting in the United States Navy, his ambition being to be a mechanic’s mate. Meanwhile, also, he was learning something about the English language.

When he landed at Castle Garden, he was rather proud of his ability to speak the language but not so proud one day when, downtown near the Battery and wanting to make a purchase, he approached a policeman and inquired if there was a store in the

neighborhood where he could buy the particular article in mind.

The policemen listened, took off his helmet, scratched his head, and asked Knudsen to repeat his question.

Carefully, slowly, and in what sounded like plain English to him, Knudsen repeated his request.

The policeman nodded, this time understandingly, and pointed to a South Brooklyn ferry, saying, "Sure sonny, take that ferry, right over there."

It was Knudsen's turn to take off his hat and scratch his own head. He decided not to repeat his question. Instead, he thanked the policeman, turned away, and walked to the elevated station. On the way uptown he did some serious thinking about his ability to express himself understandably in the English language. He thought about going to school but dismissed the thought because he could not afford it.

Then he thought of another way. That evening he put it into effect, beginning a long routine of sitting in the doorway of the apartment house where he lived and talking with the children who were always running in and out. He kept it up all the months he lived there. He learned the simple language of children—direct, forceful, plain speech.

These evenings were pleasant interludes, for his working hours at the shipyards were not always pleasant.

Those were days when factories—and shipyards—operated on a straight line of authority with a shop setup beginning with a general foreman, foreman, and men. Piecework was customary. If the foreman knew his arithmetic, the men made out pretty well; so did the company. If the foreman did not know his arithmetic, the new man picked up his tools and went searching elsewhere for work. There was no appeal from a foreman's decision. Or, if the new man, when operating with a gang, failed to hold up his end, his fellow workers got rid of him. There was no appeal from that decision, either.

When there was a dispute the practice of the day was to settle it behind the shed—with fists. In the beginning Knudsen often found himself in fights for which there was no cause—as he figured

it—other than that he was a foreigner with a thick accent who, on his second day at work, had taken a beating from a much smaller man. As he became more proficient with his fists, the invitations to go “behind the shed” became less frequent but the tormenting continued.

With a boyhood apprenticeship in Denmark under a tough foreman and an initiation in the United States into the quick-fisted fraternity of shipyard workers, Knudsen became tough and quick-fisted himself.

He was not long on the job of reaming holes in the bottoms of torpedo boats when he was promoted to be a bucker-up. Being tall and in close quarters he had to work with his knees under his chin and his hands over his head, holding the iron bar against the hot rivets for the riveters to hammer in place. It was hard work.

The gang consisted of four men—two riveters (a right-hander and a left-hander), the bucker-up, and a heater boy. The piece-work was on a rivet basis, with pay being split so that the riveters and the bucker-up each got a third. The bucker-up paid a third of his share to the heater boy, while each riveter gave the heater boy five cents on each dollar earned. Saturday was payday. One of the riveters, or Knudsen, always went to the paymaster, collected the money, which was in bills, silver, and pennies, and brought it back in a cap where the others were waiting. To divide it they put down three caps and counted out the money, so much in each hat. With this done each would split with the heater boy.

There was always an argument until the day Knudsen said he could split the money in half the time by simple arithmetic. Picking up a piece of chalk and using the side of the ship as a blackboard, he demonstrated, with figures, what each would have to pay and how much each would have left.

The riveters were Irish, the heater boy was Irish, and none of the three had any confidence in the Dane’s arithmetic. Knudsen told them to put all the money back in one hat, work it out their own way, and see the result. They did. The result was the same. Knudsen was named treasurer of the riveting gang. He was making

twenty-one dollars, and sometimes twenty-two dollars a week.

On Saturday afternoons he always rigged himself out in his party clothes—blue suit, white shirt, high collar, and derby—and alone, or with shipyard workers, spent the idle hours in the Atlantic beer gardens on the Bowery; in the Irving Place Theater, with supper at Luchow's; or, as on part of one Saturday afternoon, in a saloon on Christopher Street.

Among his companions was a Scotsman who wanted whisky and who, after filling his glass, put a five-dollar bill on the bar. The bartender gave him change for one dollar. The Scotsman objected. His protestations were choked off as a bung starter, swung by the bartender, crashed down on his head. A free-for-all started. With his companions, including the unconscious Scotsman, Knudsen found himself sprawled on the sidewalk, outside.

He tired of the Atlantic Gardens and the Irving Place Theater and began spending his afternoons at Coney Island. Here, too, there were beer gardens and in them Scandinavians who, like himself, liked to sing the songs of their native lands and accompany the nostalgic memories with thumping steins. Then he found something even better—it was Central Park with its band concerts. Thereafter Central Park was his Sunday afternoon habitat. All the while he was improving his English and liking the United States more and more—and particularly did he like the fruit pies he and Hansen used to get from a German baker whose shop was just around the corner from the apartment house. It became a nightly ritual, two pieces, one for each, and between them a bucket of beer.

In the fall of 1900 the shipyards closed and Knudsen got a job repairing locomotive boilers in the Erie railroad shop at Salamanca, a small town in the western part of New York state. It was night work, seven nights a week, and here he learned one of the most important production lessons of his life.

Working as a helper for a veteran boilermaker named Murphy, he soon noted that Murphy, although never seeming to hurry, invariably completed a job in less time than did his younger boilermakers. Knudsen watched and saw that Murphy always figured out the

job on paper first and then followed each planned step.

“Why do you do it that way?” inquired Knudsen.

“Because that way I get the whole job in my mind,” explained Murphy. “To put it down on paper I have to think about it, and if I think about it enough, it means I won’t be making mistakes and wasting time.”

In Salamanca, as in New York, Knudsen lived in a boardinghouse. His landlord was a Dane named Rasmussen, who was married to a German woman. They were the parents of two children. So here, as in New York, there were children to whom he could talk and to whom he could listen; here, too, as in the shipyards, the work was hard and fist fights were frequent until the word got around that “the squarehead” could handle himself; then, as in the shipyards, they became less frequent. But the bosses were just as tough and his job of calking seams in the fireboxes of locomotives did not soften up Knudsen.

He was on his way to being “a bull of the woods,” as tough foremen were called, and he looked forward to the day when he would be able to distribute some of the indignities that had been his lot. It was not that he was vindictive; it was natural. It was the treatment upon which he had been brought up, wherever he worked. To him it was the prerogative of authority; and authority was the award of success.

He had been in the United States nearly a year. He had grown to like it. He wanted to get ahead. He liked the informality of the people. He liked, as he wrote his mother, “the political parades where everyone carries a high hat, an umbrella, or a torch, representing a personal attempt to demonstrate that he, at least for the moment, represented something aside from the ordinary. There is something refreshing about it. Whatever the object is, he is trying to stand out from the crowd and represent something.”

He liked the give-and-take, the hustle, the spirit, the opportunity for improvement. Beginning to look upon himself as an American he was beginning to resent being looked upon, by others, as anything else. He had given up his plan to join the Navy in favor of the work in the railroad shop, and now that it was Christmas he had his

first day off since coming to Salamanca.

Although there were two children in Rasmussen's family and although Christmas is a day for children, it was a lonely day for Knudsen. Very lonely.

In Denmark, on Christmas Eve, even the animals and birds celebrated. Knudsen thought of that—of the extra rations given the animals, of the long ears of corn that were tied to poles stuck in the ground and placed there as a special treat for the birds . . . of Christmas Eve, beginning with the ringing of church bells at six o'clock—the gathering of the family, the table loaded with roast goose and roast pork, rice, browned potatoes, the very special Christmas cake and cookies, rum punch and port wine; and after the feast, the opening of the door to the front room, the exchange of simple gifts. No Santa Claus for the children of Denmark, that was German tradition; in Denmark there were gnomes, many gnomes, who did kind deeds at Christmastime . . . and after the distribution of the simple presents, voices, old and young, joining in singing carols. . . .

Christmas Day—church bells ringing calling all to worship . . . visiting with friends and neighbors in their homes after church . . . strolling down the Boulevard . . . and the second Christmas on the following day when still gathered together they feasted on the leftovers from the Christmas Eve dinner.

Here, in Salamanca, he was a long way from Copenhagen. It was his first Christmas away from home. They sang "Holy Night" in three languages, Rasmussen and Knudsen in Danish, Rasmussen's wife in German, and the two children in English. The children hung up their stockings and went to bed. After helping Rasmussen and his wife fill the stockings, Knudsen went to bed, too.

At noon on Christmas Day there was a dinner of salt codfish cooked in milk, roast pork, and potatoes. Rasmussen and Knudsen spent the afternoon playing with a present to one of the children, a five-cent game of lotto.

In the spring of 1902 Knudsen got a thirty-day leave from the railroad and returned to Denmark. Dressed in a blue suit, white

shirt with high white collar, a derby, and a short overcoat, fingertip length, he disembarked at Copenhagen and presented himself to his family. They commented upon his American accent and approvingly examined his American clothes. They were pleased when he told them he was working steadily and making \$100 a month. He was in Denmark only nine days.

Back in Salamanca he heard disquieting news. He heard that Murphy, the veteran boilermaker who had been working for the railroad company for thirty years, also was making—\$100 a month. Seeking confirmation Knudsen went to Murphy, told him he didn't want to pry but told him he could not understand why he, who had been with the railroad company less than two years, was getting as much money as was Murphy, who had been with the company thirty years.

Murphy pointed out it was a steady job, just the sort of job a man needed when he was older and had a family.

To Knudsen, in his early twenties, the steadiness of the job had slight attraction. “Thirty years,” he thought. “Thirty years—and in less than two years I'm getting as much as he does, and him with eight kids.” He shook his head over the prospects—or rather over the lack of them.

About this time he received a letter from his brother Semon, who was now a partner in the importing firm of Christian Achen, in Copenhagen. The letter stated they were sending their head salesman, a man named Tursleff, to the United States with a view to obtaining representation for an American bicycle company in Denmark. His brother explained there had been correspondence with the John R. Keim Mills, Inc., bicycle manufacturers in Buffalo, N.Y., and inquired if he, Knudsen, would go along with Tursleff, as interpreter.

Shortly afterward Tursleff arrived in Salamanca and Knudsen accompanied him to Buffalo. There they met William H. Smith, superintendent of the Keim plant. Smith was a Yankee, a good mechanic, and a quick appraiser of men. When the interview was ended he looked at Knudsen inquiringly. “You told me you worked

for the Erie railroad?”

“That’s right.”

“Then how do you happen to know so much about bicycles?”

“I worked on them in Denmark.”

“Doing what?”

Knudsen told him; also told him about having participated in road races.

“I’ll give you a job here.”

“What kind of job?”

“Working on bicycles. I’ll pay you ten dollars and a half a week.”

Knudsen laughed. “The railroad’s paying me \$100 a month.”

“Here you’ll have a chance to work up. You won’t get that there.”

“I’ll take it.”

On the way back to Salamanca, Knudsen damned himself for his hastiness in accepting Smith’s offer. But when he got off the train after a ride of three hours, his self-recriminations had disappeared in thoughts of Murphy with his eight children, his thirty years with the railroad company, and his pay of \$100 a month.