

**JASON EDWARDS.
AN AVERAGE MAN**

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Jason Edwards. An Average Man by Hamlin Garland

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AN AVERAGE MAN

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AUTHOR OF WAYSIDE COURT-
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JASON EDWARDS.

PART FIRST—THE MECHANIC.

I.

THERE was a phrase which very completely defined the character of Walter Reeves. He was level-headed. He faced the street, hideous with mud, and tumultuous with the war of belated business, with a laughing face and steady brown eyes, though the city impressed him more than he expected it to do. Fresh from college in an interior New England town, where life moved quietly—this rush of men and teams over greasy, black cobble-stones deafened and bewildered him.

He stood a little while in the mouth of the depot, a gloomy, castellated structure.

His first thought was how to get a boarding place. He set off at last, breasting the stream of suburban people making toward the trains. He was conscious of a little feeling of pride in his appearance, and was flattered by the pleasant glances the young girls gave him as they passed in their beautiful blue and wine-colored waterproof cloaks.

The boarding-house problem puzzled him. Like the thrifty New England boy he was, he couldn't think of going to a hotel, so he fell into the slender stream of people moving off into the heart of the city. This brought him inevitably to the Common; which he had visited once on a Fourth of July excursion.

It was growing dark now, and the rain was falling steadily. The November wind had a wild and lonesome sound in the branches over his head—but he only heard that when the heavy gusts came. The ceaseless tramp of hooves and the grinding roar of the cars deafened and clouded his brain.

He kept on down the plank walk till

he came to the end of the Common. He paused and considered. A fat, very red-haired policeman was standing in the middle of the intersecting streets directing the streams of impatient drivers and sheltering timid ladies across the way under his chevroned arm.

Walter had always been told that the only safe person to ask a question of on the street was a policeman, so he stood an instant by the side of the gesticulating giant, and asked for a good, cheap boarding-house.

"F'r Gawd's sake!" growled the stupefied officer, looking down into Reeves' face. "Where you born?—H'yar! What 're y' doin' there? G'wan!" he shouted to a hackman who was cutting in ahead of a car. He then remembered Reeves. "Anywhere. De whole town is full of 'um"—he threw out his arm toward the left—"Git a move on ye there!"

Walter crossed the street and moved in the direction indicated by the policeman. It was a noisy and crowded street, and he turned off instinctively upon one of the