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NOVEMBER 1917

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

"The
Roaring
U.P. Trail"
by ZANE GREY

"Pleasure
Island"
by
FRANK
R.
ADAMS

Beginning
"Sindbad Of Oakland Creek"
a fine series of sea stories
by Frederick R. Bechdolt

THE BLUE BOOK

RAY LONG, Editor.

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Pleasure Island. By Frank R. Adams 26

This intriguing romance by the author of "Taking Care of Sylvia" and "Princess Bill" reaches some of its most exciting episodes in this installment.

The Roaring U. P. Trail. By Zane Grey 96

Zane Grey was made widely popular by "Riders of the Purple Sage," "The Border Legion" and "The Lone Star Ranger." This story of "The Roaring U. P. Trail" is the best he has ever written.

Twelve Unusually Worth-While Short Stories

Sindbad of Oakland Creek By Frederick R. Bechdolt 1

The first of a new series of fascinating sea stories by the man who wrote "Lighthouse Tom." *Crow's-nest Dan* is a character you will love and admire.

Free Lances in Diplomacy By Clarence Herbert New 13

"Poker in Vienna" has to do with a dramatic *coup* of our secret-agents in Vienna. Watch what the newspapers report from Austria this month.

The E. P. of Badger Bill By J. Frank Davis 49

He knows his Texas and his Texans, does Mr. Davis. And you'll agree that he deals with a place and a people well worth knowing.

Ten Yards for Slugging By William Almon Wolff 59

Football is only one of the interesting elements in this story. A real man and a real woman will also kindle your enthusiasm.

The Mercy Wagons By Stephen Morehouse Avery 70

A story of the great war and of our gallant pioneer American participants, the ambulance-drivers.

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This hero of the war was c
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West.

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The Roaring U. P. Trail

A Novel of the Great West by Zane Grey

(Events of the previous installments:)

AT dusk one night in 1865, just after the Civil War, an old trapper named Slingerland rode into the camp of some engineers who were at work in the Black Hills on a hazardous survey—the laying out of the Union Pacific Railroad. Slingerland reported that a little party of eastbound travelers was threatened by Sioux near by, and asked help of the soldiers who accompanied the surveying party. The soldiers immediately went to the rescue, and with them rode an adventurous young engineer named Warren Neale and his cowboy friend Larry King.

Meanwhile the travelers under the leadership of a man named Horn had made a fort of their wagons; and Horn had buried a treasure of gold he was bringing back from California.

Among the travelers were two women—Mrs. Durade and her daughter Allie, a girl of sixteen; and before the Indian attack, Mrs. Durade made a confession to her daughter.

"I ran off with Durade before you were born," Mrs. Durade told her daughter. "Durade is not your father! Your name is Lee. Your father is Allison Lee. I've heard he's a rich man now. Oh! I want to get back—to give you to him—to beg forgiveness.

"We were married in New Orleans in 1847. My father made me marry him. I never loved Allison Lee. I met Durade, a Spaniard—a blue-blooded adventurer. I ran off with him to Cali-

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fornia. You were born out there in 1850. He was a crooked gambler. He made me share in his guilt. My face lured miners to his dens! Thank God I left him—before it was too late—for you!"

And then the yells of the attacking Sioux cut short Mrs. Durade's story.

WHEN Warren Neale and the soldiers came upon the scene it seemed at first that they were too late, for they found only charred ashes and mutilated bodies.

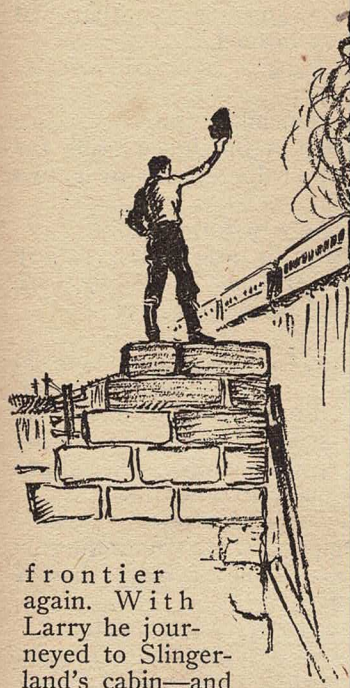
Neale, King and Slingerland lingered after the soldiers had left, however; and under a ledge of rock they came on a young girl, unconscious but still alive, sole survivor of the massacre.

They took the girl to Slingerland's cabin, and there she gradually came to herself. Neale was detailed to pass the winter in this vicinity in order to take observations of the snowfall. He lived at Slingerland's cabin, and the time passed happily, for Allie blossomed into new health and beauty; when in the spring Neale went back to his work with the construction survey, he left Allie engaged to him.

A busy summer followed, in the course of which Larry and Neale each saved the other's life in exciting adventures. Fall brought a bitter disappointment, for Neale was ordered to Omaha and was unable to visit Allie at Slingerland's.

In the Omaha office Neale came into collision with the forces of graft. One of his surveys was declared faulty and the construction work ordered done over again—simply for the additional profits of the repeated construction. Neale protested, but in vain.

When spring came, Neale threw up his work in Omaha and left for the

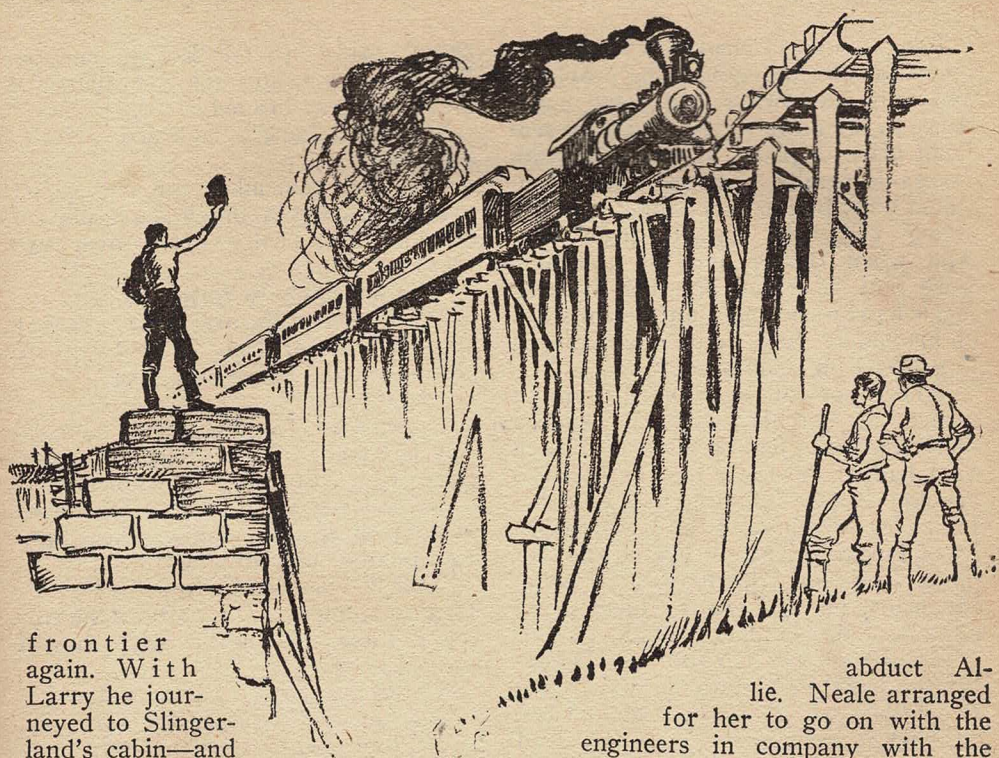


frontier again. With Larry he journeyed to Slingerland's cabin—and found only an abandoned heap of charred embers.

MUCH had happened to Slingerland had left her alone and four outlaws had come to the cabin, robbed it of the treasure, set it afire and carried Allie away. The girl had escaped from them only to be captured by Indians and retained as the prize of a young chief. Allie was helped to escape by the chief's jealous wife. For a time she made her way alone across the wilderness; and when at last she reached the fort, it was from a party of travelers by the gambler Durade, Allie's father. Durade took her to his cabin where he opened a gambling house.

Meanwhile Neale, heartbroken by Allie's loss, gave up his job and came to Benton. There he met Slingerland who told him how Allie was then, eventually, he found her; for she had escaped from Durade and had taken refuge with Slingerland, leader of the engineers.

Fearful that Durade would



frontier again. With Larry he journeyed to Slingerland's cabin—and found only an abandoned heap of charred embers.

MUCH had happened to Allie. Slingerland had left her alone one day, and four outlaws had come to the cabin, robbed it of the trapper's furs, set it afire and carried Allie off. The girl had escaped from them, however, only to be captured by Indians. Destined as the prize of a young chief, Allie was helped to escape by the chief's jealous wife. For days Allie made her way alone across the wilderness; and when at last she found succor, it was from a party of travelers led by the gambler Durade, Allie's foster-father. Durade took her to Benton, where he opened a gambling-house.

Meanwhile Neale, heartbroken at Allie's loss, gave up his job, and seeking distraction, came also, with Larry, to Benton. There he met Slingerland, who told him how Allie was lost; and then, eventually, he found Allie herself; for she had escaped from Durade and had taken refuge with General Lodge, leader of the engineering party.

Fearful that Durade would again

abduct Allie. Neale arranged for her to go on with the engineers in company with the wives of some of the officers.

Shortly after, the party was attacked by a force of Sioux accompanied by ruffians. And when, after the cabins had been burned and many of the party killed, reinforcements drove off the redskins, Allie had again disappeared.

For with the Indians had been Durade's henchman, the outlaw Fresno. He had carried off Allie and brought her again to Durade; and the gambler now held her a close prisoner in a back room of his gambling-house in Benton. And in spite of his searchings through the purlieus of that wild town, Neale failed to find any trace of her.

(The story follows in detail:)

CHAPTER XXII

NEALE conceived an idea that he was in line for the long-looked-for promotion. Neither his chief nor Baxter gave any suggestion of a hint of such possibility, but more and more as the work rapidly progressed, Neale had been intrusted with important inspections.

Long since, he had discovered his talent for difficult engineering problems, and with experience had come confidence in his powers. He had been sent from place to place, in each case with favorable results. General Lodge consulted him; Baxter relied upon him; the young engineers learned from him. And when Baxter and his assistants were sent on ahead into the Rockies, Neale had an enormous amount of work on his hands. Still, he usually managed to get back to Benton at night.

Whereupon at once he became a seeker, a searcher; and he believed there was not a tent or a hut or a store or a hall in the town that he had not visited. But he found no clue of Allie. He never encountered the well-remembered face of the bandit Fresno; he saw more than one Spaniard and many Mexicans, but not one of them could have been the gambler Durade.

But Benton was too full, too change-ful, too secret to be thoroughly searched in a little time. Neale bore his burden, although it grew heavier each day. And his growing work on the railroad was his salvation.

ONE morning he went to the tele-graph-station expecting orders from General Lodge. He found the Chief's special train at the station headed east.

"Neale, I'm off for Omaha," said Lodge. "Big powwow. The directors roaring again!"

"What about?" queried Neale, always alive to interest of that nature.

"Cost of the construction. What else? Neale, there are two kinds of men building the U. P. R.—men who see the meaning of the great work, and men who see only the gold in it."

"And they conflict! That's what you mean?"

"Exactly. We've been years on the job now, and the nearer the meeting of rails from west to east, the harder our problems. Henney is played out; Boone is ill; and Baxter wont last much longer. If I were not an old soldier, I would be done up now."

"Chief, I can see only success," replied Neale with spirit.

"Assuredly! We see with the same

eyes," said General Lodge, smiling. "Neale, I've a job for you that will make you gray-headed."

"Hardly that," returned Neale, laughing.

"Do you remember the survey we made out here in the Black Hills for Number Ten bridge—made over two years ago?"

"I'm not likely to forget it."

"Well, the rails are within twenty miles of Number Ten. They'll be there presently—and no piers to cross on!"

"How's that?"

"I don't know. The report came in only last night. It's a queer document. Here it is. Study it at your leisure. It seems a big force of men have been working there for months. Piers have been put in—only to sink!"

"Sink!" ejaculated Neale. "Whew! That's a stumper. . . . Chief, the survey is mine. I'll never forget how I worked on it."

"Could you have made a mistake?"

"Of course," replied Neale readily. "But I'd never believe that unless I saw it. A tough job it was—but just the kind of work I eat up."

"Well, you can go out and eat it up some more."

"That means I'll have to camp out there. I can't get back to Benton."

"No, you can't. And isn't that just as well?" queried the Chief, his keen, dark glance on Neale. "Son, I've heard your name coupled with gamblers—and that Stanton woman."

"No doubt. I know them. I've been seeking some trace of—of Allie."

"You still hope to find her? You still imagine some of this riffraff Benton gang made off with her?"

"Yes."

"Son, it's scarcely possible," said Lodge earnestly. "Anderson claims the Sioux got her. We all inclined to that."

. . . . Oh, it's hard, Neale. . . . Love and life are only atoms under the iron heel of the U. P. R. . . . It's too late now. You can't forget—no, but you must not risk your life, your opportunities, your reputation."

NEALE turned away his face a moment and was silent. An engine whistled; a bell began to ring; some

train-official called to General Lodge. The Chief held up his hand to stop more delay.

"I'm off," he said rapidly. "You'll go out to Number Ten bridge—charge."

That surprised and thrilled Neale with eagerness.

"Who are the engineers?"

"Blake and Coffee. I'll send them. Henney sent them to Omaha. They're well recommended—that's no matter. Something's wrong. You're to have full charge of the bosses, masons. In fact, I've sent you out to that effect."

"Who's the contractor?"

"I don't know. But what he has made a pile of money out of—job—and the job's not done yet—what galls me."

"Well, Chief, it *will* be done. Neale, sharp with determination."

"Good! Neale, I'll start another load off my shoulders. And Son, if you throw up your hands there'll be no delay, something's wrong for the rails and the work. Then plan piers right for Number Ten. Well, you'll hear from it: take care. They shook hands."

"I may be gone a week or more. I can't tell," went on the Chief. "When I do come, I'll probably have a trainload of directors, contractors, stockholders."

"Bring them on," said Neale.

"Maybe if they saw more of the work up against, they wouldn't have any more to say."

"Right! Remember your charge and that I trust you. Good-by and good luck!"

The Chief boarded his train and was gone. Neale watched the station, and with a swiftness he realized that he had been right. That his premonition of a conflict had not been without warning.

THE work-train was back at the station and would depart in short order. Neale hurried to his lodgings to pack his few belongings. Larry was lying on his cot, and asleep. Neale shook him.

"Wake up, you lazy son of a gun," shouted Neale.

train-official called to General Lodge. The Chief held up his hand for a little more delay.

"I'm off," he said rapidly. "Neale, you'll go out to Number Ten and take charge."

That surprised and thrilled Neale into eagerness.

"Who are the engineers?"

"Blake and Coffee. I don't know them. Henney sent them out from Omaha. They're well recommended, but that's no matter. Something is wrong. You're to have full charge of engineers, bosses, masons. In fact, I've sent word out to that effect."

"Who's the contractor?" asked Neale.

"I don't know. But whoever he is, he has made a pile of money out of this job—and the job's not done. That's what galls me."

"Well, Chief, it *will* be done," said Neale, sharp with determination.

"Good! Neale, I'll start east with another load off my shoulders. . . . And Son, if you throw up a bridge so there'll be no delay, something temporary for the rails and the work-train and then plan piers right for Number Ten—well, you'll hear from it: that's all."

They shook hands.

"I may be gone a week or a month—I can't tell," went on the Chief. "But when I do come, I'll probably have a trainload of directors, commissioners, stockholders."

"Bring them on," said Neale. "Maybe if they saw more of what we're up against, they wouldn't holler so."

"Right! Remember you've full charge and that I trust you implicitly. Good-by and good luck!"

The Chief boarded his train as it began to move. Neale watched it leave the station, and with a swelling heart he realized that he had been placed high, that his premonition of advancement had not been without warrant.

THE work-train was backing into the station and would depart westward in short order. Neale hurried to his lodgings to pack his few belongings. Larry was lying on his cot, fully dressed and asleep. Neale shook him.

"Wake up, you lazy son-of-a-gun!" shouted Neale.

Larry opened his eyes.

"Wal, what's wrong? Is it last night or to-morrow?"

"Larry, I'm off. Got charge of a big job."

"Is thet all?" drawled Larry sleepily.

"Why, shore I always knowed you'd be chief engineer some day."

"Pard, sit up," said Neale unsteadily.

"Will you stay sober—and watch—and listen for some news of Allie? Till I come back to Benton?"

"Neale, air you still dreamin'?" asked Larry incredulously.

"No. Will you do that much for me?"

"Shore."

"Thank you, old friend. Good-by now; I've got to rustle."

He left Larry sitting on his cot, staring at nothing. On the way to the station, Neale encountered the gambler Place Hough, who despite his nocturnal habit was an early riser. In the excitement of the hour, Neale gave way to an impulse which at a cooler time he might not have had. Briefly he told Hough about Allie—her disappearance and probable hidden presence in Benton—and asked the gambler to keep his eyes and ears open. Hough seemed both surprised and pleased with the confidence, and he said he would go out of his way to help Neale.

Neale had to run to catch the train. A brawny Irishman extended a red-sleeved arm to help him up.

"Up wid yez!"

Neale found himself with bag and rifle and blanket sprawling on the gravel-covered floor of a flat-car. Casey, the old lineman, grinned at him over the familiar short black pipe.

"B'gorra, it's me ould fri'nd Neale!"

"It sure is. How're you, Casey?"

"Pretty good fur an ould soldier. . . . An' it's news I hear of yez, me boy!"

"What news?"

"Sure, yez hed a boost. Ginerall Lodge hisself wor tellin' Grady, the boss, thot yez hed been given charge of Number Ten."

"Yes, that's correct."

"I'm dorn glad to hear ut," declared the Irishman. "But yez hev a hell of a job in thot Number Ten."

"So I've been told. What do you know about it, Casey?"

"Shure, ut aint much. A fri'nd of mine was mixin' mortar over there. An' he sez whin the crick was dry, ut hed a bottom, but whin wet, ut sure hed none."

"Then I have got a job on my hands," replied Neale grimly.

THE work-train took several hours to reach the end of the rails in those days. Neale rode by some places with a profound satisfaction in the certainty that but for him the track would not yet have been spiked there. Construction was climbing fast into the Black Hills. He wondered when and where would be the long-looked-for meeting of the rails connecting East with West. Word had drifted over the mountains that the Pacific division of the construction was already in Utah.

At the camp Colonel Dillon offered Neale an escort of troopers out to Number Ten, but Neale decided he could make better time alone. There had been no late sign of Indians in that locality, and he knew both the road and the trail.

Early next morning, mounted on a fast horse, he set out. It was a melancholy ride, for several times he had been over that ground, once traveling west with Larry, full of ardor and joy at the prospect of soon seeing Allie Lee, and again on the return, in despair at loss of her.

He rode the twenty miles in three hours. The camp of dirty tents was clustered in a hot, dusty valley surrounded by hills sparsely fringed with trees. Neale noted the timber as a lucky augury to his enterprise. It was an idle camp full of lolling laborers.

As Neale dismounted, a Mexican came forward.

"Look after the horse," said Neale, and taking his luggage, he made for a big tent with a fly extended in front. Several men sat on camp-chairs round a table. One of them got up and stepped out.

"Where are Blake and Coffee?" inquired Neale.

"I'm Blake," was the reply. "And there's Coffee. Are you Mr. Neale?"

"Yes."

"Coffee, here's our new boss," called Blake as he took part of Neale's baggage.

Coffee appeared to be a sunburned, middle-aged man, rather bluff and hearty in his greeting. The younger engineer, Blake, was a tanned, thin-faced individual with a shifty gaze and constrained manner. The third fellow they introduced as a lineman named Somers. Neale had not anticipated a cordial reception and felt disposed to be generous.

"Have you got quarters for me here?" he asked.

"Sure. There's lots of room and a cot," replied Coffee.

They carried Neale's effects inside the tent. It was large and spare, containing table and lamp, boxes for seats, several cots and bags.

"It's hot. Got any drinking water?" asked Neale, taking off his coat. He opened his bag to take things out, then drank thirstily of the water offered him. He did not care much for this part of his new task. These engineers might be sincere and competent, but he had been sent on to judge their work, and the situation was not pleasant. Neale had observed many engineers come and go during his experience on the road; and that fact, with the authority given him and his loyalty to the Chief, gave him cause for worry. He hoped, and he was ready to believe, that these engineers had done their best on an extremely knotty problem.

"We got Lodge's telegram last night," said Coffee. "Kinda sudden. It jarred us."

"No doubt. I'm sorry. What was the message?"

"Lodge never wastes words," replied the engineer shortly. But he did not vouchsafe the information Neale asked.

NEALE threw his notebook upon the dusty table, and sitting down on a box, he looked up at the men. Both engineers were studying him intently, almost eagerly, Neale imagined.

"Number Ten's a tough nut to crack, eh?" he inquired.

"We've been here three months," replied Blake.

"Wait till you see that hole," added Coffee.

"Quicksand! It was a stream-bed when I ran the here and drew the plans for Ten," declared Neale.

Coffee and Blake stared at him. So did the lineman, Somers.

"You! Did you draw the we've been working on?" asked Neale.

"Yes, I did," answered Neale. It struck him that Blake smiled slightly. Neale sustained a of surprise and antagonism over his notebook, opening a page. Fighting his first impulse, he decided they had arisen from the dismay of the engineers' consciousness of a blunder.

"Let's get down to notes," he said, taking up his pencil. "I've been here three months."

"Yes."

"With what force?"

"Two hundred men, on a

"Who's the gang-boss?"

"Colohan. He's had some of the best contracts along the line."

Neale was about to inquire of the contractor, but he refrained by one of his peculiarities.

"Anybody working with you here?" he supplemented.

"Yes. Masons had been on for six weeks."

"What's been done?"

Coffee laughed harshly. "Three piers in—good and solid bottom. Then along comes the rain and our work melts into the mud. Since then we've been trying to get it over."

"But why did this happen in this place?"

Coffee spread wide his arms. "Ask me something easy. Is the bottom dry and solid? Or is it rain? Why did solid earth turn into quicksand?"

Neale slapped the notebook on the table and rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen, that is not the way engineers," he said deliberately.

"The devil you say! Then?" burst out Coffee, his face growing redder.

"I'll tell you later," replied Neale.

"Wait till you see that quicksand hole," added Coffee.

"Quicksand! It was a dry, solid stream-bed when I ran the line through here and drew the plans for Number Ten," declared Neale.

Coffee and Blake stared blankly at him. So did the lineman, Somers.

"You! Did *you* draw the plans we've been working on?" asked Coffee.

"Yes, I did," answered Neale slowly. It struck him that Blake had paled slightly. Neale sustained a slight shock of surprise and antagonism. He bent over his notebook, opening it to a clean page. Fighting his first impressions, he decided they had arisen from the manifest dismay of the engineers and their consciousness of a blunder.

"Let's get down to notes," Neale went on, taking up his pencil. "You've been here three months."

"Yes."

"With what force?"

"Two hundred men, on and off."

"Who's the gang-boss?"

"Colohan. He's had some of the biggest contracts along the line."

Neale was about to inquire the name of the contractor, but he refrained, governed by one of his peculiar impulses.

"Anybody working when you got here?" he supplemented.

"Yes. Masons had been cutting stone for six weeks."

"What's been done?"

Coffee laughed harshly. "We got the three piers in—good and solid on dry bottom. Then along comes the rain—and our work melts into the quicksand. Since then we've been trying to do it over."

"But why did this happen in the first place?"

Coffee spread wide his arms.

"Ask me something easy. Why was the bottom dry and solid? Why did it rain? Why did solid earth turn into quicksand?"

Neale slapped the notebook shut and rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen, that is not the talk of engineers," he said deliberately.

"The devil you say! What is it, then?" burst out Coffee, his face flushing redder.

"I'll tell you later," replied Neale,

turning to the lineman. "Somers, tell this gang-boss Colohan I want him."

Then Neale left the tent. He had started to walk away when he heard Blake speak in a fierce undertone.

"Didn't I tell you? We're up against it!"

And Coffee growled a reply Neale could not understand. But the tone of it was conclusive. These men had made a serious blunder and were blaming each other, hating each other for it. Neale was conscious of anger. This section of line came under his survey, and he had been proud to be given such important and difficult work. Incompetent or careless engineers had bungled Number Ten. Neale strode on among the idle and sleeping laborers, between the tents and then past the blacksmith's shop and the feed-corral down to the river.

A SHALLOW stream of muddy water came murmuring down from the hills. It covered the wide bed that Neale remembered had been a dry sand and gravel waste. On each side of the abutment, piers had been undermined and washed out; not a stone remained in sight. The banks were hollowed inward, and shafts of heavy boards were sliding down. In the middle of the stream stood a cofferdam in course of building, and near it another that had collapsed. These frameworks almost hid the tip of the middle pier, which had evidently slid over and was sinking on its side. There was no telling what had been sunk in that hole. All the surroundings—the tons of stone, cut and uncut, the piles of muddy lumber, the platforms and rafts, the manifestations in the worn shores up and down both sides—all attested to the long weeks of fruitless labor and to the engulfing mystery of that shallow, murmuring stream.

Neale returned thoughtfully to camp. Blake and Coffee were sitting under the fly in company with a stalwart Irishman.

"Fine sink-hole you picked out for Number Ten, don't you think?" queried Blake.

Neale eyed his interrogator with somewhat of a penetrating glance. Blake did not frankly meet that gaze. The young man seemed to be laboring

with what Neale took to be a bitterness difficult to conceal.

"Yes, it's a sink-hole, all right, and no mistake," replied Neale. "It's just what I calculated when I ran the plans. . . . Did you follow those plans?"

Blake appeared about to reply, when Coffee cut him short.

"Certainly we did," he snapped.

"Then where are the breakwaters?" asked Neale sharply.

"Breakwaters!" ejaculated Coffee. His surprise was sincere.

"Yes, breakwaters," retorted Neale. "I drew plans for breakwaters to be built upstream so that in high water the rapid current would be directed equally between the piers and not against them."

"Oh, yes—why, we must have got it mixed," replied Coffee. "Thought they were to be built last. Wasn't that it, Blake?"

"Sure," replied his colleague, but his tone lacked something.

"Ah—I see," said Neale slowly.

Then the big Irishman got up to extend a huge hand.

"I'm Colohan," he boomed.

NEALE liked the bronzed, rough face, good-natured and intelligent. And he was aware of a shrewd pair of gray eyes taking his measure. That these men should want to look through Neale might have been natural enough, but it began to be strange to him. He had come there to help them, not to discharge them. Colohan, however, did not rouse Neale's antagonism as the others had begun to.

"Colohan, are you sick of this job?" queried Neale after greeting the boss.

"Yes—an' no," replied Colohan.

"You want to quit, then?" went on Neale bluntly.

The Irishman evidently took this curt query as a foreword of the coming dismissal. He looked shamed, crestfallen, at a loss to reply.

"Don't misunderstand me," continued Neale. "I'm not going to fire you. But if you are sick of the job, you can quit. I'll boss the gang myself. . . . The rails will be here in ten days; and I'm going to have a trestle over that hole so the rails can cross. No holding up the

work at this stage of the game! There's near five thousand men in the gangs back along the line—coming fast. They've all become imbued with one idea—success. The U. P. R. is going through. Soon the rails will meet out here. . . . Colohan, make it a matter of your preference. Will you stick?"

"You bet!" he replied heartily. A ruddy glow emanated from his face. Neale was quick to sense that this Irishman, like Casey, had an honest love for the railroad; whatever he might feel for the labor.

"Get on the job, then," ordered Neale cheerily. "We'll hustle while there's daylight. We'll have that trestle ready when the rails get here."

Coffee laughed scornfully.

"Neale, that sounds fine, but it's impossible, until the trains get here with piles and timbers, iron and so forth. We meant to run up a trestle then."

"I dare say," replied Neale. "But the U. P. R. didn't start that way and never would finish that way."

"Well, you'll have your troubles," declared Coffee.

"Troubles! Do you imagine I'm going to think of *myself*?" retorted Neale. These fellows were beginning to get on his nerves. Coffee grew sullen; Blake shifted uneasily from foot to foot; Colohan beamed upon Neale.

"Come on with them orders," he said.

"Right! Send men up on the hills to cut and trim trees for piles and beams. . . . Find a way, or make one, for horses to snake down these timbers. Haul that pile-driver down to the river and set it up. . . . Have the engineer start up steam and try out. . . . Look the blacksmith shop over to see if there's iron enough. If not, telegraph Benton for more—for whatever you want—and send wagons back to the end of the rails. . . . That's all for this time, Colohan."

"All right, Chief," replied the boss, and he saluted. Then he turned sneeringly to Blake and Coffee. "Did you hear them orders? I'm not takin' none from you again. They're from the Chief."

Colohan's manner or tone, or the word "chief" amazed Coffee. He looked ugly.

"Go on and work, then, paddy," he said violently. "Chief-blarney doesn't fool only working to get on the your new boss. . . . Let you're in this Number Ten—as deep as we are."

It had developed that hatred between these men. Neale's face turned fiery red, and Coffee, he looked the quiet and dangerous nature of his.

"Coffee, I'm sayin' this trestle right now. I aint deep in the Ten deal. . . . I obeyed damn' strange ones, some of them."

Neale intervened and prevented a clash.

"Don't quarrel, men. I'm bound to be a little friction or so. But we'll soon get smooth."

Colohan strode away without a word; his brawny shoulders expressive of a doubt.

"Get me my plans for the construction," said Neale, and he meant to do his share of the best of it.

Blake brought the plans and them out on the table.

"Will you both go over and see me?" inquired Neale.

"What's the use?" retorted Coffee disgustedly. "Neale, you're headed."

"Yes, I guess so," replied Coffee constrainedly. "That's what the Lodge sent me up here—over my head."

NO retort was forthcoming. The two disgruntled engineers went into the tent and drew the table in there. He went alone—to study his plans, to consider the whole matter. He found blue-prints and drawings as abundant as good stories; still, there came no word to his attention. Blake walked into the tent several times, as if to see each time he retired silence. Some messenger brought a note one of the engineers out, but it must have caused a whisper that followed. Finally they came and Neale, getting to work

"Go on and work, then, you big Irish paddy," he said violently. "Your 'Chief'-blarney doesn't fool us. You're only working to get on the right side of your new boss. . . . Let me tell you you're in this Number Ten deal as deep—as deep as we are."

It had developed that there was hatred between these men. Colohan's face turned fiery red, and looming over Coffee, he looked the quick-tempered and dangerous nature of his class.

"Coffee, I'm sayin' this to your face right now. I aint deep in this Number Ten deal. . . . I obeyed orders—an' damn' strange ones, some of them."

Neale intervened and perhaps prevented a clash.

"Don't quarrel, men. Sure, there's bound to be a little friction for a day or so. But we'll soon get to working smooth."

Colohan strode away without another word; his brawny shoulders were expressive of a doubt.

"Get me my plans for Number Ten construction," said Neale pleasantly, and he meant to do his share at making the best of it.

Blake brought the plans and spread them out on the table.

"Will you both go over them with me?" inquired Neale.

"What's the use?" returned Coffee disgustedly. "Neale, you're thick-headed."

"Yes, I guess so," rejoined Neale constrainedly. "That's why General Lodge sent me up here—over your clear heads."

NO retort was forthcoming from the two disgruntled engineers. Neale went into the tent and drew a seat up to the table in there. He wanted to be alone—to study his plans, to think about the whole matter. He found his old figures and drawings as absorbing as a good story; still, there came breaks in his attention. Blake walked into the tent several times, as if to speak, and each time he retired silently. Again some messenger brought a telegram to one of the engineers outside; and it must have caused a whispered colloquy that followed. Finally they went away; and Neale, getting to work in earnest,

was not disturbed until called for supper.

Neale ate at a mess-table with the laborers and enjoyed his meal. The pad-dies always took to him. One thing he gathered early was the fact that Number Ten bridge was a joke with the men. This sobered Neale, and he left the company for a quiet walk alone.

It was twilight down in the valley, while still daylight up on the hilltops. A faint glow remained from the sunset, but it faded as Neale looked. He walked a goodly distance from camp, so as to be out of earshot. The cool night air was pleasant after the hot day; it fanned his face. And the silence, the darkness, the stars, calmed him. A lonely wolf mourned from the heights, and the long wail brought to mind Slingerland's cabin. Then it was only a quick step to memory of Allie Lee; and Neale drifted from the perplexities and problems of his new responsibility to haunting memories, hopes, doubts, fears.

When he returned to the tent, he espied a folded paper on the table in the yellow lamplight. It was a telegram addressed to him. It said that back salaries and retention of engineers were at his discretion, and was signed "Lodge." This message nonplused Neale. What was there that he had not found out? The Chief meant that Blake and Coffee would not be paid for past work or kept for future work unless Neale decided otherwise. While he was puzzling over this message, the engineers came in.

"Say, what do you make of this?" demanded Neale, and he shoved the telegram across the table toward them.

Both men read it. Coffee threw his coat over on his cot and then lighted his pipe.

"What I make of that is that I lose three months' back pay. Six hundred dollars!" he replied, puffing a cloud of smoke.

"And I lose four hundred," supplemented Blake.

Neale leaned back and gazed up at his subordinates. He felt a subtle change in them. Something had been decided for them.

"But this message reads 'at your discretion,'" said Neale. "It's a plain sur-

prise to me. I've no intention of making you lose your back pay, or of firing you, either."

"You'll probably do both, unless we can get together," asserted Coffee.

"Well, can't we get together?"

"That remains to be seen," was the enigmatic reply.

"I'll need you both," went on Neale thoughtfully. "We've a big job. We've got to put a force of men on the piers while we're building the trestle. . . . Maybe I'll fall down myself—heavens, I've made blunders. I can't condemn you fellows. I'm willing to call off all talk about past performances and begin over again."

Neale felt that this proposition should have put another light on the question and should have been received appreciatively if not enthusiastically. But he was somewhat taken back by the fact that it was not.

"Ahem! Well, we can talk it over to-morrow," yawned Coffee.

Neale made no more overtures but busied himself with his notes for an hour, and then sought his cot.

NEXT morning, bright and early,

Neale went down to the river to make his close inspection of what had been done toward building Number Ten. From Colohan he ascertained the number of shafts and cofferdams sunk; from the masons he learned the amount of stone cut to patterns. And he was not only amazed and astounded, but overwhelmed, and incensed beyond expression. The labor had been prodigious. Hundred of tons of material had been sunk there; and that meant that thousands of dollars also had been sunk.

Upon investigation Neale found that as often as cribbings had been sunk for the piers they had never been sunk deep enough. Cofferdams that did not dam at all had been useless, senseless wastes of time and material, not to say wages. His plans called for fifty thirty-foot piles driven to bedrock—which, according to the excavations he had had made at the time of survey, was forty feet below the surface. Not a pile had been driven! There had been no solid base for any of the cribbings! No foundations for the piers!

At the discovery, a bursting gush of blood burned hot in Neale's face.

"No blunder! No incompetence! No misreading of my plans! But a rotten, deliberate deal! Work done over and over again! Oh, I see it all now! General Lodge knew it without ever coming here. The same old story! That black stain on the great work! Graft!"

He clambered out of the wet and muddy hole and up the bank. Then he saw Blake sauntering across the flat toward him. Neale sat down abruptly to hide his face and fury, giving himself the task of scraping mud from his boots. When Blake got there, Neale had himself fairly well in hand as to exterior appearances.

"Hello, Neale," said Blake suavely. "Collected some mud, I see. It's sure a dirty job."

"Yes, it's been dirty in more ways than mud, I guess," replied Neale. The instant his voice sounded in his ears, his temper was restrained.

"Sure has been a pile of money—dirty Government money—sunk in there," rejoined Blake. He had assurance that surprised Neale into a desire to see how far he would go.

"Blake, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good."

A moment of silence passed before Blake spoke again.

"Sure. And it'll blow you good, too," he said, breathing hard.

"Every man has his price," replied Neale lightly.

Then he felt a big soft roll of bills stuffed into his hand. He took it, trembling all over. He wanted to spring erect—to fling that bribe in its giver's face. But he could control himself a moment longer.

"Blake, who's the contractor on this job?" he queried rapidly.

"Don't you know?"

"I don't."

"Well, we supposed you knew. It's Lee."

NEALE started as if he had received a stab; the name hurt him in one way and was a severe shock to him in another.

"Allison Lee—the commissioner?" he asked thickly.

"Sure. Oh, we're in r

replied Blake with a laugh. Swift as an Indian, and Neale sprang up. He threw bills into Blake's face.

"You try to bribe me! Out Neale passionately. "I take your dirty money—crooked job! Why, you thief! You dog!"

He knocked Blake down

"Hold on, Neale!" gasped

raised himself on his elbow. "Pick up that money," ordered and he threatened Blake again. Now march for camp!"

Neale dragged the young into the presence of his superior. A fee sat at his table under Somers and another man. appeared on the moment, and excited comments from proaching. Coffee stood turned yellow. His lips sm

"Coffee, here's your slice," called Neale, and his biting. "I've got you by the rights, you liars! You never to work on my plans Number Ten."

"Neale, what the devil pose we're out here for," Coffee harshly. "They're slice of this money. Then it. The directors of the crooked. They play both the middle. They borrow from the government and out to themselves. You're dreamers. You're Lodge you can't scare me."

"Coffee, if there was any for stealing, you'd go to jail," Neale. "You're a thief, pup who tried to bribe worse. You've held up the ordered your rotten work over again. This is treason, General Lodge—to Henney, out here. And to me it's no name low enough. I line through here. I drew Number Ten. And I'm giving you both cheats—you and tractor!"

"Neale, there's more to deal," said Coffee sullenly

"Sure. Oh, we're in right, Neale," replied Blake with a laugh of relief.

Swift as an Indian, and as savagely, Neale sprang up. He threw the roll of bills into Blake's face.

"You try to bribe me! *Me!*" burst out Neale passionately. "You think I'll take your dirty money—cover up your crooked job! Why, you sneak! You thief! You dog!"

He knocked Blake down.

"Hold on, Neale!" gasped Blake. He raised himself on his elbow.

"Pick up that money," ordered Neale, and he threatened Blake again. "Hurry! Now march for camp!"

Neale dragged the young engineer into the presence of his superior. Coffee sat at his table under the fly with Somers and another man. Colohan appeared on the moment, and there were excited comments from others approaching. Coffee stood up. His face turned yellow. His lips snarled.

"Coffee, here's your side-partner," called Neale, and his voice was biting. "I've got you both dead to rights, you liars! You never even tried to work on my plans for Number Ten."

"Neale, what the devil do you suppose we're out here for?" demanded Coffee harshly. "They're all getting a slice of this money. There's barrels of it. The directors of the road are crooked. They play both ends against the middle. They borrow the money from the government and then pay it out to themselves. You're one of these dreamers. You're Lodge's pet. But you can't scare me."

"Coffee, if there was any law out here for stealing, you'd go to jail," declared Neale. "You're a thief, just like this pup who tried to bribe me. You're worse. You've held up the line. You've ordered your rotten work done over and over again. This is treachery to General Lodge—to Henney, who sent you out here. And to me it's—it's—there's no name low enough. I surveyed the line through here. I drew the plans for Number Ten. And I'm going to prove you both cheats—you and your contractor!"

"Neale, there's more than us in the deal," said Coffee sullenly.

COLOHAN strode close, big and formidable.

"If you mean me, you're a liar," he declared. "An' don't you say it." Coffee was intimidated, and then Colohan turned to Neale. "Boss, I swear I wasn't in on this deal. Lately I guessed it was all wrong. But all I could do was obey orders."

"Neale, you can't prove anything," sneered Coffee. "If you have any sense, you'll shut up. I tell you this is only a *little* deal. I'm on the inside. I know financiers, commissioners, Congressmen and Senators—and as I told you before, the directors are all in on this U. P. R. pickings. You're a fool!"

"Maybe. But I'm no thief," retorted Neale.

"Shut up, will you?" shouted Coffee. "I'm no thief. Men get shot out here for saying less than that."

Neale laughed. He read Coffee's mind. That worthy, responding to the wildness of the time and place, meant to cover his tracks one way or another. And Neale had not lived long with Larry Red King for nothing.

"Coffee, you *are* a thief," declared Neale, striding forward. "The worst kind—because you stole without risk. You can't be punished. But I'll carry this deal higher than you."

And quick as a flash, Neale snatched some telegrams from Coffee's vest pocket. The act infuriated Coffee. His face went purple.

"Hand 'em back!" he yelled, his arm swinging back to his hip.

"I'll bet there's a telegram here from Lee, and I'm entitled to keep it," responded Neale, cool and slow.

Then, as Coffee furiously jammed his hand back for his gun, Neale struck him. Coffee fell with the overturned table out in the sand. His gun dropped as he dropped. Neale was there, light and quick. He snatched up the gun.

"Coffee, you and Blake are to understand you're fired," said Neale. "Fired off the job and out of camp, just as you are!"

FIFTEEN days later the work-train crossed Number Ten on a trestle, and the construction progressed with new impetus.

Not many days later a train of different character crept slowly, foot by foot, over that temporary bridge. It carried passenger-coaches, a private car containing the directors of the railroad, and General Lodge's special car. The engine was decorated with flags, and the engineer whistled a piercing blast as he rolled out upon the structure. Number Ten had been the last big obstacle.

As fortune would have it, Neale happened on the moment to be standing in a significant and thrilling position—for himself and for all who saw him. And that happened to be in the middle of the stream opposite the trestle on the masonry of the middle pier now two feet above the cofferdam. He was as wet and muddy as the laborers with him.

Engineer, fireman, brakeman and passengers cheered him. For Neale the moment was unexpected and heart-swelling. Never in his life had he felt so proud. And yet, stinging among these sudden sweet emotions, was a nameless pang.

Presently Neale espied General Lodge leaning out of a window of his car. He was waving. Neale pointed down at his feet, at the solid masonry; and then circling his mouth with his hands, he yelled with all his might.

"Bedrock!"

His chief yelled back:

"You're a soldier!"

That, perhaps, in the excitement and joy of the moment, was the greatest praise the army officer could render. Nothing could have pleased Neale more.

The train passed over the trestle and on out of sight. Upon its return, about the middle of the afternoon, it stopped in camp. A messenger came with word for Neale to report at once to the directors. He hurried to his tent to secure his papers, and then, wet and muddy, he entered the private car of the directors.

It contained only four men—General Lodge and Warburton, Rogers and Rudd. All except the tall, white-haired Warburton were comfortable in shirt-sleeves, smoking, with a table between them. The instant Neale entered their presence, he divined that he faced a big moment in his life.

THE Chief's manner, like Larry King's when there was something in the wind, seemed quiet, easy, potential. His searching glance held warmth, and a gleam that thrilled Neale. But he was ceremonious, not permitting himself his old familiarity before these dignitaries of the great railroad.

"Gentlemen, you remember Mr. Neale," said Lodge.

They were cordial—pleasant.

Warburton vigorously shook Neale's hand, and leaned back, after the manner of matured men, to look Neale over.

"Young man, I'm glad to meet you again," he declared in his big voice. "Remember him! Well, I do—though he's thinner, older."

"Small wonder!" interposed the Chief. "He's been doing a man's work."

"Neale, back there in Omaha you got sore—you quit us," went on Warburton reprovingly. "That was bad business. I cottoned to you, and I might have—But no matter. You're with us again."

"Mr. Warburton, I'm ashamed of that," replied Neale hastily. "But I was hot-headed—am so still, I fear."

"So am I. So is Lodge. So is any man worth anything," replied the director.

"Mr. Neale, you look cool enough now," observed Rogers, smiling. "Wish I was as wet and cool as you are. It's hot in this desert."

Warburton took off his frock coat. "You gentlemen aren't going to have any the best of me," he said. "And now, Neale, tell us things."

Neale looked at his papers and then at his chief.

"For instance," said Lodge, "tell us about Blake and Coffee."

"Haven't you seen them—heard from them?" inquired Neale.

"No. Henney hasn't, either. And they were his men."

"Gentlemen, I'm afraid I lost my head in regard to them."

"Explain, please," said Warburton. "We will judge your conduct."

It was a rather difficult moment for Neale, because his actions regarding the two engineers now appeared to have been a result of violent temper instead of an exercise of authority. But then,

as he remembered Blake's Coffee's threat, the heat of his nerves, and that stirring forceful expression.

"I drove them out of the

"Why?" queried Warburton.

"Blake tried to bribe me for a fee—"

"One at a time," interrupted Warburton, and he thrust a finger through his hair, ruffling it to scent battle. "What did he try to bribe you to do?"

"He didn't say. But he wanted to cover their tracks."

"So! And what did Coffee

"He tried to pull a gun on

"Why? Be explicit, please."

"Well, he threatened me. I laughed at him—called him a

"What names?"

"Quite a lot, if I remember. He objected to was 'thief,' that, and snatched some telegraph from his pocket. He tried to drive me on, and then I drove them out of camp. They got through, but they were seen in Benton."

"Sir, it appears to me you

head to good purpose," said

"Now, just what were the

wanted you to cover?"

"I drew the original plan for Number Ten. They had not followed. To be exact, they did not dig. To hold the cribbings for the piers did not go deep enough. The shafts—they built cofferdams in piers over and over again. It was forty feet of quicksand under their work, and of course they sank."

Warburton slowly got up.

"Over and over again!"

furiously. "Over and over again, Lodge, do you hear that?"

"Yes. Sounds kind of odd to me," replied the Chief with a rare smile. He was beyond words. He saw the end. He alone had realized the nature of the work. And that smile had the well as triumphant.

WARBURTON stamped down the car aisle. Neale wanted to smash something

as he remembered Blake's offer and Coffee's threat, the heat thrilled along his nerves, and that stirred him to forceful expression.

"I drove them out of this camp."

"Why?" queried Warburton sharply.

"Blake tried to bribe me, and Coffee—"

"One at a time," interrupted Warburton, and he thrust a strong hand through his hair, ruffling it. He began to scent battle. "What did Blake try to bribe you to do?"

"He didn't say. But he meant me to cover their tracks."

"So! And what did Coffee do?"

"He tried to pull a gun on me."

"Why? Be explicit, please."

"Well, he threatened me. And I laughed at him—called him names."

"What names?"

"Quite a lot, if I remember. The one he objected to was 'thief.' I repeated that, and snatched some telegrams from his pocket. He tried to draw his gun on me, and then I drove them both out of camp. They got through safely, for they were seen in Benton."

"Sir, it appears to me you lost your head to good purpose," said Warburton. "Now, just what were the tracks they wanted you to cover?"

"I drew the original plans for Number Ten. They had not followed them. To be exact, they did not drive piles to hold the cribbings for the piers. They did not go deep enough. They sank shafts—they built cofferdams—they put in piers over and over again. There was forty feet of quicksand under all their work, and of course it slipped and sank."

Warburton slowly got up.

"Over and over again!" he roared furiously. "Over and over again! Lodge, do you hear that?"

"Yes. Sounds kind of familiar to me," replied the Chief with one of his rare smiles. He was beyond rage now. He saw the end. He alone, perhaps, had realized the nature of that great work. And that smile had been sad as well as triumphant.

WARBURTON stamped up and down the car aisle. Manifestly he wanted to smash something or to take

out his anger upon his comrades. It was not the quick rage of a moment; it seemed the bursting into flame of a smoldering fire. He used language more felicitous for one of Benton's halls than the private car of directors of the Union Pacific Railroad. Once he stooped over Lodge, pounded the table.

"Three hundred thousand dollars sunk in that quicksand hole!" he thundered. "Over and over again! That's what galls me. Work done over and over—unnecessary—worse than useless—all for dirty gold! Not for the railroad, but for money! What a band of robbers we've dealt with! Lodge, why in thunder didn't you send Neale here at the start?"

A shadow lay dark in the Chief's lined face. Why had he not done a million other things? Why, indeed! He did not answer the irate director.

"Three hundred thousand dollars sunk in that hole—for nothing!" shouted Warburton in a final explosion.

The other two directors laughed.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Rogers softly. "What is that? A drop in the bucket! Consult your notebook, Warburton."

And that speech cooled the fighting director. It contained volumes, and it evidently struck home. Warburton growled, mopped his red face and fell into a seat.

"Lodge, excuse me," he said apologetically. "You know that—what our fine young friend here told me was like some one stepping on my gout. I've been maybe a little too zealous—too exacting. Then, I'm old and testy. What does it matter? How could it have been prevented? Alas, it's black, like that hideous Benton. . . . But we're coming out into the light. Lodge, didn't you tell me this Number Ten bridge was the last obstacle?"

"I did. The rails will go down now fast and straight till they meet out there in Utah! Soon!"

Warburton became composed. The red died out of his face. He looked at Neale.

"Young man, can you put permanent piers in that sink-hole?"

"Yes. They are started, on bedrock," replied Neale.

"Bedrock!" he repeated, and re-

mained gazing at Neale fixedly. Then he turned to Lodge. "Do you remember that wild red-haired cowboy—Neale's friend—when he said, 'I reckon thet's aboot all'? I'll never forget him. . . . Lodge, say we have Lee and his friend Senator Dunn come in—and get it over. An' thet'll be aboot all!"

"Thank Heaven!" replied the Chief fervently. He called to his porter, but as no one replied, General Lodge rose and went into the next car.

NEALE had experienced a disturbing sensation in his breast. Lee! Allison Lee! The mere name made him shake. He could not understand, but he felt there was more reason for its effect on him than his relation to Allison Lee as a contractor. Somewhere there was a man named Lee who was Allie's father, and Neale knew he would meet him some day.

Then when the Chief walked back into the car with the frock-coated individuals, Neale did recognize in the pale face of one a resemblance to the girl he loved.

There were no greetings. This situation had no formalities. Warburton faced them, and he seemed neither cold nor hot. He might have been meeting anyone whose relation with him had passed.

"Mr. Lee, as a director of the road, I have to inform you that following the reports of our engineer here, your present contracts are void and you will not get any more."

A white radiance of rage swiftly transformed Allison Lee. His eyes seemed to blaze purple out of his white face.

And then Neale knew him to be Allie's father—saw the beauty and fire of her eyes in his.

"Warburton! You'll reconsider. I have great influence—"

"To blazes with your influence!" retorted Warburton, the lion in him rising. "The builders, the directors, the owners of the U. P. R. are right here in this car. Do you understand that? Do you demand I call a spade a spade?"

"I have been appointed by Congress. I will—"

"Congress or no Congress, you will

never rebuild a foot of this railroad," thundered Warburton. He stood there glaring, final, assured. "For the sake of your—your Government connections, let us say, let well enough alone."

"This upstart boy of an engineer!" burst out Lee in furious resentment. "Who is he? How dare he accuse—or report against me?"

"Mr. Lee, your name has never been mentioned by him," replied the director.

Lee struggled for self-control.

"But, Warburton, it's preposterous!" he protested. "This wild boy—the associate of desperadoes—his report, whatever it is, is absurd! Absurd as opposed to my position! A curb surveyor—slick with tongue and figures—to be thrown in my face! It's outrageous. I'll have him—"

Warburton held up a hand that impelled Lee to silence. In that gesture Neale read what stirred him to his soul. It was coming. He saw it again in General Lodge's rare fleeting smile. He held his breath.

"Lee, pray let me enlighten you and Senator Dunn," said Warburton sonorously, "and terminate this awkward interview. When the last spike is driven out here, presently, Mr. Neale will be Chief Engineer of Maintenance of Way of the Union Pacific Railroad!"

CHAPTER XXIII

SO for Neale the wonderful dream had come to pass, and but for the memory that made all hours of life bitter, his cup of joy would have been full.

He made his headquarters in Benton, and spent his days riding east or west over the line, taking up the responsibility he had long trained for, and for which he would soon be accountable—the upkeep, the maintaining of the perfect condition of the railroad.

Toward the end of that month he was summoned to Omaha.

The message had been signed "Warburton." Upon arriving at the terminus of the road, Neale found a marvelous change even in the short time since he had been there. Omaha had be-

come a city. It developed ton had been called back, leaving word for Neale orders.

Neale availed himself to acquaint himself with the way he would deal with in the road shops and the bustle he lost perhaps temporarily a sense of loss and pain. Despite himself, the deflection of him was flattering, and his habit of making friends of himself. His place was a There were rumors in the lines for the Union Pacific consulted for advice, in positions, invited here and the days in Omaha were pleasant and pleasurable.

Then came a telegram from Benton calling him to Washington.

It took more than two there, and the time dragged. Neale. It seemed to him that portance grew as he traveled which was amusing to him resembled a dream.

When he reached the hotel in the telegram, it was a warm greeting from Warburton.

"It's a long trip to make," said the director. "And it amounts to now. I thought you to answer a few questions. But you'll not be questioned and so you'd better keep a . . . We've raised the completion of the U. P. Railroad." Neale could only consider those questions might have Warburton offered no explanation. This circumstance recalled his former impression of the financial and political construction. Warburton's dinner and later to a club introduced him to many men.

For this alone Neale was had been summoned to the met Senators, Congressmen, Government officials, and financiers and prominent men, he was surprised to note, formed regarding the Union Pacific Railroad.

come a city. It developed that Warburton had been called back to New York, leaving word for Neale to wait for orders.

Neale availed himself of this period to acquaint himself with the men whom he would deal with in the future. Among them, and in the roar of the railroad shops and the bustle of the city, he lost perhaps temporarily that haunting sense of loss and pain and gloom. Despite himself, the deference shown him was flattering, and his old ambitious habit of making friends reasserted itself. His place was assured now. There were rumors in the air of branch lines for the Union Pacific. He was consulted for advice, importuned for positions, invited here and there. So the days in Omaha were both profitable and pleasurable.

Then came a telegram from Warburton calling him to Washington.

It took more than two days to get there, and the time dragged slowly for Neale. It seemed to him that his importance grew as he traveled, a fact which was amusing to him. All this resembled a dream.

When he reached the hotel designated in the telegram, it was to receive a warm greeting from Warburton.

"It's a long trip to make for nothing," said the director. "And that's what it amounts to now. I thought I'd need you to answer a few questions for me. But you'll not be questioned officially—and so you'd better keep a close mouth. . . . We've raised the money. The completion of the U. P. R. is assured."

Neale could only conjecture what those questions might have been, for Warburton offered no explanation. And this circumstance recalled to mind his former impression of the complexity of the financial and political end of the construction. Warburton took him to dinner and later to a club, and introduced him to many men.

For this alone Neale was glad that he had been summoned to the capital. He met Senators, Congressmen and other Government officials, and many politicians and prominent men, all of whom, he was surprised to note, were well informed regarding the Union Pacific. He

talked with them but answered questions guardedly. And he listened to discussions and talks covering every phase of the work, from the *Crédit Mobilier* to the Chinese coolies that were advancing from the West to meet the paddies of his own division.

HOW strange to realize that the great railroad had its nucleus, its impetus and its completion in such a center as this! Here were the frock-coated, soft-voiced, cigar-smoking gentlemen among whom Warburton and his directors had swung the colossal enterprise. What a vast difference between these men and the builders! With the handsome white-haired Warburton, and his associates, as they smoked their rich cigars and drank their wine, Neale contrasted Casey and McDermott and many another burly spiker or teamster out on the line! Each class was necessary to this task. These Easterners talked of money, of gold, as a grade-foreman might have talked of gravel. They smoked and conversed at ease, laughing at sallies, gossiping over what was a tragedy west of North Platte; and about them was an air of luxury, of power, of importance, and a singular grace that Neale felt rather than saw.

Strangest of all to him was the glimpse he got into the labyrinthine plot built around the stock, the finance, the gold that was constructing the road. He was an engineer, with a scientific habit of mind, but he would never be able to trace the intricacy of this monumental aggregation of deals. Yet he was absorbed with interest. Much of the scorn and disgust he had felt out on the line for the mercenaries connected with the work he forgot here among these frock-coated gentlemen.

AN hour later Neale accompanied Warburton to the station, where the director was to board a train for his return to New York.

"You'll start back to-morrow," said Warburton, "I'll see you soon, I hope—out there in Utah where the last spike is to be driven. That will be *the day—the hour!* It will be celebrated all over the States."

Neale returned to his hotel, trying to make out the vital thing that had come to him on this hurried and apparently useless journey. His mind seemed in a whirl. Yet as he pondered, there gradually loomed to him a thought that in the Eastern or planning end of the great plan there were the same spirit and evil and mystery as there were in the Western or building end. Here big men were interested, involved: out there bigger men sweated and burned and aged and died. The difference was that these toilers gave all for an ideal which to the directors and their partners meant only money—a profit that would enable them to indulge in a pleasure trip to Europe.

Neale restrained what might have been contempt, and he thought that if these financiers, or any men, could have seen the life of the diggers and spikers as he knew it, there would have been a nobler motive born. Before he dropped to sleep that night, he concluded his trip to Washington, and the recognition accorded him by Warburton's circle had fixed a desire in his heart to heave some rails and drive some spikes for the railroad he loved so well. To him the work had been something for which he had striven with all his might and risked his life. He wanted to embody all of it that was possible—to feel not only that his brain had given to the creation, but that his muscle had ached from the toil.

ON the journey home Neale seemed steeped in the luxurious and complicated impressions received in Washington. And all these impressions drifted to and fro through a picture of bright-lighted clubrooms, richly furnished, where handsome frock-coated gentlemen lounged at their wine and cigars, conversing in softly modulated tones, oblivious to the destinies and lives of common men.

When Neale at last reached Benton, it was night. Benton and night! And he had forgotten. A mob of men surged down and up on the train. Neale had extreme difficulty in getting off at all. But the excitement, the hurry, the discordant and hoarse medley of many voices were unusual at that hour around

the station, even for strenuous Benton. All these men were carrying baggage. Neale shouted questions into passing ears, until at length some fellow heard and yelled a reply.

The last night of Benton!

He understood then. The great and vile construction-camp had reached the end of its career. It was being torn down and moved away—depopulated. There was an exodus. In another forty-eight hours all that had been Benton, with accumulated life and gold and toil, would be incorporated in another and a greater and a last camp—Roaring City.

The contrast to the beautiful Washington, the check of his half-dreaming memory of what he had experienced there, the sudden plunge into this dim-lighted, sordid and roaring hell—all brought about in Neale a revulsion of feeling.

And with the sinking of his spirits there returned the old haunting pangs—the memory of Allie Lee, the despairing doubts of life or death for her. Beyond the camp loomed the dim, black hills, mystical, secretive and unchangeable. If she were out there among them, dead or alive—to know it would be a blessed relief. It was this horror of Benton that he feared.

He walked the street, up and down, up and down, until the hour was late and he was tired. All the halls and saloons were blazing in full blast. Once he heard low, hoarse cries and pistol-shots. How strange they should make him shiver! But all seemed strange. From these sounds he turned away, not knowing what to do, where to go, since sleep or rest was impossible. Finally he went into a gambling-den and found a welcome among players whose faces he knew.

It was Benton's last night, and there was something in the air—a release of compression.

Neale gave himself up to the spirit of the hour and the game. He had almost forgotten himself when a white jeweled hand flashed over his shoulder, to touch it softly. He heard his name whispered. Looking up, he saw the flushed and singularly radiant face of Beauty Stanton.

THE afternoon and day in Benton, Allie Lee was in her room, were hideous, so full of hours. Her ears were filled with Benton's roar—whisper and laughs, thick voices, the cold voices of men, the clink of gold and clatter of a ceaseless tramp and pistol-shots muffled and pistol-shots ringing and the angry hum of bravado, the strangest of all this dream—the high-pitched, piercing women, in songs without mirth, in cries without mirth, in cries so terrible and mournful.

Allie lay in the dark, dawn, shuddering at the sound, fearful that any relapse of Benton would shatter the flimsy walls of her mind. But the roar swelled and died away; the darkness to gray light and then to dawn; the wind began to sleep.

Her mirror told Allie that night. Her face was haunted by terrible dark shadows beneath. She held her hands steady.

Late that afternoon the rings and sounds in Durango place had awakened. Perhaps himself brought her face looked haggard, worn, and He did not seem to notice or appearance.

"That deaf and dumb waited on you is gone. Yesterday was paid. . . . Many are gone. fifty thousand dollars in. "Isn't that enough?"

He did not hear her talking of his winning games and big stakes trembled; his eyes glittered at the air.

For Allie it was a relief. He had almost reached the apex of his fortunes and end. Allie realized that

CHAPTER XXIV

THE afternoon and night of pay-day in Benton, during which Allie Lee was barred in her room, were hideous, sleepless, dreadful hours. Her ears were filled with Benton's roar—whispers and wails and laughs, thick voices of drunken men, the cold voices of gamblers, clink of gold and clink of glasses, a ceaseless tramp and shuffle of boots, pistol-shots muffled and far away, pistol-shots ringing and clear at hand, the angry hum of brawling men; and strangest of all this dreadful roar, were the high-pitched, piercing voices of women, in songs without soul, in laughs without mirth, in cries wild and terrible and mournful.

Allie lay in the dark, praying for the dawn, shuddering at this strife of sound, fearful that any moment the violence of Benton would burst through the flimsy walls of her room to destroy her. But the roar swelled and subsided and died away; the darkness gave place to gray light and then dawn; the sun arose; the wind began to blow. Benton slept.

Her mirror told Allie the horror of that night. Her face was white; her eyes were haunted by terrors, with great dark shadows beneath. She could not hold her hands steady.

Late that afternoon there were stirrings and sounds in Durade's hall. The place had awakened. Presently Durade himself brought her food and drink. He looked haggard, worn, and yet radiant. He did not seem to note Allie's condition or appearance.

"That deaf and dumb fool who waited on you is gone," said Durade. "Yesterday was pay-day in Benton. . . . Many are gone! Allie, I won fifty thousand dollars in gold!"

"Isn't that enough?" she asked.

He did not hear her, but went on talking of his winnings, of gold, of games and big stakes coming. His lips trembled; his eyes glittered; his fingers clawed at the air.

For Allie it was a relief when Durade left her. He had almost reached the apex of his fortunes and the inevitable end. Allie realized that if she were

ever to lift a hand to save herself she must do so at once. This was a fixed and desperate thought in her mind when Durade called her to her work.

ALLIE always entered that private den of Durade's with her eyes cast down. She had been scorched too often by the glances of men. As she went in this time, she felt the presence of gamblers, but they were quieter than those to whom she had become accustomed. Durade ordered her to fetch drinks, and then he went on talking rapidly, in excitement, elated, boastful, almost gay. Others also were talking.

Allie did not look up. As she carried the tray to the large table, she heard a man whisper low: "By Jove! Hough, that's the girl!"

Then she heard a slight, quick intake of breath and a suppressed exclamation. Both voices thrilled Allie. The former seemed the low, well-modulated, refined and drawling speech of an Englishman; the latter was keen, quick, soft and full of genuine emotion.

Allie returned to her chair by the sideboard before she ventured to look up. Durade was playing cards with four men, three of whom were black-garbed, after the manner of professional gamblers. The other player wore gray, and a hat of unusual shape, with wide, loose cloth band. He removed his hat as he caught Allie's glance, and she associated the act with the fact of her presence. She thought that this must be the man whose voice had proclaimed him English. He had a fair face, lined and shadowed and dissipated, with tired blue eyes and a blond mustache that failed altogether to hide a well-shaped mouth. It was the kindest and saddest face Allie had ever seen there. She read its story. In her extremity she had acquired a melancholy wisdom in the judgment of the faces of the men drifting through Durade's hall. What Allie had heard in this Englishman's voice she saw in his features. He did not look at her again. He played cards wearily, carelessly, indifferently, with his mind plainly on something else.

"Ancliffe, how many cards?" called one of the black-garbed men.

The Englishman threw down his cards.

"None," he said.

THE game was interrupted by a commotion in the adjoining room, which was the public gambling-hall of Durade's establishment.

"Another fight!" exclaimed Durade impatiently. "And only Mull and Fresno showed up to-day."

Harsh voices and heavy stamps were followed by a pistol-shot. Durade hurriedly arose.

"Gentlemen, excuse me," he said, and went out. One of the gamblers also left the room, and another crossed it to peep through the door.

This left the Englishman sitting at the table with the last gambler, whose back was turned toward Allie. She saw the Englishman lean forward to speak. Then the gambler rose and turning, came directly toward her.

"My name is Place Hough," he said, speaking rapidly and low. "I've heard strange rumors about you. And now I see for myself! Are you Allie Lee?"

Allie's heart seemed to come to her throat. She shook all over. And she gazed with piercing intensity at the man. When he had arisen from the table, he had appeared the same black-garbed, hard-faced gambler as any of the others. But looked at closely, he was different. Underneath the cold, hard, expressionless face, worked something mobile and soft. His eyes were of crystal clearness and remarkable for a penetrating power. They shone with wonder, curiosity, sympathy.

Allie instinctively trusted the voice and then consciously trusted the man.

"Oh, sir! I am—distressed—ill from fright!" she faltered. "If I only dared—"

"You dare tell me," he interrupted swiftly. "Be quick. Are you here, willingly, with this man?"

"Oh, no!"

"What—then?"

"Oh, sir—you do not think I—"

"I knew you were good, innocent, the moment I laid eyes on you. . . . Who are you?"

"Allie Lee. My father is Allison Lee."

"Whew!" The gambler whistled softly, and turning, glanced at the door and beckoned Ancliffe. The Englishman arose. In the adjoining rooms sounds of strife were abating.

"Ancliffe, this girl is Allie Lee—daughter of Allison Lee, a big man of the U. P. R. . . . Something terribly wrong here," and he whispered to Ancliffe.

ALLIE became aware of the Englishman's scrutiny, doubtful, sad, yet kind and curious. Indeed, these men had heard of her.

"Hough, you must be mistaken," he said.

Allie felt a sudden rush of emotion. Her opportunity had come.

"I am Allie Lee. My mother ran off with Durade—to California. He used her as a lure to draw men to his gambling-halls—as he uses me now! Two years ago we escaped—started East with a caravan. The Indians attacked us. I crawled under a rock—escaped the massacre. I—"

"Never mind all your story," interrupted Hough. "We haven't time for that. I believe you. You are held a close prisoner?"

"Oh yes—locked and barred. I never get out. I have been threatened so that until now I feared to tell anyone. But Durade—he is going mad. I—I can bear it no longer."

"Miss Lee, you shall not bear it," declared Ancliffe. "We'll take you out of here."

"How?" queried Hough shortly.

ANCLIFFE was for walking right out with her. But Hough shook his head.

"Listen," began Allie hurriedly. "He would kill me the instant I tried to escape. He loved my mother. He does not believe she is dead. He lives only to be revenged upon her. . . . He has a desperate gang here—Fresno, Mull, Stitt, Black, Grist, Davis, a greaser called Mex—and others, all the worst of bad men. You cannot get me out of here alive except by some trick."

"How about bringing the troops?"

"Durade would kill me the first thing!"

"Could we steal you out?"

"I don't see how. The night. I am barred. . . . Better work on Durade. Gold! He's mad from the fever's on him, he might sell me for gold."

Hough's cold eyes shone. He opened his lips to speak, but quickly motioned Ancliffe to the table. They had just seen the two gamblers followed by Durade.

"What was the fuss about, Hough, tipping the ashes?"

"Some drunks after me. And got thrown out of the game. Pains?" inquired Ancliffe.

"Yes. Mull and Fresno now."

The game was taken up. Hough sensed a different note. The gambler Hough now favored a different position at the table; and the card he played there seemed to have a different purpose and trend. Ancliffe soon left the game. He appeared fascinated when he had been indifferent. He opened that Hough, by his play, was driving his opponent to despair. Hough's passion for play, working his feelings. Durade seemed a gambler, but he had the luck balanced his excess. Two other gamblers pit themselves against Hough.

The shadows of evening began to darken the room where the game was played. Hough for lights. A slim, sloping Mexican came to the order. He wore a black hat and looked like a black man. He had lighted the lamps. Durade and spoke in Spanish. He replied in the same tone. The Mexican went out. One of the gamblers lost all and arose from the table.

"Gentlemen, may I get my money and return to the game?" asked.

"Certainly," replied Hough. Durade assented with a nod.

THE game went on as before. The gambler est. Probably the gambler reported the fact of its

"Could we steal you out at night?"

"I don't see how. They are awake all night. I am barred in—watched. . . . Better work on Durade's weakness. Gold! He's mad for gold. When the fever's on him, he might gamble me away—or sell me for gold."

Hough's cold eyes shone like fire in ice. He opened his lips to speak—then quickly motioned Ancliffe back to the table. They had just seated themselves when the two gamblers returned, followed by Durade.

"What was the fuss about?" queried Hough, tipping the ashes off his cigar.

"Some drunks after money they lost."

"And got thrown out for their pains?" inquired Ancliffe.

"Yes. Mull and Fresno are there now."

The game was taken up again. Al lie sensed a different note in it. The gambler Hough now faced her in his position at the table; and behind every card he played there seemed to be intense purpose and tremendous force. Ancliffe soon left the game. But he appeared fascinated where formerly he had been indifferent. Soon it developed that Hough, by his spirit and skill, was driving his opponents, inciting their passion for play, working upon their feelings. Durade seemed the weakest gambler, but he had the best luck, and this luck balanced his excited play. The two other gamblers pitted themselves against Hough.

The shadows of evening had begun to darken the room when Durade called for lights. A slim, sloe-eyed pantherish-moving Mexican came in to execute the order. He wore a belt with a knife in it and looked like a brigand. When he had lighted the lamps, he approached Durade and spoke in Spanish. Durade replied in the same tongue. Then the Mexican went out. One of the gamblers lost all and arose from the table.

"Gentlemen, may I go out for more money and return to the game?" he asked.

"Certainly," replied Hough.

Durade assented with bad grace.

THE game went on and grew in interest. Probably the Mexican had reported the fact of its possibilities, or

perhaps Durade had sent out word of some nature. For one by one his villainous lieutenants came in, stepping softly, gleaming-eyed.

"Durade, have you stopped play outside?" queried Hough.

"Supper-time. Not much going on," replied Mull.

Hough watched this speaker with keen coolness.

"I did not address you," he said.

Durade, catching the drift, came out of his absorption of play long enough to say that with a big game at hand he did not want to risk any interruption. He spoke sincerely, but he did not look sincere.

Presently the second gambler announced that he would consider it a favor to be allowed to go out and borrow money. Then he left hurriedly. Durade and Hough played alone; and the luck seesawed from one to the other until both the other players returned. They did not come alone. Two more black-frocked, black-sombreroed, cold-faced individuals accompanied them.

"May we sit in?" they asked.

"With pleasure," replied Hough.

Durade frowned, and the glow left his face. Though the luck was still with him, it was evident that he did not favor added numbers. Yet the man's sensitiveness to any change immediately manifested itself when he won the first large stake. His radiance returned.

Hough interrupted the game by striking the table with his hand. The sound seemed hard, metallic; his hand was empty, yet any attentive observer would have become aware that Hough had a gun up his sleeve. But Durade did not catch the significance.

"I object to that man leaning over the table," said Hough, and he pointed to the lounging Fresno.

"Thet so?" leered the ugly giant.

"Do not address me!" ordered Hough.

Fresno backed away silently from the cold-faced gambler.

"Don't mind him, Hough," protested Durade. "They're all excited. Big stakes always works them up."

"Send them out so we can play without annoyance."

"No," replied Durade sharply. "They can watch the game."

"Ancliffe," called Hough, just as sharply, "fetch some of my friends to watch this game. Don't forget Neale and Larry King."

Allie, who was watching and listening with strained faculties, nearly fainted at the sudden mention of her lover Neale and her friend Larry. She went blind for a second; the room turned round and round; she thought her heart would burst with joy.

The Englishman hurried out.

Durade jerked up with a passionate and wolfish swiftness.

"What do you mean?"

"I want some of my friends to watch the game," replied Hough.

"But I don't allow that red-headed cowboy gun-fighter to come into my place."

"That is regrettable, for you will make an exception this time. . . . Durade, you don't stand well in Benton. I do."

The Spaniard's eyes glittered.

"You insinuate, señor—"

"Yes," interposed Hough, and his cold, deliberate voice dominated the explosive Durade. "Do you remember a gambler named Jones? He was shot in this room. If I should happen to be shot here, in the same way, you and your gang would not last long in Benton!"

Durade's face grew livid with rage and fear. And in that moment the mask was off; the nature of the Spaniard stood forth. Another fact manifest was that Durade had not before matched himself against a gambler of Hough's caliber.

"Well, are you only a bluff, or do we go on with the game?" inquired Hough.

Durade choked back his rage and signified with a motion of his hand that play should be resumed.

Allie fastened her eyes upon the door. She was in a tumult of emotion. Despite that, her mind revolved wild and intermittent ideas as to the risk of letting Neale see and recognize her there. Yet her joy was so overpowering that she believed if he entered the door she would rush to him and trust in God to save her—in God and Reddy King!

She remembered the cowboy, and a thrill linked all her emotions. Durade and his gang would face a terrible reckoning if Reddy King ever entered to see her there.

MOMENTS passed. The gambling went on. The players spoke low; the spectators were silent. Discordant sounds from outside disturbed the quiet.

Allie stared fixedly at the door. Presently it opened. Ancliffe entered with several men, all quick in movement, alert of eye. But Neale and Larry King were not among them. Allie's heart sunk like lead. The revulsion of feeling, the disappointment, was sickening. She saw Ancliffe shake his head and divined in the action that he had not been able to find the friends Hough wanted particularly. Then Allie felt the incredible strangeness of being glad that Neale was not to find her there—that Larry was not to throw his guns on Durade's crowd. There might be a chance of her being liberated without violence.

This reaction left her weak and dazed for a while. Still she heard the low voices of the gamblers, the slap of cards and clink of gold. Her wits had gone from her ever since the mention of Neale. She floundered in a whirl of thoughts and fears and tremblings and thrills until gradually she recovered self-possession. Whatever instinct or love or spirit had guided her, had done so rightly. She had felt Neale's presence in Benton. It was stingingly sweet, it was terrible, to realize that. Her heart swelled with pangs of fullest measure. Surely he again believed her dead. Soon he would come upon her—face to face—somewhere. He would learn she was alive, unharmed, true to him with all her soul. Indians, renegade Spaniards, Benton with its terrors, a host of evil men—not these nor anything could keep her from Neale forever. She had believed that always, but never as now, in the clearness of this beautiful spiritual insight. Behind her belief was something unfathomable and great. Not the movement of progress as typified by those men who had dreamed of the railroad, nor the spirit

of the unconquerable engine defied by Neale, nor the wild youth like Larry King, heroic labor and simplicity of common men, nor the passion of these gamblers for the mystery hidden in the minds of these fallen women, strange on the night wind—not these, then, wonderful and incalculable they were, loomed so great and that uplifted and upheld Allie.

WHEN she raised her head from the gambling-scene had only three men played—Hough, Durade and another. And even looked, this third player threw into the deck and with silence rose from the table to take with the other black-garbed standing behind Hough. The of their attire contrasted with the whiteness of their faces. lost gold, which fact meant them. But there was something significant in their presence Hough. Gamblers leagued crooked gambling-hell! Durade lost a fortune—yet not all his. He seemed a haggard, a wreck of the once debonaire. His hair was wet and disheveled, collar was open; his hands Blood trickled down from his lip. He saw nothing except the cards and that steel-faced, implacable Hough. lined up his gang, nervous, frenzied, with eyes on the game.

Allie slipped into her room, the door ajar so she could peep there, she paced the floor, waiting for what she had not dared.

The gambler Hough won that Durade had and the against her. That was what he believed. She had no doubts winning her too, but she doubted he could take her away. To be a fight. And if there was then that must be the end. For this gambler Hough, with shakable nerve, his piercing wonderful white hands, swiftness he would at the slightest kill Durade.

of the unconquerable engineers as typified by Neale, nor the wildness of wild youth like Larry King, nor the heroic labor and simplicity and sacrifice of common men, nor the inconceivable passion of these gamblers for gold, nor the mystery hidden in the mad laughter of these fallen women, strange and sad on the night wind—not these nor all of them, wonderful and incalculable as they were, loomed so great as the thing that uplifted and upheld Allie Lee.

WHEN she raised her head again, the gambling-scene had changed. Only three men played—Hough, Durade and another. And even as Allie looked, this third player threw his cards into the deck and with silent gesture rose from the table to take a position with the other black-garbed gamblers standing behind Hough. The blackness of their attire contrasted strongly with the whiteness of their faces. They had lost gold, which fact meant little to them. But there was something big and significant in their presence behind Hough. Gamblers leagued against a crooked gambling-hell! Durade had lost a fortune—yet not all his fortune. He seemed a haggard, flaming-eyed wreck of the once debonair Durade. His hair was wet and disheveled; his collar was open; his hand wavered. Blood trickled down from his lower lip. He saw nothing except the gold, the cards and that steel-nerved, gray-faced, implacable Hough. Behind him lined up his gang, nervous, strained, frenzied, with eyes on the gold.

Allie slipped into her room, leaving the door ajar so she could peep out, and there she paced the floor, waiting, listening for what she had not dared to watch.

The gambler Hough would win all that Durade had and then stake it against her. That was what Allie believed. She had no doubts of Hough's winning her too, but she doubted that he could take her away. There would be a fight. And if there was a fight, then that must be the end of Durade. For this gambler Hough, with his unshakable nerve, his piercing eyes, his wonderful white hands, swift as light—he would at the slightest provocation kill Durade.

Suddenly Allie was arrested by a loud, long suspiration—a heave of heavy breaths in the room of the gamblers. A chair scraped, noisily breaking the silence, which instantly clamped down again.

"Durade, you're done!" It was the cold, ringing voice of Hough.

Allie ran to the door, peeped through the crack. Durade sat there like a wild beast bound. Hough stood erect over a huge golden pile on the table. The others seemed stiff in their tracks.

"There's a fortune here," went on Hough, indicating the gold. "All I had—all our gentlemen opponents had—all *you* had. I have won it all!"

Durade's eyes seemed glued to that dully glistening heap. He could not even gaze up at Hough.

"All! All!" echoed Durade.

Then Hough, like a striking hawk, bent toward the Spaniard and spoke:

"Durade, have you anything more to bet?"

DURADE was the only man who moved. Slowly he rose, shaking in every limb, and not till he became erect did he unrivet his eyes from that yellow heap on the table.

"Señor—do you mock me?" he gasped hoarsely.

"I offer you my winnings—all—for *the girl you have here!*"

"You are crazy!" ejaculated the Spaniard.

"Certainly. But hurry! Do you accept?"

"Señor, I would not sell that girl for all the gold of the Indies," replied Durade instantly. No vacillation—no indecision in him here! Hough's offer held no lure for this Spaniard who had committed many crimes for gold.

"*But you'll gamble her!*" asserted Hough, and now indeed his words were mockery. In one splendid gesture he swept his winnings into the middle of the table, and the gold gave out a ringing clash. As a gambler he read the soul of his opponent.

Durade's jaw worked convulsively, as if he had difficulty in holding it firm enough for utterance. What he would not sell for any price he would risk on a gambler's strange faith in chance.

"All my winnings against this girl!" went on Hough relentlessly. Scorn and a taunting dare and an insidious persuasion mingled with the passion of his offer. He knew how to inflame. Durade, as a gambler, was a weakling in the grasp of a giant. "Come! Do you accept?"

Durade's body leaped, as if an irresistible current had been shot into it.

"*Si, señor!*" he cried, with power and joy in his voice. In that moment, no doubt the greatest in his life of gambling, he unconsciously went back to the use of his mother tongue.

Actuated by one impulse, Hough and Durade sat down at the table. The others crowded around. Fresno lurched close with a wicked gleam in his eyes.

"I was onto Hough," he said to his nearest ally. "It's the girl he's after!"

THE gamblers cut the cards to decide who should deal. Hough won. For him victory seemed to exist in the suspense of the very silence, in the charged atmosphere of the room. He began to shuffle the cards. His hands were white, shapely, perfect, like a woman's, and yet not beautiful. The spirit, the power in them, the ruthless nature had no relation to beauty. How marvelously swift they moved—too swift for the gaze to follow! And the incomparable dexterity with which he manipulated the cards gave forth the suggestion as to what he could do with them. In those gleaming hands, in the flying cards, in the whole intenseness of the gambler, there showed the power and the intent to win. The crooked Durade had met a match who toyed with him. If there were an element of chance in this short game, it was that of the uncertainty of life, not of Durade's chance to win. He had no chance. No eye, no hand, could have justly detected Hough in the slightest deviation from honesty. Yet all about the man in that tense moment proved what a gambler really was.

Durade called in a whisper for two cards, and he received them with trembling fingers. Terrible hope and exultation transformed his face.

"I'll take three," said Hough calmly. With deliberate care and slowness, in strange contrast to his former motions,

he took, one by one, three cards from the deck. Then he looked at them, and just as calmly dropped all his cards, face up, on the table, disclosing what he knew to be an unbeatable hand.

Durade stared. A thick cry escaped him.

Swiftly Hough rose. "Durade," he said coolly, "I have won." Then he turned to his friends. "Gentlemen, please pocket this gold."

With that he stepped to Allie's door. He saw her peering out.

"Come, Miss Lee," he said.

Allie stepped out, trembling and unsteady on her feet.

The Spaniard now seemed compelled to look up from the gold Hough's comrades were pocketing. When he saw Allie, another slow and remarkable transformation came over him. At first he started slightly at Hough's hand on Allie's arm. The radiance of his strange passion for gold, which had put a leaping glory into his haggard face, faded into a dark and mounting surprise. It mounted to amazement—to astounding realization. A blaze burned away the shadows. His eyes betrayed an insupportable sense of loss and the spirit that repudiated it. For a single instant he was magnificent—and perhaps in that instant race and blood spoke; and then, with bewildering suddenness, surely with the suddenness of a memory, he became a black, turgid, dripping-faced victim of unutterable and unquenchable hate.

Allie recoiled in the divination that Durade saw her mother in her. No memory, no love, no gold, no wager could ever thwart the Spaniard.

"Señor, you tricked me!" he whispered.

"I beat you at your own game! My friends and your men heard the stake—saw the game."

"Señor, I could not bet—that girl—for any stake."

"You have lost her. . . . Let me warn you, Durade: be careful, once in your life! You are welcome to what gold is left there."

DURADE shoved back the gold so fiercely that he upset the table, and its contents jangled on the floor. The

spill and the crash of a tered everywhere, released men from their motion. They began to pick up the

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He helped her get out, laboriously. Then he s Hough. The gambler let swiftly and noiselessly.

"Now what?" he mutte

THEY appeared to b alley between a house a house of canvas. E sounded inside this car and evidently alarmed H a motion he enjoined s Allie through the dark p

spill and the crash of a fortune, scattered everywhere, released Durade's men from their motionless suspense. They began to pick up the gold.

The Spaniard was halted by the gleam of a derringer in Hough's hand. Hissing like a snake, Durade stood momentarily held back by a fear that quickly gave place to insane rage.

"Shoot him!" said Ancliffe with a coolness which proved his foresight.

One of Hough's friends swung a cane, smashing a lamp; then with a like swift action he broke the other lamp, instantly plunging the room into darkness. This appeared to be a signal for Durade's men to break loose into a mad scramble for the gold. Durade screamed and rushed.

Allie felt herself drawn backward along the wall, through her door. It was not so dark in there. She distinguished Hough and Ancliffe. The latter closed the door. Hough whispered to Allie, though the din in the other room made such caution needless.

"Can we get out this way?" he asked.

"There's a window," replied Allie.

"Ancliffe, open it and get her out. I'll stop Durade if he comes in. Hurry!"

While the Englishman opened the window, Hough stood in front of the door with both arms extended. Allie could just see his tall form in the pale gloom. Pandemonium had begun in the other room, with Durade screaming for lights, and his men yelling and fighting for the gold, and Hough's friends struggling to get out. But they did not follow Hough into this room and evidently must have thought he had escaped through the other door.

"Come," said Ancliffe, touching Allie.

He helped her get out, and followed laboriously. Then he softly called to Hough. The gambler let himself down swiftly and noiselessly.

"Now what?" he muttered.

THEY appeared to be in a narrow alley between a house of boards and a house of canvas. Excited voices sounded inside this canvas structure and evidently alarmed Hough, for with a motion he enjoined silence and led Allie through the dark passage out into

a gloomy square surrounded by low, dark structures. Ancliffe followed close behind.

The night was dark, with no stars showing. A cool wind blew in Allie's face, seeming to refresh her after her long confinement. Hough began groping forward. The area where they stood had a rough board floor and a skeleton framework; it had been a house of canvas—some of the partitions were still standing.

"Look for a door—any place to get out," whispered Hough to Ancliffe as they came to the opposite side of this square space. Hough, with Allie close at his heels, went to the right while Ancliffe went to the left. Hough went so far; then, muttering, he drew Allie back again to the point where they had started. Ancliffe was there.

"No place! All boarded up tight," he whispered.

"Same on this side. We'll have to—"

"Listen!" exclaimed Ancliffe, holding up his hand.

There appeared to be noise all around, but mostly on the other side of the looming canvas house, behind which was the alleyway that led to Durade's hall. Gleams of light flashed low down in the gloom. Durade's high, quick voice mingled with hoarser and deeper voices. Some one in the canvas house was talking to Durade, who apparently must have been in Allie's room, at her window.

"See hyar, greaser, we aint harborin' any of your outfit, an' we'll plug the first gent we see!" called a surly voice.

Durade's staccato tones succeeded it.

"Did you see them?"

"We heerd them gettin' out the window."

Durade's voice rose high in Spanish curses. Then: "Fresno—Mull—take men, go round the street! They can't get away. . . . You, Mex, get down in there with the gang!"

Lower voices answered, questioning, eager but indistinct.

"Gold? Kill him—bring her back—and you can have it all!" shouted Durade.

Following that came the heavy tramp of boots and the low roar of angry men.

HOUGH leaned toward Ancliffe.

"They've got us penned in."

"Yes. But it's pretty dark here. And they'll be slow. You watch, while I tear a hole through somewhere," replied Ancliffe.

He coolly extinguished his cigarette, dropped it and then put on his gloves.

Hough loomed tall and dark. He stood with his elbows stiff against his sides, a derringer in each hand.

"I wish I had heavier guns," he said.

Allie's thrill of emotion spent itself in a shudder of realization. Calmly and chivalrously these two strangers had taken a stand against her enemies; and with a few cool words and actions had accepted whatever might betide.

"I must tell you—oh, I must!" she whispered, with her hand on Hough's arm. "I heard you send for Neale and Larry King. . . . It made my heart stop! Neale—Warren Neale is my sweetheart. See, I wear his ring! . . . Reddy King is my dearest friend—my brother, almost."

Hough bent low to peer into Allie's face—to see her ring. Then he turned to Ancliffe.

"How things work out! I always suspected what was wrong with Neale. Now I know—after seeing his girl! No wonder he's haunted—driven!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Ancliffe.

"I've never been so—Here, Ancliffe, I'll block Durade's gang. Will you save the girl?"

"Assuredly," answered the imperturbable Englishman. "Where shall I take her?"

"Where *can* she be safe? The troop-camp? No, too far. . . . Aha! take her to Stanton! Tell Stanton the truth! Stanton will hide her! Then find Neale and King."

Hough turned to Allie.

"I'm glad you spoke—about Neale," he said, and where his voice was not husky it held a softness. "I owe him a good deal. I like him. Ancliffe will get you out of here—and safely to Neale!"

ALLIE knew somehow—something in his tone, his presence—that he would never leave this gloomy inclosure. She heard Ancliffe ripping a

board off the wall or fence, and that sound seemed alarmingly loud. The voices no longer were heard behind the canvas house. The wind whipped through the bare framework. Somewhere at a distance were music and revelry. Benton's night roar had begun. Over all seemed to hang a menacing and ponderous darkness, as much of life as it was of night.

Suddenly a light appeared moving slowly from the most obscure corner of the square, perhaps fifty paces distant.

Hough drew Allie closer to Ancliffe.

"Get behind me," he whispered.

A sharp ripping and splitting of wood told of Ancliffe's progress; also it located the fugitives for Durade's gang. The light vanished; quick voices rasped out; then stealthy feet padded over the boards.

Allie saw or imagined she saw gliding forms back against the pale gloom. She was so close to Ancliffe that he touched her as he worked. Turning, she beheld a ray of light through an aperture he had made.

Suddenly the gloom split to a reddish flare. It revealed dark forms. A gun cracked. Allie heard the heavy thud of a bullet against the wall. Then Hough shot. His derringer made a small spiteful report. It was followed by a cry—a groan. Other guns cracked. Bullets pattered on the wood. Allie heard the spat of lead striking Hough. It had a sickening sound. He moved as if from a blow. A volley followed, and Allie could not distinguish those shots fired by Hough, but she saw the bright flashes. All about her bullets were whistling and thudding. She knew with a keen horror every time Hough was struck. Hoarse yells and strangling cries mixed with the diminishing shots.

Then Ancliffe grasped her and pushed her through a hole he had made. Allie crawled backward, and she could see Hough still standing in front. It seemed that he swayed. Then as she rose, further view was cut off. While not looking about her, she was aware of a dimly lighted storeroom. Outside, the shots had ceased. She heard something heavy fall suddenly—then a pattering of quick, light footsteps.

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Ancliffe's strange gesture lie's lips. She followed close to him. There were—and men. All seemed before the Englishman. Indeed, his movement ap ural. They went down a out into the dark. Light to the right, and hurrying cliffe ran with her in the tion.

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Ancliffe essayed to get through the aperture feet first. It was a tight squeeze, or else some one held him back. There came a crashing of the wood; Ancliffe's body whirled in the aperture and wrestled. Allie heard a hissing Spanish utterance. She stood petrified, certain Durade had attacked Ancliffe. Suddenly the Englishman crashed through, drawing a supple, twisting, slender man with him. He held this man by the throat with one hand and by the wrist with the other. Allie recognized Durade's Mexican ally. He gripped a knife, and the blade was bloody.

ONCE inside, where Ancliffe could move, he handled the Mexican with deliberate and remorseless ease. Allie saw and heard him twist and break the arm which held the knife. Not that sight, but the eyes of the Mexican, made Allie close her own. When she opened them, at a touch, Ancliffe stood beside her, and the Mexican lay quivering. Ancliffe held the bloody knife; he hid it under his coat.

"Come," he said. His voice seemed thin.

"But Mr. Hough? We must—"

Ancliffe's strange gesture froze Allie's lips. She followed him—clung close to him. There were voices near—and men. All seemed to fall back before the Englishman. He strode on. Indeed, his movement appeared unnatural. They went down a low stairway, out into the dark. Lights were there to the right, and hurrying forms. Ancliffe ran with her in the other direction.

Only dim, pale lamps shone through tents. Down this side-street it was quiet and dark. Allie stumbled, would have fallen but for Ancliffe. Yet sometimes he stumbled too. He turned a corner, and proceeded rapidly toward bright lights. The houses loomed big. Down that way many people passed to and fro. Allie's senses admitted a new sound—a confusion of music, dancing, hilarity, all distinct, near at hand. She could scarcely keep up with Ancliffe. He did not speak nor look to right or left.

At the corner of a large house—a

long structure which sent out gleams of light—Ancliffe opened a door and pulled Allie into a hallway, dark near at hand, brilliant at the other end. He drew her along this passage, striding slower now, and unsteadily. He turned into another hall lighted by lamps. Music and gayety seemed to sweep stunningly into Allie's face. But Allie saw only one person there—a negress. As Ancliffe halted, the negress rose from her seat. She was frightened.

"Call Stanton—quick!" he panted. He thrust gold at her. "Tell no one else!"

Then he opened a door, pushed Allie into a bright, elegantly furnished parlor and, closing the door, staggered to a couch, upon which he fell. His face wore a singular look, remarkable as its whiteness. All the careless, indifferent, weary shade had vanished.

As he lay back, his hands loosed their hold of his coat and fell away all bloody. The bloody knife slid to the floor. A bloody froth flecked his lips.

"Oh, heaven! You were—stabbed!" gasped Allie, sinking to her knees.

"If Stanton doesn't come in time—tell her what happened—ask her to fetch Neale to you," he said. He spoke with extreme difficulty, and a fluttering told of blood in his throat.

ALLIE could not speak. She could not pray. But her sight and her perception were abnormally keen. Ancliffe's strange, clear gaze rested upon her, and it seemed to Allie that he smiled, not with lips or face, but in spirit.

Then Allie heard a rush of silk at the door. It opened—closed. A woman of fair face, bare of arm and neck, glittering with diamonds, swept into the parlor. She had great, dark-blue eyes full of shadows, and they flashed from Ancliffe to Allie and back again.

"What's happened? You're pale as death! Ancliffe! Your hands—your breast! *My God!*"

She bent over him.

"Stanton, I've been—cut up! And Hough is—dead!"

"Oh, this horrible Benton!" cried the woman.

"Don't faint! Hear me! You re-

member we were curious about a girl—Durade had in his place? This is she—Allie Lee. She is innocent. Durade held her for revenge. He had loved—then hated her mother. . . . Hough won all Durade's gold—and bought the girl. . . . But we had to fight. . . . Stanton, this Allie Lee is Neale's sweetheart! He believes her dead. . . . You hide her—bring Neale to her!"

Quickly she replied: "I promise you, Ancliffe—I promise! How strange—what you tell! But not strange for Benton. . . . Ancliffe, speak to me! Oh, he is going—"

With her first words, a subtle change passed over Ancliffe. It was the release of his will. His whole body sank. Under the intense whiteness of his face a cold gray shade began to creep. His last conscious instant spent itself in the strange gaze Allie had felt before, and now she had a vague perception that in some way it expressed a blessing and a deliverance. The instant the beautiful light turned inward, as if now to illumine the darkness of his soul, she divined what he had once been, his ruin, his secret and eternal remorse—and the chance to die that had made him great.

So, forgetful of the other beside her, Allie Lee watched Ancliffe, sustained by a nameless spirit, feeling with melancholy and tragic pity her duty as a woman—to pray for him, to stay beside him, that he might not be alone when he died.

And while she watched, with the fading of that singular radiance, there returned to his face a slow, careless weariness, cold now, fixing bitterly in a mask of death.

"He's gone!" murmured Stanton, ris-

ing. A dignity had come to her. "Dead! And we know nothing of him—not his real name—nor his place! But even Benton could not keep him from dying like an English gentleman!"

SHE took Allie by the hand and led her out of the parlor, across the hall into a bedroom. Then she faced Allie wonderingly, with all a woman's sympathy and something that Allie sensed as a sweet and poignant wistfulness.

"Are you—Neale's sweetheart?" she asked, very low.

"Oh, please find him for me!" sobbed Allie.

The tenderness in this woman's voice and look and touch was what Allie needed more than anything, and it made her a trembling child. How strangely, hesitatingly, with closing eyes, this woman reached for her to fold her in gentle arms! What a tumult Allie felt throbbing in the full breast where she laid her head!

"Allie Lee! And he thinks you dead?" she murmured brokenly. "I will bring him to you!"

When she released Allie, years and shadows no longer showed in her face. Her eyes were tear-wet and darkening; her lips were tremulous. At that moment there was something beautiful and terrible about her.

But Allie could not understand.

"You stay here," she said. "Be very quiet. . . . I will bring Neale!"

Opening the door, she paused on the threshold to glance down the hall first and then back at Allie. Her smile was glad. She closed the door and locked it. Allie heard the soft swish of silk dying away.

THEY find Allie at last, of course—but in the house of the notorious Beauty Stanton. And this is only one of the many dramatic episodes in the next installment of "The Roaring U. P. Trail." It will appear in the next—the December—issue of the BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale November 1st.

Considera

ZEBULON KINGSLEE, president of the Kingslee Light and Power Corporation, swung

around heavily in his desk-chair and looked y Jim Holman over, quite he had never seen him man frowned at his emp ing gaze; he had been good quarter of an hour figured, and he had grov

"You sent for me, sir," said almost testily. "I an

"You Southerners are you?" Kingslee chided sn here, Holman," he went fair salary, and I don't with work; and yet you' What's wrong?"

"Since you've asked Holman, "you've bee younger and less capable I, while I stay in the why I'm not satisfied. Y me for that, sir."

Kingslee laughed. "I And all you say is true, ing of Bowers and Gayle, relatives of mine; don't your chance has come. man:

"Down in your own ho is a town that is badly in electric light and power. from that town, on Skel the edge of the Smokies, the best dam sites in the owned by a more or less farmer named Selah Rin tried hard to buy it, wouldn't sell. He's got without selling off land, h

"Now, if you will go