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- ✓ **Without Gloves**

WITHOUT GLOVES

BY

JAMES B. HENDRYX

AUTHOR OF

“THE PROMISE,” “CONNIE MORGAN IN ALASKA,” ETC.



G.P. Putnam's Sons
New York & London
The Knickerbocker Press

1924

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WITHOUT GLOVES

Without Gloves

CHAPTER I

THUNDERBOLT LEONARD

SHIRLY LEONARD, alias Thunderbolt Leonard, holding his cheap bath robe loosely about him, walked rapidly down the short aisle and climbed through the ropes that bounded the raised platform, closely followed by Red Casey, burdened with certain impedimenta of the prize ring.

It was Thunderbolt's first appearance as a professional fighter, and he fervidly wished himself elsewhere. He was badly "rattled"—and the worst of it was, he knew it.

"Sit down!" hissed a voice, and he glared into the face of Red Casey, as he settled himself upon the canvas stool that adorned his corner. He suddenly realized that he hated Red Casey. Red had got him into this. It was only for amusement that he had put on the gloves one night in the little

Eureka Social Club across the river and since that night, a little more than a year ago, Red Casey, professional trainer at the club, had seen to it that he appeared in the arena for a work-out at least twice each week. One after another the amateurs of the club had gone down before him. Then the champions of other clubs had gone down.

In a flash, as he sat blinking in the garish light, it occurred to him that he had liked the game. With a sickening chill at the pit of his stomach, he wondered at the thrills his successive victories had given him—especially his knockout of Pat Kavanaugh the lengthy champion of the Eagles. He recollected his first battle with Kavanaugh and the depths of despair into which the profane and abusive “bawling out” he had received from Red Casey had plunged him when the Eagle champ had earned the decision at the end of the sixth round, with him, Leonard, clinging desperately to the ropes. But this humiliation had been more than counterbalanced by the flush and thrill of the return match when, in the first minute of the first round he had landed a swing that put the mighty Kavanaugh so soundly asleep that, had he been so minded, the referee could have counted ten thousand instead of the required ten.

It was after that bout that the fertile brain of

Red Casey had substituted the name Thunderbolt as a suitable appellation for "a guy dat kin knock 'em cold in de foist." It was after that bout, also, that Casey had began to press a point that he had previously only hinted at, namely that young Leonard should quit driving truck for the Metropolitan Construction Company, and enter the list of professional fighters. He had listened to the glowing word pictures of Casey anent the rewards in fame and fortune that were waiting to shower themselves upon him. Under the spell of Casey's oratory the check for thirty dollars that was handed to him each Saturday by the cashier of the construction company dwindled to such piffling proportion that he became almost ashamed to present it for payment.

"T'irty bucks fer a week's woik!" scoffed Casey contemptuously, "W'en any amount of clubs is wil-lin' to kick in wid a century fer an hour's woik in de ring! An' w'en dey find out w'at youse kin do dey'll be clawin' all over one anuder to slip youse a grand, an 'tain't long before youse kin laugh at a grand."

Leonard listened, but held onto his job. Daily as he hauled sand and gravel and lumber and cement over the streets of the great city, his brain reverted to the glowing word pictures of Red Casey.

Came then a day of excessive heat, during the long hours of which he had handled many sacks of cement. Sweat poured from every pore to mingle with the cement that found its way through the bags and coated his clothing and skin with a grey mud that caked and chafed and irritated. It was Saturday and that evening the fingers that folded the pay check were stiff and sore. "Thirty case notes," he muttered, as he climbed stiffly from his truck in the garage, "An' Casey claims someone's waitin' to slip me a hundred fer punchin' some guy in the jaw!"

That night when he appeared at the Eureka Club, Casey swooped down upon him, and hustled him into an alley behind a row of lockers. The trainer's eyes were shining, and as he talked, he prodded Leonard's ribs with a stiff forefinger: "I seen Dreyfus, today, an' we made a deal. He was over to the Eagle Club de night you paralyzed dat long stiff, Kavanaugh. An' he was at de ringside de night you put away de China Kid."

"Who's Dreyfus," asked Leonard, indifferently, as he slowly opened and closed his fingers, stiff and sore from the gripping of cement sacks.

"Don't youse know who Bill Dreyfus is?" cried the horrified Casey. "De manager of de Bon Ton Athletic Club on East Houston Street! Well—w'en a guy gets a decision at de Bon Ton he's dere! An'

lose out half a dozen times 'fore I gits wise dat de booze is nix—an' den it's too late to hook on agin. Dey're afraid to give me a try, 'cause dey figger I can't stay off de booze. But, I be'n off it fer two years. I takes dis job 'cause it's de best I kin git—see? De foist time I seen youse stripped, I says to meself, 'Dere's a guy dats built for a champ, if he's got guts, an' de head to match his build.' So I starts to woik on youse, an' it ain't long till youse begun puttin' 'em away. 'Course dey's all ama-choors an' ain't no real fighters. But youse has got de head all right, an' de speed an' de punch. But, I'm tellin' it to youse fer yer own good, kid. Dere's a streak of yellor in youse dat's got to come out 'fore you git anywheres. I've know'd it ever sence dat foist battle wid Kavanaugh, an' it's showin' now. Youse is afraid to fight Bull Larrigan—"

A flush of anger reddened the younger man's cheeks, and he was about to retort angrily, when Casey hastened on; "It ain't no use to git sore about it. Gittin' sore proves it's true. Guys don't git sore w'en you tell 'em t'ings about dereself dat's lies. It's w'en dey know it's de troot, dey git sore. De yellor's dere, an' it's got to come out—like a rotten toot'. I git youse all right, an' I'm wise to de game. Ask anyone about old Red Casey an' dey'll tell youse dere ain't no better trainer, an' dey'll tell

youse Red took de count in de fight wid John Barley-corn—but he ain't. Kid, I'm as good now as I ever was—an' better. Give me de chanct to train youse —Git holt of a good manager, an' youse'll go clean to de top, er I don't know de game, w'ich I do. We'll t'row in togedder. Youse slip me w'at youse t'ink I'm wor't. W'en youse git a little money, youse kin slip me a little, an' w'en youse git more, I git more. If I ain't satisfied, I'll tell youse, an' if we can't fix it up, I'll quit an' git out. W'at do youse say?"

Young Leonard's big hand grasped the wiry hand of the trainer: "You're on, Red," he said with a rather sheepish grin, "An'—you're right about me bein' scairt to fight Bull Larrigan. I am scairt—scairt stiff. An' I was scairt stiff in the ring with Kavanaugh. That's why I hit him so hard—I was scairt of him."

Red Casey grinned: "Don't I know it? An' youse is goin' to hit Bull Larrigan jest as hard—only youse has got to stall fer a few rounds foist. De sports wants to see a little fun fer dere money."

The following Monday morning Thunderbolt Leonard quit his job, and now, as he sat under the arc light whose huge reflector shot its full glare down into the ring, he gazed helplessly over the blur

of upturned faces and heartily wished himself elsewhere.

Red Casey moved about, close beside him, scrutinizing the lacings of a pair of gloves. Leonard glanced diagonally across the canvas covered floor to the empty stool in Larrigan's corner. The crowd was becoming impatient. Loud-bawled calls for Larrigan, scattered at first, became more frequent and more vociferous. Leonard heard his own name mentioned, and realized that the crowd was "kidding" him. He swallowed, nervously, and shifted about on his stool.

The whispered words of Casey, speaking out of the side of his mouth reached his ear: "Dat's w'at always happens to new guys, kid. Dey're tryin' to git yer goat. It's old stuff Bull Larrigan's pullin'—keepin' a new guy waitin' till de crowd gits his nanny. It shows Larrigan's scairt of youse. Watch him, he'll use all de tricks he knows. But, youse has got w'at he ain't got, an' dat's de punch. Keep away from his rushes, an' wait him out. W'en de chance comes, knock him fer a gool, kid, knock him fer a—" Red Casey's voice was drowned in a roar from the crowd, and glancing across the ring, Leonard saw a robed figure step through the ropes. The next moment, the bath robe was tossed to the floor and Bull Larrigan stood in his green fighting

trunks grinning at the crowd, which cheered, and jeered, and "kidded." Leonard's swiftly appraising eye took in the details of his opponent's figure at a glance; the short thick neck that supported a close-cropped bullet-shaped head, with a heavy undershot jaw, thick shoulders and arms that showed heavy muscles bunched into great knobs and knots; curly hair heavily matted upon a broad chest, and a thick waist with a very perceptible roll of fat where the trunk string encircled the paunch. Instantly he recollected the words of Red Casey: "He ain't built fer de speed he shows. De speed's in his head—it's forced speed—wait him out—an' w'en youse swing, swing hard."

Thunderbolt Leonard knew, in a dazed sort of way that he was upon his feet, that the bath robe had been stripped from his shoulders, and that a man was perfunctorily examining the tape bandages upon his hands. He heard his own name mentioned by a loud-mouthed man who stood in the ring, and managed to duck his head in acknowledgment of the hand-clapping and cheers of the crowd. He knew that Red Casey was tying on the gloves, and that he was again seated upon his stool, then a gong sounded, and he was upon his feet facing Bull Larrigan who, instead of leaping half way across the ring and boring in with a smothering rush, as

Casey had predicted, was approaching cautiously, eyes narrowed, guard raised, and a sneering grin upon his lips. With Leonard still in a daze, the two half circled each other, when, without warning, Larrigan sprang straight in. In vain the younger man tried to guard the shower of blows that rained in on him. Before he knew it he was on the ropes and instinctively he clinched. As the blows showered upon him, Leonard's head cleared. This was what he had expected—what Casey had predicted. The clinch was broken, Larrigan rushed again, and again Leonard brought up with the ropes biting into his back. Again he clinched, hugging close till the referee once more broke them apart. There was a stinging at the corner of his eye, and Leonard realized that the warm trickle that tickled his cheek was blood. The crowd was roaring encouragement to Larrigan whose third rush was stopped by the sound of the gong.

The first round was decidedly Larrigan's round.

The cold water felt good and he returned Red Casey's look of solicitation with a grin. "I'll get him," he whispered, as Casey whipped the towel up and down before his face.

"Sure youse will," hissed Casey, "But, sting him a little, dis round. Don't take all de punishment. Reach him now an' den, but guard an' stall till de

fift' or sixt'. He'll slow up den, an' dat's de time
——”

Gong!

Leonard was hardly upon his feet when Larrigan was upon him in a savage rush that had carried him clear across the ring. The crowd was all Larrigan's now, and Leonard, cool as a cucumber, heard the words of approbation and encouragement that greeted the rush of the Bull. “Eat him up!” “Kill the dub!” “Knock him through the ropes!” To Larrigan's surprise, instead of meeting the rush with a futile guard, Leonard swiftly side-stepped and stung him with a well placed right to the jaw, which before the surprised Bull could put up his defence was followed by a long left, and a short right jab that brought blood from his lips. The crowd, that a moment before had been howling for his life blood, now cheered Leonard, who continued to force the fighting, without, however, landing a blow. But the forcing was short lived, for recovering himself, Larrigan rushed again, and this time succeeded in once more crowding the youngster into the ropes. The round ended with Leonard stalling, and the crowd again with Larrigan.

The third and fourth rounds were simply a series of rushes, with Leonard always on the defensive, and only now and then reaching his opponent with

a well directed blow. But, Larrigan knew what the crowd did not know, that each blow of Leonard's that landed, landed hard. He redoubled his efforts to smother the youngster and to get his nerve with the very speed of his hooks and jabs, with the result that each round ended with Leonard on the ropes struggling vainly to ward off the furious onslaughts.

The crowd was loud in its demands that Larrigan finish the bout with a knockout. Thunderbolt Leonard was so palpably a dub that the fans felt aggrieved. Only at the ringside, a few of the wise ones, noting that between the rounds Larrigan's over heavy paunch worked spasmodically as he sucked the air into his lungs, and that at the end of each round he sprawled more heavily upon the ropes, withheld decision, and hoped for that thrill that is dearest to the heart of the prize ring fan, the sudden and decisive rally of an apparently beaten man.

In his corner Larrigan heard the cries for a knockout, and he realized that he could deliver no knockout. His hope of winning the decision rested upon two things, either the continuation of the bout to the end of the final round, the tenth; or his ability to make the youngster "lay down" by the ferocity of his rushes. Larrigan knew that this was

Thunderbolt's first fight in the professional ring, and somewhere he had heard that at times the youngster had showed a streak of yellow. And it was to make him "lay down" that he had exerted himself to the utmost in the rushes. But the kid showed no signs of "laying down," and a dull rage burned in Larrigan's heart as he realized that the rushes were costing him dear.

At the beginning of the fifth, Larrigan forbore to rush. Toe to toe, they indulged in a bit of sparring in which each landed harmless blows. Leonard, on his guard for the rush that did not come, suddenly realized that Larrigan was stalling for wind. Redoubling his effort he forced Bull to the ropes, seeking in vain for an opening that would enable him to deliver a smashing blow to the jaw, or the heart. He tried for a long left to the jaw, his foot slipped, and the next instant his head rocked and he felt himself falling from a great height. A moment later he realized that he was lying upon his back, and that his gloved hands were clutching at the mat in a vain effort to keep from being whirled into space. Above him the hand of the referee was rising, falling. His ears caught words—three—four—five— He recovered his senses with a rush. He, Thunderbolt Leonard, was on the mat, and the referee was counting him out! He turned on his

side and rose to his hands and knees—seven—eight — He was upon his feet, his guard up, and Larrigan with redoubled ferocity was rushing him to the ropes. The gong sounded before he could clinch, and as he sank onto his stool, he could hear the wild shouting of the crowd. The clammy cold of the wet ropes felt good as he stretched his arms along them and lay back while Casey fanned him with the towel. “Look out for him, on de start, dis round, kid—he t’inks he’s got youse—git him, now anytime. He’s about all in. Watch yer chanct, an’ git him!” Casey grinned and winked, as the gong sounded, and with the roar of the crowd, he met Bull Larrigan’s frantic rush. Good old Casey! The only man in the house who believed in him. He’d show ’em! Feinting a sidestep, Thunderbolt drove a terrific left to the undershot jaw. The blow went high, landing squarely on the nose with a force that rocked the mighty Bull to his shoe soles. The rush stopped in a rapid exchange of close in-fighting, Larrigan blowing the blood that ran into his mouth from his flattened nose, so that it splattered and spotted the arms and chest of Thunderbolt with crimson. The crowd went wild. The air was filled with a mighty roar of voices in which the name of Thunderbolt divided honors with the name of Larrigan. For the youngster was fighting, now—fight-

ing as he had never fought in his life. He could see what the crowd could not see, the peculiar glassy look in the eyes of Bull, that is the look of a beaten man. He knew also that Larrigan was slowing up. A swing of his own missed its mark, and Larrigan's right crashed against his jaw. He knew that Larrigan had put everything he had into that blow, and the blow had failed even to jar. A moment later Larrigan's glove, catching fairly the blow it was to block, was driven back into his own face—he couldn't even guard! A punch to the stomach staggered Bull. His arms momentarily dropped, and in that moment a long left to the jaw followed a right to the heart, and Larrigan, his arms fanning the air like flails, his mouth open, and the lower half of his face showing in the glare of the light like a grotesque crimson mask, staggered backward against the ropes. Wildly the man clutched the rope with one arm, as he sought to force a clinch with the other. Leonard easily avoided the clinch, carefully measured his distance, and landed on the point of the jaw, and Bull Larrigan, sagging down the ropes, went peacefully to sleep upon the floor, while above him the arm of the referee slowly rose and fell for the tenth time.

As Thunderbolt crossed to the corner he heard his own name roared from a thousand throats, as

the crowd milled and swarmed about the ringside and the exits. For crowds are ever fickle. An old hero had fallen, and the East Side had a new darling.

CHAPTER II

ALL SET

TOWARD the middle of the afternoon of the day following the fight, Dreyfus entered the door of the Eureka Social Club's gymnasium and was greeted by Red Casey: "Hello, Bill! How's every little t'ing goin' wid youse?"

"All right, I guess," Dreyfus ran an appraising eye about the room. "Nice place you've got here, Red."

"Well, it ain't so bad. 'Course it ain't no Bon Ton, nor nuttin' like dat. But, we manage to pay de rent, an' a few salaries, an' now an' den we got enough left over fer to put in a little new 'quipment."

"What we take in over to the Bon Ton ain't what you'd call all velvet," answered Dreyfus, dryly.

Red Casey grinned knowingly, "No, I s'pose Lefty Klingermann tends to dat."

Dreyfus nodded: "Um-hum, an' it's Lefty I come over to see you about."

“Lefty! Wot in de devil have I got to do wid Lefty Klingermann? He ain’t got no strings on dis dump. You tell Lefty I says w’en we git ready to move de Eureka Club over to Union Market precinct, I’ll come an’ see him.”

Dreyfus grinned: “I’ll say you’d go an’ see him, or he’d go an’ see you—every once in so often—an’ sometimes twice. But, it ain’t that—it’s about Thunderbolt Leonard.”

“T’underbolt! Wot about T’underbolt?”

“Lefty’s took a notion he wants to manage him.”

Red Casey stared incredulously at the speaker: “Manage T’underbolt!” he cried. “Yer crazy wid de heat! Wot in blue hell would dat grafter do wid a pug? Wot’s his game? Talk to me, Bill. Put me wise.”

“That’s all I know. I’d kind of figured I’d like to take holt of him myself, if he showed anything last night. But Lefty come in after the bout was over an’ said he was goin’ to manage him, himself.”

The wrath of Red Casey flared high: “Youse go back an’ tell dat big fat slob of a Kike dat I says to hell wid him!” Red stepped closer and lowered his voice: “Le’me give youse a tip, Bill. Dis here kid’s a comer. But, he’s got to be handled right. He’s raw as a chunk of liver—but he’s got de goods. Wid youse managin’ him, an’ me trainin’

him, we'd put him to de top. I ain't t'rowin' de bull. Dat's straight goods. Youse go back an' tell Lefty to go chase hisself an' if he kes it too hot fer youse over dere, quit yer job an' come over here. You an' me, we kin put de kid clean to de top. An' w'en we do, de jobs we got now'll look like t'irty cents, Mex."

Dreyfus shook his head: "I'd like to do that the best in the world. But you don't know Lefty Klingermann like I know him. We wouldn't stand no show. He'd queer our game one way an' another. An' that ain't all. When he gits it in for a man there ain't no place he can go an' be safe. Remember Coxy Wesson?"

"De guy dat use'd to run de stuss joint on Rivington street?"

"That's him. Well, he tried to double-cross Lefty a while back. The bulls clea ' his dump out, but Coxy made a getaway. Well, last Thursday Coxy got bumped off—in Denver. An' Sunday a couple of gunmen sneaked back into town. That's Lefty."

Red Casey's brow wrinkled: "Does he know youse come over here today?"

Dreyfus nodded.

"Well, den dey ain't no use talkin' about me an' de kid slippin' out to New Orleans or 'Frisco, 'cause dat'd leave youse here, an' he'd know youse double-

crossed him, an' it wouldn't do no good fer youse to go along, 'cause if he got Coxy, he'd git youse. Looks like we got to play de game wid his chips. I don't like it."

"Maybe it won't be so bad," said Dreyfus. "Lefty's got plenty of jack. An' he seems hell-bent on bringin' out a champ. There's one thing about Lefty, when he gets a notion in his head he'll ride it, no matter what it costs. I don't think he wants to break into the game for what money's in it. He's got some other reason. We might do worse than set in the game with him."

Casey made a wry grimace: "Might's well claim we kin, seein' dere ain't no udder way. But how do youse figger us bot' in on de jack? Youse is a trainer, an' so am I. Lefty he ain't goin' to hire two trainers, is he?"

Dreyfus grinned. "No, Red, you can do the training. Don't worry about me. I'll get mine. The Bon Ton is going to be the training quarters for the new champ, an' most of his fights will be fought there. Then Lefty promised to ease up about fifty per cent on—collections."

A form darkened the door, and Casey motioned him to join them. "Here's T'underbolt, now," he whispered, "We'll see what he says."

Thunderbolt nodded to Dreyfus, and greeted

Casey with a grin: "Framin' up another match?" he asked, "Bring 'em on. I need the jack."

"No, we ain't dopin' out no match," explained Red, "We're dopin' out a manager. We got a proposition. Say, kid, do youse know who wants to manage youse? Well not no one but Lefty Klingermann, hisself!"

"Who's Lefty Klingermann?"

"Dey ain't no one on de East Side couldn't tell youse who Lefty is. He's de devil, an' president, an' congress, an' de fire department, an' de police, an' de mayor all rolled in one bundle an' stuffed inside a silk shirt. He's de guy dat lets de wheels go 'round on de East Side. He's de King of Union Market. An' he wants to manage youse. He set at de ringside las' night, an' today he sends Dreyfus over to git youse."

An avaricious gleam flashed in the young man's eyes: "What's in it?" he asked, tersely.

Dreyfus answered: "He didn't mention no terms. He wants you should come over to the Bon Ton tonight, an' talk it over. There'll only be him an' me an' you, an' Red. Nine o'clock, in my office."

Thunderbolt turned to Red: "How about it?" he asked.

Casey squared his shoulders and looked up into the prize fighter's face. "Dey ain't no use beatin'

de devil around de stump," he said. "It's like dis: If youse is out fer de jack, an' lookin' fer de easiest way to git it, I'd say sign up wid Klingermann. Dey ain't no one goin' to buck him. Chances is youse'll win all yer fights, an' pull down a lot of jack. But if youse wants to hammer yer way to de top, lickin' de men youse kin lick, an' gittin' licked by de ones dat kin lick youse, an' takin' chances on not drawin' down much jack at first, den keep away from Lefty. One way, youse git a long ways up wid t'ings all fixed fer youse—an' maybe he's big enough to put youse clean over. Championships has be'n fixed before now."

Thunderbolt grinned: "I'll say I'm out fer the jack—an' I don't care how I git it. The easier the better. What kind of a damn fool would I be to throw over a chanct to git to the top easy, an' make plenty of jack doin' it, to hammer my way to the top an' gittin' hell hammered out of me, an' gittin' paid less for it than the other way?" He turned to Dreyfus: "Where's this here Lefty guy? Lead me to him!"

As they followed Thunderbolt out the door Dreyfus whispered a single word into Red Casey's ear: "Yellow."

Casey nodded, and returned the whisper: "Mebbe you an' me's lucky—an' de big Kike's stung!"

Thunderbolt, Casey, and Dreyfus waited in the latter's stuffy office until fifteen minutes past the appointed time before Lefty Klingermann, breathing heavily from his ascent of the stairs, appeared in the doorway, stiff straw hat pushed to the back of his head, a cigar protruding at an angle from the corner of his mouth. He paused for a moment and allowed his glance to travel slowly over the faces of the three occupants of the little room.

"Klingermann, this is Thunderbolt Leonard," introduced Dreyfus, "Thunderbolt, meet Lefty Klingermann."

Each acknowledged the introduction with a nod. "Seen him in the ring last night," observed Klingermann, carelessly. "Who's the other one?" He indicated Casey with a sidewise quirk of the head.

"That's Red Casey, one of the best trainers in the game."

"Casey—Red Casey," muttered Klingermann, as if trying to recall the name. A flicker of interest lighted his eyes. "Not the Red Casey that helped get old Fitz into shape, an' then helped put the big boiler maker to the top—not that Red Casey!"

"De hell I ain't," challenged the trainer.

"Glad to know you," admitted Klingermann, advancing into the room and offering his pudgy hand. "Where you be'n keepin' yourself?"

“Managin’ a club, same as Dreyfus, here,” answered Red.

Klingermann regarded him shrewdly; “How does it come a man that was touted up like you was them days has got to manage a dinky club?” he asked abruptly. “You don’t look so old to me. Why ain’t you still in the camps of the big ones?”

Casey met the cold-blooded stare of the other with a glance, half humorous—half contemptuous: “I went into de ring wid old John Barleycorn, an’ he knocked me for a gool. Big Jim tied de can to me. I ain’t sayin’ he’s right, er he ain’t. I was hittin’ de booze pretty hard. Dat was about t’ree mont’s before his battle wid de Big Smoke.”

“I suppose,” sneered Klingermann, “If he hadn’t ditched you, we wouldn’t never had no tarbaby champ.”

“I ain’t sayin’ we would, er we wouldn’t,” answered Casey. “All I know is dat when de fight’s over, Big Jim’s a has-be’n, an’ Little Arthur’s started on his prowl.”

Klingermann deposited his hat, crown down upon the table, and eased himself into a chair. He turned abruptly upon Thunderbolt: “So you think you’ll make a fighter, do you?”

“You said you was at the ringside last night.”

“Well, don’t go gettin’ cocky ’cause you knocked

out poor old Bull Larrigan. He's jest be'n waitin' fer some kid to come along an' put him to sleep fer about a year. At that, he pretty near got you. Whoever's be'n handlin' you had ought to slipped you the word that your hands an' feet could be used fer somethin' else besides eatin' an' walkin' with."

"Is that so?" cut in Casey. "Youse might of saw a lot of fights Lefty, but when it comes to handlin' de fighters, you don't know no more about it dan I do about hornin' graft out of a stuss joint. Two weeks ago dat kid was a truck driver. Las' night was his first real fight. He went into it wid only two weeks' trainin', an' he was rattled, to boot. If you t'ink it's so easy to build up a fighter, go pick you out a truck driver, or any udder kind of a guy dat don't know nuttin' about de game, an' I got a century dat says you can't learn him enough in two weeks to even hit Larrigan, let alone knock him out. Larrigan's on de toboggan. His punch is gone, but he's dere wit' de science, an' you know it."

"With the punch the kid's got, if he had Larrigan's speed an' Larrigan's science, he'd be a world beater."

Casey shook his head: "Larrigan never had de speed he showed. His speed was forced. He was trained wrong. Look at de bunchy muscles on him. He never had no punch. Dis kid here, his muscles

lays so flat an' smooth youse wouldn't never know he had none, an' time I've woiked wid him six mont's, if he ain't got more science dan Larrigan showed, I don't want no pay fer my time."

Klingermann eyed the old trainer coldly: "I ain't decided I want to manage this kid, yet," he said, "But, if I do I ain't goin' to hire no broken down booze h'ister fer a trainer."

"Youse has got de right dope, Lefty, an' dat's w'y I want de job. You see, two years ago I woke up one mornin' an' called myself jest what you said, a broken down booze h'ister, a rum hound, right. It made me mad to git called names like dat, an' I knocked old John Barleycorn clean t'rough de ropes. He ain't boddered me since. Youse has follered de game long enough to know dat Red Casey knows his business. An' w'at's more, I know dis kid better'n enyone else knows him. Give me a chanct wit' him?"

Klingermann's eyes narrowed: "Do you think he'll make a champ?" he asked after a moment of silence.

"Dat all depends on how he's managed, an' how he's handled. It's a long road from w'ere he's at to de heavyweight belt. But, I'm tellin' youse dat dere ain't no one else in sight dat's got no better chanct."

Klingermann turned abruptly upon Dreyfus.

“What do you think?” he asked, “About him for a trainer?”

“Well,” answered the manager of the Bon Ton, “It looks to me like if a man knows enough about the game to bring out two champs an’ be half-soused all the time, like Red used to be, he had ought to be able to bring out another when he’s sober all the time.”

“It’s goin’ into your contract, then,” snapped Klingermann, turning to Red, “One drink, an’ you’re fired, automatic.”

“You’re on,” answered Casey, and for an hour the three principals talked terms and conditions until a satisfactory arrangement was reached.

“All right,” said Klingermann, as he arose to go, “I’ll have my mouthpiece put it down on paper, an’ we’ll sign up tomorrow. Meanwhile you two better move over into the Avenue Hotel so you’ll be handy to your trainin’ quarters here. I’ll stop an’ make the arrangement when I go down.”

And so it happened that Thunderbolt Leonard came under the management of Lefty Klingermann, and ensconced in a suite of rooms in the precinct’s “swellest” hotel, became a personage in the immediate neighbourhood.

CHAPTER III

THE GIRL IN THE DOMINO MASK

FOUR weeks later, in the ring of the Bon Ton Athletic Club, Thunderbolt knocked out one Hammer Hamlin, of Harlem, who took the count in the fourth. The following evening Klingermann, in full dress, and in genial mood, invited Thunderbolt, Casey, and Dreyfus to dine with him at an expensive up-town hotel. Over cigars and black coffee the manager waxed prophetic: "We're goin' to put you clean to the top, kid. There ain't nothin' to it. The way you handled your mitts last night didn't look like the same guy that almost let old Bull Larrigan smother him in the same ring four weeks ago. An' you was there with the foot work, too. That Harlem bird never had a show from the tap of the gong. Us four is a combination they can't beat. I guess I didn't make no mistake when I picked out old Red, here, for a trainer. A lot of wise guys would said I was a fool. Little Lefty's

be'n played for a fool before now, but the guys that done the playin' always lit wrong end up at the finish. Ain't that right, Dreyfus?"

"That's right," agreed Dreyfus. "Playin' you for a fool is like playin' a sellin' plater to win a sweepstakes."

"As I says a minute ago, us four is a combination they can't beat. But there's one thing that's got to be changed." Three pairs of eyes searched the speaker's face as, with a flourish, he drew a pair of tortoise shell rimmed eyeglasses from his pocket and affixed them to the bridge of his nose. Picking up a newspaper which lay folded with the sporting news outermost on the table beside him, he leaned forward, and indicated with a pudgy forefinger a column headed "In the Squared Circle." "You all seen the papers, so I don't have to read this piece where it tells about our card down to the Bon Ton, an' how the feature of the evenin' was you knockin' out Hammer Hamlin, an' how it says it's understood you is under the management of Lefty Klingermann, the well-known East Side politician. But, that ain't what I'm gittin' at. It goes on down an' gives the fights at other clubs. Here's where Knockout Brady wins over Kid Johnson, an' Sailor Hall gets a decision over Tiger Keller, an' so on down the line. They wasn't none of 'em big

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fighters, an' most of the pugs is guys that ain't known out of their own precinct. An' all of 'em fightin' under some big soundin' monaker. It's Thunderbolt, an' Hammer, an' Sailor, an' Knockout, an Kid, an' Tiger, an' Bull. That's all right as long as these guys are fightin' around in clubs, but it don't go with the top notchers. Think back over the big boys that's be'n champs. Jake Kilrain, John L. Sullivan, Jim Corbett, Bob Fitzsimmons, Jim Jefferies, Jack Johnson—every one of 'em fightin' under a regular honest to God front name. It's only the little guys that don't never git nowhere that fights under them nicknames. What we're goin' to do is can this 'Thunderbolt' stuff. What's your regular name?"

"Shirly Leonard."

"Shirly!" cried Klingermann in dismay, "that's a hell of a name fer a pug! Ain't you got no other one?"

"No, that's all," grinned the other. "That's why Casey changed it to Thunderbolt."

"Well, Shirly ain't no fightin' name, an' Leonard ain't none too good. While we're changin', we might's well make a job of it. You can't fight under that name no more than what Kid McCoy could of fought under the name of Norman Shelby. We've got to dope out a new name."

“My mother’s name was Duffy,” ventured Leonard, “an’ her old man’s name was Mike.”

“There you are! Mike Duffy! There’s a name with a punch! Shirly Leonard couldn’t never be no champ, but Mike Duffy’s goin’ to be. An’ now that’s settled, how about me tryin’ to git a match with Knockout Brady for next month?”

The fight with Brady was arranged. With the introductions came the announcement from the ring that hereafter Thunderbolt Leonard would fight under the name of Mike Duffy. The announcement was met by applause for the youngster had already become a favourite with the Bon Ton fans. Whereupon, in a spectacular exhibition, during which each contestant fought furiously until the end of the eighth round when Brady suddenly collapsed on the ropes, the youngster vindicated the interest of his following.

During the next eight months Duffy added seven victories to his record and thus became the man most to be reckoned with among the local heavies. Sporting writers took him up. His photographs in ring costume showing his well-known “fighting face” appeared in Sunday sport gossip sheets, and letters began to pour in upon Klingermann offering matches with pugs of more than local fame.

By this time Mike Duffy had become the social

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lion of Union Market precinct. His popularity as a fistic star, together with the fact that he was a protégé of Lefty Klingermann gave him a standing in the community enjoyed by few others. He purchased raiment commensurate with his position and tonsorially blossomed like the rose. At the periodical social club, and gang dances, Mike Duffy, with his pink-necked hair-cut, and his highly polished finger nails, was the envied recipient of the adoring glances and flaunted blandishments of the feminine underworld. But, to the wiles and the blandishments of the sirens, the erstwhile truck driver gave no heed. So that not by virtue of so much as honeyed word or look could any moll among them claim prestige over any other. Which was a fact that gave Lefty Klingermann much secret satisfaction, that he broached one day to Casey. But the trainer shook his head: "Dey all falls fer a skirt sooner or later, an' believe me, w'en de kid falls, he'll fall hard." The worldly wisdom of which prophecy was demonstrated toward the tag end of the winter when at a masked ball in a little street just off the Bowery, Duffy met Lotta Rivoli. From the moment the domino mask dropped and he found himself staring speechless into the face of the sloe-eyed Cleopatra from Sullivan Street, Mike Duffy was hooked. The eyes that returned his stare held

hint of demure reproach, and the cherry red lips suggested a pout: "What's the matter, you big, strong boy, don't you—like me?"

"Like you!" Mike Duffy's voice was husky, and he knew that the words were uttered scarce above a whisper: "Say, kid—them eyes—an' lips—are they real?"

The pout became a smile. White teeth gleamed between curving red lips, and in the black eyes was a glint, deep down: "Oh, yes. They are much real—as real as the so strong muscles I could feel in your arms as we danced. And I know you, too. In the paper I saw it only last week—the picture of you in the little trunks, and the fighting gloves on your hands. But your face—so cross it looked! You must not ever look at Lotta like that. I shall be afraid—so terrible. Are you not Mike Duffy, the so great fighter?"

"You've got me right, kid—Lotta—that's a swell name. But you ain't got nothin' on me. I know you, too. Not your name. But, I've saw you somewheres—an' talked to you—in dreams."

A low gurgle of laughter rippled the white throat, and the dark eyes mocked: "It is some one else you know. I am not a girl of dreams. I am too—too—alive! And in the dark I am afraid."

"It's you, all right! There ain't no other one.

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Say, it's hot in here. We don't want to dance no more. Let's go."

"Go—where?" The dark eyes glowed, and the red lips parted alluringly.

"Anywheres—away from here. I know a place. We'll have a feed—an' talk."

"I, too, am tired of the dance, and hungry. In five minutes you shall meet me at the door—downstairs." The next moment she was gone.

In a daze, Mike Duffy recovered his overcoat and hat, and in the cool hallway outside the door, he paused under a mantled gas jet and struggled into them. In the dimly lighted lower hall the wait seemed interminable. Duffy paced up and down, pausing at each turn and listened for the sound of footsteps upon the bare stairs. "She ain't comin'," he muttered, "she was jest kiddin' me along. Maybe her pardner got next—damn him! I'll kill him!" With fists clenched inside his overcoat pockets, he began the ascent of the stairs. A low laugh rippled from the gloom above, and a rich low pitched voice sounded close in his ear:

"So fierce! I am afraid. And who is it you shall kill!"

The girl of the domino mask was beside him upon the stairs, and grasping her almost roughly by the arm, he hurried her down the few remaining

steps and out onto the street. "Do not hold my arm so tight, you are hurting me," she said. "And, you have not told me, who is it you would kill?"

Duffy smiled rather sheepishly, as he released her arm. "I—I thought some guy had stopped you from comin' downstairs—the guy you come with, or—" he ceased speaking abruptly, and peered searchingly into her face: "Say, kid, who did you come to the dance with? You ain't—married?"

The low, throaty laughter held a tantalizing note, and the dark eyes mocked: "Why do you care? Sometimes one marries too young. One does not know. And sometimes one puts it off too long. That which has passed, is gone. And that which is to come, we do not know. It is only now we live. So, why do you care?"

The bitter March wind, whipping around the corner struck the two muffled figures and held them in their tracks as they attempted to turn east on Houston Street. Instantly Duffy's arm was about the girl's waist, and he drew her back into the shelter of the building. For an instant he held her close while his breath came fast. With her muffed hand against his breast, she drew away. Even as he released her he caught a look of wondrous softness in the depths of the dark eyes—and the red lips smiled.

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A row of taxis, their hoods swathed in robes, stood along the opposite curb in anticipation of patronage from the dance. The drivers muffled to the ears in huge coat collars, stood humped in the lee of their cars, or stamped up and down upon the sidewalk. At a shrill whistle from Duffy, the robes disappeared from a hood, and with the roar of a motor, a cab detached itself from the line, and swung to the curb before the two waiting figures. Handing the girl inside, Duffy gave the driver a number, and the next moment was seated beside her upon the cushions. She had settled herself into the corner, with head thrown back and eyes closed, and, despite her rich dark complexion, her face looked almost marble white in the dim light of the street lamps. A white hand lay ungloved upon the seat beside him, and as he took the hand, soft warm fingers closed about his own. It seemed to Duffy as though the girl must certainly hear the wild pounding of his heart. He spoke aloud, as though no interval had elapsed since her last words, and in his own ears his voice sounded strangely gruff: "I don't care! I don't care—a damn!" His lips were upon hers, his arms were about her and as he drew her close, and closer, he could feel the rapid rise and fall of her bosom. In a surge of trembling passion he rained hot kisses upon her lips, her

cheeks, her eyes, and upon the full rounded throat that rose columnlike from the deep fur of her collar.

The taxi swerved sharply into Avenue A, and a few moments later drew up in front of a glaringly lighted café, a few doors below the Avenue Hotel. The door opened and Duffy was assisting the girl to alight. Slipping a dollar bill into the driver's hand, he followed her across the sidewalk. At the door of the café the girl turned abruptly and hurriedly recrossing the sidewalk, entered the taxi. Duffy stared after her in surprise. Then, his glance swept the brilliantly lighted interior of the building. Midnight diners were grouped here and there at small tables. At a table well forward two men sat, and as Duffy looked, one of them was slowly settling himself into his chair from which he had evidently half-risen. The other man's hand rested in evident restraint upon his arm. The eyes of both were upon the door through the glass panels of which his own face showed bewildered surprise. As he turned and followed the girl, a puzzled frown wrinkled his forehead. The man who had half-risen from his chair was Lefty Klingermann, the other was Red Casey.

By the time he reached the door of the taxi, the girl had completely recovered her poise, if indeed she had ever lost it.

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“What’s the matter, kid?” asked Duffy, thrusting his head into the interior.

The girl laughed: “Oh, it is nothing. Only I do not like that place. A long time ago—more than a year—I one night sat at a table and there was a fight, and I saw a man stabbed, so that he fell down dead on the floor. I rushed out from there screaming, with many others, and I have never been in there since. I could not go in there and eat. Always I would see that man lying dead on the floor, and the red blood upon the tiling.”

“I heard about it,” answered Duffy, “some Dago row, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, the man who was killed was a—Dago.”

“But, why didn’t you tell me before, an’ I’d of took you somewheres else. I eat here regular. It’s a swell dump, an’ they feed you good.”

“I didn’t know where we were till I got to the door.” She paused and the smouldering dark eyes were fixed half-timidly upon his face. “I was thinking about—something else.”

Duffy was beside her upon the seat. “Where’ll we go?” he asked, “anywhere’s you say.”

“I know a place—up town. Let’s go there. It is quiet, and I can forget this so horrible place.” She gave him a number which he repeated to the driver.

The door closed, and the car drew smoothly away from the curb.

In a little chop house, far from Avenue A, the two sat long over black coffee at the conclusion of their meal. For the most part, the man talked and the girl listened, now and then interrupting with a question or a suggestion that drew out the greater share of his life's history, and more particularly his record in the ring. More than once she surprised him with some pertinent remark upon matters pugilistic, which betrayed a thorough and deep-rooted knowledge of the inside working of the game.

"I don't get you kid!" he exclaimed suddenly, in reply to a suggestion that his trainer pay some attention to developing his left along other lines than an upper-cut. "How do you know I ain't got nothin' in my left but that upper-cut? How do you know I could of floored Brady sooner by keepin' him away, an' forcin' him to fight long range? Where do you get this dope, anyhow? Who are you? You ain't even told me yer name, except Lotta!"

Laughter rippled from the girl's curved lips. "It is because I like to read about the fights, and about the fighters. It is not only the men who read about such things. I know about many fighters—why

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some are strong, and why others are weak. If they would let women in, I would go and see them all.”

“But, you ain’t told me yer name. An’ where do you live?”

“My name is Lotta Rivoli. And now we shall finish the coffee, and you shall take me home.”

“What’s yer grift, kid?” asked Duffy abruptly, a few minutes later as the taxi he had summoned skirted the park.

“Grift?” The dark eyes looked puzzled for a moment, and lighted in a swift smile. “Oh, yes, I know. You mean how do I earn my living. I am an—an artist.” The car turned into Eighty-fourth Street, and a few moments later drew up to the curb before a modest apartment house. “Come, and you shall see how an artist lives,” she invited in a low voice, as the driver fumbled at the catch of the door. “Maybe we could even find some wine—light wine, that will not go to your head.”

Upon the steps of the house Duffy turned at the question of the driver: “Shall I wait?”

The girl forestalled his answer: “No, do not wait.” And the next moment, with wildly pounding heart, Duffy found himself following her up the stairs.

CHAPTER IV

A VISIT TO TRENTON

AT a conference in the brilliantly lighted Avenue A café, that had lasted until midnight, Klingermann and Red Casey, with numerous offers, challenges, and defies before them, had been endeavouring to map out a campaign that would place Mike Duffy in position to challenge the holder of the heavyweight championship. To Klingermann the road to glory looked easy, but Red Casey was cautious.

“We’ve got to go slow, Lefty,” he warned, in reply to Klingermann’s demand that they accept a challenge from Cincinnati, to be followed a month later by a bout with a Chicago aspirant.

“What d’you mean—go slow? This here Cincy guy ain’t never show’d nothin’ better’n a lot of ’em the kid has knocked out, has he? An’ this here packin’ house pet from Chicago—he might be a little stronger than anything the kid’s tackled, but

by that time he'd ought to be able to handle him. What we want is about three good fights leadin' up to Kid Morowitz. An' then if we can put Morowitz on ice we can go after the big fellow."

"Yer spacin' 'em along too fast, Lefty," cautioned the trainer. "De kid'll go stale. 'Cordin' to youse we'd ought to take on Morowitz dis comin' fall."

"That's it."

Casey shook his head: "Kid Morowitz ain't goin' to be no easy bird to handle. Take it from me, Lefty, he could right now knock de champ fer a gool. I look fer him to hook up wid de champ nex' winter, an' if we lay off, an' de champ licks him, dat'll clear de decks for us wit'out fightin' Morowitz, an' if Morowitz wins de belt, we can go after him about a year from nex' fall."

"To hell with a year from next fall!" exclaimed Klingermann impatiently. "It's all right for you to string yer job out as long as you can, but how about me? It's little Lefty that's puttin' up the jack."

Casey grinned: "Youse should worry about de jack? Dere's always plenty more w'ere dat come from. I wisht I got mine as easy as w'at youse do. Take it from me, Lefty, youse better play safe, like I says."

Lefty Klingermann leaned forward impressively, and lowered his voice so that the trainer had to lean close to listen: "I got a card in the hole that you don't know nothin' about—an' believe me, she's an ace. I was over to Philly for a couple of days. I didn't go there for nothin' else but jest to see Jack Keen, Morowitz's manager. I seen him, an' Morowitz, too. If we can win three fights this summer, they'll take us on in October. An' Mike Duffy wins with a knockout!"

"W'at's de price?" asked Casey.

"Morowitz takes on the St. Paul boy in August. If he wins with a knockout, it'll cost me more than if he don't. We didn't talk figures. There's time for that later. Whichever way it goes it'll cost enough. Keen's out for the jack, all right."

"Well," said Casey, thoughtfully, "you'se know yer business better'n w'at I do, but, at dat, I'd sooner see de scrap put off fer a year, an' den pulled on de level. I b'lieve Duffy could win."

"Can that stuff! What I want is a champ. An' I don't give a damn how I get him. The quickest way's the best way. When Duffy wins the belt, your salary doubles, so the quicker the sooner, for you, too—" Klingermann paused abruptly and stared at the door where the faces of a man and a girl showed through the glass panels. Casey's eyes

followed his glance, and a moment later the girl turned swifty and hurrying across the sidewalk, stepped into a waiting taxi. Klingermann half-rose from his chair, as the man turned to follow the girl, but the hand of Casey restrained him.

“Did you see who it was?” asked Klingermann, a frown wrinkling deeply his fat forehead.

Casey nodded: “Dago Lottie, an’ de kid.”

“How’d you know? She ain’t be’n around here since you have.”

“No, I ain’t saw her fer a couple of years. She use to be Bull Larrigan’s skirt.”

“Yes, an’ when Bull hit the toboggan she quit him. Do you know where she’s be’n lately?”

“No.”

“She’s be’n in Philly. Hooked up with Kid Morowitz. Believe me, I was glad when she kissed this precinct good-bye. She’s a gold digger, right. I’d rather mix it up with the devil himself than her. An’ now she’s back!”

“Youse talk like youse was afraid of her,” grinned the trainer.

“I’ll say I’m afraid of her! The man that ain’t’s a fool!”

“I mus’ be a fool, den. I ain’t never be’n afraid of no woman yet. You leave her to me. If she gets to buzzin’ around de kid too strong, I’ll slap her

face an' send her home. What's her game? Put me wise."

The look that Klingermann bent upon the trainer was a blending of pity and scorn. "When you feel like slappin' someone's face, Red, you'd better jest slip around to some of the hangouts and pick you out a couple of good live gunmen, an' try it on them. You might get away with that—but not Dago Lottie! You want to know what her game is, an' I wish to hell I could tell you. I'll give you a line on what she's done, an' maybe we can dope out what she's goin' to do. Her name is Lottie Rivoli, an' her father runs a fruit store somewheres over on Sullivan Street. But there wasn't no 'sella de banan' ' for Lottie. She started in young an' got to be one of the smoothest dips in the business. Her specialty was bag openin', an' that took her into the shoppin' districts where she soon got to be the queen of shoplifters. She was too smart for the store dicks, an' they knew it. So, one by one, she made deals with 'em, that is, through them, with the management of the store. I'll bet she's right now on the payroll of twenty big stores in this town, an' probably as many more in Philly, as a member of their 'detective force,' which means that they're all payin' her a salary to stay away from their stores. A couple of years ago or more she

married Nick Gorno. They lived around the corner, a couple of squares from here. Nick was a clever counterfeiter sometimes, an' a gunman all the time. It wasn't long till they had trouble, an' one night she framed him, an' while she was sittin' at the table with him he was bumped off right here in this room. After that Lottie throw'd in with Bull Larrigan. It seems she's nuts on pugs, an' when Bull begun to skid, she quit him an' took up with Kid Morowitz. When Jack Keen got holt of Kid an' took him over to Philly, she went along, an' believe me, there was plenty of us not over a thousand miles from here that was good an' damn' glad to see her go. I tried to make her kick in onct, same as the rest was doin'. Before we got through with her it cost me money, an' the Captain, too—an' Dago Lottie had the jack! Things was lookin' pretty good till she showed up tonight with Duffy—but she's too swift for me!"

A slow grin overspread the face of the trainer. Klingermann frowned: "I don't see nothin' funny about it. You'll be laughin' out of the other side of yer mouth, time you know her as good as I do."

"She's a peacherino," muttered Casey. "If a guy was to fall fer her, he'd be apt to fight like hell to hold her, wouldn't he?"

"What d'you mean?"

"I mean, these here gold diggers is like rats. An' you know de sayin' about de rats leavin' a sinkin' ship. She quit Bull Larrigan when he hit de toboggan—an' now if she's quit Morowitz, w'at's de answer?"

"You don't mean Morowitz is—through!"

"I ain't sayin' he is, or he ain't. He fights a week from tonight over to Trenton. I guess I'll jest slip over dere an' look him over. 'Cause if he's slowin' up, de quicker we git to him de better. 'Fore someone else beats us to it."

Klingermann nodded: "That's right. We'll take on these other guys an' put 'em away one after another, an' take Kid Morowitz on in the fall. If Dago Lottie has quit him, an' figgers on throwin' in with Duffy, she might slip us some good inside stuff on the Kid. That would make it cheaper when we come to deal. She'd do anything to hook up with a champ. But, believe me, it's dangerous business, tryin' to make use of Dago Lottie."

"Not w'en we bot' got our money on de same card. If she's smooth as you say, she damn well knows she's got to t'row in wit' us."

"Yes, an' double-cross us without battin' an eye, if she seen where she could make by it—same as she's prob'ly double-crossin' Kid Morowitz right now. I wisht she'd stayed out of it, but seein' she

didn't, we got to make the best of it. Good-night. See you tomorrow."

For a week after the night of the masked ball, Mike Duffy haunted the flat on Eighty-fourth Street, but all to no purpose. He called in the evening, and in the afternoon, and once even in the morning, but the door never opened to his ring, and in desperation he tried to bribe the janitor's wife to let him into the apartment with a pass key. She flatly refused, and the only information he could get out of her was that the lady who leased the apartment was a "Cubian," or "Spanish lady," who was hardly ever there.

His work that week was perfunctorily performed, and Casey noted that the youngster was morose and irritable. Whereupon, he invited Duffy to accompany him to Trenton to see the mill between Kid Morowitz and the 'Frisco Wonder.

At the ringside Duffy watched every move as the contestants battled on for the full ten rounds. For he knew that the time was coming when he would have to fight the Philadelphia boy, and secretly, he feared him. In vain he sought for manifestation of the much-talked-of ring generalship of the near champ, and for the terrific surprise punch that had put many an adversary to sleep before bedtime. What he saw was an exceptionally good exhibition

of boxing which lasted the full ten rounds, during every one of which Kid Morowitz had undoubtedly the best of it. Duffy saw the much touted fighter pass up two chances, and fail in half a dozen attempts at a knockout, and also, he saw him rocked to his heels by a right to the jaw in the eighth.

“How’d he look to youse, kid?” asked Casey as the two waited at the ringside for the crowd to thin in the aisles. “If youse had be’n in de ring wid him tonight dey’d of carried him out. If de ’Frisco Wonder had followed up we’n he had him goin’ in de eight’, he’d of got him.”

“Maybe Morowitz wasn’t showin’ all he had,” replied Duffy, doubtfully. Then, vanity over-shadowing for a moment the yellow streak the old trainer knew was there, he added: “But yer right, Red, if I’d of be’n in the ring in the eighth, I’d of et him up.”

Casey nodded emphatically: “Sure youse would. I guess Lefty’s right. Kid Morowitz is about done. It’s up to youse to git him. An’ de quicker we git him, de better. It’ll mean plenty work dis summer. Lefty’s got t’ree fights lined up, an’ w’en we got dem on ice, Morowitz has got to talk to us.”

Duffy grinned, knowingly: “Leave it to Lefty,” he whispered, “he told me about his trip to Philly.”

“Look a-here, kid,” replied the trainer, “by de

time fall comes you won't need no frame-up to knock Morowitz fer a gool."

"Where in hell do you get that stuff?" retorted Duffy. "What kind of a fool d'you think I am, to go into the ring against Morowitz an' take a chance, when the fight can be put on ice before she starts! Let Lefty spend some of his money. He gets it easy. Believe me, it's the man with the graft that draws down the jack. Hard work don't get no one nowheres. Look at Lefty, he never done a tap in his life, an' he rolls up more jack every week than I ever seen." They were on the sidewalk, now, before the door of the hall in which the fight had been staged. A big limousine stood at the curb a short distance away, the liveried chauffeur standing beside its closed door. As the two drew opposite the car, a lane opened in the passing crowd, and Kid Morowitz closely followed by Jack Keen hurried across the sidewalk. The chauffeur held the door open and by the light of a street lamp both Duffy and Casey saw distinctly in the gloomy interior of the car the face of a beautiful woman. It was only a momentary glimpse, then the door closed, the crowd surged about the vehicle, which the next moment glided slowly away.

Casey glanced at his companion who stood rooted to the sidewalk, his face showing marble white in

the glare of the arc lamp. Suddenly, with a half-articulate exclamation, Duffy sprang forward, heedless of the imprecations of the men who were jammed together in the crowd. "Stop that car!" he cried hoarsely. Someone laughed. Amid jeers and jibes Casey managed to get hold of his arm and bring him to a standstill just as a big policeman shouldered his way to the spot to ascertain the cause of the commotion. Evidently no one in the crowd felt himself sufficiently aggrieved to make a complaint, and with a word of advice as to future conduct the officer passed on, leaving Duffy and Casey to worm their way to the edge of the crowd and cross to the opposite side of the street.

"What was she doin' in that machine? Where is he takin' her?" cried Duffy as he stared down the street into which the car had disappeared.

"Back to Philly, of course," grinned Casey. "Why?"

"Why!" cried the young man, excitedly. "Good God, man, that's Lotta! She's mine—my girl! We're goin' to be married! She don't live in Philly! She lives in New York. She's an artist—an' she ain't be'n home for a week! Where's the station? It's me for Philly!"

"An' w'at'll youse do w'en youse git dere?" grinned Casey.

"I'll hunt up Kid Morowitz, an' I'll—I'll——"

"Yeh, an' dat's as far as youse would git. Make a damn fool of yourself, an' maybe git pinched. Take it from me, kid, youse don't need to chase dat skirt over to Philly. All youse got to do is go back to little old Noo York, an' sit tight, an' Dago Lottie'll be chasin' youse up inside a week."

"Dago Lottie! What do you mean? Who in hell you talkin' about?"

Casey glanced at his watch, and hailed a passing taxi: "We got five minutes to get de train fer home," he answered. "Wait till we git on de cars, an' I'll tell youse."

As the train pulled out of the station, Duffy said surlily, "Well, spit it out. What was you goin' to spring on me?"

"In de firs' place," began the trainer, as if carefully weighing his words, "dis here moll was married to a Dago gunman, an' w'en she got tired of him, she framed him, an' had him bumped off in de Elite Café, an' her settin' by an' lookin' on. Leastwise, dat's wat dey claim——"

"It's a damned lie!" hissed Duffy. "She told me, herself, about sittin' there one night an' seein' some Dago guy croaked. It busted her all up. She ain't never be'n in there since. An' why in hell did you call her Dago Lottie?"

Casey grinned: "All right. I didn't figger youse would believe it. An' Dago Lottie—dat's de mon-aker she goes by. Take it from me, kid. Dis here Morowitz ain't the first pug she's hooked on to—an' youse won't be de last."

Duffy interrupted with a sneering laugh: "Where'd you get that—suck it out of a pipe? She never know'd a pug till she know'd me. She lives on Eighty-fourth Street. I've be'n to her flat—I guess I know. She's an artist."

"I'll say she is!" agreed Casey. "But tell me, kid. You know her so damn well—ain't she pretty well posted on de fight game?"

Duffy hesitated, frowning, as he recollected his own surprise at her intimate knowledge of matters pertaining to his profession. Then he remembered her own explanation. "What if she does?" he growled, "she likes to read the dope in the papers."

"Sure, an' w'at she couldn't find in de papers Kid Morowitz could tell her. She's be'n livin' wit' him fer a year. An', now we got started, we might's well go de whole road, she's de smoothest dip, an' bag opener, an' shoplifter in de game."

Duffy leaned closer, his fingers gripping the arm of the trainer: "Someone's be'n stringin' you with a pack of lies," he said, in a low, tense voice. "But, even if it was all true, it wouldn't make no differ-

ence to me." A note of defiance crept into his voice: "Everyone else is crooked, why shouldn't she be?"

"You got de wrong slant, kid," replied the old trainer, soothingly. "It's only de tin horns dat's crooks——"

"Tin horns!" sneered the youngster, "Lefty Klingermann, an' the Captain, an' them higher up is all grafters. An' look at damn near every one you know! Who's got the jack? It's the con men, an' the gams, an' them that uses their head. Show me any one that ain't a crook——"

"I ain't," interrupted Casey, emphatically.

"Yes, an' what you got to show? Nothin' but a job with a lot of work, an' damn little pay! You've told me yerself how much you be'n offered, back when you was workin' with the big ones, to sell out. If you'd of done it, you'd of had enough jack so's you wouldn't be workin' now."

Casey shook his head: "No. Dat kind of jack don't never stick to a man. Look all around you. Dey ain't nowheres I guess dat's got more crooks livin' in it den Union Market precinct, an' how many of 'em's got anyt'ing to show fer it?"

"They would have if they didn't shove it all over the stuss tables! You can't tell me nothin'. I got eyes. I can see who's got the jack an' who ain't."

He paused for a minute and broke out, petulantly: "What in hell did I listen to you for, anyhow? I'd ought to be in Philly right now—an' it's your fault I ain't! If you think she's be'n livin' with Kid Morowitz fer a year, what made you say she'd be huntin' me up inside a week? Tell me that!"

"Sure I'll tell youse. I'm playin' her to run true to form. Her huntin' youse up in de foist place showed she know'd what we didn't know—dat Kid Morowitz was reachin' clost to de end of his string. She was huntin' fer a place to light w'en de Kid dropped, an' she picked youse. After what we seen tonight we know she's right. Morowitz should of knocked dat guy cold, but he couldn't. She'll hunt youse up, all right—but she won't break wit' de Kid—not till youse two come togedder. Her game'll be to string youse bot' along, kind of layin' low to see w'ich way de cat jumps—an', take it from me, kid, she'll jump wit' de cat—an' light right side up!" Duffy relapsed into a moody silence, his sullen gaze fixed upon the outer darkness where now and then a tiny light flashed past. Newark was reached before Casey spoke again: "If yer still want her, kid, de best bet fer youse is to woik up to w'ere youse kin knock Kid Morowitz cold, w'en youse get in de ring wit' him dis fall."

Duffy's lip curled in a sneer: "Is that so? I'll

have her all right. But, you talk like you'd fergot Lefty's trip to Philly."

Casey grinned: "S'pose Morowitz was to find out she was playin' up to youse? Would he deal wit' Lefty, den? Nix! He'd go into de ring to git youse—an' de best man wins!"

"How in hell's he goin' to find out?" asked Duffy, querulously. "She ain't goin' to tell him—an' I ain't. Seein' I'm in the game, I'll play it a little smooth, myself. But, damned if I'm fool enough to try to knockout Kid Morowitz, when I can set back an' have the fight all bought fer me."

Casey answered nothing, but a grim little smile twisted his thin lips as he followed the younger man out of the car. "An' it's a new job fer me nex' fall," he muttered, as he ascended the steps to the station, "'cause w'en Morowitz gets t'rough wit' youse, youse won't never fight no more!"

CHAPTER V

LOTTA RIVOLI RETURNS

SHIRLY LEONARD, alias Mike Duffy, erstwhile truck driver, now a minor, but rapidly waxing star in the constellation of the prize ring, had first looked upon the world in a not uncomfortable Brooklyn tenement. Of rather drab parentage—his father worked in an ice plant, and his mother was just—a mother, who functioned to the satisfaction of all concerned in the preparation of meals, and the maintenance of the home in reasonable comfort. To which duties were added certain offices of police, judiciary, and executioner in the enforcement of certain home-made laws and rules of conduct.

His early education had been perfunctorily, and therefore eminently satisfactorily, attended to both at school and at home, so that by the time he had reached the estate where a job seemed advisable, he fared forth to do battle with the world equipped with a strong, clean-muscled body, and a mind whose

code of ethics consisted in the observance or the non-observance, of an endless number of disassociated, and entirely irrelevant and arbitrary taboos. The observance of such taboos constituting RIGHT and their non-observance constituting WRONG. Right was non-punishable. Wrong was punishable, provided the culprit be caught. Some taboos were of greater importance than others, as witness the degree of punishment prescribed for their non-observance. He had learned these taboos, as he had learned his multiplication table—by process of repetition, not by process of reasoning.

Therefore, his education completed, Shirly Leonard, the average citizen, sought his job, and found it as helper about the ice plant garage. For this work he received wages, the greater part of which were demanded and paid as remuneration for his board and lodging at home. This arrangement he accepted without question, not from any sense of filial duty, but because all others of his acquaintance who were earners paid for their own maintenance, either at the homes where they had formerly received maintenance free, or elsewhere. And it had never occurred to Shirly Leonard to go elsewhere because he had become habited to eat and sleep in those particular rooms of that particular tenement.

With each successive raise in wages, came a cor-

responding raise in his assessment for board and lodging. And this was as it should be, not because of any increase in quantity or quality of the board and lodging, nor because of any increase in the cost of maintaining the habitual standard, but because it was the habit of those who received more to pay more.

After a year and a half of service for the ice company, he quit his job and accepted a more remunerative one as driver of a truck. And it was while serving in that capacity that he joined, for amusement and recreation, the Eureka Social Club, Red Casey, Manager, and under the tutelage of the able Casey, took up boxing as a pastime, and became Thunderbolt Leonard, amateur champion, and later Mike Duffy, the pug.

With the quitting of his job as truck driver to enter the professional prize ring, had come a readjustment of values that the youngster had difficulty in assimilating. Casey's prediction of a hundred dollars as compensation for a few minutes in the ring—two hundred—a thousand—had been received with a skepticism that only the feel of the cash in his hands had dispelled. His idea of compensation having consisted of a certain fixed sum being paid at regular intervals in return for certain hard manual labor continuously performed during a certain pre-

scribed number of hours in each week. But this was "big money"—easily come by! A few hours of training each day—a few minutes of fighting in the ring—and the big money was paid over, with the promise of more! A man was a fool to work. What did it get him? Look at John Leonard, his father, who after forty years of ceaseless grind at jobs that demanded eight, or ten, or twelve hours of his time each day, six days in the week, fifty-two weeks in the year, was receiving twenty dollars a week! So much for the cash—but there were other considerations. For instance, his name had been printed in the newspapers. Many thousands of people whom he had never seen, and who had never seen him, had read his name and his deeds in the ring. He was a personage, like Christy Mathewson, or J. P. Morgan, or Harry Thaw. The thought stirred his imagination. This was only the beginning. Soon he would be a topic of conversation in street cars and subways.

"Mattie win his game, today."

"Um-hum, an' I see where Thunderbolt Leonard win last night with a knockout."

"Yup, an' old Rosebud win at Latonia."

His deeds would be spread before the world, his comings and goings recorded, while John Leonard, sweating in the boiler room of the ice plant, had

never seen his name in print, nor would he ever. Nor, would he ever take home more in the weekly pay envelope than would suffice for the needs of that week. A man is a fool to work!

It was at this stage of readjustment that Lefty Klingermann assumed the helm of destiny. Young Leonard quit the paternal roof to take lodgment in the Avenue Hotel without regret. It was not that he looked forward to any pleasurable adventure in the change, nor did he anticipate better accommodations. His home had been to him a place eminently satisfactory in which to eat and sleep, but now the exigencies of his fortune demanded that he remove from thence. The exodus was a move of no import to himself, nor could it be said to be of any more import to his parents. It had been a matter of no moment to them when he had quit the ice plant to become a truck driver, and neither had it been a matter of moment when he forsook the truck for the squared circle, nor any matter of moment that he should change his place of lodgment.

Ensconced in the Avenue Hotel, surrounded on every hand by men and women who lived in open or secret defiance of the taboos that he had been taught to observe, his readjustment of values progressed by leaps and bounds. A policeman, who in his humbler and less sophisticated environment, he

had always regarded as one whose duty it was to see that taboos were respected, became now a functionary whose office it was to see that the breaker of taboos paid for the privilege. Crime was openly discussed in the hangouts, as were its perpetrators, and future crime planned. Lefty Klingermann was the big noise, and "seeing Lefty" was the main concern of the powers that prey.

As protégé of the mighty Lefty, his own acquaintance and good will was sought, and his entrée into any resort or hangout in the precinct was unquestioned. He early learned that the most respected in the community were those who by superiority of wit and finesse were fitted to fraudulently obtain large sums of money. For in the cosmos of the underworld money speaks louder than words, yet in the practice it is the acquisition rather than the possession of money that counts. For no place in the world is money held more lightly, nor spent more wantonly than by those who have risked life and liberty in its acquisition.

The age of twenty-two is an impressionable age, a philosophical age, and an age of elastic adaptability. Shirly Leonard's tentative theory that a man was a fool to work, soon crystallized into Mike Duffy's firm conviction that a man was a fool to work. His own occupation was gainful beyond any

“job” he could possibly hold down. Furthermore it broke no taboo, a fact that had its advantages in that his life and liberty were not endangered, nor was it necessary for him to “kick in” to the police for the privilege of pursuing that occupation. Yet his mind rapidly arrived at the point where it held nothing of censure, and much of admiration for the successful among the powers that prey, and a half-cynical contempt for the wage earning observer of taboos. This attitude of mind was logical, and in no degree reprehensible. New impressions flooding a mediocre brain, had completely submerged the existing impressions of that brain. New environment bedazzled, new self importance destroyed perspective, and new acquaintances interested. No actual contact with crime had as yet revealed its sordid detail. His impressions were only of the romance of crime.

This, then, was the Mike Duffy who returned from the ringside at Trenton, and this was the physical and mental equipment with which he must meet that which lay before him.

As Duffy stepped from his hotel early on the second evening after his return from Trenton, an urchin brushed lightly against him upon the sidewalk, slipped a scrap of paper into his hand, and disappeared. A half hour later, with quickened

pulse he pressed the button beside the door of the little flat on Eighty-fourth Street. The door opened cautiously the length of a short chain, closed, and swung wide to disclose a vision of feminine loveliness that struck Duffy speechless, his eyes drinking in each detail of the wondrously beautiful figure that stood half revealed in the dim light of the tiny hallway. Bare shoulders gleamed above the rich warm tints of a gown whose short skirt revealed far more than they concealed of a pair of daintily curved silk-clad legs—a costume whose every fold and fabric was designed to exert to the utmost the world-old appeal of sex. The red lips of Lotta Rivoli smiled, and beneath the loosely piled masses of raven hair, the dark eyes invited. Slowly the bare arms outstretched and the next instant closed about the great shoulders of the man who was pressing her to his breast with a grip that threatened to crush the life from her body. Their lips met, the dark eyes fixed on his, slowly closed and for a long, long moment they stood thrilled in each other's embrace. Then, slowly, the dark eyes opened, the bared arms dropped from his shoulders, and very gently the girl disengaged herself from his embrace, and closing the door, led the way into the little sitting room, where a single rose-shaded light burned low, and blue flames shot fitfully from log to log

of the tiny gas grate. Again the girl turned and faced him, her two hands resting lightly upon his shoulders, as her eyes glowed up into his: "I have thought of you all the time—big boy. I've been—needing you."

Duffy's face darkened: "This is the fifth or sixth time I've be'n here since—that night. Where have you be'n?"

She smiled guilelessly into the lowering eyes: "You missed me, then! I am glad! I have been in Baltimore. My work—it took me there. I had no time to let you know."

"Baltimore!" cried the man, sharply, "All the time? You ain't be'n nowheres else?"

"No, no! Foolish one! No place else! But, why do you ask?"

For answer the man's hands closed roughly upon the upraised bare arms, and he pushed her from him so violently that she crashed among the pillows of the davenport that was drawn up facing the fire. "You lie! Damn you!" The man's breath came fast, and his voice sounded thick with passion: "It's either me or Kid Morowitz. An' you've got to choose now—tonight!"

The girl looked little and helpless as she cowered among the cushions, with the man standing over her glaring down into her half frightened eyes: "What—what do——?"

“Don’t try to pull that stuff, kid. You can’t git away with it! Didn’t I see you myself—in the big car, in Trenton—an’ didn’t I see Kid Morowitz git into the car, an’ the car pulled out fer Philly? Monday night, it was—the night he fought the ‘Frisco Wonder.” He paused. The girl buried her face in the cushions and her shoulders shook with sobs, but as she lay huddled upon the davenport her brain worked rapidly. If worse came to worst she could swing unequivocally to this man who glowered above her, but—Morowitz might win! For years her dream had been to share the money and the fame of a world’s champion. If, when these two came together Morowitz should win—she must make one desperate effort to save the situation as it was. He was speaking again: “I’ve learnt a lot in the last year. I’ve learnt a man can’t make no jack by workin’ for it. I fight for mine. If I couldn’t git it that way, I’d gamble for it—or steal it! But I’ll be damned if I’d lie to a pal! I want you, kid! I—yes—damn it! I love you! But there ain’t goin’ to be no half-ways about it! You’ll either belong to me or to Kid Morowitz—you can’t belong to both!”

The stage was denied a star when Lotta Rivoli cast her lot with the underworld. Just as her superb ability as an actor had carried her through more

than one trying situation in the department stores, so now it leaped forth to triumph over the accusation of her outraged lover. With a cry she leaped to her feet, and her eyes brimming with tears, threw her arms about the man's neck: "Oh, you do love me!" she sobbed, "You do! You do! But, you are wrong—all wrong!"

"It ain't no use——"

The girl's finger tips pressed against his lips, smothering the words, "Listen, big boy, I see it all, now! I was a fool to lie to you. But I lied because—I loved!"

"Morowitz?" the question rasped nastily from between the man's lips.

"No, no! Only you! For Morowitz I do not care so much as that!" She snapped her fingers in the air and hastened on: "I will come clean—will tell you everything. You see, I did not know—the papers said you were a truck driver before you began to fight. I did not think you would understand. I thought that if you knew my—business you would hate me. I told you I was an artist. I am, in a way—but not the way you think. I am an artist in my profession. I am a crook—yes, a shifter—a shoplifter." She paused and smiled, slightly, as her glance drifted about the room. "And, it has paid me well. I became so much of an

artist in my line that rather than try to catch me, the managers of many great stores are glad to pay me to never enter their doors. Each month I get my pay—the pay of a private dick. And to earn it I do nothing but stay away from their stores. It is easy grift and it pays—well. I was afraid to tell you this before. I know you better, now. For you said if you couldn't get your money by fighting for it you would gamble, or steal it. But I am no worse than the others—they all steal—the big from the little, the strong from the weak—always. But I steal only from the rich—from those who can afford to lose. It is not wrong—one must live.”

“Sure it ain't,” cried the man, impatiently, “I don't care nothin' about that. But Morowitz—how about Morowitz?”

“I am coming to that,” the red lips smiled, and the dark eyes glowed softly, “So jealous, and—I am glad. For I know by that, you love me. For a year, now, I have lived in Philadelphia. I keep this apartment also, because each month I must come to New York to collect my—salary. And, then sometimes, I run down and stay a few days when it seems—necessary, for reasons of my profession. But I live in Philadelphia because there I can work at my profession. There the stores do not pay me

to stay away, and it is easier because the store dicks are not as wise as here.

“But the police are alike, one place and another. They’ve got my number, and I must kick in. It is the same in a certain part of Philadelphia as in New York. The police have their go-betweens, and their collectors. Over there Jack Keen is the same as Lefty Klingermann and a few others are here. I kick in to Jack Keen, and he squares me with the bulls. The other day I met a police lieutenant on the street and he told me I wasn’t playing square, that I was holding out, and he threatened to get me. Then I hunted up Jack Keen, because he knows I play square. It was the night of the fight at Trenton, and he had no time to talk to me, but I was afraid the bulls would frame me that night, because the lieutenant was sore. Keen and Morowitz were going to drive to Trenton in a big car, and Keen told me to go along and we could talk. So I went, and we doped out a plant for that bull, and I waited in the car till after the fight, and then we drove back.”

The man’s hands closed upon her wrists in a vise-like grip: “Then, you ain’t be’n livin’ with Morowitz?” The dark eyes that met his own so steadily, registered supreme disgust, and the red lips curled slightly: “Morowitz!” she hissed, “I hate him!”

But, you are hurting me!" she winced with pain at the grip of his hands, and with a laugh he released her wrists, and seating himself upon the davenport, he drew her to his lap where for a long time he held her close. "Tell me, kid," he asked, at length, "Why do you hate Morowitz?"

The dark eyes flashed: "Oh, you should hate him, too—if you love me. A long time ago, it was—before he learned I could take care of myself——"

"Wait till I get in the ring with him! Damn him! I'll fix him!"

The girl looked quickly into his face: "Ah, yes! In the ring! When do you fight him? If it could only be soon!"

Duffy smiled: "What's the hurry?" he asked. "The way things is doped, him an' I hook up sometime in the fall."

With a little sigh of regret, she laid her head back against his shoulder: "Too bad," she breathed, "If you only could fight him this summer. He may be able to—come back, by fall."

"What do you mean—come back?" asked the man, curiously. "He win his Trenton fight, didn't he? An' he's goin' to fight the St. Paul guy in August."

The girl sat suddenly erect: "You have not seen the papers?" she asked, in surprise.

“What papers? I ain’t looked at none today. They wasn’t no fights come off last night.”

For answer she slipped from his arms, and crossing to a small table picked up a newspaper, carried it to the light, and turned to a news story upon the sporting page. “Listen at this:

‘St. Paul, Minn.—Patsy Gibson local heavy-weight, met with a serious accident while returning in his automobile from White Bear Lake with a party of friends late last evening. According to best reports obtainable the car, which was being driven at a rapid rate, skidded at a sharp curve and turned turtle. Gibson was pinned beneath the machine and suffered the fracture of his right arm and several ribs. He was hurried to the hospital where internal injuries are feared.

‘Gibson was to have fought Kid Morowitz of Philadelphia in August, and it is understood in sporting circles that the winner of that bout was to have challenged the present holder of the heavy-weight title.

‘Gibson’s manager wired Morowitz this morning calling the fight off, or at least postponing it indefinitely, as the doctors state that the battler will not be able to fight for six or eight months at least, if indeed, he will ever again enter the ring.’

“So you see,” continued the girl, “Morowitz don’t have to fight in August, and with all summer to rest up, he might be able to come back strong in the fall.”

Duffy was all interest, now. "You talk about him comin' back. What's the dope? Ain't he right?" He paused abruptly, and a gleam of suspicion flashed into the eyes he fixed on the face of the girl: "An' if he ain't, how in hell do you know so much about him?"

Lotta Rivoli laughed, and crossing the room, seated herself close beside him: "Oh, I know I am a spy, and I do not like spies. I would not tell anyone else what I heard, even though I hate Kid Morowitz. But, you I will tell—because I love you. I want you to win. It is this way: I went to Trenton with Keen and Morowitz that night because I must talk with Keen. It did not take so long to tell him what I had to say, and we finished before we got to Trenton. Going home I pretended to sleep. I was really sleepy and it was late, and part of the time I dozed, but the car was not a good place to sleep in, and I would keep waking up, and then I heard them talking, and I pretended to be asleep so I could hear them. First they talked about the fight and of how they were satisfied to win without a knockout because Morowitz had to save himself all he could because his heart was bothering him. Morowitz told Keen that if the 'Frisco Wonder had known it, he could have got him with a rap on the heart any time. Then they talked about the fight

with Gibson, and they figured that Morowitz would have to cut out most of the heavy work in training. Morowitz even talked of having it put off, but Keen wouldn't stand for it. He said the doctor claimed he could keep Morowitz going till after the fight, anyhow. 'Just this one more fight, Kid,' says Keen, 'And then in the fall that easy money of Lefty Klingermann's and we're through.' I knew Lefty was your manager, and it made me mad to hear them talk about you as 'easy money.' " The girl was toying with the man's hand in her lap, and she failed to catch the peculiar expression that flitted across his face at her words. "Easy money!" she cried, "We'll show 'em if it's easy money, won't we—dearie?"

"I'll say we will!" cried Duffy, "I'll knock him cold for that—an' what you told me."

"But—couldn't you fight him sooner?"

Duffy considered: "I'd like to fight him tomorrow," he answered, "the quicker the better. But, I've got some other fights on—onless Lefty could sidetrack 'em."

"Oh, maybe he could!"

"Maybe—but, if the Kid's heart has went bad on him, maybe he won't be in no hurry to fight. Maybe he's good an' damn' glad he don't have to fight this summer."

The girl laughed and shook her head: "He'll fight, all right. I heard a lot of things that night. He's broke—he's got to fight! They figured that what they dragged down at Trenton would just about pay expenses till the Gibson fight. Take it from me, big boy—they've got to fight!"

Duffy leaped to his feet: "It's me to find Lefty!" he cried, "What's the use of stringin' along with these other guys? If they want to fight me after I knock Morowitz out there'll be plenty time to do it. Believe me, with that inside dope I'll knock him cold!"

The red lips pouted: "You are going to run away and leave me?"

He drew her to him and held her close: "Sure, kid, I want to git Lefty on the job before some other guy steps in an' gits a date. Never you mind—it won't be long now till we'll be together all the time."

"But—it's early, yet. Can't you come back?"

"Maybe, an' maybe not. Lefty's a hard guy to find nights. I might have to shag him all over town. An' I might not find him till morning."

"Maybe there is some other girl—prettier than I am. And you must go to her tonight."

Duffy laughed: "Nix on that stuff, kid. You're the only skirt for me! Honest, kid—I never had

no other girl!" her laugh was smothered in his kisses, and releasing her he turned to the door. "If I find Lefty before midnight, I'll be back. If I don't I'll see you tomorrow night."

"Not tomorrow night, dearie," she answered. "I've got to be in Philadelphia tomorrow night. It's the night we frame that fresh bull. I've got to be there. If I ain't Keen would be in bad and if Keen went back on me, the bulls would make quick work of me."

Again the look of suspicion had leaped into Duffy's eyes, and the red lips answered with a pout: "You don't trust me! Even after what I told you! See, I trust you——"

"Forget it, kid," smiled Duffy, "Day after tomorrow night, then."

"Day after tomorrow night—right here—at the same time. And—shall I dress up for you?" her eyes were sparkling, and spreading out her arms she whirled rapidly about, so that her short skirts stood straight out from her waist.

"Just like tonight!" cried the man, "God, kid—let me out of here! You'll drive me crazy!"

CHAPTER VI

IF I LOSE?

IT was four o'clock in the morning when, in a little all night restaurant on Rivington Street Duffy found Lefty Klingermann, seated at a table with the Police Captain of the district in civilian clothing. Unlike many of its counterparts, this particular restaurant did actually serve meals, although an uninitiated observer, had one such been present, must have wondered at the fact that most of the patrons, ignoring the white clothed tables, passed to the rear and disappeared through the door of an enormous refrigerator. From which proceeding the uninitiated observer would have erroneously deduced that said refrigerator was kept and maintained for the illicit purveying of liquor. As a matter of fact, the refrigerator concealed the entrance to a stairway which led to the floor above, where flourished a stuss bank in which Lefty Klingermann held a half-interest.

Advancing directly to the table, Duffy drew up a

chair and seating himself close beside Klingermann, drew the folded Philadelphia newspaper from his pocket: "Did you see that?" he asked, indicating the news story from St. Paul.

Klingermann adjusted his eyeglasses, and carefully read the lines. "No," he answered, "I didn't see it. What about it?" His tone was coldly deprecating, but behind the words Duffy detected a certain restrained eagerness.

"What we want to do," he answered, "Is to step in an' take Morowitz on while the takin's good."

"What d'you mean—while the takin's good?" asked Klingermann, quickly. "I figured on fightin' him this fall."

"I mean I seen him fight over to Trenton, an' so did Red, an' both of us knows that if it would of be'n me in the ring with him that night I'd of got me a knockout. He'd ought to handled this here 'Frisco Wonder easy, an' the best he gits, is a decision. If we wait till fall maybe he'll be in shape agin."

Klingermann grinned: "What's the difference? I ain't takin' no chances on that bout. When the time comes I'll have it all sewed up before she starts."

"Yes, but you won't have to pay so high fer your sewin'. He knows, an' Keen knows, he's way off."

“Chances are they won’t talk now. They’ll wait till fall when they kin make a better deal.”

Duffy grinned: “Not on your life! I’ve got the inside stuff on Kid Morowitz. Never mind where I got it, but it’s the goods all right. Morowitz is on the rocks. He needs the jack. He’s got to fight.”

“What’ll Red say? I had a hell of a time to talk him into takin’ Morowitz on this fall. He wanted to wait till next year. An’ besides I’ve lined up a string of fights fer the summer.”

“Bust ’em, then. There ain’t nothin’ much in ’em, nohow. An’ you needn’t worry none about Red. He seen the Trenton fight.”

Klingermann turned abruptly upon the Captain, who had been an interested listener: “You’re in on this—fifty-fifty. It’s goin’ to take quite a piece of change to swing it. I know Keen, an’ he’ll hold out fer a big bunch of cash. But we’ll clean up at that. There’ll be plenty of Morowitz money, an’ they’ll give odds. Maybe Duffy’s right. Anyways, I’m goin’ to slip over to Philly this mornin’ an’ see Keen.”

“What’ll it cost?” asked the officer, doubtfully.

“Oh, three, four, maybe five years’ pay,” grinned Klingermann. “But, think of it! It’s the chance of a lifetime. The sports fallin’ all over theirselves

to give odds on Morowitz, an' the fight all sewed up beforehand, an' only us on the inside. All you got to do is hustle around an' get your mitts on every cent you can beg, borrow, or steal, an' put it on Duffy. Lord, what a clean-up!"

"Yes, an' Lord what a clean-up, if somethin' goes wrong," foreboded the Captain, lugubriously.

Klingermann shot the speaker a scornful glance: "Didn't I jest git through tellin' you I was goin' to slip over an' see Keen, myself? Well, when Little Lefty takes holt of a deal, it don't go wrong—you'd ought to know."

"Oh, sure!" the Captain hastened to reply, "It looks good—so damn' good I'm goin' to do just like you said an' bet everything I can get holt of. That's why I was thinkin' that if——"

"They ain't no ifs about it. They ain't no one goin' to try to put nothin' over on me—not what you'd notice. They's boys within three blocks of right where we're settin' that would follow a man clean to hell if I winked my little finger at 'em—an' they'd get him, too. Keen knows that, an' so does Morowitz." Klingermann pushed back his chair and rose to his feet. "I need a little sleep if I'm goin' to jump over to Philly this mornin'." He turned to Duffy: "So do you, Kid. 'Cause, if your dope's right you'll be steppin' into the ring with

Morowitz about a month from now, an' it's up to you to make a hell of a show of trainin'."

The three left the restaurant and turned into Avenue A where Duffy parted with them at the door of his hotel. Ten minutes later he drew on a pair of blue silk pajamas and grinned at himself in the mirror: "I didn't say nothin' to Lefty about Kid Morowitz's bum heart or he might of figgered I'd ought to handle him without buyin' the fight. I ain't takin' no chances—me. But, believe me, when the Kid gives me the openin' for the fake knockout, it ain't goin' to be no fake that I hand him. Damn him! If she was handin' it to me straight, he's got it comin'! An' if she's lyin' to me—he's got it comin' all the more!" After which outburst, he turned out his light and slipped into bed.

Later that same morning Lotta Rivoli, alias Dago Lottie, arrayed in a neat travelling suit, drew swiftly aside as the bulky form of Lefty Klingermann joined the crowd that awaited the opening of the train gate in the Pennsylvania Station. When finally the throng trickled through she trailed and watched him enter the vestibule of the club car, and as she passed on to the chair car, she smiled a trifle grimly: "Lefty ain't losing any time," she muttered, "Big fat Kike! They think he's a hell of a fixer down in Union Market. I gypped him

once, an' he ain't forgot it, an' I'll gyp him again, too, when I get the chance. The dirty crook! If he tries to put anything over on me on account of me throwing in with Mike, I'll show him I start in figuring where he leaves off."

Among the first to leave the train at Philadelphia, the girl stepped into a taxi and a few minutes later let herself into an apartment with a latchkey. Kid Morowitz stood before a mirror adjusting a necktie. "Well, what luck?" he asked, without turning his head.

"Rotten luck," answered the girl peevishly, "They wouldn't only ten of 'em come acrost. The rest of 'em stalled along with a line of bull about reducin' their force of detectives. Meaning that they ain't afraid of me no more. Some of 'em even dared me to try to work their stores. That's what I get for coming over here and living till they forget I'm alive."

Morowitz frowningly regarded the girl as she drew off her gloves: "Don't start in on that!" he growled, "Ain't I told you a hundred times that I couldn't of got nowheres if I'd stayed in Noo York."

"That's all right for you, but how about me? And I don't see as you've got such a hell of a ways. You're on the rocks, ain't you?"

"Damn near it," admitted Morowitz, "But, at

that, I've got up to where I stood to challenge the champ next winter. An' if that damn' Gibson hadn't gone an' got hisself busted up in his auto we'd of drug down enough off that fight to put us all to the mustard. An' as fer the jack, I spent it when I had it, an' I spent it on you, didn't I?"

The girl tossed her gloves upon the table, and advancing to the man smiled into his face as she laid her two hands on his shoulders: "Sure, you did, Kid. There ain't nothing in us two quarrelling. I was a little sore on account of them guys turning me down. But, I'll show 'em. Damn 'em, they'll be lucky if they've got their counters left when I get through with 'em!"

Morowitz grinned, and seating himself in a big chair drew the girl to his lap: "That's the talk, Lottie, an' believe me, you've got to get busy. I figgered we had about enough jack if we was careful to last till the Gibson fight. But now that's gone fluie an' on top of that, they've cut your regular meal ticket right plumb in two. Somethin's got to be done, an' you're the one to do it."

The girl laughed: "Oh, that part of it's all right. But, you know, I've got a hunch things ain't so bad as they look."

"What d'you mean, ain't so bad? I don't make you."

“You know there’s been quite a little talk in the papers lately about a guy named Duffy that’s coming strong over in the big burg?”

“Yup. Mike Duffy. I seen a piece in the paper the other day where he win a fight an’ made his brag he was goin’ after the winner of the Morowitz-Gibson fight.”

“Do you know who’s his manager?”

“Lefty Klingermann, the damned crook.”

The girl nodded: “That’s what I was thinking. Well, Lefty Klingermann was on the train this morning coming to Philadelphia. Of course I don’t know, but I just got a hunch that maybe he’d saw in the papers where your fight with Gibson was off, and was coming over to talk business.”

“The hell you say!” exclaimed Morowitz, his eyes lighting with real interest. For six months he had known that his fighting days were numbered. His heart was bad, and getting worse. His physician had insisted that he quit the game. He tried another physician, and another, until he found one that agreed to undertake the responsibility of keeping him in the ring until after his fights with the ‘Frisco Wonder, and with Gibson. About that time Klingermann, knowing nothing of the failing heart, had intimated that after the Gibson fight he would like to make a “deal”—a proposition to which both he

and Keen had willingly assented. They knew that Klingermann had money, and that the arrangement would afford a profitable wind-up to a ring career already foredoomed. Morowitz's main concern had been the girl with whom he had been living for a year. He loved this girl with a brutish, passionate man-love that amounted almost to a mania. Knowing as he did, her championship ambitions, the thought of losing her maddened him and caused him to conceal from her all knowledge regarding the weakening heart. Quite by accident she had learned the truth, and with cunning and finesse that far exceeded his, she kept Morowitz in ignorance of this fact, and straightway hunted up Duffy. The fact that when she came to him he knew that she had already been the wife of one man and the mistress of another mattered not at all. He had wrested her from Bull Larrigan as part of the spoils of battle. Nor did it matter that underworld rumour had it that she had contrived the bumping off of her husband. This had been but a means to the end that he, Morowitz, should possess the girl. His supreme egotism, together with the superb ability of the girl to live the part she played had of late convinced him that when the time came for him to quit the game she would, despite her championship aspirations, cast her lot with his. Klingermann's visit to Philadelphia

could mean but one thing. The time had come for him to sound the girl out.

The telephone bell rang sharply. With the receiver to his ear Morowitz listened to the voice of Keen: "Hello, Kid! Say, Lefty's in town—had me on the wire a minute ago. Says how he seen that the Gibson fight was off, an' he didn't know but what we'd consider takin' on Duffy. I stalled along an' told him you an' me would drop around to his hotel 'long about three this afternoon. Me an' you better get together first—see?"

Morowitz turned to the girl: "You're a pretty good guesser," he said, "That was Keen, an' he says Klingermann wants to make us a proposition."

The man had returned to his chair, and leaning against his shoulder Lotta gently stroked his cheeks with her long flexible fingers: "How good is Duffy, Kid?" she asked, abruptly.

Morowitz hesitated for a moment before replying: "Pretty good, I guess. The dope looks like he's about the best there is next to me, now Gibson's out of it."

"But—you can handle him, Kid?"

Morowitz laughed, shortly. "Hell! I've always handled 'em, ain't I?"

"Sure you have! And you could handle the champ, too!"

“Well, I figured on challengin’ him sometime this winter,” his voice held a rather evasive, groping note that the girl was quick to catch.

“Good!” she cried, with just the right touch of enthusiasm, “And then, Kid—think of it—then you’ll be the champ! The best fighter in all the world! Think of the fun we’ll have—the easy money in the big time vaudeville. We can stall along for a couple of years an’ be the main scream wherever we go!”

“Sure we can!” he seconded eagerly. But, the words came with a visible effort.

“Say, Kid,” the girl asked, abruptly, “What’s Lefty Klingermann in the fight game for, anyhow?”

The Kid shrugged; “Search me. For the jack, I guess, same as anyone else.”

“Not on your life he ain’t,” contradicted the girl. “He gets his easier than that. Every crook in his precinct kicks in to him, and so does every stuss dealer and the men that run the hang-outs, and believe me, a big slice of the jack they turn in sticks to Lefty. The rest he passes on to the Captain. And besides that he owns an interest in a half a dozen different games, and they pay out big.”

“Maybe he’s in it for his health, then—like some folks goes to the sea-shore.”

“No, it ain’t his health, either. I’ll tell you why

he's in it. He's in it because he wants to manage a champ. He thinks this Duffy guy is a world beater, and he'll spend money to put him to the top."

"Where'd you git that stuff?" asked Morowitz, a gleam of suspicion lighting his eyes.

The girl smiled: "Oh, I know Klingermann. I lived in his precinct. And I know that money ain't going to stop him when he goes after something he wants. Take it from me, Kid, if you and Keen play it wise, you can clean up big on this fight."

"You mean——?"

"I mean that you know, and I know, and Keen knows, that you can put it all over this Duffy. He's a baby along side of you. Klingermann don't know that. He thinks his man will win. And besides Klingermann is a gam. Don't sign up with him on no 40-60, or 25-75 proposition. Hold out for winner takes all. He might kick a little at first but he'll come through. Then all you got to do is bore in with your gloves and grab off the jack."

The girl paused and Morowitz stared hard at the pattern on the rug. "But, s'posin'—You know you can't never tell what's goin' to happen in the ring. S'posin' somethin' happened, an' I don't win?"

The girl laughed—a silvery, tinkling laugh of pure merriment: "Quit your kidding Kid! Who's this Duffy guy, anyhow? What's he ever done? If he

lasts five rounds with you it'll be because you want the sports to get their money's worth. But, you're only kidding."

"Maybe I'm kiddin'—an' maybe I ain't," answered Morowitz, his eyes still on the rug. "I'm askin' you—s'pose I lose?"

Instantly the girl's pose changed, and dropping to her knees beside him, she looked up into his face, her eyes wide with solicitude:

"What do you mean, Kid—if you lose?"

"I mean this!" he cried, seizing her wrists in his two hands, "I mean if I lose this fight where do you stand? You've told me a thousan' times you love me! Do you? Do you love me enough to stick by me if I lose? Or, do you love me like you loved Bull Larrigan?"

The colour left the girl's face. The man's fingers were biting into the soft flesh of her wrists, hurting her, and his voice rang harsh with a half-concealed sneer.

"Don't! Don't, Kid, you're hurting me! Of course I love you! You've made me love you! I couldn't love no one else if I tried. And if you lose, we lose together."

The man's grip relaxed, his arms were about her shoulders, and his lips were close to her ear; "I'm sorry I hurt you. But, God, Lottie, I see red when

I think of losin' you! It's my heart—on the bum. You seen what I done at Trenton. If I'd of be'n right, I'd of et that guy up. I'm on the toboggan. I got a hunch that this here Duffy will put me away. But, I don't give a damn, now I know how you feel. I'd like to of gone to the top, fer your sake—but, we won't need to worry none. You had the wrong hunch on this fight. What I want to do is hold Klingermann down to a 40-60 split, or a 50-50 would be better if he'd stand fer it. Then if I lose, I've got a proposition that's got the fight game faded a mile. We'll drag down more jack in a month than a champ does in a year—an' not half the work."

"What is it?" asked the girl, with a show of unfeigned eagerness.

"Tug boatin'."

"Tug boating! What do you mean? Running one of these here dirty little boats that goes tooting and snorting around the harbor?"

"That's the kind of boat I mean. Only this here boat don't do no tootin' an' snortin', an' she makes most of her trips at night."

"At night?"

"Yes, at night, an' without no lights. Runnin' hop."

"Running hop! And have the whole Gov'ment after you! Say, Kid, I've been outguessing cops

and dicks all my life, and I've got away with it, so far. But I never fooled with the Gov'ment. They'll get you. And when they do get you they'll put you away right! They'll take your boat, and then where'll you're money be?"

Morowitz laughed: "Let me run in a batch or two first, an' they can have the boat. Listen, the profits is so big that every trip pays more'n the boat's worth. Some of them boats has made a hundred times what they cost, an' they're still goin'."

The girl shrugged. "Maybe—I'll think it over. But don't you worry, Kid. We'll find some way. Of course, I wanted you to be the champ—but it don't make no difference. You better run along now and see Keen. I've got to pack three or four trunks, and I don't want you hanging around in the way."

"Pack trunks! What for?"

Lotta laughed: "Foolish one! What should I be doing while you are training for your fight? How much money have we got? Enough, maybe, to last till the fight—and nothing more——"

"Well, that's enough, ain't it? I'll clean up enough on this fight to buy into that proposition, an' we won't need to worry none then."

"But, why not make a real clean-up while we're at it? I want some money to bet. I'm going to put up every cent I can get hold of——"

The man interrupted her almost savagely: "But, hell! Didn't I jest git through tellin' you I'd maybe lose?"

"That's just what you've got to do—lose. My money's going down on Duffy. Silly one! Can't you see? If you go in to lose, my money's got to win."

Morowitz grinned, sheepishly, "Sure, kid—I'd of thought of that, first off, if it hadn't be'n your money. You see, I never figgered to see you bettin' agin me. You got the right hunch, all right. Put up all you can git holt of, an' you ought to git in on the short end, too. But—where you goin'?"

"Why, back to the big burg, of course. 'Back to where there's something worth while to lift, and where I can get a decent price for it when I get it. And besides there's a string of stores that's got to be showed they made a mistake in cutting down their detective force."

"They's plenty of stores here," answered the Kid, sulkily. "Why in hell can't you stay here?"

"What, stay in this rube town?" she sneered, "This ain't a city, it just thinks it is. It's an insult to my work to pull anything here. Work like mine ain't appreciated in this burg. If goods ain't marked down to a dollar-seventy-nine there ain't no crowd around the counters—and I need the crowd. And

besides when I do business with a fence, I want one that knows a diamond brooch from a hod of coal! The best dealer here had the nerve to offer me three hundred for that black fox piece, and when I took it to New York Rosenbloom slipped me twelve hundred for it without batting an eye."

"When you goin'?" asked Morowitz, only half mollified.

"Tomorrow. No use wasting time. Tonight we'll celebrate—you and I. And tomorrow we'll both get to work." The girl accompanied him to the door where, standing on tiptoe, she kissed him on the lips. And as the door closed behind him, she smiled.

CHAPTER VII

BULL LARRIGAN COMES BACK

WITH the Morowitz-Duffy fight only a week off, the sport sheets were devoting space to the event commensurate with the importance of the only major heavyweight contest of the year. Daily news stories appeared, and daily interviews from one camp or the other, with principals, trainers, or managers. Each contestant had publicly boasted that in the event of winning the fight he would challenge the title holder, and having thus aroused the public interest, the managers deftly kept it alive by daily bulletins from the camps. Sparring partners were knocked out. Mysterious new lines of offence and defence were being developed. Until the speed of Duffy and the terrific punch poundage of Morowitz were topics of daily conversation wherever men foregathered.

It was the general concensus of opinion among the sport writers and the dopesters that Morowitz

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would win. Odds of five to three, seven to four, and nine to five drew out a little Duffy money, but on the whole the backers of the New York boy seemed extremely cautious.

These were the halcyon days for Lefty Klingermann. He had returned from Philadelphia three weeks before, with a decidedly bad taste in his mouth, and a profound respect for the bargaining ability of Messrs. Keen, Morowitz & Co. For the sum demanded, and which he was forced to pay, was an amount so far in excess of what he had figured that it caused him some concern, and nearly caused the Captain of Police, who had been drawn into the deal, a fit of apoplexy. But, now, with the pain of the extraction dulled, Lefty Klingermann fairly wallowed in the newspaper notoriety he had paid for so dearly.

As the time for the fight drew nearer, the scarcity of Duffy money emboldened the Morowitz fans to offer two to one, and at that figure those on the inside began to cover big bets. Keen succeeded, by devious methods, in placing his share of the amount paid over by Klingermann. Duffy placed all he could rake and scrape together. And Klingermann blatantly wagered large sums for himself and the Captain of Police. Dago Lottie, too, plied her trade with a vim, and as fast as she cashed her plunder,

put the money up on Duffy. It was a beautifully simple scheme. The fight fans betting on Morowitz, and all those on the inside taking the short end.

Only three people in the two camps were not betting. Morowitz, holding out in hope that his widely advertised training, and his bombastic statements of "no chance to lose," and "dead sure thing," would force the odds to five to two. Red Casey, the old trainer, who, despite the sneers and jibes of both Klingermann and Duffy, absolutely refused to bet on a fixed fight. And Bull Larrigan, who had been hired as a sparring partner for Duffy. Bull Larrigan was suspicious. He had been taken on by Klingermann upon the same terms that Casey had been employed: "One drink, and you're through," Klingermann had told him. For the cause of Larrigan's downfall from high estate in the prize ring was well-known on the East Side. So also was known his abysmal hatred of Kid Morowitz. Not because Morowitz had knocked him out in the ring the year before, but because after knocking him out, he had robbed him of his girl. For three weeks, now, Larrigan had worked with Duffy—had taught him much, for Larrigan in his prime had been a real fighter. The thing that Larrigan could not fathom was that Duffy was

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willing to work hard in preparation for a fight that was already his. Then, one week before the fight he found out.

The three weeks of gruelling grind and strict observance of training had done wonders for Bull Larrigan. His muscles had hardened, his eyes had cleared, and his old speed was fast returning. Red Casey noted the change even before Larrigan himself was conscious of it. Then he discovered it—discovered suddenly that Duffy was at his mercy. All at once it dawned on him that he could knock Duffy out any time he chose. And if Duffy, why not Morowitz? The old fighting spirit suddenly awakened, and that night, alone in his room, Bull Larrigan fought the fight of his life. The first impulse that leaped into his brain at the discovery, was to fittingly celebrate the event—and with Larrigan, to celebrate meant to get drunk. For three weeks he had kept away from the booze because he needed the money that Klingermann was paying him. It had been fairly easy. His days had been taken up in Duffy's training quarters, and so faithfully did he perform his work, that at night he went to his room dog tired. But now the pent up desire for drink surged upon him with his new found strength. Bull Larrigan was no fool. He shared the East Side's knowledge of his own downfall. He had

disregarded the warnings of trainers and managers in his ring days, and had continued to flirt with whiskey until whiskey got him. Then, it was too late. He accepted the fact of his defeat, and drank more heavily than before. They all had told him he was done—and he believed it. But, now, suddenly he had found out they were wrong. He could come back! He had come back! He knew this—and by morning the whole East Side would know.

Snatching up his cap, he paused with a hand on the door knob and allowed his eyes to sweep the confines of the shabby room that was his home. The cheap wooden dresser with its cracked and distorted mirror. The iron bedstead with its enamel scaled off in spots and splotches. The washbowl in the corner, stained with the rust of chronically dripping faucets. The bare floor. The filthy wallpaper that sagged and bulged from the wall. And the unpainted board with its row of hooks from which depended a battered hat, a dejected sweater with ravelled elbows, and a limp suit of serge. Mentally he contrasted the room with Duffy's apartment in the Avenue Hotel. Bright coloured rugs, glittering brass bedstead, clean white bath room, mahogany dresser with its array of monogrammed toilet articles, and whole closets full of expensive clothing.

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“An’ I’m a better man now, den he is!” The words formed themselves in a growl from between clenched teeth. With an oath, he jerked the cap from his head, hurled it into a corner, turned the key in the lock, and threw himself fully dressed upon the bed. Bull Larrigan slept little that night. He dozed fitfully, awakening at frequent intervals to battle with his desire for liquor. He drank quantities of tepid water from the tap, and planned ring battles, round by round. Always it was Kid Morowitz that he fought. And always the fight ended with Kid Morowitz lying limp on the canvas while he himself stood over him, as his own name roared from a thousand throats.

In the morning, he bolted a huge breakfast, and went to work, and that day he learned a little thing that changed the course of prize ring history.

“Got some special work for you today, Bull,” informed Duffy, approaching him in the locker room, an hour before the regular daily work-out.

“Dat short left chop I was——?”

“No. I got the hang of that chop, all right.” Duffy glanced around to make sure they were alone, and stepped closer. “You know Lefty fixed things up with Morowitz and Keen.”

Larrigan nodded, and waited for the other to proceed.

“Well, Morowitz slipped into town last night—just him an’ Keen. They kept it quiet, an’ got into my rooms without anyone catchin’ on. Lefty was there, an’ Red Casey, an’ we rehearsed the finish. It’s in the seventh, an’ it goes like this: Morowitz leads off strong, an’ forces me to the ropes. I clinch. We break, an’ in the break, I leave an openin’—like this. Morowitz slams in a swing for the jaw that misses by an inch, which leaves him wide open. I come in quick with a right an’ left to the jaw. He’s clawin’ the air, an’ I follow up, crowdin’ him close an’ smotherin’ him with hooks an’ chops till he goes down for the count. We went through it a dozen times, an’ it looks like the real stuff.”

“Well, what’s dis here special work about, den?”

A peculiar smile curled Duffy’s lips: “That’s all right as far as it goes. But, what I want is a real knockout.”

“You mean you want to gyp him?”

“Yes, damn him! That’s just what I want to do! When he misses my jaw and leaves me the openin’, instead of swingin’ to his jaw I want to land heavy on his heart.”

Larrigan considered. His hatred for Morowitz caused a slow grin to curl his lips, but he shook his head: “Nix. It’s like dis: You already got dis

fight on ice. W'at's de use takin' a chanct. S'pose you don't git him wit' de swing to de heart? S'pose you miss, or s'pose you don't land heavy enough? Dis here Morowitz ain't no cinch fer you. W'en he finds out yer tryin' to gyp him, he'll jest nach'lly jump in an' tear hell out of you."

If was Duffy's turn to grin: "Never you mind that. It ain't goin' to take much of a rap on the heart to stop Kid Morowitz. His pump's on the bum—he's done."

"W'ere'n hell did you git dat dope?"

"I got it straight enough," answered Duffy, easily. "From the only one that knows it except Keen an' his doc. I got it from a skirt."

"Dago Lottie!" the name exploded from Larrigan's lips, and his fists clenched till the knuckles whitened. "Where'd you see Dago Lottie?"

Duffy smiled cavalierly: "How'd you guess it?" he asked, easily. "Yes, Dago Lottie told me."

"But, where d'you see her? An' how'd she come to tell you about—him?"

"See her!" laughed Duffy, "why, I see her every night. You see we've got a little flat uptown. She put me wise so I could win. She don't know the fight is framed."

The colour that had leaped into Bull Larrigan's face slowly receded. His fists relaxed, and he

spoke with a slight trace of huskiness in his voice, more to himself than to Duffy: "So, Kid Morowitz's heart is on the fritz, eh? An' w'en she found out he was t'rough she switched over to you, did she? An'—we're does she go from here?"

"What?" cried Duffy, sharply, "what the hell do you mean? You be'n talkin' to Red Casey. Listen: You birds has got that skirt all wrong. She never had nothin' to do with Kid Morowitz. She jest happened to be in Philly to see Jack Keen on business, an' she happened to hear him an' Morowitz talkin' about his heart, an' she slips me the tip—see? Where the hell do you get that stuff about her an' Morowitz? She hates his guts! She's mine!"

"Oh," answered Bull Larrigan, slowly. "Well—maybe—I—got—her—wrong."

"I'll say you did! Believe me, there's one moll that's all to the good. I suppose Casey's handed you that line of bull about her framin' her husband. That's a damned lie. She told me all about it. It was one of these here Eytalian mix-ups, that started over in the old country. Them Dagos is hell fer croakin' one another." Duffy paused and dropped his voice, slightly. "'Course, Lottie, she—works the stores. An' she's so damn' good that

they're afraid of her. But, other ways—you know—she's square as hell."

Larrigan nodded. "Yes," he answered, "I know." He swung the door of his locker open and pulled off his sweater. "An' she's bettin' on you to win?" he asked, casually.

"I'll tell the world she is! She'll cop off a nice bunch of jack, too."

"What do you want to hand Morowitz a knock-out fer, when you win anyhow?" persisted Larrigan, as he unlaced his shoes.

"There's a couple of reasons. First off, I hate him 'cause she does—see. Then I don't want her to know the fight was framed. I want to put him damn' good an' out."

"An' what is it you want me to do, now?" asked Larrigan, drawing on his trunks.

"I want you to go through this rehearsal like I told you—like Morowitz went through it with me last night. I'll give you the openin' when we break, an' you slam a right to the jaw that misses, then instead of tryin' fer your jaw, I'll shoot in a right an' left to the heart. I want to get the range, an' I want you to try an' block. You're faster than Morowitz, if you can't block quick enough to cover, it's a cinch he can't. If you can, we've got to dope out a way to land those punches faster, that's all."

CHAPTER VIII

THE DOUBLE DOUBLE-CROSS

WITH the big fight that was to determine the challenger of the heavyweight title only two days off, Bull Larrigan slipped quietly into a smoking car, and landed late in the evening in Philadelphia. Stepping into a telephone booth, he called Morowitz's number, and a few moments later got a sleepy answer. "Hello, Kid, dat you?"

"Yes, it's me. Who are you, an' what in hell do you want?"

"I got to see you. I got a message——"

"Who from?"

"Dago Lottie."

"Well, spit it out," the voice came more sharply. Larrigan laughed. "Nix on dat. I got to see you. How do I know it's you dat's talkin'?"

"All right," growled the voice, "take a taxi. I'll pay for it." He gave Larrigan a street and number. "Third floor front. The door'll be open."

Ten minutes later Kid Morowitz drew back with a start as a man with a sweater collar drawn high, stepped across his threshold.

“Bull Larrigan!” he exclaimed and instinctively stepped behind a table in the drawer of which lay a loaded automatic pistol.

Larrigan carefully closed the door behind him, and faced the other with a grin. “No chanct fer a gun-play, Kid. I ain’t heeled. An’ besides I come here fer yer own good.”

“What do you mean?” asked Morowitz, ignoring the reference to the gun.

“I be’n in Duffy’s camp fer a mont’—sparrin’ pardner.”

A thin smile twisted Morowitz’s lips. “An’ you want to sell me somethin’? Lottie’s name was only a stall to get in here?”

“No,” answered Larrigan, “I’ll leave it to you if I’m stallin’. An’—I wouldn’t try an’ sell a man back a fight he’d already sold, would I? What I’m here fer is to hand you somethin’. If it ain’t wort’ nothin’ to you, all right. If it is, all right agin—see?”

“No,” answered Morowitz, coldly, “I don’t see. How long since you be’n such a good friend of mine that you’d make a trip over here from Noo York to hand me somethin’? What’s yer game?”

Larrigan scowled, and glared at the other across the table. "Fer more'n a year, I've hated yer guts, on account of—you know—on account of her. I'd of croaked you any day if I t'ought it would of got her back—but it wouldn't." Morowitz glanced toward the table drawer, and Larrigan divined the intent. "I told you I wasn't heeled," he said harshly, "an' I'm tellin' you now, I don't hate you no more. Long as you had her I hated you, but now you've lost her, I hate de man dat's got her, same as I hated you."

"Lost her!" Morowitz, forgetting the gun, stepped swiftly around the table, and clutched the other's arm. In the light of the electric chandelier Larrigan saw that his face had gone suddenly white. "What do you mean—lost her?"

Larrigan glanced about the apartment. "She ain't here, is she?"

"No! Damn you! She's in Noo York——"

"Livin' wit' Mike Duffy in an uptown flat——"

"It's a damn lie! Duffy lives at the Avenue Hotel. I was in his rooms——"

"Um-hum—rehearsin' de sevent' round. 'Course a man can't have two places! An' course if he did, he'd took you to de one wit' de girl in it. It would make it nice all around."

Morowitz's grip relaxed, and he sank into a chair,

and motioned Larrigan into another. "Prove it, damn you! If you're lyin' I'll croak you right here. What's yer game? What did you come here for?"

"I come because dat damn dirty double-crossin' yeller bastard has got de girl I love—yes, I love her! I don't give a damn who knows it. I'd go t'rough hell to git her back—right now! If croakin' him would do it, he'd be planted by now—but it wouldn't. Dere's jest one chanct—an' dat's you."

"Me!" exclaimed Morowitz, in surprise.

"Yes, you. It's like dis." He paused and fumbling in his pocket drew out a ruffled newspaper clipping which he handed to Morowitz.

Several days before, an old sport reporter had stood for a long time and watched Bull Larrigan and Mike Duffy at their work in Duffy's training quarters. He was a reporter who had known Larrigan in his better days—had known Red Casey, too. When the workout was over he hunted up Casey. Then he went back to the office and sat down at his typewriter and wrote a story. It was a story which was also a prophecy. It began and ended with an if. It recited Bull Larrigan's ring record, and his bar record, also. It was to the effect that if Bull Larrigan, the forgotten, the down-and-outer, would let booze alone, he could come back with a rush that would carry him to the

top in a year's time. Many people read the story. Many who knew Larrigan laughed. Others scoffed. The old sport reporter came in for much kidding, in and out of print. Red Casey read it, and believed it. Bull Larrigan read it, and knew that it was true. Dago Lottie read it, and wondered. Morowitz read it, and handed it back with a grin. "Have a drink?" he asked, "I've got a bottle here."

"I'll cut my t'roat first," answered Bull, gruffly. "I'm goin' to de top!"

"An' where do I come in?" smiled Morowitz, patronizingly.

Larrigan leaned forward, his voice tense: "Don't go tryin' dat on wit' me. You knocked me out, onct. You got my girl away. You've got a swell flat, an' swell clothes, an' you eat swell grub. An' I'm a bum. I live in a dirty hole, an' de clothes I got on my back is de best I own. But, by God, I'm a better man dan you are right now! An' I'll have all de t'ings you got now w'en you ain't got a nickel left! I told you I come up here to hand you some-thin'. I did. But, it ain't altogedder on your account. It's 'cause I kin use you in hittin' a lick fer myself." The man paused, and the other waited for him to proceed. "It's like dis: De way you an' Duffy has got de sevent' round framed, you open fast an' crowd him to de ropes. He clinches. In

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de break, he leaves a openin' an' you slam in wit' a right to de jaw dat misses, leavin' him a openin' an' he comes in wit' a right an' left to de jaw, an' follers up wit' hooks an' jabs dat smother you before you kin come back from de jolt on de jaw. You take de count. Am I right, or wrong?"

"That's right," admitted Morowitz.

"Well, git dis: Duffy ain't goin' to swing on yer jaw w'en you give him de openin'. He's goin' to come in wit' two damn' swift swings to de heart _____"

"The heart!" cried Morowitz, quickly.

"Yes, de heart. He's be'n tryin' it out on me fer two days, an' believe me, he's dere wit de stuff!"

"But—why in hell should he do that? The fight's all framed to go the way we rehearsed it. What's the big idee?"

"De girl," answered Larrigan, "She's got him fooled. He don't believe she ever lived wit' you, but she's told him enough so he hates you an' he's goin' to make it a real knockout. Den besides, he don't want her to know de fight's framed."

"There you go, with the girl, again. Damn you, you ain't proved nothin' yet! You ain't proved she even knows Duffy."

"I ain't, eh? Well, maybe you'll tell me what

a couple of good stiff jolts on de heart would do to you."

Morowitz stared, hesitated, and tried to bluff: "Anyone knows a stiff enough jolt on the heart'll stop any man. But he couldn't hit hard enough to hurt me, even if he landed."

Larrigan grinned: "'Tain't no use, Kid. Listen: Yer heart's on de bum. You had to change docs to stay in de game fer dis fight. You're done. Dat's why she quit you—like she quit me w'en I was done. How would I know dis if she hadn't told Duffy, an' Duffy told me? She's double-crossed you, Kid. An' Duffy's goin' to double-cross you agin."

Morowitz leaped from his chair and paced up and down the room cursing like a mad man. He cursed his doctor, his heart, the girl, Keen, Klinger-mann, and Larrigan, but most of all he cursed Duffy. "Damn him to hell! I'll fix him! I'll tear into the dirty pup the first round an' I'll butcher him! I'll show him! I'll kill him!"

Larrigan listened until the other had worn himself out, and settled again into his chair. "Dat's one way," he admitted, half scornfully. "But, w'at's de use of takin' chances. Dis here Duffy ain't no baby—w'at I'm tellin' you. An' if I had a bum heart I wouldn't take no chances in de ring wit'

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him. He's dere wit' de punch, an' he's got science, an' speed. He's got everyt'ing he needs, but de guts."

"What the hell am I goin' to do then? Stand up to him an' let him gyp me! Let him swing on me, when a good stiff punch on the heart would prob'ly croak me!"

"No, I wouldn't do dat. An' if I had everyt'ing comin' my own way I wouldn't make no fool play like tearin' in to kill him de first round, neither."

"What d'you mean?"

"I mean, I'd play de game wit' his own chips till it comes to de sevent'. W'en de sevent' starts you bore in an' crowd him to de ropes, like it's doped out fer you to do, den he'll clinch, den on de break he'll give you de openin' to swing fer his jaw—an' miss. S'pose you don't miss? S'pose you land on his jaw w'en he ain't lookin' fer it, wit' everyt'ing you got, an' den foller it up wit' another?"

Morowitz leaped to his feet, excitedly: "That's the dope!" he cried, "damn him! I'll learn him to try to gyp me! An' I'll learn her, too!"

Larrigan grinned: "She's bettin' every cent she can git hold of on Duffy," he said, "I should worry. De buster she is, de quicker she'll come back to me——"

"To you!"

"Yes, Kid—to me! It's a pug she wants—a champ. She's t'rough wit' you. She don't want no broken down sport wit' a bum heart. Dey ain't no chanct fer you to git her back, no matter which way de cat jumps. You're done. An' here's another t'ing. Believe me, w'en you knock Duffy fer a gool you got to hunt yer hole an' lay clost. De girl ain't de only one dat's playin' Duffy to win. An' she ain't de only one dat's bust de minute de referee counts ten over Duffy. Dere's de Cap, an' Lefty—an' a dozen gunmen dat jumps w'en dey pulls de string. An' besides, dere's Keen. He's got his jack up on Duffy, too. W'at's he goin' to say w'en he finds out you've gyped him?"

"Damn Keen! Damn the Cap! And damn Lefty! I'd gyp the world to knock that dirty double-crosser cold! I don't owe them birds nothin'. Keen made all the jack he ever owned off me, now he can lose it where he got it."

"How about you?" asked Larrigan, "ain't you got de jack Lefty paid over bet on Duffy, too?"

A twisted grin was Morowitz's answer, and reaching into his pocket, he drew out a thick roll of yellow bills. "I was waitin' fer the odds to go up," he said, unrolling the bills and fingering their edges. "Here's jack enough fer a gitaway, an'

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some to spare. An' I can get half agin as much by bettin' on myself."

Larrigan, his eyes on the roll of bills, forced a look of indifference: "You got to be damn' careful, bettin' on yerself," he suggested. "S'pose Keen or Lefty got wise to it? An' even if you got de jack down wit'out dem findin' it out, you dastn't show yer mug to collect it. Believe me, Kid, yer goin' to be on de run w'en de referee says 'ten.' You don't even dast to go back to yer dressin' room. Keen'll be layin' fer you, an' yer trainer, too, wit' a water bottle, an' a couple of Lefty's gunmen will finish up de job."

"What am I goin' to do?" asked Morowitz, growing a shade paler.

"Leave it to me," answered Bull Larrigan, reassuringly.

"But, you——"

"Sure, I know. I hated you ever since you grabbed de skirt offen me. But, you ain't got her no more, so w'at de hell! I show'd you I'm right, didn't I—w'en I put you wise dat Duffy was goin' to gyp you, an' land on yer heart hard enough to maybe croak you? Come heads er tails, yer in a hell of a fix anyways. If you go t'rough wit' it de way it's doped, Duffy croaks you wit' a smash on de heart. If you knock Duffy out, an' gyp Lefty

an' Keen, an' de Cap, Lefty's gunmen croaks you. I'm de only chanct you got. Listen: Dis fight's pulled off in de Bon Ton. De minute you slip t'rough de ropes after it's over you make fer de locker room, but don't go on t'rough to yer dressin' room. Turn left behind de first row of lockers an' you'll find a door. Go t'rough dat into de little hallway at de head of de stairs dat goes to Dreyfus's office. I'll be dere wit' a suit of clothes. You crawl into 'em an' beat it to a taxi I got waitin', an' slip over to my room. It ain't no swell joint like dis, but it'll do fer a hide-out. Lefty'll be combin' Noo York wit' a fine toot' comb to find you, but dey won't never look fer you dere."

"But, how about this?" asked Morowitz, fingering the bills. "That don't give me no chanct to git my money down."

Larrigan shrugged: "Well, you might take a chanct on gittin' it down without dem findin' it out. An' another chanct on showin' up to collect it after de fight. But, believe me——" he finished the sentence with an expressive grimace.

"If I was sure you wouldn't gyp me," muttered Morowitz, after a pause, during which his fingers riffled the edges of the bills, "I'd get you to put this down along with yours."

Larrigan laughed: "A guy can't never tell what's

goin' to happen to him till it does. An' some guys is funny, at dat. Here's you willin' to take a chanct on me keepin' you from gittin' croaked, an' wonderin' if you dast take a chanct on me wit' yer roll. De quicker you make a get-away, an' de funder you go, de easier it is fer me to git Dago Lottie back. She's all I want—to hell wit' you!"

Without a word, Morowitz handed over the roll, and Larrigan stuffed it into his pocket: "Remember de dope, now, an' don't fergit it." He paused, grinning, "You knocks out Duffy, an' den you beats it. Dat leaves de skirt fer me. I got what I come after—an' you'll git yours. So long."

As he descended the stairs, his fingers tightly clutching the roll of yellow bills, he grinned again: "I'll say he will!" he muttered, savagely. "I'll tell de cockeyed world!"

CHAPTER IX

THE FIGHT

As the day of the Morowitz-Duffy fight approached, New York's underworld felt more and more Lefty Klingermann's urgent need of cash. Under threat of police interference, and vague hints of gunman activities, he gouged and extorted right and left; and the crooks, and the keepers of dives, and gambling houses, and hide-out joints and fences paid. They whined, and squawked, and cursed, and threatened dire vengeance—but they paid. With his uncanny intuition as to the whereabouts of dishonest dollars, Klingermann ferreted them out and appropriated them. Playing a sure thing, he levied upon his own stuss banks until the reserve held against a run of adverse luck was shaved to a dangerous minimum. And on top of this, he borrowed prodigiously among the petty merchants of his precinct. On ten-day notes, signed jointly by himself and the Captain of Police, he obtained

thousands of dollars at an interest of ten, and even twenty-five per cent for the ten days.

The result of this eleventh hour flood of Duffy money was to force down the odds. Morowitz money became hard to find, and when found was offered at one-and-a-half, at one-and-a-quarter to one, until on the day of the fight bets were laid at even money, and plenty of Duffy money in sight.

It was on that day that Bull Larrigan, in an uptown pool room, whose management knew nothing of his connection with the camp of Duffy, succeeded in placing his roll—his own money, and the money entrusted to him by Morowitz. "It's a funny old world, take it up an' down and cross-ways, w'en you come to t'ink about it," he soliloquized, as he crossed over and walked down Fifth Avenue. "Take Lefty, now, an' de Cap, an' Kid Morowitz, an' Duffy, an' Keen, an' Lottie. Gawd! All of 'em settin' in de big game togedder—an' not a damn one of 'em hep to what's comin' off. De deck's stacked, an' no one knows who stacked it—only me, an' I'm jest lookin' on!"

The Bon Ton club blazed with light. The seating capacity had been trebled by the removal of a partition wall between its gymnasium and an adjoining loft building. The usual price of admission,

also, had been trebled, and Dreyfus smiled as he stood near the doorway and watched the fight fans file in and noisily take their places.

At the ringside, attired in citizen's clothing sat the Captain of Police. A close observer would have noted that his ruddy face was many shades paler than was its wont, and that his lips were tightly drawn about the butt of an unlighted cigar, held stiffly between clamped teeth. The room was not uncomfortably warm, but at short intervals the Captain ran an uneasy finger around the inside of his low collar. He looked neither to the right, nor to the left, but sat with his eyes on the newly canvased ring, with its ropes wound with red, white, and blue bunting. But the Captain took no note of the details of the ring, nor of the crowd that was rapidly filling the seats. Before his eyes passed a long procession of notes, dozens of notes—hundreds of notes. Notes of varying amounts, and of varying rates of interest, but each and every one of which bore his name, and must be met within ten days of its date—and some of them were already a week old! Suppose something should go wrong! There was an icy chill at the Captain's feet, and he curled the toes in his square black shoes. His head and neck felt hot, and for the twentieth time he ran his finger around the rim of

his collar. An acquaintance greeted him jovially, and he returned the greeting with a grunt, as his eyes sought the bulky form of Lefty Klingermann for moral support.

In sharp contrast to the Captain's fit of doldrums, Klingermann's manner was hilariously exuberant. Moving along the aisles, and about the ringside, he called noisy greetings to acquaintances, shaking a hand here, slapping a shoulder there, laughing loudly at some quip or joke, and stooping low to whisper confidentially to some fan of wide importance in the pugilistic world. He fairly radiated nervous geniality. His little eyes glittered, and he was incessantly on the move.

A notorious race track plunger known as Parlay Smith took his seat at the ringside, and Klingermann greeted him banteringly: "Hello! Parlay! Bring your roll along?"

The man grinned, and held up a thick wad of bills. "Want to make a hole in it?" he challenged. "You don't figure that selling plater you're backing has got a show to win, do you?"

Klingermann laughed uproariously: "S-a-y! That's pretty good! Tell you what I'll do—seein' it's you. You'd bet me even money, wouldn't you? Sure you would—a week ago you was bettin' two-to-one!" Klingermann plunged his hand into his

pocket and drew out a roll of hundred dollar bills which he flattened out and counted with a flourish. "Twenty of 'em!" he announced loudly. "Twenty centuries! Two thousand of the good old iron men!" he slapped the packet of crisp bills loudly against the palm of his hand. "But I ain't a-goin' to let you bet even. I'm a-goin' to give you odds of two to one! Yessir, two-to-one on that boy! It's costin' me a cold thousand to do it. But, it's worth that in advertisin' to these folks just what I think of him. There's a boy, gents, that's goin' to be the next champ! An' don't you fergit it! Who says so? Little Lefty says so! Little Lefty Klingermann! You'll all be comin' to Lefty fer the fight dope, after tonight!" He paused abruptly and thrust the bills toward the other: "Want it? All right, cover it with a grand, an' let your friend there hold the stakes, or hold 'em yerself, if you want to. That's the last bet made—two-to-one on Duffy!" Cheers and cat-calls broke out in a pandemonium of noise as the man covered the money. Shouts filled the air, and Klingermann was besieged with offers at the same odds. For answer he thrust both hands into his trousers pockets and turned them inside out. "Busted!" he roared. "Busted, an' mortgaged to the ears! But I won't be long!" And with his pockets adangle, he took his seat

beside the Captain of Police, just as the official announcer stepped through the ropes.

The preliminaries were exceptionally good, and the big crowd showed noisy appreciation, and with a tremendous ovation of noise, it greeted the two contestants of the main bout as they were formally introduced from the ring. For it was no secret that the winner of this fight would challenge the champ, and excitement ran high.

At Morowitz's appearance the sold trainload of Philadelphia rooters threatened to raise the roof with their din, which was drowned a few moments later as Duffy stepped through the ropes, by the mighty roar that surged from the throats of the New Yorkers.

Duffy walked to his corner and sat down. His glance swept the sea of faces about him, and he smiled complacently, as his thoughts carried him back to his first appearance in that selfsame corner, and of the alternate waves of icy chill and burning heat that shot through his body as the minutes dragged by while he waited for the dilatory Bull Larrigan to take his place. Much water had passed under the bridge since that evening, when Thunderbolt Leonard, the truck driver, his blood turned to water in his veins, had nervously awaited the arrival of his first professional antagonist.

Measured in days and months, the time that intervened had not been long. Measured in worldly experience it was a far, far cry back to that night. In the interim, the unsophisticated truck driver had learned many things. Through the untiring efforts of honest old Red Casey, he had learned that he was a good boxer—not a good fighter—for despite his victories over the fighters that were the best the city afforded, he knew, and Red Casey knew of the fear that was always at his heart—the yellow streak that would not down. Physically he was a superb athlete, a clever boxer, and a hard hitter. But his wholesome association with Red Casey had been more than offset by his unwholesome association with Lefty Klingermann, and with those about him whose cunning brains permitted them to live opulently in more or less open defiance of the law.

The suspicion that “a man is a fool to work,” that had come with the fruits of his first professional battle, had cemented into a firm conviction by his daily contact with the wolves of society. It was this twist in his mental complex that made him leap at Klingermann’s offer to buy the Morowitz fight. To Duffy, money meant everything, personal achievement nothing. No pride of victory swelled his breast. He fought hard to win, not for

the sake of winning, but because the winner drew down the lion's share of the proceeds. And for the same reason he wanted to be the champ. With envious eyes he read of the easy money to be derived from vaudeville and cinema engagements, and, until Lotta Rivoli had come to loom large in his scheme of things, his desire to win the heavyweight championship had rested wholly upon the acquisition of this easy money. But Lotta Rivoli was ambitious. The prestige of championship meant as much to her as the emoluments of championship, and in the weeks of her association with Duffy, she had partially succeeded in instilling into the fighter a little of her own enthusiasm, so that he actually thrilled as the storm of applause broke over his entrance to the ring. And so, as he sat in his corner, his eyes roving over the massed humanity about him, he smiled complacently. For, in his mind's eye, he was already the champ. With Morowitz out of the way it would be easy. For Duffy shared the general opinion that the holder of the belt was a pugilistic joke, who would go down before the first real fighter who faced him.

Someone had been haranguing the crowd from the ring, announcing weights and conditions. The man ceased speaking, and Duffy found himself upon his feet in the centre of the ring with Morowitz,

his trainer, Red Casey, and the referee, perfunctorily examining gloves and bandages. Then he was again in his corner and Casey was tying on the gloves.

At the sound of the gong, he faced Morowitz, who led off with a stiff right to the jaw which Duffy easily blocked, and countered with a left whip to the stomach. The round became a fast exchange of hooks and jabs, and ended, so far as apparent result showed, in a draw.

The second round saw some heavier hitting, some clever blocking and equally clever foot work. This was clearly Morowitz's round as it ended with Duffy on the defensive, his back to the ropes.

Morowitz obtained a shade the best of the third, although Duffy seemed to be coming stronger, and the round ended with both contestants, toe to toe, in the centre of the ring.

It was in the fourth that Duffy first noted the sinister gleam in Morowitz's eyes. The man's blows came thick and fast, and behind each blow was a stab of hate from the narrowed eyes of the fighter. The yellow streak showed. A sudden fear gripped his heart, and his attention diverted, Morowitz rushed him viciously into the ropes for a clinch. The round ended with the Morowitz rooters on their feet yelling their heads off.

Duffy pulled himself together during the intermission, and with the knowledge that the fight was his anyway, he led out strongly and forced the fighting to the end of the round. It was his own rooters who were on their feet this time, and he attributed Morowitz's ferocity to his desire to give the fans their money's worth, and to allay all suspicion of the fight's having been framed. It was during the intermission after this round that Duffy discovered that Lotta Rivoli occupied a ringside seat close under his corner, and that next to her sat Bull Larrigan, whose loudly bellowed approbation of the round drowned all voices about him.

The close proximity of the girl nerved him, and Duffy leaped from his corner at the sound of the gong, and met Morowitz in his own corner. This, too, was Duffy's round. Twice he forced Morowitz to the ropes, and with a thrill of exultation, he noted that the man was weakening. More hateful, more sinister than before, his eyes flashed, but his blows had lost much of their punch, and he hung heavily in the clinches. In the opinion of many fans the gong saved Morowitz. And as Duffy went to his corner he wondered whether the man had been stalling, paving the way for the knockout that would come in the seventh.

Through the ropes he caught a glimpse of the face of the Captain of Police. It was white as the tightly twisted newspaper that he gripped with his two hands. Beside him sat Lefty Klingermann, who leaned forward with tightly clenched lips, his low collar open at the throat, the ends of his gaudy necktie a-dangle.

The room rang with cries of "Duffy!" "Duffy!" "Eat him up!" "Oh, you Duffy!" "Polish him off!" "Knock him through the ropes!" Duffy glanced down. Close beside him, looking up at him, her eyes like stars, Lotta Rivoli flashed him a smile of encouragement. Even the face of Bull Larrigan appeared drawn—tense. Of all the faces about him, only the face of the girl showed no trace of excitement—the girl and Red Casey.

Duffy glanced across the ring where Morowitz's trainer was whispering frantically. Duffy could see his lips move rapidly as he fanned the fighter who lay back with his arms stretched along the ropes. A wave of resentment shot through him as he glanced into the face of Red Casey who was plying his towel in silence. The face of the old trainer was impassive as a mask. He performed his work with automatic precision. He had scarcely spoken a word since the fight started, a fact that conveyed to Duffy plainer than many words, the

older man's disgust at being a party to a framed fight. "Old fool," thought the fighter, "I'll ditch him. . . ." The gong rang for the seventh.

The two men met in the centre of the ring. Morowitz opened the attack, and exactly as in rehearsal Duffy began to retreat slowly before the rain of blows. Inch by inch he gave backward, blocking, countering, furiously exchanging blow for blow. The narrowed, bloodshot eyes of Morowitz seemed to blaze with hate, and as his own eyes met them momentarily a sudden premonition of evil struck a chill to Duffy's heart. He felt the ropes pressing into his back and with his brain a whirl of panic, he clinched. Directly below him the face of the Police Captain showed like the face of a dead man, paper white, the eyes staring and glassy. Morowitz's lips were against his ear, and his words came with a hiss of hot breath, "Break! Damn you! Git it over! I'm—all in!" Duffy broke. Letter perfect in his rôle, he allowed his foot to slip just enough to throw him momentarily out of balance—the move that left the opening for Morowitz's long swing that should miss his jaw by an inch. He caught the flash of a glove as the swing was launched. Eyes on his opponent's breast, he tensed his muscles for the blow that would land on the weakened heart, the Judas blow that would

rid him of the glare of those fateful eyes. Something happened. There was a blinding flash of light. A crushing, stunning weight crashed against his jaw. His muscles went limp. The ropes were swaying with his weight. His gloved hands were open. There was a terrible din of voices that blended into a roar of thunder. Another crashing blow reached his jaw, and for a single instant, he caught the gleam of hate in Morowitz's eyes. He felt no pain—only a terrible numbness. He felt his body slipping along the ropes, he must gather himself for that swing to the heart. But—something was wrong. His muscles refused to obey the order of his numbed brain. His open right hand, dangling uselessly from his limp arm, was almost touching the canvas as he slipped slowly down the ropes. Another crashing blow, and—he was lying on the deck of a boat that rocked fearfully. Somewhere, close behind him, a man was counting—six—seven—eight—— Suddenly the numbed brain awoke. He was in the ring—down—and the referee was counting him out. Him—Mike Duffy! Double-crossed! Gypped!—Nine—— With a mighty heaving of muscles he gathered himself together, raised himself on one knee, and sprawled his length on the canvas.

Boom! Instead of the fatal “ten” the clang of

the gong sounded above the thunderous uproar of voices.

With Red Casey's arms under his shoulders, he was half-dragged to his corner, where he sprawled against the ropes. Fumes from a bottle held close against his nose cleared his brain. Dashes of ice water upon his skin revived his flaccid muscles, and the cold air of the fanning towels was beginning to dispel the deadly numbness that gripped him. Red Casey was whispering, and he saw that the old man's eyes were flashing. "Go get him! Boy—he double-crossed ye! Ye can do it, yet! He's weakened. His heart's gone bad." A surge of rage welled up within him, and Duffy glanced wildly about him. The face of the girl was deadly white. And between the ropes the Captain of Police, with his glassy-eyed stare, had not moved. Lefty Klingermann was not in his seat, and Bull Larrigan, too, had disappeared. The sound of the gong brought him to his feet automatically, and Casey shoved him into the ring. Instinctively Duffy raised his gloves to meet the man who leaped at him like a wild beast. Rage blazed from Morowitz's eyes, and his lips writhed in a snarl of hate. The gong had cheated him by a second, but—— Sudden fear gripped the heart of Duffy—stupefying, abysmal fear. With a gurgling sound in his throat,

he raised his crooked arms about his face and turning, ran to the ropes, with Morowitz's gloves thudding his back, his shoulders, and the back of his head. Far out over the ropes he leaned to avoid the thumping blows. A flash of white caught his eye, as Red Casey, his face a thundercloud, tossed a towel into the ring. The blows ceased. A pandemonium of noise broke loose, but different from the thunderous applause that had greeted the finish of the rounds. Cries of "Yellow dog!" "Quitter!" "Piker!" "Yellow!" "Drag him out!" "Kill him!" coupled with cat-calls and hisses, commingled with the shouts of applause for Morowitz. Cries of "Morowitz!" "Morowitz!" filled the air. After what seemed a long time Duffy turned from the ropes. But for himself and the referee the ring was empty. Even Red Casey had departed, and Morowitz was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER X

THE GET-AWAY

HIS brain in a whirl, Duffy stood and stared out over the seething sea of faces that swirled and eddied about the ringside. Amid the wild cheers and applause for Morowitz, he caught, now and then, the sound of his own name coupled with oaths of contempt, or obscene words of disapprobation. Gradually his wits cleared. It was all over. The fight was over—and Morowitz had won! With a shudder he glanced back over his shoulder half expecting to meet those glaring eyes and snarling lips. He couldn't stand—he wouldn't stand another of those terrible smashing blows that drove to his jaw—the sickening flash of light—and the stupefying numbness that left him limp and lifeless upon the heaving canvas of the ring. Everywhere sneering faces looked up into his own. Damn them—they didn't understand. Morowitz had gypped him! If they knew they wouldn't be yelling for Morowitz! He wet his lips with his tongue and glanced down

straight into the face of Lefty Klingermann. Close behind him stood Bull Larrigan. The beefy face of the Jew was crimson. Duffy noticed that the thick neck overbulged the band of the silk shirt. Then, the narrowed, bloodshot eyes met his, as Klingermann raised a shaking forefinger: "You yellow dog! You dirty welcher! He was all in! If you'd stood up to him one minute—handed him one punch, you'd of got him! But, damn you! You'll get yours!" The man's voice was thick with passion, and the words came jerkily from between the thick lips.

Two men reached Klingermann's side. They were squat, dark men who wore caps, and Duffy recognized them as gunmen—killers. Klingermann bent low and whispered into their ears, and as he listened the black eyes of one of them raised and met Duffy's squarely. The man nodded—and disappeared in the crowd. Icy chills crept up and down Duffy's spine. A new terror gripped him. On trembling legs he turned toward his corner, the motion chilling the clammy sweat that had started on his forehead and chest.

His bath robe lay on the floor where it had dropped when Red Casey pushed him into the ring for that fatal eighth round. There should have been no eighth round! Morowitz had gyped him!

He stooped to recover the robe, and found himself staring straight into the eyes of Lotta Rivoli. The girl had not moved. The black eyes flashed and the red lips twisted in scorn: "You piker!" she hissed, "you yellow pig! If you'd have fought instead of bought you'd have won! I know you—now! Bull Larrigan told me—right here at the ringside. You dirty double-crosser! You got what was coming to you! The tip I handed you was straight. If you'd have played it you'd won!"

"But—listen—girl—I——"

"Listen—hell!" The writhing scorn of that last word silenced Duffy and he stared stupidly as the girl turned to Bull Larrigan, who had gained her side through the rapidly thinning crowd.

She laid a hand affectionately upon Larrigan's arm, and Duffy saw that the dark eyes glowed softly as the red lips, curved now in a wondrously ravishing smile, spoke words that came distinctly to his ears: "Come on, Bully boy, take me home. This place—stinks!" As Larrigan led her down an aisle at the heels of the crowd, she whispered to him: "I'm broke, Bull. I bet all I had on that lemon, and he dogged it!"

The fighter's big hand squeezed her arm, and he grinned: "Never mind, kid. You come wit' me——"

“Not to your room—to that hole on——”

“No kid, not dere. Dey’s somet’in comin’ off dere pretty quick you wouldn’t want to see.” Deftly, he piloted her down the stairs and across the sidewalk, and into a waiting taxi, which at a word, drew away from the curb and headed uptown. Fifteen minutes later the car stopped, and bidding the girl stay where she was, Larrigan disappeared into a narrow hallway. A few moments later he re-appeared, and to her surprise, the girl heard him give the chauffeur the number of her own apartment. The next moment he was seated beside her, and thrusting a hand into either side pocket he withdrew them, each grasping a huge roll of yellow bills. The girl stared: “Where—where did you get them?” she managed to gasp. “They told me you was down and out—living like a rat in a hole.”

The man laughed: “It’s a funny world, ain’t it, kid? I’ve come back, an’ we’re goin’ clean to de top dis time. Nix on de booze fer me! It was de strong stuff dat put me where I was at. But, I come back.”

“Sure, Bull, I know. And I’m with you, Bull. I was a fool ever to quit you. But you know——”

“Sure, kid—I know. I was on de rocks, right. I ain’t blamin you——”

“But—where did you get all the jack? You ain’t fought since—since Duffy knocked you out.”

“He can’t do it now! I could knocked him fer a gool a dozen times in de las’ two weeks——”

“Sure, I know—but the jack?”

“Part of it’s wages,” answered the man, “an’ part of it’s Kid Morowitz’s share of de jack Lefty Klingermann slipped him an’ Keen fer to buy de fight, an’ de rest of it’s w’at someone else bet on Duffy.”

“But—how’d you get it?”

“Me? Oh, de Kid wanted I should bet it fer him. You see he dasn’t let Keen find out he was bettin’ on hisself.”

“But, where’s Kid, now?”

“He won’t be needin’ it no more. You see, de Kid double-crossed Lefty, an’ I slips Lefty de word dat de Kid’s hidin’ out in my room, an’ Lefty he passes de word on to Stiletto John Serbelloni an’ de Sicily Ape, along wit’ some orders.”

Involuntarily the girl shuddered and shrank close against the man’s side at the mention of the names. Larrigan grinned: “Yup, de same ones you hired to git——”

“Don’t—don’t!” cried the girl, throwing her arms about him, “That’s all past and gone, now. And, oh, Bull, you’re a wonder!”

Gathering his bath robe about him, Duffy slipped through the ropes, and made his way hurriedly to the locker room. The room with its single electric light suspended from the ceiling by a cord, seemed dark in comparison with the brilliantly lighted ring. Voices sounded from the shower room, and glancing fearfully toward the open doorway, he gathered his clothing in his arms and passed around behind the lockers. Klingermann's threat rang in his ears, and in his mind's eye he could see the venomous glitter of the pig-like eyes, and the appraising glance of the gunman who had slipped quietly from Klingermann's side and merged himself in the departing crowd. Footsteps sounded on the wooden floor, and he drew into the blackest shadow at the extreme end of the narrow passage where he cowered against the wall. Cold sweat dampened his forehead as he listened to the approaching footsteps, his eyes fixed upon the light that showed at the opening of his alley. If Stiletto John Serbelloni, or the Sicily Ape should suddenly appear framed in that square of light it would be all off. Cornered like a rat in a trap his body would be perforated like a sieve by the bullets from the gunman's automatic. A shadow darkened the mouth of the alley, and every muscle tense, Duffy strained his body against the wall. The shadow was gone, and the

sound of the opening and closing of a door told the cowering man that someone had passed on into Dreyfus's private office.

In feverish haste he tore at his gloves, breaking the lacings by hooking them over a nail that protruded from the wall. Without removing his trunks he drew on his clothing with trembling fingers, cursing himself for the conspicuously loud checked suit of clothing he had selected for the occasion. With fumbling fingers he succeeded in lacing his shoes, and the next moment was stealing swiftly toward the square of light at the mouth of the alley. An inspiration seized him as his shoulder brushed a pair of overalls that hung where some workman had left them, and pausing he drew them on over his checked trousers. Pausing at the mouth of the alley to glance fearfully about him, a discarded sweater and a dilapidated cap that hung on the opposite wall of the room caught his eye, and hurling his hat into the shadow he crossed the room and lifted the garments from their nails. Voices still sounded from the shower room through which he must pass to gain the door by which he had been accustomed to enter and leave the training quarters. One glance toward the door that led to Dreyfus's office sent a shudder through his frame, and hastily drawing the sweater on over his coat,

he pulled the cap low over his eyes and dashed through the gymnasium with its deserted aisles, and its tiers of empty seats, and two at a time, descended the broad steps that led to the main entrance.

Crowds of fight fans blocked the sidewalk, talking, gesticulating among themselves. Duffy heard his own name mentioned, coupled with oaths and angry threats. For these were men who, following Klingermann's lead, had bet heavily on him and lost. Holding his breath, he slunk unnoticed through the crowd, and with sweater collar turned up and cap pulled low, hastened along the street. Mechanically he turned into Avenue A, and proceeded in the direction of his hotel. Then, abruptly, he paused, and drew into the shadow of a doorway. A taxi rolled slowly along the street, and as it passed him Duffy caught sight of the dark face of Stiletto John Serbelloni. The car drew up to the curb in the next block and he saw two men alight, cross the sidewalk, and disappear through the lighted doorway of a building. The building was the Avenue Hotel!

Duffy turned and fled. On and on he ran, turning from one half-deserted street into another, the one obsession of his brain being to place distance between himself and Union Market precinct. Once a policeman called to him to halt, but instead of

complying, he redoubled his speed, and turning into a side street, hopelessly outdistanced the officer who made a bluff at a half-hearted chase.

After that Duffy slowed his pace to a walk, and a half-hour later descended the stairs to the subway and took an uptown train. At Grand Central Station he got out and wandered around for a while, his eyes darting swift glances here and there, half expecting that some sinister minion of Lefty Klingermann had penetrated his disguise and was dogging his footsteps.

Duffy had left the subway train at Grand Central Station, not with any idea of departing from the city, but merely because most of the passengers on that particular car disembarked at that point, and he followed the crowd which separated and subdivided in the labyrinth of the underground city. After a time he found himself in a great room where people stood about in little groups, while others hurried to and fro across the tiled floor, and still others, carrying hand baggage, walked slowly toward a grilled gate beside which stood a uniformed official.

Having lived all his life within the precincts of Greater New York, the trolley, the elevated, and the subway had sufficed his need of travel. His trip to Trenton with Red Casey had been his sole ex-

cursion on a railway train. Sight of the iron grilled gate, and the uniformed guard brought that journey vividly to his mind. Here was his chance—his get-away. If he stayed in New York Lefty Klinger-mann would get him. He might hide out for a day, a week, a year—but sooner or later, he would come face to face with one of Lefty's gunmen, and then—the roar of an automatic, stabs of hot pain, the rap of an officer's night stick, the little crowd of curious, the sound of the ambulance gong, and—Duffy shuddered, and made his way toward the open gate to the train shed.

“Ticket!” The guard extended his hand, and Duffy stared at him blankly. “Where you goin’ to? Where’s yer ticket?”

“Trenton,” said Duffy, speaking the name of the only city outside New York he could remember.

“Get along with you! This is the Chicago train.”

“Well, Chicago, then. It don’t make no difference.”

The guard eyed him sharply: “Where’s yer ticket?”

“I ain’t got none,” answered Duffy, “Where do I git it?”

The man pointed toward a window across the room.

As the train purred smoothly over the rails, Duffy stared out at the tiny lights that twinkled along the Hudson. Up to this point the one thought in his mind had been to get away—to put distance between himself and Lefty Klingermann's paid assassins. That he would be shot down on sight, he never for an instant doubted. He knew Klingermann—knew it was his boast that no one had ever gypped him and got away with it. No one except Dago Lottie. She was too smart, even for Klingermann.

As the miles slipped behind in the darkness, and fear gave place to a certain sense of security, the events of the evening began to shape themselves in his brain. He scowled sullenly at the twinkling lights, as a mighty rage against the perfidious Morowitz welled up within him. "The dirty dog doubled-crossed me," he thought, "An' he double-crossed Lefty, an'—Gawd! He must of double-crossed Keen, 'cause Keen had his money up on me. An' Bull Larrigan, he double-crossed me, 'cause he told Lottie about us buyin' the fight, an' she was gyppin' me all the time, makin' me think she loved me, an' the minute things goes against me, she switches over to Bull. I wonder if old Red was right—about her an' Kid Morowitz, an' she was double-crossin' him, too? Maybe she did frame her husband. Ain't it a hell of a world,

everyone gyppin' everyone else? They ain't no one on the level but old Red Casey, an' what's he got?" For a long time he stared out into the darkness: "I ain't no better'n the rest. I hadn't ought to stood fer Lefty buyin' the fight. I'd ought to took Lottie's tip, an' gone in an' won. It was a crooked game all the way through. I was goin' to gyp Morowitz, an' he beat me to it. An' now I'm broke, all but fourteen dollars, an' Lefty's broke, an' the Cap. Gee, he looked like a dead man. He's hit hard. Looks like Morowitz is the only one that win on the deal. Him, an' Bull Larrigan—he gits Lottie—but, damn her—he can have her! She'll git him, yet. She gits everyone. Damn women, a guy better leave 'em alone if he knows what's good fer him. So that leaves Kid Morowitz the only winner—an' believe me he's goin' to have to do some swell hidin' out or Lefty'll git him. I wonder what old Red Casey'll think when I don't show up no more? Old Red, he wouldn't bet on a framed fight—" he paused abruptly, and a slow grin twisted his lips. "Why, damn it! He's got his money in his pocket. Maybe he's the only one that win, after all. Anyways, he's the only one that ain't on the run, or busted, or mixed up with a skirt. Maybe Red's right. I guess most of the big ones in the ring has been on the level, at that."

Next day, as the train neared Chicago, Duffy bought a newspaper, and turned at once to the sport page. There it was in glaring headlines,

DUFFY QUILTS COLD.

And, beneath, the story of his miserable defeat. He read it all, to the last scathing word. His cheeks burned as he saw himself panned as no fighter had ever been panned before. Why couldn't he have seen what everybody else saw, that had he stood up to Morowitz in that fatal eighth round he could have won easily. He had seen no signs of weakening, only those blazing eyes, and the gloves that had so terribly battered his jaw. Oh, well, he was yellow. He had known it, and Red Casey had known it, and now all the world knew it. He would never fight again, could never fight again. The mere thought of standing up to an opponent made him shudder. Other headlines met his eyes. Three columns wide they seemed to leap from the page. And again he read his own name.

MOROWITZ-DUFFY FIGHT FRAMED.
MOROWITZ FOUND MURDERED IN ROOM
ON RIVINGTON STREET.
POLICE CAPTAIN A SUICIDE.

Feverishly Duffy read the whole sordid story as told to the reporters by the disgruntled Keen. He read of his own disappearance, and the theory that he, too, had been mysteriously murdered. And he read the attempts of the newspaper men to correlate the murder and the suicide with the crooked prize fight.

When he had finished he laid down the paper and stared out the window at the endless succession of freight cars, and factories, and the back doors of cheap dwelling houses that lined the right of way.

"So the Kid got his," he breathed with a shudder, as he pictured in his mind's eye the scene in that room on Rivington Street. "An' I'd got mine, too, if I'd stayed. An' old Red's the only guy in the whole bunch that was on the level. He was the only one that worked fer his jack. An' he's the only guy that ain't busted or dead. Maybe a man ain't such a fool to work, after all. If you git the jack crooked, you always got to keep one jump ahead of the pack of crooks that's tryin' to git it away from you—an' mostly, you can't do it. Maybe you don't git so much jack workin', but what's the use gittin' a lot of jack together, an' gittin' gypped out of it? The higher you git, the further you fall, an' the further you fall the harder you hit, an' there y'are." The train slowed to a stand still. Most of the passengers were already in the aisle.

In his hasty flight from the locker room of the Bon Ton Club, Duffy had not stopped to put on his collar. The car was warm, and picking the loud checked coat, and the dilapidated grey sweater from the seat beside him, he drew them on over his gaudily striped silk shirt. The coach was slowly emptying, and as he slipped from his seat, and took his place at the end of the procession, his eyes dropped once more to the printed page of the newspaper that lay where he had dropped it. "They think Mike Duffy is dead," he thought to himself, "An' he is. I never even heard of the guy. I'm Shirly Leonard—me. I'm a truck driver. An' I'm lookin' fer a job."

Three or four blocks from the station he entered an unpretentious restaurant, and seating himself at a stain-clothed table, ordered a steak and a cup of coffee. At a small table ranged against the side wall of the room a man sat smoking a cigar. He was a young man of a type that had become familiar to Leonard since his residence on Avenue A. Before the man sat an empty plate, a handful of alleged silverware, and a glass of water. He was evidently waiting to be served. The waiter brought Leonard's order, and as he busied himself with the food, he noted that two or three others had entered the room, and after exchanging glances with the

man at the table, had passed on and disappeared through a door in the rear.

Leonard finished his meal and paid his check. The man at the wall table grinned as their eyes met, and modulating his voice to an undertone, asked: "Lookin' fer a little action?"

Leonard shook his head: "No. Lookin' fer a job. I'm a truck driver."

The man winked knowingly: "Sure thing. I'm hep. But, say, bo, them there sweater an' overalls rig is nix. Make me? A blind dick could spot them classy clothes in under 'em."

Leonard nodded, returned the wink and rose from the table: "See you later," he whispered, and drawing on his cap, hurried out the door.

As he walked rapidly down the street he frowned: "If I ever see that guy again it'll be 'cause I can't help it. This here Chicago's too much like New York to suit me. Lefty, he's got friends in Chicago. Coxy Wesson went clean to Denver, an' they got him. But Coxy showed up around the hangouts. I'm goin' to keep right on goin' till my jack runs out—me."

A few blocks farther on he entered the door of a dealer in second-hand clothing, and easily effected an exchange that netted him a suit of blue serge, a couple of cotton shirts, and a soft hat. When

he again merged onto the street he breathed easier. He knew that he had been unmercifully cheated in the trade, but he was happy.

From the clothier's he made straight for the railway station and approached the ticket seller: "When does yer next train start?" he demanded.

The man smiled: "Well, there's one due to pull out in about four minutes."

"Where to?"

"St. Paul—Minneapolis."

"Give me a ticket!"

Payment for the ticket reduced his funds to an alarming minimum, but he hurried for the train, pausing only long enough to buy a later edition of a newspaper.

Not until the train was well under way did Leonard turn to his newspaper. The headlines brought him up with a jolt.

POLICE SEEK DUFFY IN PRIZE FIGHT MURDER.

Fear chills alternated with hot waves of anger as he read that upon certain information furnished by Klingermann, the police had abandoned the theory that Duffy had been murdered and his body disposed of. Klingermann pointed out that there

was a woman in the case, in this he was substantiated by Bull Larrigan, and later by the woman herself, who was none other than Lotta Rivoli, alias Dago Lottie, a notorious character of the underworld. Under severe cross questioning the girl admitted that she had deserted Morowitz for Duffy, and that the latter had made repeated threats against the life of the Philadelphia boy. "Ain't it hell?" he muttered, between clenched teeth. "If they got holt of me, they'd frame me an' send me to the chair, an' when the guy touched the buzzer, they'd laugh. An' Lottie's the worst of the bunch! Believe me, Bull an' Lefty's playin' with fire. I've learnt somethin', I'll tell the world! I'd drive a truckload of dynamite through hell, but I'll be damned if I'll ever fool with another skirt!"

CHAPTER XI

LEONARD GETS A JOB

IN Minneapolis Leonard applied for a job, got it, joined the union, and went to work. For four weeks he drove one of the Regan Construction Company's big trucks rushing material to the job, a huge grain elevator whose battery of twelve cylindrical concrete storage bins must rise to the height of one hundred feet before October first. Delays at the factories, and delays in transportation had set the work back so that by the middle of August "Young Tom" Regan, the firm's superintendent of construction, was straining every nerve to hurry the work along, for the contract carried a heavy forfeiture clause for nonfulfilment.

A human dynamo, Young Tom was on the job twelve hours a day, and spent half the night in the office. He drove the men unmercifully and they loved him for it. The very force of his person-

ality had them on their toes every minute. He was here, there, and seemingly everywhere at once, and under his direction the massive grey cylinders forced themselves higher and higher into the air.

It was not long before he noted that Number Eight truck, Leonard driving, was hauling one or two more loads each day than any other truck on the job. A night or two after making this discovery Young Tom casually strolled through the garage where the fourteen Regan trucks were housed. Number Eight was out on the floor, and Leonard was tinkering with the transmission.

"Trouble?" asked Young Tom, pausing for a moment to speak to the figure in grease-smearred overalls.

"Naw," answered Leonard, wiping his hands on a piece of waste. "Just givin' her a little goin' over. Saves time an' keeps her tuned up." Regan glanced at his watch. It was nine-thirty. Two nights later he again passed through the garage, and again found Number Eight out on the floor. A pair of legs protruded from beneath the truck, and Young Tom passed on.

Saturday evening when Leonard paused before the window of the little temporary wooden office that had been erected on the job, instead of handing him his pay envelope, the paymaster indicated

a door with a jerk of his thumb. "Mr. Regan wants to see you a minute. In there."

Half sullenly, Leonard stepped through the door. Young Tom Regan was leaning over a pine table, studying a blue print. After a moment he looked up: "Well?" he asked, sharply.

Leonard shifted onto the other foot: "The guy there in the window says you want to see me."

"Oh, yes—Leonard." Regan crossed to a desk and picked up a slip of paper. It was a pay check, and he handed it to Leonard.

"This yours?" he asked, gruffly.

Leonard took the paper and nodded.

"Is it right?"

The truck driver glanced again at the paper, and again he nodded.

"It ain't no such a damn' thing!" Young Tom Regan was purposely ungrammatical, as he was purposely gruff, in dealing with his men. "Do you think we're here to get somethin' for nothin'? You're haulin' more stuff than any man on the job. How much time have you spent nights in the garage tinkerin' with that truck? An' why ain't you turned in any overtime?"

Leonard shifted uncomfortably: "I didn't figger to turn in no overtime. I like to keep her runnin' sweet, an' you was in such a hell of a rush

with the job, I figgered it would save a little time."

"What would the boss of the union say if he knew it?"

"My time's my own after supper. It ain't no one's business what I do with it," answered Leonard surlily.

"It's my business," snapped Young Tom, "when you put it in workin' on my truck. How long you been doin' it? An' how many hours have you put in?"

"I don't know. I ain't kep' no track. 'Bout three weeks, I guess, every couple nights I slip over an' put in couple hours, maybe sometimes three or four."

Young Tom figured for a moment with a lead pencil, and stepping into the other room, returned a few moments later with a check which he handed to Leonard. "Guess that'll about square it," he said. "After this you turn in your overtime. Anyone that tries to put anything over on me has got to get up a damn' sight earlier in the morning than you do."

Leonard detected a twinkle in the grey eyes of the boss, and as he folded the two checks together and placed them in his pocket he grinned, and thereafter he turned in his overtime.

Leonard had been in the habit of attending the weekly meetings of his union which with several other locals, shared a hall over a barber shop on Washington Avenue South. The social equipment of the hall consisted of a couple of pool tables, four or five card tables, a punching bag, and a few pairs of boxing gloves. After the business meeting it had been his custom to play a little two-bit Kelly pool, or an occasional game of poker. The boxing equipment interested him not at all, until one evening he was bantered and badgered into putting on the gloves, huge padded affairs covered with sheepskin with the woolly side out. His opponent was a fellow truck driver, big framed and clumsy, who flourished his arms like flails as he lumbered heavily about the "ring" that had been chalked on the floor. From the very moment the gloves were fastened, Leonard felt a sickening chill at the pit of his stomach, and cold fear gripped his heart at the first awkward lunge of the man who faced him with a loose-jawed grin. Like a flash it came upon him—that terrible eighth round. He saw before him not the clumsy, muscle-bound amateur, grinning and swinging his arms foolishly, but the sinister face of Kid Morowitz, the narrowed, bloodshot eyes, the lips drawn back in a snarl of hate, and the lithe arms that could lash out like lightning, and that

landed with dizzying numbness. Without any thought of guarding, the man struck heavily, right and left. For a single instant Leonard stood as though paralyzed. A huge glove landed against the side of his head, more of a push than a blow. He staggered slightly, and then raising his arms to cover his face, he turned amid jeers and roars of laughter, and with the huge gloves of his opponent beating and mauling at the back of his head, he staggered across the chalk line.

He accepted the jibes of his fellows surlily, and thereafter drew more and more within himself. He attended no more meetings of his union. He was yellow clean through. He knew it. Everyone else knew it. What did it matter? To hell with 'em!

Came a day when this estimate of others suddenly changed. August had slipped into September, and for the first time in months Young Tom Regan could see a chance of completing the work on schedule time. Factory delays were a thing of the past for the very good reason that all the material for the completion of the work was in transit, and the railways were delivering it with gratifying promptitude. But everything must run smoothly. Days counted, even hours. An inclined track had been constructed to facilitate the handling of certain material. Switch engines shunted the loaded

cars to the foot of the incline from which point they were handled by means of a winch and wire cable.

Close beside this spur track, Leonard, his big dump truck loaded with sand, awaited his turn to unload at the mixer. Two hundred yards away, a flat car loaded with heavy steel I-beams was being winched up the incline. Close beside his truck a gang of twenty or thirty wops were unloading a couple of cars of cement onto a covered platform. The truck ahead dumped its load and moved off across the spur. Leonard started his motor, threw in his clutch, and as he moved up to the mixer, a wild cry sounded from up the track.

At the sound Young Tom Regan leaped from the little wooden office just in time to see the men of the mixer crew leap from their platform and take to their heels. The clang of the wildly racing gears of the winch engine drew his gaze, and in frozen horror he saw the flat car gaining momentum with each second, racing madly down the incline, hurtling its thirty tons of steel directly at the cement cars that swarmed with men. A wire cable had parted with the car at the very top of the incline! A yell of warning froze on his lips as a new horror presented itself. A truck was just pulling up at the mixer, but instead of stopping, it moved past directly for the crossing! Hadn't the driver heard

the wild cry of warning, or the shriek of the racing gears? Hadn't he seen the mixer crew quit the platform? Possibly he could make the crossing ahead of the flying flat, but if anything should happen. And then, something did happen. Directly on the crossing the truck stopped dead still. The driver raised in his seat and wrenched at his dumping lever. The body of the truck rose slowly. Young Tom Regan closed his eyes. Seconds passed—one—two—three. Each seemed a minute—an hour. Then it came—the crash. And Young Tom opened his eyes and forced his gaze toward the scene of the catastrophe. His face paper-white, he stared, striving to take in the import of what he saw. The big mixer canted at a slight angle where the carload of I-beams had knocked out some of its underpinning. The car itself was upon its side, and beyond it a truck was slowly pulling away from the crossing. A few feet beyond a gang of twenty or thirty wops crowded the unloading platform and swarmed in the doors of the cement cars staring stupidly at the derailed car. From all directions men were running toward the spot shouting to each other in whoops and cheers of sheer relief. Young Tom also ran, realizing that his legs felt weak and awkward under him, and that he was vainly trying to swallow a lump that had risen in his throat. A

moment later he stood at the crossing, a yard boss at his side. The man pointed downward:

“Foor ton av sand, Misther Raygan—foor ton av sand on the thrack, an’ foorty ton av ut in th’ hear-rt av th’ b’y thot laid ut there! God! Sir, av he’d av be’n two siconts later—wan sicont, they’d be’n a string av dead wops from here to th’ main thrack! An’ a wreck t’would av took two days to clean up!”

“Who was it, Clarity? Who drove the truck?” The voice of Young Tom Regan sounded very gruff, and not quite steady.

“Who but that Leonard. Th’ Number Eight thruck. An’ he’s th’ b’y they’re all sayin’ is yallah. Yis sir—yallah! B’cause he wouldn’t stand up an’ box wid thim big woolly gloves agin me own son Dinny that drives th’ Number Three thruck! Yallah, is ut? Wait till Oi lay hands on Dinny—thim’s his own words—yallah. Oi’ll make um take off his hat to Number Eight right here on th’ job, or Oi’ll yallah um—wid a crow-bar-r!”

“Where is Leonard?” asked Regan.

Fifty pairs of eyes swept the roadway. The truck was nowhere in sight. “Pulled out, Oi guess,” answered Clarity. “Gone back f’r another load—seein’ he wasted that’n.” Young Tom joined in the laugh that followed, and a few minutes later under

his own direction men were busy jacking up the mixer platform for new underpinning, removing scattered I-beams, and clearing the track of sand.

At the sound of the loud warning cry, Leonard had taken in the situation at a glance. He saw the car in its downward plunge from the incline, saw the mixer crew leap from the platform, and saw that the unloading gang had given no heed to the cry. Fully half of the wops would be inside the box cars when that car of steel hit! With a vicious grinding of gears his truck responded to his action. The next moment it was on the track, and he was releasing his dumping lever. The sand slid smoothly down the steep inclined box, and he started his truck just as the flying flat struck the sand pile. He saw the load shift with the sudden checking of momentum. Saw it shiver as the car wheels left the rails, and saw the rear end swing sidewise and bring up with a crash against the flying timbers of the mixer platform. "It's a damn' good thing for me that car didn't tip this way," he grinned. "Maybe I've raised hell, but if that load of iron had hit them box cars they'd of be'n Dagos smeared all over the job." He glanced backward. Men were running toward the spot. He could see Young Tom Regan just starting from the office. He

accelerated his speed. "Guess I better give him a chanct to cool off a little after he sees what I done to his mixer," he muttered as he disappeared around the corner of a lumber pile.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE NORTH COUNTRY

RUMBLING northward on Third Avenue South with its load of sand, Leonard's truck was held for cross traffic at Fourth Street. As the first two men of a little knot of pedestrians stepped from the curb to cross the street his grip tightened upon the wheel. He knew those faces, Boyle and Barnes, of the New York Central Office. Together here as they were always together in New York. No one ever saw Boyle that Barnes was not at his side. And no one ever spoke of Boyle, or Barnes, but always of Boyle and Barnes—not two personalities, but a single entity, and that entity by far the most feared of all police officers by a certain element of New York's underworld. The men crossed the street and turned their steps toward the huge granite pile whose tall tower reached skyward. As his eyes followed the movements of the two men, a furious clanging sounded near at hand, and a patrol wagon with its

complement of uniformed policemen, dashed through a granite arch from somewhere in the bowels of the huge building. "Court House—jail," thought Leonard, "I wonder what in hell them guys is doin' here?" Then the answer struck him with the force of a blow, as he recollected the headlines:

POLICE SEEK DUFFY IN PRIZE FIGHT MURDER.

The cross traffic had passed. The two officers had disappeared within the doors of the building and with terror in his heart, he started his truck with a jerk. "I wouldn't have no show," he mumbled. "Lottie, an' Bull, an' Lefty'd swear me to the chair!"

Instead of pulling on to the job with his load of sand, Leonard swerved into Second Street, and a few blocks farther on drew up to the curb in front of the garage where the Regan trucks were housed. Then very deliberately, he clambered from the seat, glanced swiftly about him, and walked hurriedly away. Night found him in an empty box car of a Northern Pacific freight train, northward bound, while Young Tom Regan was scouring the city in an endeavour to locate the driver of his Number Eight truck, who was to have started in next morning as boss truckman.

At the same time, Boyle and Barnes, of the New York Central Office, the formalities of their visit to the Mill City having been complied with, were comfortably seated in the smoking compartment of a Pullman on their return journey to the Metropolis. Between them sat a certain notorious bond thief who had been nabbed by the Minneapolis police while trying to dispose of certain securities that had been feloniously snatched from the hands of a messenger, a month previous, at the corner of Chambers Street and Broadway.

In the northern part of the state, Old Elija Blodgett was clearing the last of the pine from his holdings. Year by year his camps had crept farther and farther back from the great river that floated his logs to the mills. His problems had been simple, easily and cheaply solved by the construction of a few more miles of railway each year, upon which the logs were hauled and banked on the river. But this year would see the last of it. When the Blodgett crews should come out of the woods in the spring, they would not go into the woods again until Blodgett had solved the problem of the "back tract." This "back tract" was a big stretch of timber that Old Elija had picked up cheap in the early days—twenty million feet of pine, completely surrounded

by miles and miles of almost impenetrable swamp, marsh, and bottomless morass. The construction of a railway to reach it would involve nearly ten miles of "fill," and the driving of innumerable piles. The construction of a winter road for team hauling was impracticable for the reason that even during the coldest winters bog and swamp and morass do not freeze with any degree of uniformity. The saturated muck may freeze to a depth of from two to four feet for miles at a stretch, then suddenly thin to as many inches or not freeze at all. Blodgett's one hope lay in Wild Goose River, and at the mere mention of the name of Wild Goose River Old Elija Blodgett would purse his hard lips, clasp his bony fingers upon the front of his long black coat, and cant his doleful face upward as in prayer.

On the evening of the third day out from Minneapolis, Leonard dropped to the ground as the train, with grinding and shrieking of brakeshoes, drew to a jarring stop. He was not alone. Since morning of the previous day men had been crawling into that box car. One here, two or three there, as the train stopped to do its switching at little way stations. In the yards of a division point, six men had boarded the car together. And now of one accord these men were leaving the car. Some, like himself, were unencumbered with baggage. Others had sacks slung

over their shoulders by ropes or straps. They referred to these sacks as "turkeys," and in them, Leonard perceived, they carried their belongings. He, himself, would have called them kiesters.

Most of these men were acquaintances, but whether acquainted or not, the talk was general, and he found himself drawn into it, albeit he knew nothing whatever of what it was about, except that he learned that these men were foregathering at a place called Thunder Head, where a man named Blodgett was hiring men for his camps. He learned, also, that the purpose of these camps was the felling of trees, and cutting them into logs.

On the whole Leonard rather liked these men, whose talk was of cross-hauls, and cant-hooks, and skid-ways, and tote-roads. They referred to him as the "greener," and when they found out he had no definite destination in view, urged him to join on with the crew.

The more he thought of it, the more the idea appealed to him. Surely Boyle and Barnes would never think of looking for him in a logging camp. They probably knew he had been a truck driver, and it would be among truck drivers in cities they would look for him. So it was that when the train stopped at Thunder Head, and the men "piled off," Leonard "piled off" with them. The train started on, and

as he waited with the others beside the track, to allow it to pass, he glanced about him. Nothing—absolutely nothing was to be seen in the dusk excepting the scraggly skyline of low bushy trees against the faint afterglow of the sky. “I thought you said there was a town here?” he asked of a man who stood at his side.

“Sure they’s a town. It’s on t’other side the track.”

The caboose with its red lights showing bravely rattled past, and the town of Thunder Head stood revealed in its entirety. It consisted of a single row of wooden buildings ranged along one side of a muddy street that paralleled the railway track. Leonard followed the line of men which straggled toward the largest of these buildings. Yellow lamp-light streamed out at the opening of the door. “Pat MacCormack’s hotel,” informed the man who trudged beside Leonard. “Use’ to be top loader for Blodgett till he got his foot smashed.”

A gust of rain-laden wind whipped down the street, and Leonard lowered his head. The interior of the hotel looked cheerful as he ascended the wooden steps and scraped the mud from his shoes on the iron scraper. Not once in three days and two nights had he been really warm, and on the hard floor of the bouncing car he had slept miser-

ably. The door closed behind him and he found himself in the hotel "office," a rather large room with a huge stove in the middle of the floor, conveniently near which was a wooden box half filled with tobacco-stained sawdust. In one corner was a pine desk that held the register, and a glass cigar case whose top had been broken and mended with a bolt and a couple of iron washers. Seated on a high stool behind this desk, he saw a large, red-faced man, who greeted most of the newcomers familiarly as they scrawled their names on the register.

Leonard hugged the stove in which a roaring fire of slabs defied the cold autumn wind. Steam rose from his damp denim jumper as the genial warmth penetrated to his body. A pile of "turkeys" littered the floor in a corner. Other men moved to the stove while they waited their turn at the "wash dish," an iron affair that occupied a wooden sink in another corner of the room.

Leonard moved over to the register, the red-faced man eyeing him as he wrote his name.

"Ever work in the woods?" asked the man.

Leonard shook his head.

"Tractor man?"

"Truck driver," he answered, and the next moment could have bitten his tongue off, as

a vision of Boyle and Barnes flashed through his brain.

“Ut’s all the same, I guess,” the man was saying, “I knowed you was some kind of machinery man, wid yer overhalls all covered wid grease. Ye’re a likely lookin’ lad, fer all yer a greener, an’ Tim Neely’ll be after hirin’ ye all right. He figgers on bringin’ in a tractor.”

“Who’s Tim Neely?”

“Who, but Old ’Lija Blodgett’s foreman. He’s eatin’ his supper in there now. An’ ye better be runnin’ along an’ git yourn. I see Frinchy’s t’rough wid the wash dish, an’ be the looks av things you’ll be wantin’ to use ut.” The man was laughing, a laugh in which Leonard joined, as he gazed at his face in the little cracked and warped mirror that hung above the sink. Three days’ accumulation of soot and cinders had left his face black as a Gold Coast negro’s. Again and again, he dumped the water from the iron wash dish, and refilled it at the pitcher pump. At length he was clean, at least as to visible portions of his anatomy, and as the red-faced man motioned him to the dining room door he exclaimed: “Be gobs! Ye’re a white man, after all! I thought ye was a nayger!”

Where the office had been noisy with the babel of many voices, the dining room was silent as the

tomb, save for the click and rattle of dishes as the men attacked the food. Never, Leonard thought, had food tasted so good as he refilled his plate with savoury beef stew, baked potatoes, and steaming baked beans. One by one, the men finished and pushing back their chairs, returned to the office. When he joined them, he was accosted by a huge giant of a man who addressed him in a high pitched, almost squeaky voice that sounded strangely out of keeping with his huge bulk: "Pat, here, tells me you're a tractor hand."

Leonard would liked to have denied that he knew anything whatever about any kind of machinery, but he had already admitted his vocation to the hotel keeper, and besides, he reasoned swiftly, there were thousands of truck drivers, and it was extremely unlikely that Boyle and Barnes would ever penetrate to such an out of the way corner of the world as Thunder Head. "Don't even know what a tractor is," he replied, "I've drove a truck."

"Same thing, I guess," answered the man. "I don't know nothin' about 'em neither. Someone's talked the Old Man into tryin' one out this winter. Claims they'll do the work of three or four teams. Mebbe they will, but wait till the snow gits belly-deep to a gyraft, an' then see where this here tractor'll be at. But we won't worry none about that. He ain't

goin' to ship the tractor till the tote-road's built, an' if it don't work when it gits here I kin put you at somethin' else. Ever work in the woods?"

"No."

"Well, yer husky lookin', an' you kin learn. But you can't go in with no such an outfit's that." The man indicated Leonard's clothing with a bob of the head. "Come on over to the store an' we'll rig you out an' charge it up agin yer wages. We won't have no time to fool with it in the mornin'. I want to pull out by daylight."

The teams were at the door next morning just as the first streak of dawn greyed the east. The cold, rain-laden wind of the previous day had shifted into the southwest, and before it the clouds scudded in thick, ragged masses. Thirty-six men, all told, climbed onto the big wagons which had been loaded the day before with the necessary camp impedimenta, boxes and barrels of food, bales of hay, and sacks of oats, kegs of nails, saws, axes, cant-hooks, and chains. Leonard found himself seated upon his brand new turkey on top of a load of baled hay. Beside him sat the boss at whose high pitched word of command, the teamster clucked to his horses and the ponderous animals moved off, their feet splashing noisily in the well churned mud of the roadway. The other teams fell in behind, and at the edge of

town the driver swung into a narrower road that wound in and out through the stumps and scrub of the pine barrens.

“This road ain’t so muddy,” observed Leonard, as the boss lighted his pipe and settled himself for the journey.

“’Tain’t never muddy off’en the clay,” explained the boss, “Didn’t you see them stumps around Thunder Head was all hardwood? Wherever they’s a clay ridge you find hardwood, an’ when you git down onto the sand the pine begins.”

Leonard grinned: “I don’t know hardwood from any other kind. This is the first time I’ve ever been in the woods.”

“You ain’t in no woods yet. You don’t call this here cut-over woods, do you? Wait till you git into the big sticks. See all them stumps? A few years ago they was all trees—pretty a stand of timber as a man’d want to see—an’ now look at it!” The man swept the horizon with a wave of the arm. “Nothin’ but scrub oak, an’ popple, an’ soft maple, with a few jack pine patches throw’d in here an’ there. It’s a damn’ shame, that’s what it is. The country’s goin’ plumb to hell!”

The man elapsed into wrathful silence, and Leonard pondered his words. Here was something he did not understand. He stared out over the scrub

with its sprinkling of greying stumps that once were lordly trees. Here was a man taking a crew into the woods to cut down trees, and at the same time was angrily denouncing the cutting of trees.

The sun burst out through a great rift in the clouds and Leonard stared spellbound at the blaze of colour that surrounded him. The whole country as far as the eye could reach flamed with crimson and gold, relieved here and there by the dark green of a jack pine thicket or a spruce swamp. There was a tang in the air that he drew deeply into his lungs. He felt strangely thrilled. New York seemed very far away—and he was glad. Something within himself seemed seeking to expand, seemed groping to comprehend the vastness of the gold and crimson waste.

With a heavy rattling of wheels the wagon jolted over the corduroy where the road crossed an out-reaching arm of a spruce swamp. A rabbit hopped lazily from the roadway ahead of the horses, and a covey of grouse disappeared into the thicket with a noisy whirring of wings.

Leonard was conscious of a vast sense of well-being. Unconsciously he stretched the muscles of his arms. He was glad to be alive—glad that he was right here. For the first time in his life he thrilled to the simple fact of living. Unconsciously this man

who had known only cities, had fallen madly in love with the wild country. Love at first sight—and the wild country claimed him for her own. He knew nothing—understood nothing of the wild country. Her secrets were to him a closed book. But he would know! He would open the book and would glut himself with her lore. Leonard glanced at the boss who sat staring out over the cut-over. Here was a man who knew the wild country.

“But, the trees’ll grow up again,” he ventured, as much to himself, as to the other.

“Never in Christ’s Kingdom, they won’t!” exploded the boss. “They won’t let ’em! They can’t see ahead of their nose. They ain’t got no sense!”

“Who won’t let ’em? An’ why won’t they?”

“The State, the timber owners—no one. The whole damn’ mess of ’em ain’t got no sense. Fire—that’s what keeps the timber down. Keep the fire out an’ the pine’ll come back. Look all around you. See over there, an’ there—them tall trees scattered through the scrub. Them’s pines—Norway an’ white, that for some reason was left when they logged this stretch. Some was holler-butted, an’ some too small to cut an’ was lucky enough not to git swamped out, or busted down. Most anywheres in the cut-over you can find them scatterin’ trees.

Them trees grows cones an' scatters seed, an' the seed takes root an' starts young pines. Then what happens? A dry spell comes along an' some train scatters hot cinders, or drops hot coals out of the fire box, or some fool lights his pipe an' throws down the match, or throws his cigarette butt into the dry leaves, or some other fool builds a camp fire an' goes away an' leaves it fer the wind to scatter all over hell, an' it ain't long till they's a runnin' fire spreadin' out through the brush.

"If it was a fire in the big timber the hull damn' country would turn out to fight it. The timber owners, an' the State would rush all the men in they could git holt of. Why? 'Cause timber is dollars, an' they kin see the dollars burn.

"But let a fire start in the cut-over an' what happens? A ranger or two will come along an' if they kin find a handy place they'll fight it a little. If it heads fer some settler's farm he'll git out and beat it out. But the rest of the country sees the smoke an' they say, 'Nothin' but a bresh fire. Let her burn. It can't do no harm.' And the little pines, one, or two, or mebbe three year old, that's started from the seeds that's blowed around off'en them left-over trees is burnt up or scarred so they won't never amount to nothin'—an' there y'are. That's the main reason they ain't no timber growin' on the cut-over

—that, an' the timber owners bein' such damn' hogs."

"Hogs? What's that got to do with it?" Leonard, drinking in every word the boss uttered, found himself thirsting for more.

"It's got a hell of a lot to do with it," answered the boss, biting the corner from a plug of tobacco, "'Spose they'd of logged right to start out with, what then? They wouldn't be no cut-over. They'd still be cuttin' timber, an' good timber, on the first land they ever worked. Timber wasn't all started the same year. They's big trees, an' trees from them on down to ones you can't see less'n you're lookin' fer 'em. Instead of cuttin' everythin' they could lay a saw to an' swampin' out, an' smashin' down the rest, they'd of used common sense, an' kep' takin' only the good stuff as it come along, an' takin' care of the young stuff, they'd of had a crop comin' on every year.

"The first man that started out to cut timber said how they was enough timber in his patch to last the hull world forever, an' every man that's cut timber sence has said the same thing an' run hog-wild an' cut an' swamped, an' tore, an' slashed, an' gutted till they wasn't nothin' left but the sand it grow'd in. An' they call that business!"

Neely's voice had grown more high-pitched than

usual, and he finished with a ludicrous squeak—that is, it would have been ludicrous if the younger man had noticed, but he was too intent on the man's words to note the tone of his voice.

“But, in this camp we're goin' to work different, eh? Only take the best of it?”

The boss favoured him with a scowl: “Hell, no! We're a-goin' to do it just like we've always done it. Git everything that'll make a log, an' bust down the rest. That's Old 'Lij' Blodgett's way.”

CHAPTER XIII

BLODGETT'S NUMBER EIGHT

ON the edge of the "big sticks," as Neely had called the standing timber, a temporary camp of tents was set up, and under the directions of the boss all hands set to work building the winter camp. While half the crew felled trees and swamped out a level space well within the shelter of the big timber, where a swift running creek burred noisily over the stones of its tortuous bed, the other half, together with the teamsters, was sent some five or six miles into the cut-over to wreck the buildings of last year's camp known as Number Seven, and haul the lumber to the clearing.

A week later the new camp stood completed, bunk house, cook shack, and stables, presenting a curious striped and patched appearance due to the fact that no attention had been paid to placing the boards weathered side out, the amateur carpenters nailing them into place as they came to hand.

Tents were struck, and the men moved into the buildings where roaring stoves, and great swinging lamps gave promise of comfort in the short cold days to come.

During this first week, Shirly Leonard worked with the eyes of the boss upon him. Something about the "greener" attracted big Tim Neely. It was not that the younger man's work was in any way conspicuous, for every man on the job was giving the job all he had in him. But Neely sensed that here was one who instinctively loved the woods as he himself loved them.

"It's hell, ain't it?" said the greener after supper one evening when the boss came upon him seated beside the noisily babbling creek.

"What's hell?" asked Neely, curiously.

"Why, that guys like us—like you an' me, an' maybe some of the rest that likes the woods, an' likes to be in 'em, an' all that, has got to help cut 'em down. I never saw woods before, but I'd ruther be here than anywheres I ever was at."

Neely nodded, slowly: "Yes, that's hell. But, if it wasn't us, it would be someone else. When you come to think about it, the only job a man kin git that takes him into the woods is tearin' 'em down—that is, a man like me that ain't got no egg-cation to speak of."

“What’s that got to do with it?” asked Leonard.

“Well, the Government’s got what they call National Forests. It’s a mighty good thing, ’cause believe me, they’ll be the only forests left in a few years. Men that gets jobs on them is tryin’ to build up, instead of tear down. But they won’t take on no one like me, that’s worked in the timber all his life, an’ don’t know nothin’ but timber. They want men that’s got book eggication an’ kin tell if it was Abraham Lincoln or General Jackson that crossed the Delaware, an’ how far is it to the moon an’ back. The State’s kind of beginnin’ to piddle around along them lines, too, but I guess they’ll be wantin’ the same kind of men.”

“Wish I knew as much about the woods as you do,” said Leonard, and the boss detected a half-wistful note in the voice. “Do you know that up to the time I got off that freight back there at Thunder Head, I didn’t know there was such places in the world. A man kind of feels different with these here big trees all around him.”

“You bet he feels different!” exclaimed the boss, “You keep your eyes open, an’ I’ll learn you all I kin. I know’d the timber’d got you. You ain’t never goin’ out of the woods no more’n what I am—leastways, not till they’re all cut down.”

Leonard grinned: “An’ by that time maybe they’ll

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git some guy runnin' these here forests that won't give a damn who crossed Delaware, or how far the moon is just so it's far enough not to knock the tops off the big trees. Then maybe he'll give us a job makin' the cut-over look like this." He indicated the mighty pines with a sweep of his arm.

Neely shook his head: "Some day the Minnesota cut-over will look like this agin—but me an' you'll never see it, son. The State'll wake up, some day—when it gits a few million acres of this here cut-over dumped back on its hands fer taxes. It ain't fit fer farmin'. There's only one answer—timber. We'll see the start of it, but we'll never see the big sticks. An' in the meantime maybe we're boostin' the game by doin our' damnedest to help jest such birds as old 'Lij' Blodgett to git rid of what's left of the virgin stand. The sooner it's gone, the sooner the State will wake up to its job."

With the completion of the camp the work of the woods began. A log road, skid roads, cross-hauls, and loading dump were swamped out. A tie crew was set to work and everything that wouldn't make a log was rough-hewn into ties.

Into the midst of these activities came old Elija Blodgett, himself. And with him came men who carried transits and levels and long rods painted alternately with red and white. Pending the arrival

of the tractor, Leonard had been assigned to the swamping crew and on the morning of Blodgett's arrival big Tim Neely paused to watch the younger man lop the limbs from a tree felled by the sawyers.

“Don't never bring yer ax down with yer leg where it's at!” he exclaimed, seizing the razor-sharp double-bitted ax from Leonard's hand, “This here is the most dangerous tool used by man. They's be'n more men hurt with it than has be'n hurt by all the bullets ever fired on American soil. S'pose, now, that limb you was choppin' had be'n cut deeper than what you thought it was, or s'pose it was holler, or rotten on the under side so the ax would of went through it like a piece of cheese. With yer leg where it was at, it would have sunk into it to the bone. They's two things you got to remember when you're swingin' an ax, the first is where's yer legs at! An' the second is what's behind you an' over yer head. Many a man's be'n hurt by havin' his ax ketch over a limb or a piece of bresh when he makes his swing——”

“Wasting time, Neely—wasting time!” Both men turned to meet the doleful face of Elija Blodgett which regarded them from the depths of his fur collar. “I can't afford to pay foreman's wages for the personal instruction of every green hand

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that comes into the woods. Men learn faster by experience, Neely. And they have reason to remember what they learn." The pale blue, watery eyes were not upon the face of the men, but upon the tree, scaling its log measure in feet.

"This here's the tractor man, Mr. Blodgett," explained the boss. "The tractor ain't here yet, an' I put him to swampin'. I didn't want him to git laid up, 'cause there ain't no one else on the job that could handle the damn' thing——"

"No profanity, Neely! I do not tolerate it in my camps. Remember the Lord's injunction to let your conversation be yea, yea, and nay, nay."

"Jest a manner of speakin', Mr. Blodgett. No harm meant. But, as I was goin' on to say, when this here yea yea nay nay machine gits here, we got to have a man with two legs in under him to run it."

"The tractor is being unloaded and set up at Thunder Head today. I see you have the camp completed and a few ties out. Well and good as far as you have gone. But I wish you had more ties. I brought in the surveyors to extend the railroad from Number Seven to this camp, which will be known as Number Eight. There is another crew at Thunder Head unloading the horses and supplies for Number Nine——"

“Number Nine!” exclaimed Neely, in surprise, “You goin’ to run two camps?”

“Yes. Number Nine will be located on the northwest forty, and I want you to put a crew to work at once building a log road to connect that camp with this. The road will serve also as a supply road —”

“Ain’t you goin’ to run the railroad on up to this here new camp?”

“No, no!” exclaimed Blodgett, impatiently. “The tractor will haul Number Nine’s logs to the railhead which will be here. The expense of construction would be unwarranted.”

“How about it when the snow gits four foot deep on the level?” asked the boss, “What’s this here d—— double yea an’ nay tractor goin’ to do then?”

“I am assured that with the aid of a snow plow the tractor will keep its own road open. The distance will be only about three miles.”

“An’ I’ve got to run both camps? Kind of a walkin’ boss outfit?”

“No. I have employed a foreman for Number Nine. The man is Samuel King——”

“Sam King! Hell’s bells—er church bells, I should say, I s’pose. Sam King was foreman for Peters & Halverson, an’ it was him worked out the

scheme where Peters & Halverson stoled old Jack McClung's timber, an' ruint him."

"There, that will do, Neely!" The voice of Blodgett was icy. "What you say is mere hearsay, and should not be repeated. Peters & Halverson are doubtless very honorable men. The grand jury ignored this matter you speak of when it was brought before it——"

"Yes, because they was greased!" exploded Neely. "It ain't no hearsay, Mr. Blodgett, that old Jack McClung is broke—an' him as square a man as ever lived—an' the money that his logs fetched is in Peters & Halverson's pockets!"

"Tut, tut, Neely," said Blodgett, sternly, "I did not come here to discuss business ethics with you. You are to concern yourself merely with getting out the logs. I want every foot of timber on this tract at the mills by spring."

"I figgered it would take two years."

"And so it would with only one camp. That is the reason I am putting in another. The price of lumber has begun to rise. The war in Europe which started in July has created a demand for American lumber. War is deplorable—extremely deplorable and unchristian it seems to us in our limited understanding of the works of the Lord." The eyes rolled sanctimoniously upward, "My heart bleeds for

the poor fellows whose lives are being snuffed out by the hundreds, by the thousands even, if reports are to be believed. But it is the Lord's will." The glitter of greed was in the eyes that returned to rest on the log on the ground and the ring of greed was in the voice: "But lumber prices are soaring. The trade is stimulated to astounding activity, and if the United States should be drawn into the conflict, as some people are predicting, lumber will go to unheard of figures!"

"An' if we do git in," cried Neely, "You kin hunt up someone else to run yer camp, 'cause believe me, if them da—them yea yea nay nay yah yah Dutchmens think they kin lick the old U. S. they got me to lick along with the rest!"

"Him an' I, both!" cried Leonard.

"There, there," conciliated Blodgett. "Doubtless there will be no need for us to interfere. At least there is no tendency as yet on the part of the administration to become embroiled in any way. But, we're wasting time, and time is precious. Get a crew onto the new log road until King's men get here, and you, tractor man, are to return with me to Thunder Head, and run the tractor out."

Days of Herculean activity followed the visit of Elija Blodgett to Number Eight camp. Neely's crew was doubled. Sam King took over the building

of the log road, and Neely's men were divided between the grading of the railroad, and the getting out of ties.

With the arrival of the tractor, Shirly Leonard assumed a definite place in the moil of the camp's activities. Prior to Blodgett's visit he had been simply the "greener"—a raw hand, ignorant of the things those about him had known from babyhood; doing slowly and badly work that others did swiftly and well. Fair game for the facetious, and a fair butt for many a rude prank and jest—pranks and jests that were without the sting of malice, however, for his unfailing good natured acceptance of the order of things early won the respect of the camp. "Go to it," he would grin, when the roars of laughter had subsided that greeted his return from some preposterous errand, "Have yer fun while yer can. I won't always be a greener." For his attitude of good natured acceptance of his lot, big Tim Neely was largely responsible. When the camp was but two days old, Leonard had hurried up to the boss who was directing the placing of a load of lumber for the bunk house, with the request that a dozen cross-hauls be sent at once to Jake Loomis who was at work on the log road. The big boss smiled. "They've started in on you, have they? Well, let 'em have their fun. They went through it their-

selves, an' so did I. A cross-haul, son, is a road that runs back into the timber for team-loadin' the logs on to the skidways or the cars. You'll git sent on a lot of fool trips like this before you learn. But don't git mad. It's their way of jokin'. You'll be sent from one to the other to borrow left handed wedges, an' cant-hook keys, an' knothole covers, an' safety bits fer axes, an' the Lord knows whatnot. They'll generally be a bunch of 'em together when you come back an' they'll give you the laugh. Let 'em go. Laugh along with 'em, an' it won't be long before they'll git tired of it. Remember whatever you do, don't git mad. You'll learn."

Leonard laughed: "Say, boss, when you come to think of it, who's the joke on, anyhow?"

"Why, I guess the joke's on you, but——"

"Not in a hundred years it ain't. It's on the man that's payin' me my wages. It's his time I'm wastin', not mine. The way I figger it, a little runnin' around on another man's time is a cheap price to pay fer an eggication."

"Guess that's right," grinned the boss, "Better never tell that to old 'Lij' Blodgett, though. 'Cause he don't think no more of a dollar than what I do of my right hand." So Leonard had returned to Jake Loomis, who with a half dozen swampers was at work at the head of the log road, and joined

heartily in the laugh that was not wholly on himself when he reported that the cook didn't have the cross-hauls out of the oven yet. Many such errands he ran in the days that followed, and more than once to the huge delight of the onlookers, he was able to turn the laugh upon his would-be tormentor.

In the evenings beside the roaring stove he would sit and listen by the hour while men talked. Stories of drives, of adventure, and misadventure in the woods and upon the rivers were told with simple directness, interrupted and embellished by oaths of approval at the recounting of some mighty feat of strength, or of skill, or of endurance that had become a Northland epic. Stories these men had heard a hundred times were new and wonderful to Leonard, and the words of the tellers of tales sank deep within him, so that his heart thrilled at the deeds of the super-men of timber-land. But, not all the tales were of deeds heroic. Accounts of brutish debauches were told shamelessly even boasting by the men who had taken part in them.

Old Mort Mooney would hold forth for an hour at a time concerning the doings of the mighty Paul Bunion, the mythical logger. Stories, these, half-humorous, half-serious, wholly preposterous, half-believed by the lumberjacks, half scoffed at, but eagerly listened to in the camps from Maine to Cali-

fornia until the deeds of Paul Bunion, and Little Babe, his ox that was four ax handles wide between the eyes, of the Tie Cuttin' Finn, and the Big Swede, have assumed the dignity of a folk-lore.

And as he listened, Leonard found himself comparing—rather contrasting, these men with the men who had been his associates in Union Market precinct—the men of the underworld. For many nights he pondered, and then gave it up. “It’s like a big river—life is,” he decided one day as he stood beside the Wild Goose and watched its waters go tumbling down through the gorge. “Up here it runs smooth an’ quiet for long stretches, an’ then again it jumps into roarin’ white-water an’ boilin’ eddies. There’s dangers all right, the rapids an’ the eddies, but a man can see ’em, an’ he can take ’em, or let ’em alone. But back there—it slips along slick, an’ oily, an’ innocent lookin’ on top, but below it’s black—undertows an’ cross-currents. A man never knows where he’s at, or who’s his friends,” and he shuddered as he thought of Kid Morowitz. “Not one square guy from de cops up—an’ the molls is worse than the men. Not one of ’em ever had his mitts on an honest dollar—an’ I was as bad as the rest—huntin’ easy money, an’ didn’t care how I got it. Believe me easy money ain’t the kind that sticks to a guy. Take Mr. Regan—he’s got more jack than

any of them crooks, an' he ain't huntin' no easy money. He works fer his—works harder than any man on the job. An' he's square. I didn't know there was anyone would go out of his way to pay a guy more'n he know'd he had comin'. Kind of watchin' a man like him a guy damn' soon learns it pays to work, an' it pays to be on the level, too."

Leonard's ride to Thunder Head with Blodgett in the rear seat of the garage man's wheezing, stuttering flivver served to vastly increase his respect for men like young Tom Regan, and Tim Neely.

His familiarity with the mechanism of trucks simplified the garage man's task of explaining the manipulation of the tractor, so that the following morning Leonard pulled out of Thunder Head at the rear of the procession of teams that carried the men and supplies for Number Nine camp.

With the arrival of the tractor at Number Eight the foolish pranks at Leonard's expense ceased. Even Rene Brebout, the big Frenchman, who had been the most persistent of the jokers accorded him a certain respect. For he was a man who could do a thing that no other, not even the boss, could do. The men voiced open approval at the ease and skill with which this greener handled the machine that could do the work of many teams. "Paul Bunion, she haf' to git de bigger ox dan Leetle Babe for beat

de dam' trac'," exclaimed Brebout, as the machine trundled off for the railhead hauling four big loads of ties.

The three-mile log road to Number Nine was finished, and the railroad completed to Number Eight's banking ground before snow flew, and the real work of the camps began. These were slack days for Leonard whose work would come with the snow when his tractor should haul the wide bunked sleds loaded high with their pyramids of logs from Number Nine to the loading ground at the railhead. Under the boss's tutelage he learned to scale logs, and from the skidders learned many a trick of chain and travois, and the use of the big wheels. He found unflinching fascination in watching the mighty pines crash to earth as the sawyers "laid 'em down" with the precision of long practice. At Neely's suggestion he hunted, and many a meal of fresh venison was due to his persistence in stalking deer. And it was upon one of these hunting excursions that, having wandered farther from camp than usual he met Mary MacAlister—met her while the memory of the perfidy of Lotta Rivoli still rankled.

CHAPTER XIV

MARY MACALISTER

PICKING his way across the river on a wind-fall, Leonard threaded a tamarack swamp and came out on the other side onto a strip of ploughed land. It was a narrow strip, possibly two rods wide that followed the contour of the swamp in either direction as far as he could see. His attention centred, however, not on the cleared strip, but beyond, where a veritable thicket of young pine banked fresh and green against the background of larger trunks.

Crossing the cleared strip he pushed his way into the thicket of young stuff that fringed the edge of the forest. His search for deer was forgotten as he walked slowly among the big trees that towered above him, their high-flung branches spreading an even shade over the whole forest floor. Stumps here and there showed where timber had been removed, old stumps, and stumps from which the trees had been cut at a comparatively recent date.

The trees had all been cut close to the ground, leaving a low clean stump, and no waste timber.

Leonard's eyes swept the forest. Nowhere was visible any broken or twisted, or crippled young stuff, nor any dead or leaning trees. If young trees had been crippled by the fall of a big one they had been removed, leaving the ground clear for the young stuff yet to come. Every tree in sight, young or old, was a good tree. He seated himself on a stump and mentally compared this clean-floored forest tract with the Blodgett cuttings, where a mass of tangled slash and twisted and maimed young stuff marked the wake of the sawyers.

A blur of motion caught his eye, and he reached swiftly for the rifle that lay against the stump at his side, but as his hand touched the gun, his muscles relaxed. The moving thing was a person walking slowly through the forest subjecting the trees to close scrutiny. Pausing before a huge pine the person submitted the trunk to minute examination, and retreating to about the distance from the base at which the top would come to earth, half-circled the tree, apparently studying the ground. Then, walking deliberately to the trunk, proceeded to notch it.

Leonard could see the white wood show as the ax bit in and the chips flew. "Good hand with an ax for a light built man," he muttered as, picking

up his rifle, he started leisurely toward the chopper. "Knows his business, too," he added, as he noted that the notch was so placed as to throw the tree clear of a group of young pines. He paused a few feet distant, a dry twig snapping loudly beneath his feet, just as the last chip flew from the notch. Instantly the chopper whirled to face him. Leonard's jaw dropped and seconds passed as he stared in open-mouthed astonishment. He was looking straight into the eyes of a girl! For one swift instant his glance swept from the dark violet eyes that regarded him in surprise as evident as his own, to the checked shirt, the grey woollen trousers with their legs thrust into high laced boots, and the soft felt hat. Then his gaze centred once more upon the eyes of violet. The girl was the first to speak: "Who are you?" she asked, "And what are you doing here in the timber?" Leonard noted that there was neither friendliness nor hostility in the tone.

He answered: "I was huntin'. I come through the swamp from the river."

"We don't like to have people hunt here. We've never posted the timber because so few come."

"I didn't shoot none of yer deers," he answered, rather sullenly. "I didn't see none to shoot. I ain't be'n huntin' any for the last hour. I be'n lookin' over the timber."

“Looking over the timber!” cried the girl, “What do you mean? Who sent you here? The timber is not for sale.”

Leonard’s forehead puckered into a frown: “How do you git that way, kid?” he said, contemptuously, “What you tryin’ to hand me? If you was tryin’ to sell this timber fer a song I couldn’t do nothin’ but croak. Do I look like a guy that could buy timber?” He paused and drawing a long face, rolled his eyes upward, “I ain’t got no fur coat to look out over the collar of, an’ I don’t believe in smashin’ down the little trees takin’ out big ones, an’ I ain’t playin’ the Lord fer a side-kick.”

“Blodgett!” cried the girl, breaking into a peal of laughter. Leonard noted that laugh. It was deep, full-throated, genuine.

“Yup,” he answered, “He might want to buy it, not me.”

“He does want to buy it. But we—we’ll never sell to him!”

“If it was mine,” grinned Leonard, “an’ old Blodgett wanted it, I’d be damn’ glad the big end of it was stuck in the ground. This timber wouldn’t look like it does now after he’d put a crew into it. At that, though, I guess he’s got the jack.”

The girl regarded him with a puzzled smile: “I don’t know what you mean. You ask me what I

am trying to hand you, and I was not trying to hand you anything. And you ask how I get this way, and talk about a 'guy,' and 'side-kick,' and 'jack.' You talk funny. I don't understand."

"What do you mean—funny?" asked Leonard in surprise, "Where was you raised? I'm talkin' straight American. Funny—you'd ought to hear some of them guys over to camp spiel it off—Frenchy Brebout, an Torger Bjorson, an' Micky O'Toole, an' Sandy McTabb. When they all git to goin' at onct it sounds like hell broke loose fer recess."

"What camp is that?" laughed the girl.

"Old Blodgett's Number Eight."

"You work for Blodgett!" exclaimed the girl, "And you do not like him?" Leonard saw that the smile had left her lips, and she was looking straight into his eyes as though to fathom his innermost thought.

"Yup. Tractor man. Waitin' fer the snow so I can begin haulin' the logs down from Number Nine."

"But, you do not like him?" she persisted.

"He'd make a swell con-man."

The girl shook her head in resignation. "It is no use," she answered, with a shrug, "Half the time I do not know what you are talking about."

Leonard laughed—a frank, boyish laugh that was in every way understandable, and good to hear: “Say kid, we don’t make each other at all, but sometime we will. The only molls I ever knew was gold diggers, right. They was go-gitters, all dolled up, an’ playin’ both ends from the middle. They was shifters, an’ dips, an’ bag-openers, an’ stone-gitters, an’ all of ’em was snow-birds, an’ hop-heads, an’ rum-hounds. They was out fer the jack, an’ believe me, they got it. An’ if they ever wore men’s clothes it was ’cause they was hidin’ out from the bulls. But, you, kid—you’re different. You wouldn’t double-cross a guy, would you?”

The girl laughed: “I don’t understand a thing you’ve been talking about,” she answered. “But, tell me, you have not been long in the woods?”

“No, not long. Up to the time we started buildin’ Number Eight I hadn’t never seen no timber in my life.”

“Never saw any timber!” cried the girl, “Where in the world did you come from?”

For just an instant Leonard hesitated. “Gypville,” he answered, solemnly.

“Gypville? I never even heard of it. And, there is no timber? Not even scrub?”

“Nope, not even scrub. Just folks.”

“And, you’ve lived there all your life?”

“Well, not yet. The part of it I’ve lived is best fergot. The only part that counts is the part I ain’t lived yet.”

The girl smiled: “And you like it here? You are going to stay in the timber?”

“I’ll tell the world I’m goin’ to stay! That is,” he added, “as long as there’s any timber to stay in.”

“That’s just it,” said the girl, her face becoming suddenly grave. “Logging like Blodgett, and all the rest of them log, it won’t be long before all the timber will be gone. It’s a wicked shame! That’s what it is! Why, do you know that it takes God from fifty to two hundred years to make a pine tree?”

“An’ it takes Blodgett from five to ten minutes to cut it down,” interrupted Leonard, “All a guy’s got to do is to count the trees an’ set down fer a few minutes with a pencil an’ paper an’ figger how long it will take Blodgett to catch up with God. An’ believe me, if I was God, when he did catch up, I’d haul off an’ knock him fer a gool!”

“Oh, don’t!” cried the girl, crossing herself rapidly. “You mustn’t talk that way. It’s irreverent, and very wicked.”

“Now look here, kid. I didn’t mean no harm. My old lady’s a good Catholic—figgered on makin’ a priest out of me—But I liked truck drivin’ better.

Got off fer a while on the wrong road—a road that didn't lead nowhere—but I'm back on the main drag again, an' hittin' on all four. I used to have to go to Sunday School when I was a kid, an' if God's as smart as the priest claimed he is, He knows I'm fer Him good an' strong in this here timber business. It don't stand to reason if it's took Him all them years to build up the big sticks, He wants any long nosed, preacher-fakin' son-of-a-gun like Blodgett cuttin' it all down an' smashin' an' bustin' up what he can't use. Does it, now?"

"No—but, I don't quite understand. You are working for Blodgett—helping to do the very thing you say you hate. That is not consistent."

"Whatever that is—maybe not. But, I make you, all right. It's like this. What you might say, an accident throw'd me into the woods. I didn't know nothin' about timber, an' don't yet—but I'm learnin' every day, an' I'm goin' to keep on learnin' till I know all anyone knows about it. It might sound kind of funny—kind of foolish maybe fer a guy that never seen timber, but the first minute I set foot in the woods I felt to home. An' every minute since then I've felt more to home. I know, now, I'll never go out of the woods. I've be'n doin' a lot of thinkin' an' I figgered that the only way I can stay in the woods is to hang onto my job, an' learn all

I can about loggin' the way they do it. But, all the while I'm goin' to keep figgerin' how the timber could be got out without skinnin' the country right down to the sand. Of course, it's got to be took out at a profit. But Big Tim Neely says it can, an' I believe it can."

"Of course it can!" cried the girl, "Look here! Look all around you. We're taking it out at a profit."

"Who's we?" asked Leonard.

"My father and I. He took up this land years and years ago—before I was born. He thinks of timber, and he speaks of timber as a crop, to be harvested year by year, when it is ripe. For years men have laughed at him and called him crazy. 'Crazy old Paddy MacAlister,' they call him. But, it's beginning to pay, and pay well. It has been long work, and hard work. No one will ever know just how hard, but my father. But, he knew he was right, and he stuck to it, and he has lived to see it pay."

"You say it's only just beginnin' to pay? An', how long did you say he's be'n at it?" asked Leonard, a note of disappointment in his voice, "I'm afraid there ain't no loggin' outfit that would wait that long fer their profits."

"Oh, but they wouldn't have to!" exclaimed the

girl. "Dad wouldn't have had to wait either, if he had had any capital to start with. But he didn't—not one cent. He's had to do everything himself, with what help my mother could give him. Then I got big enough to help, and with three of us it has gone better. I've only been here part of the time, though. For twelve years, until this year, I have been away at school for eight months of the year. But, now, I am through, and this year we are going to hire a man to help with the sawing. In all these years, except for the drive, Dad has not paid out one cent for wages. He didn't have it to pay. It has been a hard, hard grind for him, but he stuck to it. He has proved that he was right," she paused and her eyes swept with pride the surrounding forest area, with its low, neat stumps, its absence of slash, its plowed fire lines, and its stalwart young stuff.

Leonard nodded his understanding: "It was that I was lookin' at when I seen you comin' along," he said, "I'd be'n settin' on a stump takin' it all in fer a long while. It's what could be done in every camp, if you could only make 'em believe it."

"They never will believe it. A few of them have been over here to see for themselves. They all admit it is a fine piece of timber, but they all say the same thing. 'It may work out all right on a small piece, but you couldn't work a big tract that way.' They

believe it, too. But we know better, Dad and I. We know that it could be worked on a big tract better, even, than a small one."

"How much land you got here?" asked Leonard.

"Three hundred and twenty acres that we've worked. A few years ago Dad bought the quarter section that lies west of us, but we haven't done anything with that yet."

"Gee!" exclaimed Leonard, suddenly. "It's be-ginnin' to git dark, an' I'm a long ways from camp! I got to be goin'. You see, I ain't hep to this here woods stuff yet so's I could find my way back in the dark. If I was through that swamp an' acrost the river I could make it all right."

The girl laughed: "I don't know just where this new camp of Blodgett's is," she said, "But you won't have to go out the way you came in. We have a road to the river and a foot bridge just above the ford. I'll show you the way, and from there it can't be over four or five miles to any part of the Blodgett tract."

At the foot bridge Leonard halted and looked straight into the violet eyes: "Say, kid," he said abruptly, "I can come back sometimes, can't I? I guess there'll be times when I'll be caught up with the haulin'. The way I figger it, I can learn all about the wrong way to handle timber where I'm

at, but I got to learn the right way, too. An' there ain't nowheres else I can learn it."

The girl hesitated, and Leonard persisted: "You might's well say 'yes,'" he smiled, "'Cause I'm comin'. An' next time I'll be able to find my way home in the dark."

The red lips parted in an answering smile: "I was thinking of Dad," she answered, "I don't know what he'll say. You see, he don't like Blodgett. And now that Blodgett is logging off this tract, he'll be looking around for more timber. Dad has refused several offers from him, and he's afraid Blodgett will try to get the timber—some other way. He don't trust him."

"Him an' I both!" agreed Leonard, "Believe me, if I was settin' in a game with that guy four kings would look about as good to me on his deal as catchin' a black troy to a heart flush. Him an' Parson Reddick would make a swell team. Parson, his grift is to rig up like a preacher with a long black coat an' a dinky little black necktie, an' pull a long face. He works the hotels up around Greeley Square, an' grabs off the suckers that thinks that 'cause he packs a Bible around in under his arm he's simple-hearted an' honest. It's a good grift. He turns up a lot of them suckers. But, take it from me, kid, when the piousness sticks out on a man so it's the

first thing you notice about him—look out! It ain't there fer nothin'. It's property."

"It's so funny," laughed the girl, "I don't understand half the words you use, and yet I know what you mean. But, it really will be dark before you get to the camp, if you don't hurry. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, see you later," Leonard called, and disappeared in the forest on the opposite side of the river.

For some time the girl stood staring into the darkening forest. Then she turned and made her way to the cabin that was her home.

"Who's Paddy MacAlister?" asked Leonard of big Tim Neely, as he and the boss sat that evening in the little office that had been added as a lean-to against the end of the bunk house.

"Paddy MacAlister?" Neely removed the pipe from between his lips and spat into the sawdust filled box beside the stove, "Well, Paddy's a kind of an odd fish that settled down over on Wild Goose when I was a kid. Some says he's kind of touched in the head, an' some says he's jest natchly too lazy to farm. I don't know nothin' about him—ain't seen him fer years."

"Ever be'n in his timber?"

"No. Heard he had a patch of it that he was sort

of nursin' along. That's why folks claim he's crazy."

"I wisht I was crazy—like him," Leonard grinned.

The big boss eyed him questioningly: "What you drivin' at? What do you know about old Paddy MacAlister an' his timber?"

"I don't know nothin' about Paddy. But I was through part of his timber, today."

"Well?" Neely returned the pipe to his mouth and puffed it into full glow.

"Well, you'd ought to see it. That's all. Been loggin' a little better'n a livin' off'n it for somewheres around twenty-five years, an' you can't see where he's took the stuff off except fer the stumps. He's got fire lines plowed up around it, an' the young stuff stands thicker'n the scrub does on the cut-over. An' there ain't no slash left on the ground, neither. Them woods is so clean fire couldn't run through 'em. Maybe he's crazy, but if he is so are you. 'Cause he's got just the kind of a piece of timber you was tryin' to tell me about if it was logged right."

"An' it lays clost to here?" asked Neely, blowing smoke ceilingward.

"Just acrost the river west of here."

For some moments the boss smoked in silence. Then, slowly, he nodded his head. "It would be

that, an' nothin' else," he said, more to himself than to the other.

"What would be what?" asked Leonard.

Instead of answering Neely countered with a question: "You an old 'Lij' must of got pretty well acquainted drivin' back to Thunder Head together. What do you think of him?"

Leonard winked deliberately: "If I seen him comin', an' I had a roll on me, I'd keep one hand on the roll, an' two eyes on his mitts as long as he stayed in reach."

Neely grinned; "Maybe he's all right, though. I've heard how he's the main squeeze in one of them big churches down to St. Paul."

"Sure he would be. That's part of his game. Believe me, boss, if he's square, so's the devil! Them there church folks is either an easy bunch of suckers to be took in by a guy like him or else, the chances is, he's come acrost pretty heavy with the jack, an' they don't want to know nothin' about him."

"Guess we ain't so far apart about old 'Lij.' Which bein' the case, what you told me about old Paddy MacAlister's timber kind of gives me the answer to a p'int I be'n studyin' about sence a while back."

"What's that?"

“Why, maybe it’s the reason fer ‘Lij’ hirin’ Sam King for to run Number Nine. ‘Lij’ ain’t no fool. He knows as well as I do jest what kind of a damn’ skunk Sam is. Long’s I kin remember Sam’s be’n doin’ the dirty work fer the big lumbermen. Whenever they was a dam to be blow’d up, or a piece of timber to be fired, or stole, Sam was the man they counted on to do the job. An’ it’s said that they’s be’n a time or two when he didn’t stop short of murder, neither. ’Course they ain’t never proved nothin’ on him. The men that hires him ’tends to that.”

“What would be his game?” asked Leonard, eagerly.

Neely shook his head: “Search me. But, I got an idea that if we keep our eyes on Sam King, it won’t be no hell of a while till we find out which way the wind blows.”

Leonard stood up suddenly, facing the boss. “Say, Neely, if Blodgett tries to gyp old Paddy MacAlister out of his timber, an’ things breaks so we could butt in an’ gum his game, where’d you stand?”

Neely regarded the speaker curiously: “Well I ain’t never helped anyone steal another man’s timber yet,” he answered.

“That ain’t what I said. What I mean is, would

you go out of yer way, even if you know'd it would cost you your job, to help turn Blodgett up? To save MacAlister's timber?"

Neely nodded: "Guess you could count me in," he said with a grin. "But, what in hell are you so interested in old Paddy's timber fer? You be'n talkin' to him?"

"No, I ain't. It's the timber—mostly. It would be a damn' shame to let a man like Blodgett turn loose a crew in that stuff. If you'd saw it you'd know what I mean."

"But how'd you know how long he'd be'n workin' it? An' about it payin' out better'n a livin', an' all that?"

"His girl told me," answered Leonard, "an' say, bo, she's some queen! I never seen no moll like her before. Prettiest thing I ever seen. An' smart—knows all about timber, an' the way to handle it without rippin' hell out of the woods. Dresses jest like a man, an' believe me, she swings a mean ax! Watched her notch a tree to miss some young stuff. I ain't seen nothin' on this job that would touch it fer good clean notchin'."

Neely laughed: "So, that's the way the land lays, is it? Well, good luck to you, lad."

"You talk like a fool. A moll gyped me onct—gyped me right, too. Fer as that goes, I'm off 'em

fer life—but jest the same, they ain't no one goin' to gyp her old man out of his timber if I can help it—not an' her with eyes like that, there ain't." And without waiting for a reply, Leonard left the office, and made his way to the bunk house.

CHAPTER XV

FIRE LINES

COLD weather came on. Ponds and lakes froze, and the ground congealed to a flinty hardness. Then came the snow. On the first six-inch fall, Leonard, trailing four wide-bunk log-sleds behind his tractor, broke out the road to Number Nine.

“Think that damned rig’s goin’ to keep my bank-ground clean of logs all winter?” asked Sam King, as Leonard spotted a sled for loading.

“Don’t know. Tell you more about it in the spring,” answered the tractor man, “Blodgett says it will.”

“What you goin’ to do when the snow gits deep?”

“Haul logs,” answered Leonard, “If you can put ’em on the bankin’-ground.”

“Cocky as hell fer a greener, ain’t you?” sneered King, “Maybe you won’t be so cocky about the time we git a real snow, an’ yer cast-iron buzz-wagon gits bogged to its belly in a drift, an’ you’ve got to git

a real team to haul you out. Besides, if you go shootin' off yer face like that around this camp, someone's liable to take a poke at you."

. A retort in kind trembled on Leonard's lips, but at that instant into his brain flashed the memory of Kid Morowitz, the narrowed, hate-blazing eyes, and the flailing gloves of that fatal eighth round, and without a word he turned away and busied himself with his engine. The men of the loading crew had heard the boss's taunt, and were grinning and snickering among themselves at the greener's craven silence.

"Shot a deer yesterday," remarked one to another, in a tone meant to be overheard by Leonard. "Brought everything in but the guts."

"Shouldn't ort to left 'em behind," opined another, "Some folks might need 'em."

Leonard heard. He felt himself growing hot and cold by turns, as he wiped needlessly at a spark plug. What he ought to do, and what he longed to do, and yet what he knew he did not dare to do, was to resent the insult with his two fists. Since coming into the lumber woods he had almost forgotten the yellow streak that he had known always was in his heart, and that had cropped out for the world to see in that terrible eighth round. Had forgotten it because in his association with the men of Number

Eight, he had had no cause to remember it. The men of his own camp had hectored him, as they would have hectored any greener, but the hectoring had been so palpably without malice that he had taken no offence. But this case was different. Number Nine's boss had gone out of his way to deliberately insult him, and the men of the loading crew, taking their cue from the boss, had carried on the insult. He knew that wherever men forgather open insult demands open retaliation. Knew, also, that if he had then and there started a fight even though his opponent had finished it, no slightest odium would have attached to him, provided he had done his best. And only too well he knew that by cravenly accepting the insults he had lost caste. The story would be repeated that night in the bunk house of Number Nine, and in a day or two it would get to Number Eight. Inwardly Leonard cursed himself, and in vain he tried to summon the courage to call his tormentor to account. But the mere thought of facing the blows of a doubled fist turned the blood to water in his veins. He couldn't do it. He was a coward. He was yellow to the heart. And the men of the camps would know.

The sleds were loaded at last, the big pyramids of logs chained in place, and Leonard pulled slowly out onto the log road. A mile from Number Eight a

slight rise stalled him. He uncoupled the two rear sleds, doubling back for them. In the afternoon he made another trip to Number Nine. "Spot her right here, Betilda," ordered the top loader, as Leonard swung the sleds into place.

"Say, Con, is them guts still where you left 'em?" called one of the crew.

" 'Spect they be. Ain't seen no one that looked like he'd got 'em." And so it went, Leonard listening in silence, while the four sleds were being loaded. By shovelling snow on the place where the runners had cut to the ground, he managed to make the rise and deliver his four sleds beside the waiting flat cars.

After supper that night he went directly to bed.

It took four days to clear Number Nine's bank ground—four days of torture for Leonard, who listened in sullen silence to the gibes of the loading crew. Meantime the word had passed down to Number Eight. No man mentioned it, nor did any even indirectly allude to it, but Leonard knew they knew. He had seen little knots of swampers and sawyers talking together as he passed them on the log road, and in the bunk house and at meals, men glanced at him, and abruptly looked away. He had known, of course, that they would hear of it. But this deliberate silence was harder to bear than the open taunts of the Number Nine men.

Morose and sullen, he drew more within himself, even avoiding big Tim Neely, with whom it had become his custom to spend two or three evenings a week in the little office, absorbing the lore of the woods.

With Number Nine's bank ground cleared, he told Neely he was going hunting, and right after breakfast started for MacAlister's. He found the girl, log scale in hand, on the banking ground just below the ford. Except that a mackinaw of subdued colouring covered the vividly checked shirt, she was dressed precisely as she had been on the day of their previous meeting. Leonard paused in the bush before crossing the river and for several minutes watched her pace back and forth as she waited for logs. Then, ignoring the foot bridge, he crossed the river on the ice. The girl was waiting on the trampled snow as he stepped from the river. "So, you did come back, didn't you?"

"Sure, I did. Didn't I say so?"

"Yes, but people don't always do what they say they will."

"Well, that's 'cordin' to who they are, an' what they say. I said I'd come back, an' I come. So, that's that. I'm wonderin' what did your old man say when he found out one of Blodgett's men had be'n here, an' was comin' back?"

The girl smiled: "He didn't say much—he never does—unless—" She paused abruptly.

"Unless what?" asked Leonard.

"Unless he's been drinking whiskey. He don't drink very often. Only two or three times a year when he goes to town. And then he talks, and talks, and talks, wherever he can find anybody who will listen. Some men want to fight when they're drinking, and some want to sing, but Dad just wants to talk."

"That don't hurt him none. My old man used to hit her up, too. Only his was every Saturday night, an' he'd git grouchier an' grouchier, till someone hauled off an' knocked him fer a gool, an' then he'd come home an' take it out on me an' the old lady."

The girl laid a mittened hand on his arm, and the violet eyes looked searchingly into his: "Don't ever offer Dad any liquor, will you? He never drinks around home—never even keeps it in the house. But if he should get started it would be—awful."

"Nix on that, kid. I never use it. It's made a lot of 'em take the count. It's poor stuff to train on."

"Train on?" asked the girl, "What do you mean? Train for what?"

Leonard laughed: "Oh, fer whatever a guy's got to do."

“Just some more of your funny way of speaking,” said the girl, joining in the laugh.

“Where do yer git that—funny? You must have a swell time livin’ if everything a guy says is funny.”

“Well, it is funny,” insisted the girl, “I never heard anybody talk that way before, and I can’t _____”

The sentence was broken by the rattle of a chain, and Leonard looked up to see a big team swing up to the rollway. Standing upon the two logs chained to the travois was a smallish man of the “black Irish” type, knitted cap shoved well to the back of his head, and a short cutty pipe between his teeth. The man stepped from the logs as the two approached: “Dad, this is the man I told you about, the one that was so interested in the timber. Mr. _____” She paused abruptly and laughed, “Why, do you know, you’ve never told me your name!”

“Leonard—Shirly Leonard.”

“Shearly Linerd,” repeated the older man. “Th’ Shearly part’s all roight, but Oi never heered of no Oirish Linerds.”

Leonard grinned: “Maybe not. But, I’m half Irish, all the same. My mother’s name was Duffy.”

“Thot’s better. Well, as th’ sayin’ goes, a half a loaf is better thin none, an’ Oi guess t’would be th’ same wid an’ Oirishman.”

Leonard grinned as he looked into the face of the man whose little grey eyes, red-rimmed and watery, but extremely bright with a stabbing sort of keenness, seemed to be taking his measure. "Somethin' of a kidder, eh? Well go ahead. I'm used to it by this time."

"So ye was t'rough th' timber th' other day, was ye? How do ye figger she stands?"

"A thousand to the acre, or a hundred thousand—I wouldn't know the difference—yet. I'm no cruiser. I'm runnin' a tractor fer Blodgett."

"An' if ye ain't a cruiser what did old 'Lijer send ye over here fer?"

"He didn't send me. I was deer huntin' an' come into the timber through the swamp."

"Deer huntin'—an' th' sayson closed?"

"A little tamarack beef goes good fer a change," grinned Leonard. "I bet you knock off one now an' then, yourself."

"Av' ye ain't a cruiser ye might be a game warden, so av Oi've kilt an-ny tamarack beef, ut's so long ago, Oi've fergot ut."

"You see, Dad's suspicious of strangers."

"I'd be, too," said Leonard, "If I owned a piece of timber like this that laid in next to Blodgett."

"So ye think he'll thry to git holt av ut? Whut's his game?"

Leonard shrugged: "I don't know. But, believe me, if I was you, I'd keep my eyes open. He ain't overlookin' no bets."

"Av ye ain't a cruiser, an' ain't a game warden, whut'r ye back here fer? Didn't Mary tell ye we didn't want no huntin' around here?"

"Yes, she told me. I brought the gun along this time fer an excuse to git away from camp, an' maybe pick up a deer between there an' here. What I really come fer was to see if I couldn't learn some-thin' about loggin' the way it ought to be done—without smashin' an' tearin' hell out of everything that ain't fit to be cut."

"An' whut d'ye want to know about thot fer, av ye ain't got no timber av yer own? They ain't no big comp'ny goin' to log th' way I log. They say ut can't be done."

"But, you know it can be done," said Leonard, earnestly, "She told me you knew it."

"Sure, Oi know ut. But, they don't—the wans thot hires crews."

"But, they will some time! Big Tim Neely told me, before I ever saw your timber. He claims if they'd logged right from the start there'd be as much timber left as there ever was, an' better timber. An' I believe it's true. An' if it is true, it's only a question of time till the big ones find it out. And when

they do, the guy that knows how tō do it right will be the guy that'll draw down the jack."

"They'll niver see ut!" exclaimed MacAlister, almost savagely. "Oi've be'n talkin' ut f'r years, an' they call me crazy. Let um. But, Oi'll be sellin' pine whin th' rist av um's skinnin' th' cut-over f'r pulp-wood."

"The Gover'ment an' the State'll be doin' it before long, if no one else does. Neely says so. They're startin' already. An' he says they got to do it, 'cause they're beginnin' to git a lot of the cut-over turned back on 'em fer taxes, or somethin'—an' it won't grow nothin' but timber."

MacAlister shook his head doubtfully: "Ut w'd take a sight av money, an' a sight av toime, th' shape th' cut-over's in to start wid."

"They'd find the money," persisted Leonard, "An' what's time to a State? States ain't got to die."

"Ye're a shmart lad, an' mebbe ye're roight. Anyway, ye've got th' roight idee. But come along. An' av they's things ye be wantin' to know, Oi'll be tellin' ye."

Seizing an extra cant-hook, Leonard helped roll the logs from the travois, the girl deftly applied her scale, made a notation, and joined the two men as they followed the team into the woods.

“How do you git rid of your slash?” asked Leonard, as his glance travelled over the smooth floor of the forest.

“Use the limbs f’r fire-wood, an’ cut the loppin’s to where they’ll lay flat, an’ scatter um.”

“Why not burn the loppin’s?”

“Rotten wood’s manure. Oi ain’t a logger, lad, Oi’m a timber farmer. In th’ early days down in th’ settlements where they was farmin’ th’ new land that run thirty-five an’ forty bushel av wheat to th’ acre, they burnt their straw in th’ stack to be red av ut. They was fools, takin’ everythin’ off the land an’ givin’ the land nothin’ back. They don’t do ut now. Ut was an expinsive lesson they learnt, an’ now they save ivery straw an’ they winter more stock thin they need to, so they’ll have manure to give back to th’ land. An’ ’tis th’ same wid timber as wid grain. Ye can git somethin’ f’r nothin’ f’r a while, but ye can’t kape on doin’ ut year afther year, an’ stay in th’ game.”

“But, would it pay on a big tract?” asked Leonard, “If you were runnin’ a big crew, you’d soon have more fire-wood than you’d know what to do with.”

“Oi’d say, lop ut an’ lave ut lay thin. Git ut flat on th’ ground so th’ fire couldn’t git holt on ut an’ let ’er rot.”

Without Gloves

“Yes, an’ there’s another thing. On a big tract would it pay to build fire lines?”

The old man brought up the team with a jerk and turned to face the questioner: “Wud ut pay to build fire lines! Wud ut pay! Did ye iver help fight fire in th’ timber? No! Did ye iver see a fire in th’ timber? No!” The question had roused the man to unwonted excitement. “They’s more timber be’n burnt thin iver’s be’n cut! An’ whut’s be’n cut’s paid, ain’t ut? Be th’ looks av th’ millionaires thot’s made their money off’n timber, ut’s paid! Th’ question ye’ve asked shows ye’re as ignerent av timber as th’ min that’s makin’ their millions in ut ar-re. Ye’d not be askin’ av ut paid a farmer to fence his grain fields, an’ yet th’ worst cud happen to um av he didn’t wud be to lose what little grain stray an’ rovin’ stock cud eat, an’ tromp down. Nixt year’s crop wud come along jist th’ same. But ut’s different wid timber. A big fire—a top fire, wud take ut clane. But, even a runnin’ fire—a ground fire does damage thot ut wud take a wiser mon thin me to figger in dollars. ’Tis not only the standin’ young stuff thot’s distroyed, an’ scarred an’ damaged f’r life, so’t will niver make a log, but ut burns up th’ seed in th’ ground thot wud sprout into a tree, nixt year, or th’ nixt. An’ thin th’ damage has only jist begun! Ut burns up the ground, yis sir, th’ ground

utsilf! Ut's what th' books call th' humus, an' as near as we c'n make out—I buy th' books, an Mary here reads um out loud, an' together we figger out what they mane—As near as we c'n make out, ut's like this: This humus is whut th' trees feeds on. It's th' life av th' soil. Soil widout humus is dead as brick-dust. Nothin'll grow in ut. This humus is alive, millions an' millions av germs, er bugs, er whatnot thot's workin' all th' time breakin' up th' rotten wood an' th' manure av whutiver kind into food f'r th' plants. A fire—an' a slash fire is hot enough to do ut, burns up th' manure, an' kills th' bugs er germs, an' laves th' land dead an' barren till ut's laid long enough to build up agin. An' thot's a mather av years. Thot's whut fire does! Oi'm tellin' ye, lad, on a big tract, th' furst thing Oi'd do wud be to run fire lines every quarter av a mile, er at laste, a quarter av a mile wan way, an' a half mile th' other." The old man paused abruptly, and abruptly he snapped out a question. "Have ye learnt an-nything, er have Oi be'n talkin' f'r nothin'—like Oi've be'n talkin' f'r nothin' to th' rist av um all these years?"

Leonard looked straight into the little watery eyes that regarded him shrewdly: "I'll tell the world I learnt somethin', bo. I've learnt that the guy that can keep fire losses off his books is the guy that wins

out in the timber game. If ever I git the chanct to run a piece of timber, an' run it right, the first job I'll tackle will be gittin' in my fire lines."

"An' av ye do thot," said MacAlister, with a grin, "Ye'll have to run the rist av ut domn poor to kape from showin' a profit."

"How much you takin' out this year?" asked Leonard.

"Oh, not so much," answered the old man, evasively. "Th' price ain't right f'r to crowd the cut an-ny."

"But, it's goin' up, an' goin' fast."

MacAlister shot him a keen glance: "I thot ye didn't know nothin' about timber? An' here ye're posted on th' market—an' advance knowledge av th' market. Out with ut, now—what's ye're game?"

Leonard grinned: "I don't know nothin', much—but I'm learnin' more every day. The only thing I know about the market is what I heard Blodgett tell Tim Neely. He said lumber was goin' up fast, an' that's why he put in two camps instead of one. He wants to log off the whole tract this winter on account of prices goin' up. He said it was the war over in the old country that's doin' it—but what they need lumber in a war fer's more'n I know."

The explanation apparently satisfied the other, for the little eyes twinkled: "Ut's th' Oirish'll be nadin' ut, " he said, "F'r to build skids to put in under thim Dutchmens."

CHAPTER XVI

BUCKING THE STORM

As Leonard followed his own back trail through the forest in the early darkness of evening his thoughts were for the most part of the girl with the violet eyes—of the girl, and of the time—some time in the distant future, when he should be boss of a camp.

Not until he stepped from the forest into the clearing that surrounded Number Eight did the affairs of the present obtrude upon his thoughts. He paused and stared at the ugly buildings that reared themselves out of the trampled snow, their roofs gleaming white in the light of the waxing moon. Dull squares of light showed at the windows. He could see men moving about inside, crowding the wash benches at one end of the bunk house. Every half-minute or so the door opened, and a basin of dirty water splashed onto the mound of grey ice that was gradually building to the right of the path to the cook shack. He knew that these men were talk-

ing and laughing in the exchange of rude jests as they waited their turn at the benches. A little group of men crossed the clearing from the direction of the stables—teamsters, their horses unharnessed and fed—and they, too, were talking and laughing.

The bunk house door opened, illuminated for a moment the fan-shape heap of frozen slop-water, and closed. The window in the lean-to office went suddenly black. Tim Neely stepped from the door, paused for a moment, and in answer to the raucous clangour that burst suddenly upon the crisp air, moved off to join the crowd that belched from the bunk house and swarmed toward the cook shack in the door of which the be-aproned cook was beating lustily upon the old saw that hung suspended by wires from a protruding roof log.

The day-dreams of the back-trail vanished in a wave of sudden bitterness. He hated it all! Hated the squat, ugly buildings, the silent vastness of the forest, and the trampled snow of the clearing. But most of all he hated the men—these men who had taken it upon themselves to judge him. “Who in hell do they think they are?” he muttered savagely, “A lot of boobs crowded in a bunk house that stinks of dryin’ socks! All they know is work, an’ laughin’ loud at fool jokes, an’ listenin’ to damn’ fool stories that they wouldn’t no ten-year-old kid on the Avenue

grab fer a minute. They eat like a bunch of hogs, an' they dress like—like—” Nothing occurred to Leonard to which he could liken their dress, and he glanced down at his own mackinaw, and woollen trousers and shapeless felt boots. “An I’m just like ’em! A boob—right!”

With his eyes on the felt boots, his thoughts harked back to his rooms in the Avenue Hotel. To the ornate brass bed, with its thick mattress and its white sheets. To the rows of expensive, if rather bizarre clothing that filled the two closets, and the assortment of high-priced shoes that were the last word in East Side elegance. To the fatuous and flatulent Klingermann. To the smooth, suave men who lived by brain, and not by brawn, but lived—where the night lights blazed, and with the voice of the city always in their ears. And—to Lotta Rivoli—the soft, purring, languorous Lottie, in whose black eyes the love-light smouldered as she lay close in his arms. To the alluring, the seductive Lottie in the knee-length red skirt, the tiny high-heeled pumps, the sheeny silken hose—and little else. And then—to Dago Lottie, the tigress, the husband killer, the double-crosser of men. “God,” he breathed, aloud, “They’re crooks, an’ double-crossers, an’ liars! There ain’t a square one among ’em, but old Red Casey—an’ he was more like these,” his glance

swept for a moment the lighted windows of the cook shack. But, in his mind's eye he was looking into a face whose violet eyes looked squarely into his own. It was as if she stood there in the moonlight beside him, this girl whose every movement bespoke the perfect health of the great outdoors, who dressed like a man, who could do a man's work with a man's tools, but withal, who was so intensely feminine that, despite the masculine attributes with which she surrounded herself, the spirit of femininity seemed to pervade the very air she breathed. "She wouldn't never double-cross a guy, not in a thousan' years," he muttered, and raising the rifle butt from the snow where he had rested it, he slowly crossed the clearing.

For an instant as he had stood there in the snow it seemed to him that he would give anything in the world, would gladly risk, even facing the charge of murder, to be back there in the city, to see the bright lights, and to hear the roar of traffic thundering in his ears—but only for an instant. Then, suddenly in the silence of the forest night, he had realized that the city, as he knew the city, had become repugnant to him. The criminal scheming of the powers that prey against society at large, and the vicious plotting among themselves of the gamblers, the gunmen, the dips, the yeggs, and the con-men, to say

nothing of their plots and counter-plots which included the very men whose sworn duty it was to protect society from their depredations. He knew, as he walked slowly toward the little office, that he would never go back—that he never could go back, for there, even as here, he would be looked upon as a pariah and an outcast. No, he would never go back. Here, at least, he could live, but there—he shuddered as he opened the door of the office, and stood Neely's rifle in a corner. As he entered the bunk house and splashed the cold water from the basin over his face, he knew that he wanted to be of these men of the camp and not a thing apart. No man in Number Eight had ever even hinted at the incident that had taken place at Number Nine's bank-ground, but instinctively Leonard knew that every man in the camp had heard of it. Gone was the comradery that had followed their discovery that with his tractor he could do the work of several teamsters. In its place was a studied indifference. "Damn 'em up there to Number Nine! It's their doin's. I'll knock 'em cold!" he said aloud, as he doubled his fist and flexed the muscles of his arm—and then, the fighting face of Kid Morowitz rose up before him, the narrowed, gleaming eyes, and the writhing lips, and the blows of the fist that rocked and jarred, "God, I—can't," the words were a moan.

He opened the door, threw the water from the wash dish onto the dirty grey mound of slop ice, and made his way to the cook shack. "Yellow," he muttered under his breath, "Yellower than they know—'cause if only I had the guts, I could knock them birds fer a goal."

Snow came, and more snow, one storm following another until the forest floor lay under a two-foot blanket of white. Twice each day the tractor made its trip to Number Nine and returned with its load of logs—sometimes only two sleds, sometimes three, but often all four sleds would draw up beside the flats waiting at the railhead.

It was the men of Number Eight's loading crew, the men whose duty it was to transfer the logs from the sleds to the flat cars, that showed the first spark of returning comradery. Here was a man they realized who was doing a man's job, and doing it well, and without complaint. They began to call greetings as Leonard pulled up with his logs—greetings that were music to the ears of the lonely man who had grown sullen in his long silence. The greetings were returned in kind, and soon the men were asking a question, now and then, as to the condition of the road, and the quantity of logs on Number Nine's skidways. One day, after a six-inch fall of snow they even kidded him a bit for only bringing in one

sled. With a heart lighter than he had known for many a long day, he coupled onto his empties and chugged off up the log road.

This last snow had fallen in the night, and all morning it continued in fitful flurries, lashed into whirling eddies by the wind that roared in the pine tops. The grey cloud mantle that for a week had obscured the sun, thickened. The snow flurries became more frequent, the flakes finer and dry as flour dust so that they befogged Leonard's eyes and sifted down his neck, and up his sleeves, stinging his flesh with their icy touch.

Bad luck at Number Nine's bank-ground delayed him an hour and a half. Through some fault in loading, a sled-load of logs shot out sidewise before the chains could be fastened, and but for Leonard's quick cry of warning, a man of the crew would have been crushed beneath them. It was the man who had taunted him, and who had spread the news of his cowardice throughout the camps. Cursing the ill luck which caused the accident, which was no ill luck at all, but the natural consequence of his own carelessness, the lumberjack helped reload the sled without a word to the man who had undoubtedly saved his life.

Snow, fine as fog, filled the air, obscuring all but the nearer objects, muffling the voice of the wind to

a low steady roar, like the roar of falling water heard from afar. Knotting his handkerchief tightly about his neck, Leonard buttoned his mackinaw, and pulling three sled-loads of logs, headed down the log road. In the timber the darkness increased and he switched on his powerful headlight, but its rays were smothered, absorbed in the whirling white. This caused him small concern, for he knew every turn, every dip, and sag, and hillock in the three-mile stretch of road, so shielding his face as best he could from the stinging particles, he opened his throttle and bored into the opaque smother that showed only as a blur of diffused brilliance in the rays of the powerful headlight.

Number Eight's crew had long since knocked off for the day when the tractor chugged into the clearing. Men crowded the bunk house windows at the sound, but all they could make out was a patch of white light floating like a ghost through the storm. A pair of teamsters coming from the stables stopped to view the monster that passed within two yards of them.

"D'ye see the greener pullin' in?" asked one of the men at the window as the teamsters paused inside the door to beat the snow-powder from their clothing.

"See—hell!" grinned one, "We seen a snow man

cocked up on the seat of a snow ingyne pullin' three snow mountains acrost the clearin'."

"Three loads!" exclaimed the top loader, "D'you say he brung in three sleds?"

"Yes, three," answered the teamster, as he reached for the wash dish.

Here and there in the bunk house men glanced into each other's eyes. "Beats hell, don't it?" grunted old Pap Hickman, the saw filer, who had been in the woods since boyhood.

"He won't bring in none tomorry," opined a sawyer, from the deacon seat.

"No, nor you won't lay none down, neither," answered another, "Tomorry'll be a gillon an' they won't no one leave the bunk house, but the teamsters. Glad I ain't got no horses to tend to."

"We'd ort to have mules," suggested a teamster. "I've heard how you kin throw 'em enough feed for a week an' they won't never founder theirsself like a horse. Come feedin' time an' they'll jest walk up an' eat their reg'lar feed an' quit."

The door opened and the greener entered in a swirl of fine snow. From head to foot he was white with clinging particles, and removing his mittens and cap, he proceeded to beat the snow from his clothing.

"Stand still an' I'll sweep you," said the top loader,

and picking up the broom, proceeded to wield it vigorously.

"Hell of a night," ventured a teamster who was "slickin' up" his hair before the mirror, "'S'wonder you got through."

Leonard realized almost with the suddenness of a blow that these men were talking to him. Snow was melting upon his eyebrows and lashes, and dashing the water from his eyes with his fingers, he glanced about him, to meet many friendly glances. Outside the wind moaned dully, the door rattled, and at the crack where it fitted the jamb a little fan-shaped drift was forming on the floor. But the greener had forgotten the storm. He stood there smiling, stirred to the depths by the commonplace words of the men of the bunk house.

"Wouldn't of cared to make the trip from Number Nine, myself, in a storm like this," asserted an old swamper, "She's a hell-winder."

"I'll tell the world," assented Leonard, "Couldn't see ten feet with the light on."

The sound of the cook's saw was greeted with a whoop, and pulling on their caps, the men answered the supper call, puffing and crowding as they bored through the seething storm.

Leonard was among the first to finish, and returning to the bunk house, he tied two extra handker-

chiefs about his neck, buttoned his mackinaw tightly about him, and once more stepped out into the storm.

A few minutes later the crowd pouring from the cook shack door stopped as one man. From out there in the clearing came the sound of the tractor's exhaust. A patch of hazy brightness appeared, a patch that moved slowly toward the mouth of the log road.

"What the hell?" cried Neely as, followed by several of the men, he plunged to intercept the moving patch of light.

"Hey, you! You crazy, or what?" bellowed the big boss, leaning close as he dared to the machine.

The muffled figure turned at the sound, reached for a lever, and the tractor stopped. Leonard leaned from the seat to make his voice heard above the roar of the storm and the noise of the motor:

"What you want?"

"Where you goin'?" yelled the boss.

"Got to keep her open—the road. This snow's packin' hard as she falls. Couldn't shove a plow through it by tomorrow."

"It might last two or three days, when it comes like this!" howled Neely, but the words were drowned in the grinding of gears, as the tractor moved slowly away.

"Buckin' the storm tryin' to keep the log road

open," explained one of the men who had followed the boss, when they rejoined the others in the bunk house.

"I'd see old 'Lijer Blodgett in hell 'fore I'd try to keep his log road open a night like tonight," growled a sawyer.

" 'Tain't ol' 'Lij' he gives a damn about," broke in a loader, "It's—it's different than that. As long as they's logs on Number Nine's skidways that ol' machine of his'n comes snortin' in twict a day with 'em. I was jest like you-all first off, figgerin' 'cause he didn't tear into them buckoes up to Number Nine, he didn't have no guts. But I be'n a-watchin' him, an' I'm a-tellin' it to you, it takes more guts to go right ahead like he's b'en doin', not sayin' nothin', but hangin' to the job every day—him knowin' what we was thinkin'—than it would took to lick a dozen of Sam King's men—an' Sam throw'd in to boot."

"Guess they ain't no one'll claim he's a coward now," agreed a man from the deacon seat.

"Different folks is afraid of different kind of things," opined a swamper, "Look at Frenchy, there, afraid of loup-garous, an' Murray's afraid of ghosts, an' Mike here's afraid of snakes, an' so on. I guess they's somethin' everyone's afraid of."

"I've heerd how this here now, Napolium, was afraid of cats," ventured one.

"Was he?" asked a lean lumberjack, with interest, "I never know'd that. Logged with him one year over Cloquet way. Lebant, his other name was."

"Aw hell! He was King of France or somewheres, way back. An' he licked the Roosians, an' Dagos, an' Chinamens, an' a lot more."

"Might of be'n another feller, then," admitted the lumberjack, "But this here Nap Lebant wasn't so slow, neither. Seen him clean up on four men to onct in a saloon one time. They fit with spittoons an' chairs, an' Nap he licked 'em all. They was Irish."

"Th' hell they wuz!" piped up McGinnis, a swamper, "He must av ketched 'em asleep thin."

"What d'you think about it, Pap?" asked the top loader.

"'Bout what?" asked the old saw filer, removing the pipe from his mouth.

"About the greener."

"Beats hell," pronounced the old man judicially. "Looks to me like if he's afraid to fight, an' hain't afraid of nothin' else, that's his business, not ourn."

"He'd ort to fit, though," growled a man surlily from the deacon seat. "'Cordin' to their tell, this here loader up to Number Nine handed it to him pretty raw."

"Is that so?" flashed the top loader, himself a man

famed in the woods for his fighting. "Well, if you're so hell-bent on seein' a scrap, jest you step out an' set a toe on that crack right there—yes, that un!" The man stood in the centre of the room and pointed to a certain crack in the floor, "Toe that crack or you're a dirty coward!" The man did not move from the bench, and the top loader laughed, "I guess that's as raw as Number Nine's loader handed it to the greener. An' on top of that you ain't got the guts to go from here to the stables an' back at night, neither—let alone tackle the log road in a storm like this! Let me hear another yip out of you about the greener, an' it ain't no one else but me'll walk right up you're middle!"

CHAPTER XVII

SAM KING PAYS A VISIT

THE greener kept the log road open. Three round trips he made during the night, and the following morning, two more. Shortly after noon the storm abated, and coupling on two empty sleds, he pulled for Number Nine. No one was in sight. There was still snow in the air, and spotting his sleds at the skidways, he made his way to the bunk house and opened the door. "Logs!" he called, and instantly became the focus of seventy pairs of eyes.

Sam King was the first to speak: "Where'n hell d'you come from? An' how'd you git here?"

"Come from Number Eight, an' got here same as always," he answered. "Goin' to load me?"

"No, I ain't a-goin' to load you! How in hell d'you s'pose men's goin' to work in a storm like this? They won't be no logs fer you today, nor tomorrow. It'll take us that long to git shovelled out."

Leonard closed the door, climbed to the seat of his tractor and headed down the log road. Arriving at Number Eight, where the crew was busy with shovels, he went to the bunk house, and turned in. It was broad daylight when he awoke. For some time he lay trying to think where he was. He looked at his watch. "Nine o'clock," he muttered, "But—it's light out doors—an' where's the men?" Suddenly it dawned on him—he had slept the whole night through, and half the forenoon! "An' I thought I'd just flop down till supper," he muttered, as he rolled from his bunk. His clothing was spread upon the drying rack. He tried to remember hanging it there. But, no, he recollected the stove had been cold when he laid down, and he didn't bother to spread out his clothing. "They done it," he breathed, and swallowed two or three times, "Damn' white of 'em to do it fer a guy they know is—yeller." He dressed hurriedly. "Gee, I'm hungry," he grinned into the little wall mirror, "It won't be long before dinner, an' I don't have to make no trip today."

A few minutes later he stepped from the bunk house, and was immediately hailed by the cook, who had evidently been watching for his appearance. As he entered the cook shack, the man pointed to a plate heaped with food which he had placed on a small

table near the big range. "Set right down there an' fly at it," he grinned. "Must be about starved. But the boys wouldn't wake you up las' night nor neither this mornin', figgerin' you was more in need of sleep than grub. Yisterday noon you damn' near went to sleep eatin' yer dinner."

"I can wait till dinner. 'Tain't right settin' you back this way."

"Settin' back—hell! Throw that into you, an' there's more on the stove. Any gazook that'll work forty hours straight through in a blizzard, I'll give him anything old 'Lijer Blodgett's got."

Leonard grinned happily, as he slipped into the chair.

The day following the big storm, Sam King, leaving the shovelling out of the camp in charge of a straw boss, shouldered his rifle, and fastening on his snow-shoes, struck out for Wild Goose River.

From the cover of the timber on the Blodgett side, he carefully inspected MacAlister's rollway. A quarter of a mile below the ford he crossed the river, threaded the swamp and came into the MacAlister timber at nearly the same spot that Leonard had entered it upon occasion of his first visit. He, too, noted the fire lines, the absence of slash, and the sturdy and upstanding condition of the carefully

preserved young stuff. He spat contemptuously into the snow, as he stooped to adjust the fastening of his snowshoes: "Nursin' pine! Babyin' big timber along like it was a ten acre wood lot in a back pasture! Spendin' time an' money on fire lines. Be'n here, Blodgett says, better'n twenty year, an' ain't hardly nicked into the good stuff yet." A sneering chuckle followed the words, "He might better of took it all off while the takin' was good. Old 'Lijer Blodgett hain't goin' to waste no time onct he gits a crew into it. An' he hain't a-goin' to waste no money on fire lines an' slash, neither." For two hours the man walked back and forth through the timber, his snowshoes leaving a broad flat trail in the new-fallen snow. "Eighteen, twenty thousan' to the acre if they's a foot," he estimated, "Cull stuff an' bresh all out of the way, roads all built—goin' to be the easiest loggin' I ever done." Brushing the snow from a stump, King seated himself. "Loggin' it's one thing, an' gittin' it's another," he speculated, "Blodgett, he claims he's tried to buy it a half dozen times an' it can't be done, so I won't waste no time there." The man paused with an exaggerated wink at a red squirrel that whisked about upon the snow, "They all know Sam King," he grinned, "An' when they got any dirty work to do they all send fer Sam. 'Nothin' criminal, Sam-mule, mind you, nothin'

criminal,' he says, settin' rared back in his big leather chair fittin' the ends of his fingers together acrost his belly. So, that kind of narrows things down. It can't be bought. MacAlister ain't to be croaked, it bein' criminal, an' fer the same reason the stuff ain't to be stole. He sent fer the right man. I got it doped out a'ready, if the land lays like I think it does. But I gotta figger on gittin' a level man in here without excitin' no suspicions. Cost him a bunch o' money, but the timber's worth it. Guess I'll jest slip around an' have a talk with this here MacAlister."

The old Irishman paused in the shovelling out of a huge drift that had formed from the rollway almost to the cabin. "An' who be ye? An' what the divil ye doin' in my timber?"

The boss of Number Nine paused and looked down into the rheumy old eyes with a grin: "This your timber? Pretty good stand. I was wonderin' who owned it."

"Ye workin' for Blodgett?"

"Well," answered King, apparently choosing his words, "I am, an' I hain't." The figure that had been steadily shovelling snow at a few paces behind MacAlister paused at the words and looked up at the man who stood on the top of the huge drift. The boss of Number Nine stared in astonishment as

the violet eyes met his own: "Dog-goned if it hain't a gal!" he exclaimed with a widening grin, "An' throwin' out snow like a man! You're gal, Mac-Alister?"

The old man ignored the question: "Ye be, an' ye ben't, an' mebbe ye'll tell me th' meanin' av thot. Av ye've be'n cruisin' my timber fer Blodgett, ye've wasted ye're toime. Oi've towld um Oi'd niver sell to um. An', Oi'm tellin' ye now, thot wid all his millions, he ain't got money enough to iver put wan av his domned wreckin' crews into my timber."

"Don't know's I blame you none," answered the other, "King's my name—Sam King, an' I'm supposed to be runnin' Blodgett's Number Nine camp, but that's what you might say, sort of politics. What I'm after is tryin' to locate a right of way fer the new M. & I. cut-off."

"Whut's th' M. & I. cut-off?"

"It's a railroad. They're figgerin' on runnin' a line acrost from Thunder Head to connect up with the M. & I. an' save goin' clean around by Brainard."

"An' what's Blodgett got to do wid thot?"

"That's what I was comin' to. You see, he's got two camps over there acrost the river, an' he figgers on loggin' off the hull tract this winter. What's he got left? Nothin' but cut-over, an' his back tract,

that lays twenty mile north of here, acrost the big swamp. He wants this here railroad to run up on his side of the river, so's he kin unload a strip of that cut-over land onto the railroad at a big price. He owns clean through to Thunder Head, an' if he could sell 'em a right of way through there he'd gouge 'em fer about as much as he paid fer the timber in the first place. The railroad's onto his game, so while I'm up here runnin' one of his camps, they're hirin' me to see if a right of way mightn't be got holt of on this side of the river."

"Ut's pretty near all swamp below here on this side same as above," said the old man.

"I ain't looked into that, yet, but even if we had to run the line up to here on Blodgett's side, we could put in a bridge at your lower line an' jump acrost. The way I look at it, they hain't no use lettin' one man git all the gravy."

For the first time the girl spoke, forestalling her father: "You mean that you would rather see us get the railroad's money than Blodgett, and yet, you're working for Blodgett?"

"Sure, that's what I mean. Old Blodgett's got enough the way it is."

"You're a kind-hearted man, aren't you, Mr.—er, King?"

The biting sarcasm of the tone was lost on the

boss. "Well, I like to do folks a good turn when I git the chanct, 'pecial pretty gals," a fatuous grin accompanied the words.

"And, you're working for this railroad, too?"

"Yes, I'm sort of locatin' their right of way fer 'em."

"You must be a valuable man to your employers," continued the girl, in the same biting tone, "Or, didn't it occur to you that a right of way through standing timber like ours would cost the company a great deal more than a right of way through the cut-over? Timber has to be paid for."

This time King caught the hostility of the tone. "Pretty smart, fer a gal, now, hain't you? That's what I like to see—smart women. Most of 'em lets the men do all the figgerin'. But the facts is, by us cuttin' acrost your timber we could run the line around the big swamp north of here, an' save twenty mile of fill. This here long fill would cost a good many times over what the short run acrost your timber would cost. So you see, I'm tryin' to save money fer the comp'ny an' do you a good turn to boot."

The girl made no answer. She saw that she had been scored against, but intuitively she knew that the man was lying.

"Ye're the sicont wan av Blodgett's min that's

be'n snoopin' around here," said MacAlister, "Wuz th' other wan a railroader, too?"

"Didn't know they was anyone else," replied King, eyeing the old man sharply, "Who was he, an' what'd he want?"

"Name's Linerd. Claims he's runnin' a thractor, haulin' logs fer Blodgett."

"Oh—him!" The girl was quick to note the hostility of the man's tone. "What'd he want over here?" His eyes were on the face of the girl, as his lips framed the question. She felt the hot blood mount to her cheeks, and turned quickly to her shovelling. But not before King had taken note of the blush.

"Claimed he wuz huntin' deer the furst toime, an' th' nixt toime ut wuz to learn how we done th' loggin' widout smashin' th' young stuff."

King laughed, harshly: "You want to keep yer eye on him. He's old Blodgett's right hand man. Anyone kin see he don't know nothin' about timber. But he's smart, all right. Figger it out fer yerself. What's old Blodgett got him up here fer? He hain't payin' out no wages fer nothin'. Blodgett wants yer timber. He can't buy it, so he's got this feller up here to figger out how to git it without buyin' it. He's a slick article, all right. That tractor business is jest an excuse to git him into the woods." The

man paused with his eyes on the girl who was attacking the drift furiously: "An' now he's here, mebbe the timber hain't the only thing he's after."

MacAlister noted the glance: The little watery eyes blazed: "Ye mane——?"

King shrugged: "Figger it out fer yourself. These here city fellers is mighty slick articles. An' what the hell do they care fer us folks that lives in the woods?"

The old Irishman shook a mittened fist in the face of the man on the drift: "Oi'll have nothin' to do wid Blodgett, nor none av his min! Th' two av yez kin kape away from here! Av Oi ketch yez settin' foot on my land agin they'll be throuble! Be gone!"

For answer, King grinned, and stepping closer, slipped a flat bottle from the inside pocket of his mackinaw. "No hard feelin's Old Timer," he said, "Here, take a pull at this an' you'll feel better."

"Dad!" cried the girl, sharply, as the old man reached for the bottle.

"G'wan in th' house, av ye can't moind ye're own business!" he commanded, "Wan little drink hurts no man av a cowld marnin'."

"Sure it don't," agreed King, who swallowed a liberal portion himself, before returning the bottle to his pocket, "I'll be goin', now, MacAlister. An'

you'll be knowin' I be'n handin' it to you straight—about this here railroad. They'll be some men up here surveyin' pretty quick. They'll survey a place fer the bridge below yer rollway, there, an' they'll run a line through yer timber. They won't hurt nothin', an' I'll tell 'em to be careful of yer young stuff. Hadn't ort to take 'em over a half a day to cross yer timber, an' mind you, Blodgett hain't got nothin' to do with this. If the railroad cuts through it's agin Blodgett."

"Oi'll not be botherin' th' surveyors av they do no damage in runnin' they're line. Oi cudn't shtop a railroad c̄rossin' me land av Oi wanted to. But av they do cross, moind yez, they'll pay dear f'r th' timber. O'i'll belave ye're a railroader win Oi see ye're surveyors. An' ye kin tell thot Linerd av Oi ketch him around here again, Oi'll shoot um."

CHAPTER XVIII

AT THE WATER HOLE

WITH the approach of Christmas it became evident that should both camps maintain their rate of cut, the Blodgett tract would be logged off by spring. Leonard found no time for another visit to the MacAlisters, for it required two trips a day, seven days in the week to keep Number Nine's bank-ground clear of logs. And all the time he was learning logs. An hour here, or an hour there, while he was waiting for the loading or unloading of the huge sleds found him in the timber with the sawyers, or the skidders, or the swampers. And always, as he watched the ruinous methods of the loggers, he planned and schemed and figured how that particular block could have been worked to the best advantage. Nearly every evening, in the little office, he and big Tim Neely would talk and dream of a day to come when somehow, somewhere, sometime, they should be turned loose in a virgin forest with orders to log it to the best advantage.

“Strip loggin’ is best,” said Neely one evening as they sat close to the little air-tight and listened to the howling of the wind. “Two per cent of the timber laid down every year, an’ the strip cleaned up an’ replanted behind you. In fifty years you’d have it all cut, an’ the first year’s replantin’ ready to cut again. Then, the same thing right over an’ over an’ the timber’ll last fer ever.”

“An’ that’s just what they’ll be doin’, sometime!” exclaimed Leonard, “The whole cut-over will be reforested.”

Neely nodded: “Yes, but it’ll be the State or the Government that does it. They ain’t no private party has got sense enough to figger on profits fifty years ahead.”

“But they’ll begin doin’ it before long,” asserted Leonard. “They ain’t always goin’ to set back an’ see all this here country goin’ to waste. An’ believe me, when they git at it, here’s one guy goin’ to help tackle the job. They’ll be needin’ men, an’ men that knows the game. It ain’t all goin’ to be easy sleddin’ for ’em. This here young stuff’s got to be raised from seed, an’ it’s got to be planted right, an’ set out right, an’ after it’s set out it’s got to be handled right. Fire’s got to be kep’ out, an’ disease has got to be kep’ out. Trees git sick like folks. An’ maybe fire’s et all the humus out of the soil,

an' then the soil ain't as wet as it use' to be when the timber was on it. Believe me, the guy that can dope all this here stuff out an' can find the answer to it, is the guy that's goin' to be the big noise in these here timber States one of these days."

Neely nodded: "That's right, son. You jest keep right on keepin' yer eyes open, an' yer ears open, an' a-readin' them books you sent off fer, an' someday you'll begin to cash in on what you've learnt."

Leonard grinned: "They kid me a lot about them books over in the bunk house."

"Let 'em. They don't know it, but it's their-selves they're kiddin' not you. Where'd you find out about them books, anyhow? They's a lot of good stuff in that one you loant me."

"She told me—Mary MacAlister. She's read 'em, an' she let me copy the names, an' told me where to send. That's why I draw'd them thirty dollars a while back."

"That's a sight of money to lay out fer books," admitted Neely, "I didn't know they come so high."

"Yes, but the way I look at it, if an eggication ain't worth thirty dollars to a guy, it ain't worth a damn. The thirty dollars is jest like an ante, in a jack-pot. If I lose, I don't lose nothin' but the thirty, an' if I win, I win big. But, at that,

they's a hell of a lot of work about it. It's slow goin'. Trouble is, I never went to school no longer'n what I had to, an' they's a lot of them words an' things I ain't hep to. You can work it out, though, 'cause most of the books has got a kind of a dictionary in the back of 'em, an' a guy can look the words up, an' then look in the indexes of the other books an' find out where it tells about that stuff. It's slow work, but them books tell everythin' a guy's got to know about timber only it's hell diggin' it out. But I'm a-goin' to hang to it till I know every damn' thing about a pine tree from the time the cone hits the ground till the boards is nailed to a buildin'. An' that reminds me, I'd ort to be to work right now."

"Where do you do all this here readin'," asked Neely, as the other pulled on his cap.

"I traded bunks with Frenchy up next to the end of the room, an' I set a lantern on the wash bench an' lay in the bunk an' read till the words all gits to runnin' together, then I blow out the lantern an' go to sleep." What he neglected to tell the boss was of the wonderful five minute interval that each evening intervened between the blowing out of the light and the falling to sleep—an interval of delicious fantasy, of big timber and a girl with violet eyes.

On the day before Christmas, Tim Neely rode up with Leonard to Number Nine, and accosted Sam King on the skidway: "The boys has be'n hittin' her up pretty stidy fer quite a spell, what do you say we give 'em a day tomorrow?"

Sam mouthed his quid and spat into the snow. "What's the idee?" he asked.

"Well, it's Chris'mus, an' I figgered we might kind of pull off a celebration of some kind. I kind of be'n figgerin' on it fer a spell, an' I sent out an' ordered some extra grub fer Chris'mus dinner. It come in on the train this mornin', a kag of oysters, an' some cranberries, an' a dressed hog. They's enough so both crews kin fill up on fresh meat an' oysters."

King grinned: "What'll old 'Lijer say? I ain't worked fer him long, but seems like I've heer'd tell how he'd skin a flea fer his hide an' taller."

"Whatever he says he kin say it to me," answered Neely, "I'll take the blame, an' if he don't like the way I run his camp he kin git someone else."

"You mean you want me an' the hull crew down to Number Eight fer to help eat this here grub?"

"That's it. You might send yer cook an' cookee down about daylight fer to help out with the cookin', an' the rest of you come on down soon as you like. Tell a couple of yer top ax-men to bring

their axes, an we'll pull off some choppin' races, an' ax-throwin', an' wrastlin', an' snowshoe an' ski races, an' such like. It'll do the boys good."

"Suits me," answered King, "I'll have the boys bring down the phonygraft an' we kin pull off a stag dance."

That evening at supper, Neely addressed his crew: "Boys," he began, "that there box car that come in with the log flats has got a couple hundred sacks of oats, an' twenty bar'ls of gasoline, in it, an' likewise they's a bag of cranberries, an' a kag of oysters an' a dressed hog. I'd like to git it partly onloaded tonight. The car's spotted at the hay shed. You needn't bother with the oats, nor the gasoline. Tomorrow's Chris'mus, an' we're goin' to take a day off——" The boss's voice was drowned in the shout that greeted the announcement. When he could make himself heard, Neely continued. "Number Nine is comin' down to help us celebrate. I told King to have his top ax-men along, an' we'd show 'em how to chop, an' throw axes. Likewise we want to out-race 'em, an' out-wrestle 'em, an' show 'em that Number Eight is Blodgett's top camp." Yells of approval greeted the words. The meal was finished noisily, and with loud whoops and much rough horseplay, the men dispersed, the ax-men to the grind stones, and most

of the others to the box car where they fought good-naturedly for the honour of carrying the grub to the cook shack.

Immediately after breakfast the following morning, Leonard fastened on his snowshoes, slipped into the timber, and headed for MacAlisters. He grinned as he found himself hurrying over the snow. "I don't want to miss that there dinner, but they's some things in them books I don't make. She knows all about this here book stuff. Them eyes of hers is almost black sometimes. I'd like to see her dolled up in some swell rags onct. She'd make them painted-up molls look like somethin' that had be'n left behind when the folks moved out. No, I'll be damned if I would! I like her best the way she is."

Crossing the river, he paused and surveyed the rollway. "Must have clost to a hundred thousan' feet banked a'ready," he estimated, as he eyed the logs. "That would be about two hundred thousan' fer the winter, an' not so bad when you ain't payin' out only one man's wages, an' leavin' yer woods in better shape than it was when you started."

As he neared the cabin the door opened and, water pail in hand, Mary MacAlister stepped out onto the snow. Leonard was about to call a greeting when the girl, motioning him to silence, hur-

ried toward him. "You must leave here—quickly," she said, as she reached his side. "Come with me to the river. He has threatened to shoot you, and if he should see you here—today, he might do it."

Leonard saw that her face was paler than usual, and that the violet eyes held a look of pain. "What's the matter, kid?" he asked as a bend in the road carried them out of sight of the cabin. "Who's goin' to shoot me, an' why? An' what's the matter with you? You look like you was in trouble of some kind. Tell me, kid—what's wrong?"

The sincerity of the man's words, the genuine sympathy of his tone struck straight to the girl's heart. Two big tears trembled for an instant upon the long lashes and rolled down her cheeks. She brushed them savagely away with the sleeve of her checked shirt. By the time the river was reached she had gained control of herself. At the water hole she halted. "Who's Sam King?" she asked, abruptly.

Leonard frowned: "So, he's begun his work, has he? Well, don't you worry, not fer a minute, kid. Me an' Tim Neely's keepin' cases on him."

"What do you mean, begun his work? What work? He told us he was boss of Blodgett's Number Nine, but that his real work was locating a

right of way for a railroad which will run from Thunder Head to connect with the M. & I."

Leonard grinned: "I don't know nothin' about no railroad, but the chances is he was lyin'. What Blodgett's got him up here fer, is to git holt of your timber."

A hard laugh—unmirthful, issued from the girl's lips: "That is exactly what he said about you."

"Me!" He took a step closer and looked searchingly into the violet eyes. "You didn't believe him, did you?" The girl detected a note of reproach in the words. For an instant she hesitated. The violet eyes faltered.

"Oh, I don't—don't know what to believe! Dad believes him, and he has threatened to shoot you."

Leonard laid a mittened hand upon the sleeve of her shirt: "Listen here, kid. I don't give a damn what *he* believes. What I'm carin' about is—is—you. Do you believe I'm up here in the woods to gyp you out of your timber? Do you?"

Slowly the girl shook her head: "No, I don't believe—I can't believe—that."

The man's fingers closed tightly upon her forearm: "Then it don't make no difference what anyone else believes," he said, earnestly. "Listen, kid. I ain't always be'n on the level—but them days is past. They's a lot of things I'm goin' to tell you

some day—but not yet. I got to make good, first. But, don't you worry none about that timber. Me an' Tim Neely, we're on the job. An' when we tumble to King's game, believe me we'll knock him fer a gool."

"Who's Tim Neely?"

"He's boss of Number Eight, where I'm at. He's as square a guy as ever swung an ax. It was him doped it out what old Blodgett had King up here fer, after I'd told him about your timber."

"Oh, but what can you do? What can anyone do against a man like Blodgett? He has millions and we have—nothing."

"Listen to me, kid. I'm yeller, I know. I ain't got the nerve to stand up to a man with gloves on his mitts. But we're playin' this game without gloves, an' if it comes to where I've got to, by God, I can set in the chair without yelpin' while the guy presses the buzzer! Blodgett don't git that timber—you can take it from me, he don't!"

"I—I don't understand. What does yellow mean—and what is a buzzer? Oh, I wish——"

A loud call from the direction of the cabin interrupted the girl. "Yes, Dad, I'm coming!" she answered, and spoke hurriedly to Leonard as she picked up the ax from the snow and chopped at the thin ice that had formed over the water hole:

“Quick, you must go. He may come down to see what has delayed me. No, no, hurry!” as the man tried to relieve her of the ax.

Leonard grinned: “I guess he won’t shoot no one. Anyway, we’ll find out. I’m goin’ back with you an’ tell him he’s tyin’ to the wrong guy. That there Sam King, he’s a bad actor.”

“I know—but not—today! Please! He’s—Dad’s drinking and he might—shoot.”

“Drinkin’!” exclaimed Leonard, “Where’d he git his booze at? Thought he didn’t keep none around the house.”

“It’s that horrible Sam King, I know. Yesterday a lumberjack came through and handed Dad a package—two quarts of liquor, and he’s drinking. Go, now,—please!”

“I’ll go, kid, because you’re wantin’ me to. But, I’m comin’ back. Don’t go worryin’ none about the timber. This here King, we’ll maybe have to let him go fer a while till we get hep to his lay. This here railroad stuff he’s be’n handin’ you is prob’ly all bull, but it might mean somethin’, at that. Maybe Tim Neely can dope it out. You leave that part to us, kid. We’ll get hep to his grift, all right, an’ when the time comes, believe me, we’ll turn him up—an’ old Blodgett, too.” Leonard turned abruptly away and crossed the river. At the edge of the

woods he paused and looked back. Upon the opposite bank stood the girl, water pail in hand, watching his departure. Her red and black checked shirt made a vivid splash of colour against the white snow. Leonard waved his hand, and the next moment the girl disappeared around a bend in the road to the cabin.

CHAPTER XIX

CHRISTMAS AT NUMBER EIGHT

THE dinner at Number Eight was an unqualified success. Leonard returned to the camp an hour before the repast to find festivities in full swing. Honours between the two camps were about even. A man from Number Nine had won the snowshoe race, and a big Swede from Number Eight annexed the ski running contest. Number Nine's top chopper cut through a thirty-inch log ten seconds quicker than the best man Number Eight could produce, and Number Eight came back by winning the ax throw. The 'dinner call interrupted the wrestling bout, in which a husky giant from each camp had been trying in vain to throw the other "four points down" for a half-hour.

Temporary tables of planks supplemented Number Eight's regular dining equipment, and for an hour the men gorged themselves, as plate after steaming plate disappeared before the onslaught.

After dinner someone clamoured for a tug of war, and in lieu of a rope, log chains were hooked together, and thirty picked men from each camp lined up for the pull. At a word from the starter the men surged back upon the chains, and for full ten minutes the long line weaved and shivered as each man strained and laboured, encouraged by the shouts of the men who ranged beside. Then, gradually, very gradually, the long line moved endwise, amid wild shouts and whoops of encouragement from the men of Number Nine. For Number Eight was slipping. In vain the men under the leadership of big Tim Neely laid back on the chain, redoubling their efforts to stop that irresistible forward motion. The motion became faster as footholds gave way and hand holds slipped on the chain, until, gathering momentum with each second, the men of Number Eight were dragged across the line.

The wrestling match was resumed and the early darkness was beginning to make itself felt when Number Nine's champion, caught unaware, succumbed to a hammer-lock and settled with a grunt of exhaustion into the snow.

In the bunk house the big swinging lamps were lighted. Someone turned on the phonograph, and the men of the two crews crowded the deacon seats and the edges of the bunks.

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"Take off that talkin' piece an' give us a dance tune!" demanded a swamper, executing a ponderous shuffle on the board floor.

Andy Moore, a big sawyer from Camp Nine, with a record around Duluth and Superior for bar-room brawling, stepped onto the floor and bellowed forth his challenge: "Y'all be'n foot-racin', an' throwin' axes, an' yankin' on chains all day to see which is the top camp, an' y'ain't found out. Y'ain't tried nothin' that amounts to nothin'. They ain't only one way fer to find out which is the top camp, an' likewise to find out who's the champeen of both camps. Come on, now, you Number Eighter's! Pick out the best man y'got an' shove him out here on the floor. We'll have a ginuyne stand-up-an'-knock-down-an'-drag-out, with jack-buck mittens on our dukes. That'll show who's the best man! Bring on yer fightin' man! I'm the champeen of Michigan, an' Westconsin, an' Minnesoty!" Inflamed by his own words the man stamped heavily up and down before the deacon seats bawling forth his challenge as he clumsily swung his huge fists in the faces of the men.

Seated between old Pap Hickman and the top loader, Shirly Leonard listened to the man's boasting, as his critical eye took in the ungainly bulk of him, the heavy arms that swung like flails from

thick shoulders, the thick, awkward legs, and the thick belly that bulged at the belt line where the two top buttons of his trousers had been loosened to facilitate the gorging of the Christmas feast. The trained eye of the ex-pugilist took in these details at a glance, and a mighty contempt for the beefy giant surged within him. He knew to a certainty that anyone with a semblance of speed, and foot work, and training in the placing of blows could make a fool of the man in three minutes. A plan of fight that would bring the huge bulk crashing to the floor flashed through his brain with the rapidity of light. His fists clenched and involuntarily he moved slightly forward on his seat. Then the narrowed eyes and hate-curved lips of Kid Morowitz flashed to mind. The sickening sensation of the rocking, heaving canvas ring as the droning voice of the referee counted—eight—nine—ten! The howls, and jibes, and hisses of the crowd, and the cries of “Yellow”—yes, that was it, he was yellow. He could knock this man out to a certainty—but he did not dare to stand up and face him. “Yellow!” He himself knew it. The fight fans knew it. And the men of the two camps knew it. He settled back upon the deacon seat, but not before his movement had been noted by the stamping swashbuckler: “Haw, haw, haw! The

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greener wants to try his hand! Come on, greener! Don't hold him back, boys. He wants to git at Andy Moore—an' they're tellin' how he didn't have the guts to tie into Tommy Kirgan on the rollway! Better say yer prayers first, greener, 'cause when I git at you I'll jist na'ch'ly spatter you all over the wall!"

"Spatter *me*, then!" The words cut sharply upon the surcharged air as Number Eight's top loader rose from his seat beside Leonard and faced the big man upon the floor. A yell of acclaim from the men of Number Eight filled the room. "A fight!" "A fight!" "Knock him cold, Sim!" "It's a long drag back to Number Nine!"

Neely started to protest, but Sam King interrupted: "Let 'em go, Neely," he grinned, "everyone's sober. They won't be no hard feelin's. Let 'em fight. We'll do it up regular, jist like a prize fight with three-minute rounds. You be referee an' I'll be time-keeper."

The suggestion met the unqualified approval of the men and Neely assented. Heavy jack-buck mittens, riveted at the thumbs, were produced, and as he slipped his hands into them, the top loader taunted the man from Number Nine: "Champeen of Michigan an' Westconsin, you might be, but you tuk in too much territory, Moore. The only part

of Minnesoty you're champeen of, is mebbe Minnesoty Point!" A roar of laughter greeted the words, and the fight was on.

Moore had the advantage of weight, but Sim Coughlan, the top loader, was something of a fighter, himself. Knowing nothing of boxing, nor of expert foot work, the two stood toe to toe and exchanged vicious swings for each other's faces, not one blow in ten getting past the upraised forearms. For two minutes the slugging match went on before both contestants paused for breath. Blood was trickling from Moore's nose, and the flesh about Coughlan's right eye was swelling visibly. For half a minute the two stood breathing heavily before the battle was renewed, this time more warily, each contestant milling slowly around to obtain some fancied advantage of light or position. Cries of advice and encouragement were called from bunks and deacon seats: "Slug him in the chin!" "Paste him in the nose!" "Black his lamps!" But no further blow was struck, and the milling ceased abruptly as the voice of Sam King sounded above the cries of advice: "Time!"

At the word Leonard dived for the water pail, and the next moment Coughlan was pushed gently onto the deacon seat while the greener dabbled at his swelling eye with a handkerchief soaked in cold

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water. Also the greener was whispering words of advice into his ears, words which sounded strangely professional and technical, and the meaning of which was not at all clear: "Listen, Sim, play fer his wind. You got him. Keep on swingin' fer his face, but land on his stumick. Work fast. He ain't got no speed—nothin' but beef. Feint, so he'll keep his guard up, an' then land on his stumick!"

"Round Number Two—Time!" called King, and again the men faced each other on the floor. This round was opened by Moore with a bull-like charge which Coughlan met with a couple of heavy blows that landed harmlessly upon Moore's upraised forearm. Coughlan had made no effort to avoid the rush, and as the two heavy bodies came together in a clinch, the momentum carried them against a deacon seat which promptly tipped over with all hands, at the same time tripping the contestants so that all sprawled together upon the floor.

Neely rushed in to separate the fighters: "No rough an' tumble!" he cried, tugging at the arms of the men who were seeking to pommel each other at close quarters, "Stand-up-an'-knock-down!"

As the men regained their feet Sam King again called time, and again Leonard whispered rapidly into Coughlan's ear: "Keep out of his way. Side-

step him, an' land on his stumick! You had him that time if you'd of landed like I told you. One or two good punches an' his guard'll come down, then land on his jaw. Remember, now, the stumick—then the jaw!”

“Third round. Time!” announced King, and once more the men faced each other upon the floor. Evidently bent upon finishing the fight in the shortest possible time, Moore rushed again. This time, however, Coughlan stepped aside, and as Moore turned, his left arm crooked to guard his face, and his right arm drawn back for a mighty swing, the words of the greener flashed into Cloughan's mind. He had never heard of anyone trying for the stomach in a stand-up-and-knock-down fight, the technique of the log woods calling for the visible battering of the face. However, here was his chance, and summoning all his force he sent a long right swing full into the exposed paunch of his antagonist. The effect of the blow was almost magical, the air whistled from Moore's throat in a great sighing grunt. His arms sagged weakly away from his face whose open mouth and staring eyes made a picture of pained surprise. He swayed slightly at the knees. “Give him another! Finish him up!” the voice of the greener cut loud and clear, and Coughlan struck once, twice. The first

blow landed again on the stomach, and the second full on the face, and without a sound, the self-acclaimed "champeen" spun half way around and crashed to the floor where he lay until he was lifted onto a bunk and brought to by some of his cronies.

"Seems like you know a hell of a lot about fightin' fer a man that won't fight," growled Sam King, as he paused before Leonard's seat and returned the watch to his pocket.

Old Pap Hickman laughed, a dry, cackling laugh: "Know'd 'nough 'bout it to put yer champeen of the world to sleep, didn't he, Sam? You can't beat us Number Eighters."

"Why didn't he do his own fightin'?" demanded King.

"You know all about swimmin', don't you, Sam?" queried Pap, with an aggravating grin.

"Swimmin'! What in hell's swimmin' got to do with it?"

"The crick don't freeze, an' they's a deep hole down back of the stables. You kin go swimmin' there if you want to."

"What in hell's ailin' you? You crazy?"

"No, but that's like the greener, here. A man hain't got to be doin' a thing jist 'cause he knows how to." The men who crowded the deacon seat

laughed uproariously, and the foreman of Number Nine moved on, growling about an old fool, leaving Pap Hickman mouthing his pipe and chuckling.

As Neely had feared, the men of Number Nine were taking the defeat of their champion surlily. From all about the room as they drew on their mackinaws, growls and angry retorts greeted the merciless kidding and joshing of the men of Number Eight. It looked like trouble, and Neely realized there was nothing he could do to avert it. Leaning against the stanchion of a bunk, he wished the men would hurry their departure, as he prepared to check the first outbreak of violence. Angry retort followed malicious jibe, until it seemed that nothing in the world could prevent the bunk house from becoming the scene of a free for all man fight.

Then suddenly the atmosphere cleared of all thought of fight. The door burst open and a teamster hurtled into the room with the cry of "Fire!"

On every hand men scrambled for caps and mackinaws. "The hay shed," imparted the teamster, between gasps for breath. "My lantern busted! I tried to fight it, but the wind's too strong, blowin' the fire right agin' that car of gasoline!" The word "gasoline" passed swiftly from lip to lip as the men crowded through the doorway. In the direc-

tion of the stables the clearing was already alight with flames. Force of habit carried them half way across the clearing in their first rush from the bunk house. Then the portent of the word "gasoline" seemed suddenly to percolate their intelligence. The rush wavered as men halted and turned back. "The hull camp's a goner!" "When that car lets go, she'll scatter fire a half a mile!" "We'll be covered with blazin' gasoline an' burnt to a cinder!" The rush toward the flaming hay shed stopped. In every direction men were scattering for the edges of the clearing. A few wavered uncertainly, to stare in fascination at the wind-fanned flames that were whirling and leaping about the box-car.

Leonard, Sim Coughlan, and old Pap Hickman ran at the heels of big Tim Neely. At the little knot of wavering men, the big boss paused: "Come on, boys!" he cried, "there's enough of us here to shove that car to hell!"

"An' git blow'd to hell doin' it!" retorted Sam King.

"It would be your chanct to go in good company!" snapped Neely, "Come on, boys! There's some of us has got red guts instead of rotgut inside of us! We ain't afraid of a little fire!"

At the words, Pap Hickman, Coughlan and another, fell in behind the boss. Leonard turned and

ran in the opposite direction. For just an instant the men paused to watch the fleeing figure. Sam King laughed aloud, and turning, made for the shelter of the timber. Coughlan cursed under his breath, and old Pap Hickman chuckled. As they passed the empty flats, the top loader shouldered a pinch-bar.

“The roof’s beginnin’ to burn!” cried Hickman, pointing to the little red flames that licked at the edges of the car roof. But the roar of the flames in the hay shed drowned his words.

Neely sprang for the ladder at the end of the car: “I’ll let off the brakes!” he shouted. “You boys shove!” A bright light, brighter, whiter than the red light of the flaming hay, shot across the rolling smoke clouds, accompanied by a noise that drowned the crackling of the flames. The men turned to see the tractor rounding the blazing hay shed. “My God!” cried Coughlan, “he can’t git through there! It’ll cook him!”

“Go back! Go back!” yelled Neely, dancing about on top of the car, but the tractor came on, and the next moment was lost in a sheet of smoke and flame that whipped around the corner of the shed. The next instant it reappeared, and without stopping, cut around the end of the car, and took its place on the track. With a whoop, the third man

who had followed Neely, seized the chain that dragged at the tractor's draw-bar, and made it fast to the box-car. Shielding himself as best he could from the flames, Coughlan set his pinch-bar beneath a wheel. The brake-shoes slackened creakily. "Let her go!" roared Neely, and clambering down the ladder, he placed his shoulder to a wheel. The tractor's exhaust roared. Coughlan bore down on his pinch-bar. The men pushed and strained. And the car moved! Slowly at first, then faster, until it was clear of the flaming shed. A hundred feet down the track, Neely applied the brakes, while Coughlan and the others chocked the wheels. The tractor came to a halt, and all hands attacked the blazing roof of the car with snow. It was but the work of a few minutes to extinguish the blaze, and when the last spark went black, the men stood and grinned into each other's faces.

"Where's the other feller?" asked Neely, glancing about him.

As if in answer to the question, a man stepped round the corner of the car. It was Andy Moore, and his grin was the broadest grin of all as Coughlan gripped his hand. "Well—I'll be damned," quoth Coughlan, as his other hand came to rest on Leonard's shoulder.

"We couldn't of made it without the ingyne,

greener," said Moore, and turned abruptly to Neely. "Say, boss, if I should happen to quit up to Number Nine would you give me a job? I kind of like the work down here better, an' besides they's a few things about this here fightin' game I want to learn if the greener'll wise me up to 'em."

Neely laughed: "Try it an' see," he said. "I don't never hire men off'n another man's crew—but if a man should happen to quit—that's different."

CHAPTER XX

THE NEW FOREMAN

LESS than a week after Christmas three men stepped from the caboose of the log train at Number Eight and inquired for Sam King. One man carried a tripod and a black case, another a sliding rod fitted with a painted target, and three pairs of snowshoes, while the third carried a thin metal chain and a huge suitcase. Neely forwarded them to Number Nine, via an empty log sled behind Leonard's tractor.

"Surveyin'?" asked the greener, by way of friendly conversation, as the outfit moved slowly up the log road.

"No, not exactly," answered the man with the tripod, "Going to run some levels."

"Railroad?"

"No, I don't know exactly what is wanted. Mr. Blodgett told us to report to King for instructions.

He wants to determine the fall of some river, I suppose."

Leonard mulled the information in his mind but it meant nothing to him, and he decided to try again: "Must be a nice job," he opined, "Wisht I had a job like that instead of runnin' this here damn' tractor."

The men laughed. "I guess everyone feels at times as though he would like to have the other fellow's job," said the one who had answered the first question, "but our work is no cinch, ramming around the woods with the snow belly-deep to a giraffe, digging down to hard ground to set up, and pulling off your mittens to adjust your instrument."

"Guess that's right, at that," admitted Leonard. "An' what's it good fer when you get it done?"

"Well," smiled the man, "if you were figuring on putting in a dam you would have to determine first the fall of the river. Then you could tell how high to build the dam, and how much land would be flooded by your pool."

"That's right," admitted Leonard, and immediately turned the conversation into other channels.

That night in the little office he asked abruptly of Neely: "What would old Blodgett be puttin' in a dam fer?"

“A dam? Where?”

“On the river, of course. Where in hell else would a guy build a dam.”

“What makes you think he’s goin’ to put in a dam?”

“Them guys that rode up to Number Nine with me says Blodgett sent ’em up here to run levels. Said they didn’t know what fer, but prob’ly it was to tell the fall of the river so’s old Blodgett could tell how high to make his dam, an’ how much country it would flood over. Said they was to get orders from King.”

Neely pondered the information for some time. Then suddenly he slapped his leg with his palm: “I bet that’s what his game is, all right!”

“Who’s game, an’ what is it?”

“Blodgett’s or Sam King’s, most likely. That’s what Blodgett hired him fer.”

“I don’t make you.”

“Didn’t I tell you I figgered Blodgett hired King to come up here an’ figger a way to beat MacAlister out of his timber? Well, onct Blodgett gits a dam in, he’s as good as got MacAlister’s timber.”

“How’s that?”

Without answering, Neely asked another question: “You’ve been into MacAlister’s timber, how high does it lay above the river?”

“What do you mean, how high?”

“The ground—is it high ground—hilly? Or does it lay like this tract, kind of flat an’ level?”

“Yes, that’s the way it lays. The bank you go up at the landin’ ain’t over three or four foot high.”

Neely nodded: “I thought so. King, he’s be’n over there, too. S’pose Blodgett would put in a dam jest below MacAlister. What would happen? He’d flood MacAlister out, wouldn’t he?”

“Sure he would,” agreed Leonard, “But——”

“But what?”

“He’d flood his own self out, too. This here land don’t lay no higher than what MacAlister’s does.”

Neely grinned: “They can’t build this here dam till summer. What’ll be left on this tract for Blodgett to flood? Nothin’ but a lot a slash.”

“But, hell!” cried Leonard, “ain’t there no laws? A man ain’t got a right to dam up a river an’ flood everyone out of the country, has he?”

“Sure there’s laws. But Blodgett will git the law on his side. All he’s got to do is to git a bill through the legislature permittin’ him to dam the Wild Goose River. Then he puts up a bond that he’ll pay all the claims for damages.”

“Then, he’d have to pay MacAlister fer his timber, is that right?”

“Yup.”

Leonard pondered the situation for several minutes while the boss watched him out of the corner of his eye. Suddenly, the greener looked up: “But say,” he cried, “who figgers out what he’s got to pay? MacAlister?”

Neely laughed: “I was jest wonderin’ if you’d overlook that. That’s where the steal comes in. No, MacAlister ain’t got nothin’ to say about it. They’s three men app’inted by the court. Appraisers, they call ’em. MacAlister picks out one, an’ Blodgett picks out one, an’ them two picks out the other one. They go over the ground an’ figger what the damages is.”

“How do they figger the damages?”

“Cruise the timber an’ figger out th’ stumpage.”

“But, hell, man!” cried Leonard, “That ain’t no way to figger that piece of timber! Look at the way it’s be’n handled! An’ look at the young stuff! Would they make Blodgett pay for the young stuff same as the big sticks?”

“You ort to know by this time, what loggin’ men thinks of young stuff,” answered Neely.

For a long time Leonard was silent, and when he spoke, it was as much to himself, as to the boss. “He’s be’n a long time workin’ that timber. He’s got young stuff comin’ along that’s better’n six

inches through, that was seedlin's he set out in them back strips. An' the big stuff stands thicker today than it stands right here where it ain't never be'n touched. It's what he's laid by fer *her*—that young stuff is—an' by God, she's goin' to have it! They won't be no dam on Wild Goose, Neely, but how we goin' to stop it?"

The boss knocked the ashes from his pipe against the corner of the stove. "Maybe we can't stop it," he answered. "Anyway, we've got quite a little time to figger it out. It might be we'll have to make a trip to St. Paul."

"I'd make a trip to hell to save her timber," said Leonard, as he drew on his cap and mittens, "But if I do old Blodgett'll go along with me."

"Best to do it accordin' to law," advised Neely.

"Law's all right if it works," admitted Leonard, "If it don't, then we got to try some other way," and opening the door, he stepped out into the starlit clearing.

Two weeks later the three level men came out of the woods, and again Leonard tried to engage them in casual conversation, but their answers were brief and evasive. Evidently they had been advised not to talk.

January passed without Leonard's finding time to visit MacAlister's cabin. One morning early in

February, Elija Blodgett himself stepped from the logging train and proceeding at once to Number Nine, spent the night there. Late the following afternoon, he returned to Number Eight, and after supper retired with Neely to the little office.

By way of opening the conversation Blodgett expressed approval of the progress made in the timber. "You have done very well, Neely, very well," he said, rubbing his bony hands together close to the stove. "Another sixty days will see the last of the timber on the cars, and the price is still mounting, Neely, still mounting."

"That's good," the boss replied. "Yes, sixty days will see the finish. Then I s'pose you'll be tacklin' the back tract next winter."

"Just so, Neely, just so. And it was to arrange for that that I came up here. A terrible trip, Neely, at this time of year—a most uncomfortable and disagreeable journey."

"Well, they don't run no Pullmans on this loggin' spur," admitted the boss with a grin, "But cabooses ain't so bad, when you git use' to 'em. Looks like you could of waited till spring, though, if you ain't figgerin' on goin' into the back tract till next fall."

"And so I could, Neely, so I could, if it were not for the fact that the back tract offers very exceptional difficulties in the matter of getting the logs

to the mills. It is, as you know, completely surrounded by a very considerable swamp, and were we forced to extend the railroad through this swamp, the expense would be prohibitive." Neely was about to interrupt, but Blodgett motioned him to silence: "Just a moment, Neely, just a moment. As I say, it was this that induced me to undertake this trip into the woods. And, now, before we proceed further, and to avoid needless repetition of instructions, I will ask you to select a man from the crew who may be depended upon to stand loyally by us. He must be a man of rather more than ordinary intelligence, a man capable of offering testimony—a-hem, according to instructions, before a legislative committee. Is there such a man in the crew, Neely."

"Yes, there's one that I'd figger would fill the bill. His name's Leonard. He's the tractor man."

"The tractor man!" exclaimed Blodgett, in surprise, "Why, he is a green hand. Never been in the woods before, and knows nothing at all of timber, or of conditions."

"Don't fool yerself, Mr. Blodgett," grinned the boss, "He was green when he come into the woods this fall, but he ain't no green hand, now. There ain't no part of the job except the cookin' that he ain't got holt of. He's the smartest lad I ever had

in the woods, an' he knows more about timber today than most of 'em that's worked in the woods all their life. An' when he tackles a thing he sees it through—jest remember that, Mr. Blodgett, when the greener starts a thing he sees it through. Kep' three mile of log road open by runnin' his tractor up an' down it fer forty hours to a stretch with the snow flyin' so thick he couldn't see ten foot in front of him with the headlight lit."

"Seems to be just the man we want. Bring him in here, Neely, and I will give you your instructions."

A few moments later Leonard followed the boss into the office where Blodgett greeted him with a patronizing smile: "Ah, young man, Neely tells me that you have acquitted yourself very credibly, in fact, that you have shown extraordinary aptitude for the work. It is becoming harder year by year to find among the younger generation, a man who is willing to go into the woods and learn logging in the camps. Plenty of white-collar loggers who want to learn the business through the office, but few who will go into the timber. Just remember that hard work and loyalty to your employer will soon put you to the top, my boy. You will find that you have lost nothing by your diligence. I still have timber to cut, as Neely can tell you, and

it is in connection with that timber that I am here. I want two men from this camp to offer certain testimony before a legislative committee. Neely will of course be one, and we have selected you for the other. I may add that the matter in hand will involve a trip to St. Paul, with of course, all your expenses paid, and—er—extra compensation, in the nature of a—er—bonus, we will say, which will, in effect, double your wages for the winter. Does the proposition appeal to you?"

"Le's see if I make you. What you're tryin' to say is, how'd I like to hit the rattler fer St. Paul, an' grab off a bunch of extry jack fer boostin' yer game to this here committee. All right, I'm on. What's the lay?"

Blodgett stared at the speaker, and Neely laughed: "It's jest his way of speakin', Mr. Blodgett. He's got a kind of funny lingo but after you git use' to it you kin kind of figger out what he's drivin' at. He says the proposition suits him fine."

"Extraordinary, Neely, most extraordinary. I can scarcely follow him. I wonder whether the committee——"

"You mean," interrupted Leonard, "yer afraid them guys won't make me? Don't you worry, Cap, I'll put it acrost. I never seen no one yet I couldn't talk to. Le's git down to cases."

A thin smile played about Blodgett's lips: "Extraordinary, but at least unique. In fact, it may have a very good effect. A little humour at times is a valuable asset."

Neely grinned: "They won't git the kind of talk out of him they're expectin'."

"Quite so, Neely, quite so. And now if you will give me your attention, I will outline my plans and instruct you in the line of testimony which will be necessary in the furtherance of our undertaking. I may say here that Samuel King will be our principal witness and you will be guided in a great measure by his testimony which you are to corroborate.

"As you know, of course, this tract will be logged off by spring. My other holdings are in what is known as the back tract, a very good stand of timber, but at present inaccessible. The cost of a railroad across the swamps would be too great to attempt."

"Why don't you drive the stuff down the Wild Goose?" interrupted Neely, "I cruised that timber fer you, you mind, a couple of years back, an' I come out down the river in a canoe. She kin be drove all right."

Blodgett frowned: "That is exactly what I am planning to do—drive the river. But, remember

this," he paused and glanced meaningly into the eyes of the boss, "In its present condition the *Wild Goose can not be driven*. That is the important thing to be remembered."

"Sure it can't," admitted Neely, "an' neither could any other stream that size that I ever heard tell of. She's got to be cleaned up—snags blow'd out, down stuff cut out, an' some timber booms put in. A good crew could clean her up in fifty or sixty days."

Blodgett's frown deepened. "You are not a riverman, Neely. Your judgment in this matter must defer to mine. As a matter of fact the *Wild Goose* cannot be driven, nor can it be cleaned up for driving, for the reason that it is too shallow. That is one thing you must both remember. The river cannot be driven, nor can it be put in condition to drive without the construction of a dam. I have had engineers engaged in running the levels and their reports show that the average fall of the river is so slight that a dam constructed, say at a point about opposite here, would raise the water to a sufficient height for driving my timber."

"Raise the water back to your timber!" cried Neely. "You mean clean to the back tract? Why, Mr. Blodgett, as slow as the *Wild Goose* runs, an'

as low banks as it's got, you'd spread water over half of Minnesoty."

Blodgett's frown changed to an icy smile: "I have been at some expense, Neely, quite some expense, in procuring the introduction of a bill in the legislature permitting the building of a dam at a certain point on the Wild Goose River. The bill in question has had its reading, and has been referred to the proper committee. That committee will hold a hearing on this matter in the State Capitol at ten o'clock next Tuesday morning. It is very important that this matter receive favourable action in committee. I am assured that should the House Committee report the bill favourably the Senate Committee will indorse it without further hearing. Everything will therefore depend upon our being able to convince that House Committee that this dam is essential for getting the timber from the back tract to the mills.

"The demand for timber incident to the war, which you undoubtedly know, is going sorely against the allied nations which are our friends, makes it the patriotic duty of every man who calls himself an American to do his utmost to produce lumber. This urgent demand for lumber will be a strong factor in the passage of this bill. The committee will consider its recommendation an act of

patriotism, which in fact, it will be. Therefore, your testimony must be in effect that such dam is essential."

"But, you can't hold enough water back the way the land lays to raise the river at the back tract," objected Neely.

"A fact, Neely, of which I am well aware, and a fact, also with which you need not concern yourself. Nothing will be said about the back tract, except to introduce your own figures as to the amount of standing timber. I am asking no man to perjure himself. In fact, I should not for a moment tolerate false swearing. In order that you need have no compunctions as to swearing that the dam will raise the water level at my holdings, I have purchased a narrow strip of timber, bordering upon the river from this tract clear to the back tract. The fact is that now my timber reaches down to within a half mile above the proposed dam-site, and you certainly know that a ten-foot dam will raise the water to that point."

"Do you call tamarack swamp timber?" asked Neely.

"Yes, standing timber, of course. What else is it?"

The boss sniffed contemptuously, "Where is the dam goin' in?" he asked.

“The location of the dam will be the north line of section ten, at a point where the river cuts through a low ridge which will also serve as the wall of the pool.”

“Section ten,” repeated Neely. “That would be just about MacAlister’s lower line. Maybe you ain’t heard of Paddy MacAlister, an’ his timber, Mr. Blodgett?”

“What about it?” Blodgett’s eyes narrowed perceptibly.

“Why this here MacAlister, he’s got three quarters jest acrost the river from here that’s mighty fine timber, so they say. He’s be’n workin’ it, kind of nursin’ it along fer better’n twenty year. The way the land lays through here, a ten-foot dam on the north line of section ten would put his land about six foot under water. If you’d put in yer dam above, now—say——”

“Neely,” Blodgett’s voice held a note of flinty hardness. “I didn’t come up here to ask you, but to tell you what to do. As a matter of fact, I have had competent advice upon the location of this dam. As you may, or may not know, Samuel King has had much experience in handling logs on the streams of Northern Minnesota. It was more to secure his services in the matter of locating this dam, than running Number Nine that I hired him.

His judgment is that the dam should be located on the north line of section ten, and that judgment was corroborated by the engineers who ran the levels. If there are small property holders who will be damaged by the building of the dam they have their recourse in the courts. I shall, of course, be required to put up bonds of a sufficient amount to cover such damage. The amount of such loss to small property holders will be fairly determined by disinterested appraisers, and I stand ready to abide by their decision."

"But the appraisers won't figger in nothin' but merchantable timber. That's all right in some cases, but not this one. This here MacAlister, he's farmin' timber, not skinnin' the land, but farmin' it. He's strip loggin', an' he's got young stuff comin' on that's worth as much as his big stuff, an' besides that he's worked his standin' stuff till it's a better stand today than it was when he took holt of it. Floodin' his land will kill all that young stuff, an' the appraisers won't take no account of it. It ain't right, Mr. Blodgett. An' I'm wonderin' if MacAlister's be'n notified of this here committee meetin' so he kin be there an' give his side of it!"

The blood had flooded Blodgett's face and receded, leaving it livid with rage: "Neely!" he cried, "You forget yourself! Do you presume to

intimate to my face that I have any ulterior motive in the placing of this dam? To dictate business ethics to *me?*”

Neely rose to his feet and faced his employer. “I don’t know nothin’ about what kind of motors you got or ain’t got—an I don’t give a damn! But I ain’t fergittin’ myself, none whatever. I’m rememberin’ myself so good that I’m histin’ my turkey right here an’ now. You kin git someone else to run yer camp, Blodgett. But before I go, I’m goin’ to tell you jest what I think of you. You’re a damned dirty crook—that’s what you be! An’ the only reason you want that dam to go in is so’s you kin steal MacAlister’s timber. You ain’t smart enough to do it alone so you hired Sam King to tell you how. You know’d Sam was the man to go to when you had a dirty job to do. Others has used him before, an’ you birds pass a good thing along among you. You’ve tried to buy MacAlister’s timber, an’ when you seen you couldn’t, you figger on stealin’ it. That’s what it amounts to—stealin’ it! You know, an’ I know all about appraisers. I’ve saw quite a bit of appraisin’ done, an’ I ain’t never heard a millionaire loggin’ outfit kick yet on their findin’s. It’s a dirty game, Blodgett, an’ the hell of it is that it works. You rich loggers greasin’ witnesses, an’ legislators an’ ap-

praisers, an' everyone else that you have to, an' then sailin' in an' bustin' the little fellers. An' you figger on squarin' it with God by pullin' a long face, an' givin' honest men hell fer cussin', an' forkin' over a big slice of yer boodle to the church. That's you Blodgett—a damned hypocrit! An' if you ain't in hell when I git there, it'll be 'cause you ain't dead yet." Neely turned to the desk in the corner of the room, and seating himself, drew out a check book. "I'll jest write out a check fer my time, Blodgett," he said. "An' then I'll be goin'." He glanced over at Leonard who had been a silent listener to all that had been said. "Guess I kin make out yourn, too, can't I, son?" he asked, "I guess you don't want to keep on workin' fer no such outfit as this, do you?"

For just an instant Leonard hesitated, then he cleared his throat harshly: "No, I ain't quittin'," he answered. "Cap, here, he looks like a square guy to me. Even if he ain't, it ain't none of my business. I'm workin' fer him, not fer this here MacAlister guy, an' when he throws me a chanct to make a little easy money, I'd be a fool to pass it up. You're a fool to pass it up, too. What the hell do you care about anyone else, so you git yours? I know what side of my bread the butter's on; I'll jest stick by Mr. Blodgett."

The lumberman was on his feet, his voice shaking with rage, as he pointed a trembling finger at Neely: "You're discharged—fired! Do you hear? You will leave this camp on the train in the morning."

Neely folded the check, placed it in his pocket, and rising from his chair, proceeded to stow his personal effects in his turkey. "The hell I will," he answered. "You an' your hired liars will be on that train, an' I'm a little particular who I ride with. Looks like you've got things pretty much yer own way, Blodgett, an' with the money you've got, an' the witnesses you've bought, you'll prob'ly be able to steal MacAlister's timber. But it ain't goin' to be so easy as you figgered, Blodgett, 'cause, come ten o'clock Tuesday mornin' I'll be right there to the Capitol, an' so will MacAlister, an'——" he paused abruptly, and turned his eyes full upon Leonard, "an' so will MacAlister's gal." A note of bitter scorn tinged his words as Leonard's eyes fell before his gaze: "An' as fer you, greener, as long as there's lumbermen like Blodgett, they'll be jobs fer you. You're smarter than Sam King. They'd ort to pay you well." And swinging his turkey to his back he opened the door and stepped out into the night.

In the office Blodgett turned abruptly to Leonard: "You are foreman of this camp, in the place of

Neely, who was discharged for incompetence. He didn't quit, he was discharged."

"Sure he was. I heard you fire him. But hell, Cap, you better git someone else fer boss. I can't run no camp, not yet. They's a hell of a lot I ain't hep to."

Blodgett reseated himself, and motioned Leonard to a chair. "Listen to me," he began sharply, "I want the testimony of a camp foreman. A logging foreman's word carries weight in matters pertaining to timber operations. You will be the accredited foreman of Number Eight until after the hearing. After that you will return to the camp in your former capacity."

"I make you, all right. But, say, Cap, when do I git my mitts on that extry jack?"

"What?"

"Why, you said somethin' about doublin' the wages. When do you figger to come acrost?"

"Ah, you refer to the—er, added compensation for making the arduous journey to St. Paul?"

"Er—yes, that would be it. When do you figger on—er, slippin' me the roll?"

"You shall be paid in cash by an agent, immediately upon conclusion of your testimony."

"That's all right, Cap, but s'pose we just go fifty-fifty on the purse."

"What do you mean?"

“Why, how about passin’ over half the jack *before* the testimony?”

Blodgett’s eyes narrowed: “Do you mean to intimate that you do not trust me to fulfil my obligations?”

“No, no, Cap, you git me wrong. I’d trust you—like a policeman. But this here agent guy. S’pose that there roll would stick to him. Where’d I be at?”

A thin smile played at the corners of Blodgett’s lips, and without a word he slipped a wallet from an inside pocket and counted out some bills, which Leonard recounted, and thrust into his own pocket. “And now,” continued the lumberman, “is there anything about this matter that you do not understand? Of course King will offer his testimony first, and you will be guided largely by that, but have you the essential facts in mind?”

Leonard nodded: “Yes, I guess I’ve got the whole thing pretty well doped out.”

“Suppose you just go over the salient features.”

“Huh?”

“I say, I would like to have you tell me the main points of what you are to testify to, so I may be sure you have it straight.”

“Well, you want this here committee to pass a bill to let you build a dam on the north line of section ten. The reason fer the dam is to raise

the water so you can float out your logs. Your timber reaches down to half a mile above the dam. The reason the dam's got to be right there is because there's a ridge of high ground there that will make a wall fer your pool."

"Very good, Leonard, very good. And now have you ever seen MacAlister's timber?"

"Yes. I was through it huntin' deer."

"What do you think of it?"

"Well, they's a lot of little stuff not hardly more'n what you might say, brush. There's some big stuff, but he told me he's be'n hackin' away at it fer more'n twenty years, so it don't stand to reason there'd be so much left."

"Just so, Leonard, just so. A great share of it is what might be termed cut-over, if that is the case."

"Most of it has be'n cut over all right."

"Don't forget that point. I shall instruct my attorney to bring out that evidence at the hearing—to ask you specifically about that point."

"Good idea, Cap. I'll give 'em an earful."

"Very good. We will have plenty of time tomorrow on the train to go over the finer points with King. Good night."

"Good night," answered Leonard, and as he passed around to the bunk house door, he chuckled. "Neely, he's sure sore."

CHAPTER XXI

“UP AGAINST IT”

IT was late that night when Tim Neely knocked loudly on the door of the MacAlister cabin.

“Who’s there?” called a voice from the inside, as a light glowed dully from the window.

“It’s me—Tim Neely.”

The door opened and MacAlister, clad in his underclothing, and holding a tin lamp, bade him enter.

“Who be ye, an’ what d’ye want, wakin’ folks up in th’ middle av’ th’ night?” asked the old man as he laid kindling in the stove.

“I got somethin’ to tell you, an’ there ain’t no time to lose neither if you’re goin’ to save yer timber.”

“Save the timber! What d’ye mane—save th’ timber?”

“Blodgett’s after it, an’ we’ve got to move quick to stop him.”

"He ain't goin' to haul it off tonight wid this thractor, is he?"

"No. But you've got to get your clothes on an' hitch up yer team an' pull out fer Thunder Head tonight so we can catch the train in the morning for St. Paul."

"St. Paul, is ut? What the devil ye drivin' at? An' who be ye?"

"I was boss of Blodgett's Number Eight camp till a couple of hours ago."

The flames were roaring up the pipe, and the stove began to radiate heat. A sound from a corner of the room attracted Neely's attention and he saw that someone was descending the ladder that led to the loft. A moment later Mary MacAlister stood before him, dressed in checked shirt and heavy wool trousers, her feet encased in grey yarn socks. MacAlister had drawn on his trousers and stood scowling into the face of the big foreman. "Boss av Blodgett's Number Eight!" he exclaimed, angrily. "An' we've had the boss av his Number Nine, an' his thractor man snoopin' around here! Why don't he sind over th' rist av his crew?"

Neely returned the scowl: "Look here, Paddy MacAlister, you quit yer nonsense an' listen to me! My name's Neely—Tim Neely. An' my dad was

Mike Neely that's worked side by side with you on many a job. I've heard him tell about you an' him always stickin' together in fights an' such, back in the early days——”

“Mike Neely's bye! An' why in hell didn't ye say so? An' what ye doin' workin' f'r a blaguard like Blodgett. Oi mind th' time down to Brainerd ——”

“Yes, yes, I've heerd tell about how him an' you cleaned up on the hull camp of Scotchmens. But listen to me, an' we can talk about that later. Blodgett's goin' to put in a dam on the north line of section ten.”

“A dam! A dam, did ye say? On the narth line av siction tin! Why, bye, ut w'd flood me out!”

“Sure it would, an' that's jest what he figgers on doin'. They was some surveyors through here wasn't they?”

“Sure they was, f'r th' new railroad. They spint a hull day where the narth line av siction tin crosses th' river. They said ut wuz a bridge they wuz figgerin' on f'r th' railroad to cross on.”

“Railroad—hell!” exclaimed Neely. “They ain't no railroad comin' through here. It's Blodgett's dam they was layin' off.”

“But King, he says how the Company was fig-

gerin' a cut-off line from Thunder Head to the M. & I."

"King was hired by Blodgett to figger out how to steal your timber an' he figgered that floodin' it, an' drownin' out all yer young stuff, an' gittin' the rest appraised an' buyin' it in, was about the easiest way to git it."

The girl had listened breathlessly as she laced her boots. From behind some cheap curtains that evidently screened a bed, came a low, tremulous wail. The girl crossed the room: "Do be still, mother," she begged, "it will come out all right." The low wailing continued, and the girl turned to Neely, her face deathly white: "Oh, he can't do that!" she cried, "surely, he can't do that—after we've worked so hard all these years!"

The big man shook his head lugubriously: "I don't know, Miss. He's got the money. They's be'n things as raw as this pulled in the woods before now. We got one chanct, an' only one. We got to git to St. Paul by Tuesday mornin'. The legislative committee meets at ten o'clock at the Capitol, for a hearin' on this bill. An' we got to be there to fight it. I know a lawyer in Little Falls, we'll wire him to get on the train when we go through. We'll fight 'em—but Blodgett's got his paid witnesses."

“Where’s—where’s Shirly Leonard?” asked the girl, and Neely noted the tinge of colour that flooded her face at the words.

“Leonard, he’s—with Blodgett,” he answered, gruffly. “The dirty pup switched over as soon as Blodgett offered to pay us double our winter’s wages fer to testify accordin’ to instructions.”

“Oi know’d ut! Oi know’d he wuz a domned spy! Av he’d of come back Oi’d av shot um!” cried MacAlister.

Neely interrupted him: “We ain’t got no time to lose talkin’,” he reminded, “we’ve got to git the team hooked up an’ light out fer Thunder Head. It’s after twelve o’clock, an’ Monday already. An’ we got to be there Tuesday mornin’ sure.”

MacAlister slipped on his mackinaw and lighted the lantern. “Git us a bit to ate, Mary, an’ pack th’ valise while we git th’ harses out,” he called, and as Neely followed the old man out the door, he heard a low, muffled sob that was drowned by the rattle of the iron frying pan that the girl placed on the stove.

“Gurl, ye’ll not be goin’!” cried MacAlister, as at the conclusion of the hasty meal Mary drew on her heavy fur coat.

“Yes, I’m going,” she answered, and Neely silenced the old man’s further objection.

“Let her go, MacAlister,” he advised, “she kin talk better than what we kin. An’ we need all the help we kin git. You can’t never tell what’ll happen when yer buckin’ a man with money.” So MacAlister gave reluctant consent, and on the road to Thunder Head, between spells of shovelling drifts from the trail that wound endlessly through the cut-over, Neely told all he knew of the details of Blodgett’s scheme.

In the grey of the morning they drew up before the hotel, where Pat MacCormack welcomed Neely and the girl while MacAlister put up his team. While they waited for breakfast Neely related the plot to MacCormack, who listened with ejaculations frequent and profane. At the conclusion of the narrative the landlord shook his head dubiously: “Mebbe ye’ll bate the bloody owld divil, but, Oi’m doubtin’ ut. ’Twas count o’ him Oi’m peggin’ around on this wooden fut. Niver a cint av damages did he pay me, an’ whin Oi lawed um, Oi got bate. He’d too much money f’r the likes av me to bate um, wid his witnesses all swearin’ ’twas me own fault th’ log was dropped on me fut.”

A half hour before train time the Blodgett’s logging locomotive drawing the caboosie puffed onto a side track, but the occupants did not leave the car until the ticket agent unlocked the door of the

depot. Then Blodgett stepped across and purchased the tickets, and returned to the caboose. A few moments later Neely purchased the tickets for the three, and wired the attorney at Little Falls.

When the single long whistle of the big train answered the flag signal the three started from the hotel. As they reached the door they were joined by MacCormack who, clad in a severe black suit, was carrying a very yellow suit case.

“Where you goin’ to?” asked Neely in surprise.

“Who, me?” answered the landlord, “Oi’m goin’ to St. Paul. Oi know somethin’ about MacAlister’s timber, an’ th’ time he’s spint workin’ ut, an’ th’ results he’s got—an’ av an-ny word Oi cud say wud do harm to owld Blodgett, Oi’m the b’y’ll be there wid a mouthful.”

As the heavy train ground to a stop at the wooden platform of the station, the two opposing factions came face to face at the vestibuled door of the car. Standing between her father and Neely the girl studied the faces of the men who stepped on board. Blodgett, the collar of his fur coat turned up about his ears kept his eyes severely to the front, noticing neither by word nor look the four who stood side by side on the platform. Sam King, carrying his employer’s leather bag, followed, grinning fatuously as he eyed the MacAlister crowd.

Last came Leonard who, with eyes averted, crowded hastily aboard the car.

On board the train Neely led the way to a day coach, where turning a seat, the four sat facing each other. A desultory conversation waxed and waned as the train clicked over the rails during the long hours of the forenoon. Outside the gaunt cut-over raced rearward—a desolate waste of scrub oak and maple, with occasional stands of jack pine or hardwood that had not yet been laid down by the saws of the fallers. Desolate, indeed, to these men who knew the country as it had been only a few years ago, and as if to accentuate the desolation, bare white squares showed at intervals—squares that were the snow-buried fields of settlers, who, attracted by the low price of the cut-over lands had built their houses, cleared the land of the stumps and brush, and were fighting the long, losing battle with the sand.

At Little Falls Neely stepped from the train and returned presently with a paper bag filled with sandwiches and doughnuts.

“Where’s your friend, the lawyer?” asked the girl, as the boss resumed his seat.

“He’ll be along pretty soon. I seen him git on the train, but I was afraid I’d miss gittin’ this grub if I didn’t hurry. Seen old Blodgett, too. He was

at the telegraft office when I come through from the restaurant.”

Nearly an hour passed before the attorney, a squat man, with an ill-fitting suit of store clothing, and necktie awry, approached down the aisle and halted beside the boss.

“Hello, Mr. Jenkins,” Neely greeted. “Folks this here’s Mr. Jenkins the lawyer I was tellin’ about. This is MacAlister, an’ Miss MacAlister, an’ Pat MacCormack.”

The man in the aisle acknowledged the introduction with a bob of the head that included the group, and addressed Neely: “What was it you wanted of me?” he asked.

MacCormack arose from his seat: “Set here where ye kin chin between yez. Oi’ll be goin’ to the smoker f’r a bit av a smoke.”

Jenkins slouched into the proffered seat, and Neely proceeded to enlighten him.

When the boss had finished Jenkins scratched the side of his neck with a black-nailed thumb: “Jest leave it all to me, Neely,” he said, complacently, “we’ve got ’em beat a mile. They ain’t got a leg to stand on. You folks rest easy. You won’t even need to appear before the committee. I’ll fix it all right, but it’ll cost you somethin’. Can’t afford to practice law fer nothin’. Here I am up to my

neck in work an' have to leave off right in the middle of it, an' go down to St. Paul. It's expensuv business, Neely, but you come to the right man. It'll cost you two hundred, win or lose, an' another five hundred on top of it if we win. The two hundred is payable now."

"That's all right, Jenkins," answered Neely, reaching for his pocket. "I'll jest pay it, an' MacAlister kin pay me later."

Mary MacAlister laid a hand on the boss's arm: "Just a minute, Mr. Neely," she said, and turned abruptly upon Jenkins: "What was it Blodgett has been telling you for the last hour?" she asked. "And how much is he paying you to lose this case for us?"

Caught off his guard the man flushed deep red: "Why—why—Blodgett—him an' I's old friends—that is—we've knew one another a good while—I jest happen to see him sittin' there in the sleeper, an' we set an' talked fer a bit—that's all—same as anyone would do."

Piling bluff upon bluff, the girl shot another question: "And the check he handed you—what is the amount of it?"

"The check—Oh, that! Why, that was a balance he owed me fer some work I done fer him a while back. I hadn't never sent in no bill to him yet.

They all come to me when they want a good lawyer.”

For just an instant Neely glared at the other, then as comprehension dawned on him, he reached forth a huge hand and literally swept the other from his seat and sent him sprawling into the aisle. “You git to hell out of here before I brain you!” he growled. “Go back an’ tell Blodgett about what a hell of a good lawyer *he’s* got. We don’t need none.”

As Jenkins, mumbling threats of prosecution for assault, regained his feet and retreated down the aisle, Neely turned to the girl: “You see, Miss, what we’re up against. We don’t even dare to trust no lawyer. We’ve got to go it alone. But, what I can’t see is how you know’d he’d be’n talkin’ to Blodgett, an’ about Blodgett givin’ him that check.”

The girl smiled: “In the first place I didn’t like his looks, nor the way he talked. Then, I remembered that it had been an hour since he got on the train. If the business you had with him was important enough for you to telegraph him to join us on the train, surely he wouldn’t have waited an hour before hunting us up. There must have been a reason for his delay, and I figured that Blodgett was the reason. And if I was right, then Blodgett would have to pay him, and when I saw how in-

sistent he was on collecting from us in advance, I thought he would do the same with Blodgett."

"Well, you thought right," replied Neely, grimly. "An' if you kin keep on thinkin' that good, I guess we ain't goin' to need no lawyer." He turned to MacAlister: "I was right about bringin' her along," he said. "Where'd we be'n now if we'd left her to home?"

Darkness had fallen before the train pulled into the station at St. Paul. In the glare of the arc lights Blodgett waited at the steps of the day coach. With him were two strangers. As Neely, carrying the MacAlister baggage, stepped from the car he was confronted by the two men.

"That's your man," said Blodgett crisply, "Arrest him."

One of the men showed a badge and laid a hand upon Neely's arm: "You're under arrest, young feller," he said, "I'll read the warrant."

"Arrest!" exclaimed Neely, "What for?"

"Forgery, as charged in the warrant."

Blodgett stepped forward, a gleam of triumph in his eye: "Forgery, Neely, forgery. You signed my name to a check drawn payable to yourself after you had been discharged from my employ. Mr. Leonard, the present foreman of my Number Eight camp, is a witness to the crime."

“Crime—hell! It’s a dirty trick to keep me from testifyin’ tomorrow!” cried Neely, glaring from Blodgett to the group of his paid witnesses who stood grinning in the background.

“That’ll be about all out of you,” said one of the officers, gruffly, “You come along with us.”

Neely extended the old-fashioned leather satchel to MacAlister, only to have it seized from his hand. “No you don’t!” cried the officer. “Pretty slick, ain’t you, tryin’ to git rid of evidence right in under our nose.”

“It’s theirs,” answered Neely, “I was only carryin’ it fer ’em.”

“You can tell that to the judge. But in the meantime, we ain’t overlookin’ no bets.”

Before anyone could interfere MacAlister hurled himself upon the man, tearing the satchel from his grasp and knocking him to the floor. “B’gobs, an’ thot’s me own valise, ye dirty thayfe!” he cried, angrily.

The next moment the officer was upon his feet, a leather black jack raised to strike. Like a flash Neely leaped forward and his big fist landed full in the man’s face with a force that sent him sprawling in a limp heap a dozen feet away. “Ye would hit an old man with that, would ye?” he cried, and the next thing he knew a club descended

upon his own head, and the world turned black, as two uniformed patrolmen came to the aid of the plain clothes men. In the mêlée, MacAlister had in turn launched a fresh attack upon the officer who had struck Neely down, and it was several minutes before the combined efforts of the two patrolmen could overpower the old Irishman whose white hair bristled about his head like the quills of a disturbed porcupine.

Several minutes later, in answer to a riot call, other policemen appeared and dragged the still fighting MacAlister up the stairs to the waiting patrol wagon, and carried the inert forms of Neely and the plain clothes man after him.

Leaning against an iron pillar of the train shed, the girl sobbed aloud, entirely unmindful of the little group of curious onlookers who had not followed the crowd to the wagon.

Picking up his own suit case Pat MacCormack touched the girl gently upon the shoulder: "Come on, Mary, gurl," he said, "It looks like we're up against ut all right. But they's still two av us left to fight Blodgett—an' moind ye, gurl—we're Oirish."

CHAPTER XXII

KING TRIES TO DEAL

AFTER the patrol wagon had moved away, and the crowd dispersed, Blodgett turned to the two men who stood beside him upon the sidewalk: "I want you to report at my office—you know where it is, King—at half-past eight o'clock tomorrow morning for a conference with my attorneys. You will then receive your final instructions."

"We'll be there," answered King, "an' if you should happen to want us fer anything between then an' now, we'll be to Wilson's Hotel. We might go to a show or somethin' tonight, but you leave word there an' we'll git it."

After registering in the office of the old wooden hotel that had served two generations of lumberjacks and rivermen, King led the way to the bar-room. "Give me a shot of red liquor," he ordered, "Old Blodgett's buyin' a drink. What's yourn?"

Leonard shook his head: "I ain't drinkin'," he answered, "go ahead."

"Take a seegar, then," urged the other.

Again Leonard declined: "Nothin' fer me, thanks. I don't smoke."

King eyed the greener half contemptuously: "Don't drink, an' don't smoke!" he grinned, "You must live a hell of a miserable life." There was a trace of a sneer in the words that Leonard was quick to detect. He knew that King detested him and that he had despised him from the day he had cravenly submitted to the insults of the loading crew on Number Nine's skidway. Knew also that the man's hatred had increased when his advice had enabled Sim Coughlan to defeat Andy Moore in the bunk house, and again when he had so conspicuously aided in saving the burning car of gasoline after King, himself, had sought safety in the timber. But all outward and visible signs of this hatred had disappeared the moment King had found that Leonard had been selected by Blodgett to corroborate his testimony before the committee. All the way to Thunder Head, and later on the trans-continental flyer, King had assiduously devoted himself to being agreeable to the despised greener. Time and time again Leonard had grinned to himself at the awkward overtures of Number Nine's

foreman, and the words of exaggerated praise with which King had detailed to Blodgett his feat of keeping the log road open during the blizzard.

Leonard knew that this sudden show of friendliness was but a clumsy mask of King's real feeling toward him—a mask of expediency. For if, as Neely had said, King had been hired to steal MacAlister's timber, upon the success of the undertaking depended King's remuneration.

Therefore, King exerted himself to establish friendly relations with his ally, the new foreman of Number Eight, and it was despite this exertion that the sneer had crept into his voice. He was quick, however, to cover the lapse, hoping Leonard had not noticed:

“Well, here's how! An' I was just kiddin', Leonard. Facts is, it ain't no one's business but his own if a man don't favour smokin' an' drinkin'. Some does, an' some don't—an' there y'are. Come on, we'll go in to supper, an' then we'll hunt us up a show somewheres. Use' to be a pretty good theayter over near the end of the Wabasha Street bridge, plenty of gals an' the like of that. You go to shows, don't you, Leonard?”

“Oh, sure, I go to shows, all right,” laughed the greener, “Come on. Le's eat.”

As they were leaving the dining room, Mary

MacAlister and MacCormack entered. Leonard swiftly averted his eyes, and his blood boiled as he noted the insolent stare with which King's appraising glance swept the trim figure of the girl in the white shirtwaist and blue serge skirt. Involuntarily his fists clenched, as without a word, he followed the others to the office.

An hour later, Leonard sat at a small table, in a long room filled with similar tables, and drank vichy while King drank beer.

Upon a stage at one end of the room a rather suggestive act was in progress between a lightly clad and heavily painted Amazon and a caricature of a Jew comedian. Other painted women moved freely about among the tables selling bottled beer and drinking with the patrons. And all to the accompaniment of a brass-voiced piano incessantly and vociferously manipulated by a sallow-faced youth in a stained and ill-fitting dress suit.

Straying from the stage, King's glance fastened upon Leonard, who had straightened in his chair, and was staring wide-eyed into the face of the girl who had paused at the next table to lean caressingly upon the shoulder of a cow puncher who, with three or four companions, was taking in the town. The man's arm was about the girl's waist and he was repeating with maudlin insistence that

he had brought a train-load of beef from Chinook, Montana, to the stock yards at South St. Paul. Slopping beer from a bottle into a glass, he held it to the girl's lips, and as she raised her head to drink, the boss of Number Nine saw her eyes meet Leonard's fascinated gaze. Seconds passed as the two stared into each other's eyes. Then the girl's arm slipped from the cowboy's shoulder, and the hand that held the untasted beer faltered so that when she returned the glass half its contents spilled unheeded upon the enamelled table top.

In two steps the girl reached Leonard's side: "You!" she cried, "Mike Duffy! You—here!"

"Yes, Lottie, I'm here," answered Leonard, "but, how about you? What's the matter with the big burg? What you doin' here? I thought you'd throw'd in with Bull Larrigan."

The drop curtain terminated the cheap skit on the stage, and the piano swung into the strains of a sentimental ballad. The cowboys rose from the adjoining table and made their way noisily toward the door, and the girl drew one of the vacated chairs to Leonard's side and settled her elbows on the table. "Buy a drink, Mike, and I'll tell you. They won't stand for us girls setting around unless we're selling drinks." Leonard ordered beer. King glanced quizzically at the two and feigned absorbed

attention to the stage where the curtain had risen upon a buxom female who, in high-pitched, nasal tones, rendered the sentimental ballad. A waiter set a tray of bottled beer upon the table and deftly removed the caps. Leonard paid, as the girl poured herself a drink.

“Bull couldn’t stand prosperity. We lived high while his roll lasted. But it didn’t last long. Between the booze an’ the snow it got him, an’ he’s back again, holed up somewheres on Rivington Street like he was when Lefty dug him out to help train you—only worse. Bull won’t never come back—he’s through.”

“But you—you wasn’t dependin’ on him?”

The girl’s eyes narrowed, and a gleam of hate flashed from between the heavily blued lids: “They tried to frame me, damn ’em! They did frame me! But I was too wise for ’em. I sent my mouthpiece straight to the District Attorney, an’ when the smoke cleared away, Lefty Klingermann, an’ Stiletto John Serbelloni, an’ the Sicily Ape goes up the river to wait till January the 17th, that’s—why that’s today!” A smile of savage cruelty curled the too-red lips, “If the buzzer worked all right there’s three new faces in hell tonight, and I’m glad of it! They’d of framed me for a long stretch, but I fooled ’em.”

Leonard stared into the cruel eyes, aghast: "Lefty Klingermann, an' them Dago gunmen—the buzzer! Say, kid," he cried, suddenly, "it wasn't fer bumpin' me off, was it? I seen in the paper——"

"No. For bumpin' off Kid Morowitz. They'd of framed you for that—if they'd of found you. The Kid double-crossed Lefty, an' Bull tipped it off to Lefty that the Kid was in his room, an' Lefty's gunmen got him. They had you framed for the fall guy. Believe me, you're lucky."

A weight seemed suddenly lifted from Leonard's shoulders. He was no longer a hunted man! In the woods he had felt reasonably secure, but this trip to St. Paul had been attended by risk—not great, probably, but with the police of New York on the lookout for him, a risk, nevertheless. "Then they don't want me?" he breathed, "I seen that in the papers, too—how they was huntin' Mike Duffy ——"

"Sure, that was part of Lefty's game, to swing the cops onto your trail, an' it was all framed. If they'd of got you, it would have been you shovin' against the straps this morning, instead of them."

"But, what you doin' here?"

"Oh, that was part of the deal. I was to get out of New York and never show up there again. They pay my fare to Chicago, and slip me a cen-

tury to start right on, along with a lot of good advice. I hit the Big Windy and the first job I pulls I'm pinched." She scowled savagely, "Start right—hell! What chance has a girl got to start over when the Chicago bulls is wised up before ever I hit their burg? They had my number, all right, all right. And they shook me down for all I had. I had to hustle on the street to get the carfare to get out of town. And here I am. I ain't had the nerve to try the stores yet—I don't dare to go to work without a fall roll. They've prob'ly passed me along, and I don't want to do time."

Leonard passed his hand over his eyes. A great wave of revulsion had surged up within him, as the girl shamelessly recited the details of her sordid story. Commonplace details they were—a little fragment of life—of a life he had known—had lived. A year ago there would have been nothing revolting in the recital. But, now—the air of the room seemed suddenly stifling. The odour of stale beer reached his nostrils from the slops on the tray. His eyes closed. Above him he seemed to see the dark canopy of green that was the tops of pines. All about him giant boles swayed gently in the wind. A creek gurgled noisily among ice-capped stones. He could hear the creak of runners on the snow of the log road, and the roar of his tractor exhaust.

From somewhere came the whine of a saw, the hollow ring of ax blows. The far-off cry of "timber," and the long crash of a falling tree. Chains rattled. He stood looking across a narrow river, at the girl who had paused, water pail in hand, to look back at him. The vivid splash of colour against the snow—the face of Mary MacAlister—he opened his eyes with a jerk, and stared straight into the black eyes of Lotta Rivoli, who was regarding him curiously.

"Sleepy?" she asked, with an insinuating smile. "Come on, then. I always did love you, Mike. You know that. It'll be all right, now I found you again—the two of us—we can put somethin' across."

She had risen from her chair and stood close beside him, so close that her soft breast brushed his shoulder. Her hand was upon his arm gently pulling him to his feet. In his nostrils the scent of strong perfume mingled with that of stale beer. And this was the woman who had once fascinated him! This bawd, this tainted woman, this destroyer of men! A sudden disgust that was almost akin to nausea surged up within him, and he leaped to his feet, overturning his chair, and brushing at the place where her hand had rested upon his sleeve.

"You! Love!" he muttered thickly, and with a

short, harsh laugh, turned on his heel and threaded his way swiftly among the tables to the door.

The look of intense surprise upon the face of the girl gave place almost instantly to a blazing glance of hate. Her hand groped at her throat, and she seemed about to follow the man who had almost reached the door, when Sam King stepped around the table to her side.

"Let him go, Miss," he said, "I kin tell you where you'll find him if you want him."

The black eyes flashed to his, and the red lips framed the words: "Who are you? And what do you know about him?"

"Well," answered King, guardedly, "I know quite a bit about him. He don't go by the name of Mike Duffy around here. Seems like you know'd somethin', yerself. I thought mebbe we might git together an' kind of dope out somethin'."

Without a word she motioned him to the chair vacated by Leonard and seating herself close beside him, touched a button. When the waiter appeared she ordered whiskey, which she swallowed at a gulp.

"And, now," she said, turning to King, "Come across. What's it worth to you to know what you want?"

King grinned craftily: "Quit yer kiddin'," he answered. "What I want to know is worth jest

as much as what you want to know, an' not one damn' cent more. I'll tell you this, though. He's got a good job, an' if you've got anything on him you kin make *him* come acrost—but not me."

"What is it you want to know?"

"Well, f'r instance this here 'Mike' Duffy business. I'd kind of like to git a line on what he's be'n doin' before he showed up around here."

At the end of an hour, during which King bought several drinks, the girl had given him a pretty good account of Leonard's career from the moment of his entry into the prize ring. The net result was somewhat of a disappointment to the camp boss, as the alias had immediately suggested to his mind a criminal career that would have given him a hold upon the greener.

King left the beer hall, and as he threaded the streets he dismissed all thought of the greener from his mind. There remained one card he had not played. A scheme that had been fomenting in his brain from the moment he had looked down into the violet eyes of Mary MacAlister from the top of the snowdrift upon the occasion of his first visit to her father's timber. It was, to the mind of King, a wonderfully simple scheme, and one that, should it work, would give him, and not Blodgett, control of MacAlister's timber. Baldly stated, the

scheme consisted merely of marrying MacAlister's daughter. MacAlister was getting old, he argued, and while he remained alive there ought to be better than wages for all concerned in working the tract as it was being worked. Then, when MacAlister died—at this point a gleam of greed would flash from King's eyes as he envisioned the sweeping clean-up of every foot of merchantable timber on the tract. The first winter following the death of MacAlister would see the end of timber farming on the MacAlister holdings. The girl would object, of course. The man was wont to grin maliciously at this point in the story. Hadn't he handled camps of men for years? Guess he could handle one woman!

Over and over again he had planned each step of the proceeding. He had already succeeded in implanting in MacAlister's mind a distrust of the greener, whom he had looked upon as a possible rival. He had put off from day to day speaking to the girl, or to MacAlister, whose good graces he had been cultivating by presents, at intervals, of whiskey. There was plenty of time. Blodgett wouldn't start anything till spring. In fact he had advised Blodgett to "get next" to the legislative committee, reasoning that it would be well toward adjournment time before the lumberman would feel

sure of his men. If the scheme worked—again King would grin, as he pictured Blodgett's rage when his principal witness should turn against him and expose the plot for flooding MacAlister's timber. In the game of dog eat dog, it is well to be the outside dog. The sum which Blodgett had agreed to pay him the day he got control of MacAlister's timber, was in no wise commensurate to the value of the timber itself. He could afford to wait till MacAlister died. It might not be long. Accidents happen in the woods, a loosened chain, a suddenly released binding pole, a rollway broken out at the wrong time. Lots of things could happen to shorten the time MacAlister's son-in-law must wait to administer the property according to his own logging plan.

Thus matters stood when Blodgett unexpectedly appeared with the information that they must appear immediately before the committee.

It was not yet eleven o'clock when King entered the deserted office of the cheap hotel. Seating himself in a chair he lighted his pipe, tilted back against the wall, and tried to formulate some plan for meeting the girl before appearing at Blodgett's office in the morning. At least, he need have no fear of the greener as a possible rival. He had noted with satisfaction the look of scorn with which

the girl had regarded him at Thunder Head, and again as she had entered the dining room. But, he must see her. Maybe it was better after all, that Blodgett had forced a show-down. For now the girl must realize the absolute necessity for acting immediately to save the timber. She was wise enough to know that King would be Blodgett's principal witness, and that should he swing over to the MacAlister camp, Blodgett's cause was lost.

King stood up, and walking to the register, noted the number of the girl's room. He noted, also, that MacCormack's adjoined it. He hesitated. What would she do if he should knock quietly upon her door and ask an interview with her? It was possible that she would grant it if she could be made to realize it was the last resort to save the timber, but it was more probable that she would take fright, awaken MacCormack, and precipitate a nasty row. For several minutes King stood staring at the register trying to make up his mind to act. "Damn it," he muttered, "I got to do somethin', an' that's the only way I kin figger it."

A sound from the wooden staircase attracted his attention, and he turned to see Mary MacAlister, porcelain water pitcher in hand, coming down the stairs. The girl recognized him, and for just an instant, she paused uncertainly. Then, without a

sign of recognition, she negotiated the remaining steps, crossed the room, pressed the faucet of the iron water cooler, and filled her pitcher.

As she turned toward the stairs King accosted her: "Good evenin', Miss. You're the very one I be'n wantin' to see."

The girl halted and flashed him a look of withering scorn: "I should think," she answered, "that I should be the very one you would not want to see," and continued her way toward the stairs.

"Hold on, Miss. It's fer yer own good I want to talk to you. It's yer only chanct to save the old man's timber."

At the foot of the stairs the girl turned and faced him. "What do you mean—save the timber?"

"I mean if you don't talk to me Blodgett will flood yer timber an' drown all the young stuff an' git the rest at the appraiser's price—an' you know what that means—him with the money he's got."

"Yes," answered the girl, wearily, "I know what that means."

"Well, then, you listen to me. I'm the main one he's dependin' on fer to prove this here dam has got to be put in. I kin queer his game to the committee in about a minute, an' show him up, to boot. I kin tell things that when they hear 'em, Blodgett'll be lucky to keep out of Stillwater."

“What do you mean?” cried the girl, eagerly. “That you would do that?”

“I might,” grinned the man, “I told you onct before, if you remember, that I liked to do folks good turns, now an’ then—’specially, pretty gals.” King advanced a step toward her, and the girl shrank away from him. “Oh, you needn’t be skeert of me. I wouldn’t hurt you none. Of course, they’d have to be some consideration, as they say in the contracts, fer me throwin’ old Blodgett down. He’s payin’ me pretty well fer my work. You see I ain’t afraid to speak out when they’s jest the two of us. One person’s word’s as good as another’s.”

“What’s your price?” asked the girl, dully, “Remember, we’re poor. We can’t pay much. We can’t expect to bid against Blodgett.”

“You kin pay what I want, all right, ’cause *you’re* what I want.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean if you’ll marry me, I’ll have old Blodgett huntin’ his hole in about two minutes after that hearin’ starts tomorrow mornin’.” Hot blood mounted to the girl’s face, and she stared at the man in horror. Then, in a panic, her eyes sought the stairs. “Wait a minute,” commanded King, “I ain’t expectin’ you to love me nor nothin’ like that—not yet anyways. You’ll find I ain’t so bad

if you use me right. Facts is, I'm tired of batchin' it, an' want to settle down. The old man an' I could work the timber, an' keep all the money in the fambly. I ain't hard to git along with onct you come to know me. What I'm offerin' you is the chanct to make a deal to save yer timber. You kin take it, or leave it. But, if you don't take it, you'll take what a bunch of greased appraisers gives you, an' Blodgett'll take the timber."

For just an instant the girl stood glaring into his eyes: "You beast!" she cried, "I wouldn't marry you if I knew every stick of timber we own would be stolen from us tomorrow! I despise you! I loathe you! I'd kill myself before I'd marry you!" Her voice choked up, and she started rapidly up the stairs.

The frown that had greeted her first words turned to a leering grin upon King's face: "If that's the way you feel about it, I guess we can't deal," he called after her, and turning away, crossed the floor and took his room key from its hook on the numbered board.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE HOUSE COMMITTEE

WHEN Mary MacAlister, accompanied by Pat MacCormack, entered one of the committee rooms of the State Capitol promptly at ten o'clock the following morning, it was to find the opposing forces already gathered. Chatting pleasantly with members of the committee were Blodgett and his two attorneys, while Leonard and King sat upon wooden chairs in the background.

"Something you wanted?" asked a member of the committee, as the new newcomers hesitated just inside the doorway.

"Yes," answered MacCormack, "we want to protest agin' the buildin' av a dam on Wild Goose River. Is this the place we do it?"

The man nodded curtly. "Find chairs," he said. "You will be given an opportunity to be heard in due time."

It was evident at a glance to both MacCormack

and the girl that the members of the committee were upon terms of friendliness with the lumberman and his cohorts. Smiling unctuously, Blodgett rubbed his long white hands together in appreciation of a story told by a committeeman, while the two attorneys laughed uproariously.

"We ain't got a chanct," whispered MacCormack, behind his outspread palm, "we're up agin' ut anyway we turn. Ain't Oi near run me legs off thryin' to git bail f'r Neely an' th' owld man. Thim lawyers av Blodgett's has be'n busy, an' everywhere Oi wint Oi wuz put off polite like, wid promises."

The girl nodded understanding, and her eyes dropped to her lap: "Yes, but we'll fight them. Even if the bill is passed, isn't there an injunction, or something."

MacCormack shook his head: "No use, gurl. Ye can't law a man wid Blodgett's money an' Blodgett's heart. It wud be sindin' good money after bad. They'd bust ye."

The chairman rapped for order and the proceedings began with a reading of the bill. During the reading the door opened silently and a man entered the room. He was a youngish man, broad of shoulders, and with a full-blooded, ruddy face out of which a pair of shrewd blue eyes twinkled good humouredly. Nodding pleasantly to the mem-

bers of the committee, he drew a chair to one side and seated himself.

At the moment of the man's entry it was with difficulty that Shirly Leonard checked the desire to call a greeting. During the months of his work in the woods never for a moment had he forgotten that face. It was the face of the man he had unconsciously held before himself as his ideal—the face of “the square guy”—of young Tom Regan. But, what was he doing here? The man's eyes roved casually from MacCormack and the girl to Blodgett's array of retainers, passing Leonard by without hint of recognition. “What'll he say,” thought the greener, “if he spots me as the guy that dumped the sand on the track an' busted his mixer? But, it would of smashed them wops to hell in about a minute if I hadn't.”

One thing Leonard noted with much secret glee was the action of Blodgett as the man drew up the chair and seated himself. Out of the tail of his eye he saw the lumberman cast a nervous, questioning glance toward his attorneys, and that during the reading of the few remaining clauses of the bill, he drummed uneasily upon the arm of his chair with his long, bony fingers.

At the conclusion of the reading the chairman of the committee spoke: “Gentlemen, you have

heard the reading of the bill which is the subject of this inquiry. This bill, as you have just heard, proposes to grant permission to one, Elija Blodgett, a timber operator, to erect a dam at a certain point on the Wild Goose River, for the purpose of raising the level of that river to a degree that will allow him to drive logs from a certain tract of land of which he is the owner. In order that we may familiarize ourselves with the proposition, I shall call upon Mr. Blodgett to outline such facts and details as will enable us to judge the bill upon its merits. Mr. Blodgett, please."

Blodgett rose to his feet, and in an address that lasted a full half hour, he harangued the committee with generalities, regarding the vast amount of timber that could be made available to the use of mankind only by the erection of this dam. He laid long and impassioned stress upon the fact of the crying need of lumber for the carrying on of the war, his voice faltering with emotion as he depicted the battle fields of Belgium and France and the thousands of lives that were daily being sacrificed, endeavouring the while to create the impression that somehow this sacrifice was entirely due to the fact that the armies in Belgium and France were shy some boards. Not once did he hint at the rising price of lumber, but dwelt at length upon the pa-

triotic duty of American citizens to do everything within their power to further the production of lumber at this most momentous period of history. He wound up by stating that the facts in the case could be obtained more directly, and with more technical authority by the questioning of practical logging men—men who had been repeatedly over the ground, and who were thoroughly familiar with every phase and angle of the project. He would invite the committee to question Mr. King, foreman of his Number Nine camp, and Mr. Leonard, foreman of his Number Eight camp.

Blodgett sat down, and after a moment's whispered conversation with the members of the committee, the chairman called Mr. King. "Your name, please, in full?"

"Samuel King."

"Occupation?"

"Camp foreman."

"Logging camp?"

"Yes."

"Where are you employed?"

"I'm boss of Blodgett's Number Nine."

"Where is this camp?"

"On the Wild Goose River."

"Near the site of the proposed dam?"

"Yes, right opposite to it."

“Now, Mr. King, will you tell the committee why it is necessary to build this dam? If Mr. Blodgett has camps already in operation, and is getting his logs to market, why should a dam be necessary to get out next winter’s cut?”

“Blodgett’s loggin’ road runs to Number Eight. Their logs is loaded there, an’ ourn is hauled down an’ loaded there, too. But this here back trac’ is different. Blodgett would have to run his loggin’ road twenty mile further to reach it, an’ ten mile of it would be through swamp that ain’t got no bottom fer a loggin’ road except you’d build it on piles, an’ that would run the cost up to where there wouldn’t be nothin’ in it.”

“Do you mean,” interrupted a committeeman, “that the timber on this back tract could not be taken out at a profit if this pile road would have to be built?”

“Sure it couldn’t. Blodgett would lose money if he tried it.”

“Now, Mr. King, as to the exact location of this dam. Why is it necessary to erect it precisely upon the north line of this certain section ten mentioned in the bill? Why not above, or below that point?”

“That’s the only place where a dam could go in on account they’s a ridge that runs sort of cross-ways to the river that would hold back the water

of the pool. The river cuts through this here ridge at the north line of section ten, an' that's where the dam has got to go in. They ain't no other ridge that would hold back the water."

"Have you ever had experience in driving logs on rivers of the size, or approximate size, of the Wild Goose?"

"Yes, I've drove rivers of every size they is in the State."

"In your opinion, could the Wild Goose River be driven without the erection of this dam? Could Mr. Blodgett drive the logs from a landing or dump on his back tract to the mills, or to a railway loading point without the erection of this dam?"

"No. The river's too shallow."

"How much will this dam raise the water level at, say, the lower boundary of this back tract?"

"About two foot."

"And this tract, you say, is about twenty miles above the dam site?"

"No, only a half a mile."

At this point one of Blodgett's attorney's flashed a danger signal to the chairman, and that worthy immediately steered the witness. "Mr. King, have you been thoroughly over the ground that would be flooded by the pool of this proposed dam?"

"Yes."

“Is there any land that would be so flooded that has a specific value other than stumpage value? I mean, is there any agricultural land—either being farmed at present, or that is capable of being farmed?”

“No.”

“What is the nature of the land that will be flooded by the pool?”

“Cut-over, mostly. Mebbe a little patch of timber here an’ there.”

“That will do, Mr. King,” announced the chairman, “Unless some member desires to ask further questions.”

Nobody volunteered a question, and the chairman cleared his throat.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “It seems that Mr. Blodgett has set forth good and sufficient reasons for the building of this dam at the indicated location. However, there seems to be certain opposition to the project.” He turned to MacCormack: “We will listen to what you have to say.” As MacCormack arose to his feet, Blodgett whispered to one of his attorneys who scribbled a hasty note which he passed to the chairman who read it as he asked his perfunctory questions: “What’s your name?”

“Patrick MacCormack.”

“Place of residence?”

"Thunder Head, Minnesota."

"Occupation?"

"Hotel keeper."

"On what grounds do you wish to offer opposition to the passage of this bill?"

"On th' grounds av fairness an' justice, sorr."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oi mane thot av a tin-foot dam wuz to be built on th' narth line av siction tin, ut wud flood th' purtiest stand av timber in Minnesota from three to eight foot under water. Ut wud kill young stuff thot's be'n tinded an' nursed fer more thin twinty year. An' ut wud ruin old stuff that's standin' more feet to th' acre thin any virgin timber in thot part av th' State."

"How much of this wonderful timber is there?"

"Three quarters—five hundred an' forty acres av ut."

"Who owns it?"

"Owld Paddy MacAlister."

"Where is this MacAlister? Why isn't he here to state his own case?"

"He's in jail. He wuz put there——"

The chairman rapped sharply upon his desk: "That will do. Just confine yourself to answering questions. We don't want volunteered information."

"Have you always be'n a hotel keeper?"

“No.”

“What was your occupation, say, in nineteen hundred and ten?”

“Oi wuz top loader fer Blodgett, in nineteen hundred an’ tin.”

“And you left his employ in December of that year?” the chairman glanced at the scrap of paper in his hand:

“Oi did.”

“Have you been on friendly terms with Mr. Blodgett since that time?”

“No, sorr.”

“Mr. MacCormack, is it not a fact that you brought a certain lawsuit against Mr. Blodgett, shortly after quitting his employ?”

“Oi did. Oi sued um fer—” again the chairman rapped.

“Is it not a fact that the court decided against you, and for Mr. Blodgett?”

“Ut did, because Blodgett—” The sharp rapping of the chairman cut the sentence short.

“That will do, Mr. MacCormack. Unless somebody wishes to question you further.” He glanced toward the other committeemen, who remained silent. The chairman continued, smilingly: “It seems that the only opposition that has developed up to the present moment is that of an admitted

enemy of Mr. Blodgett, in behalf of a jail bird." In her chair, Mary MacAlister winced at the words as though she had been struck, and the violet eyes that she fixed upon the face of the speaker smouldered black. The man proceeded; "Is there any further opposition? If not, I think, that in view of the evidence, we can hardly do other than report this bill favourably."

"Just a moment, please." The voice of the girl held a pleading note. The chairman bowed and the girl stood up.

"I am Mary MacAlister," she began, "The daughter of Paddy MacAlister, and it is our timber that will be ruined by the building of this dam. I want to ask you gentlemen to give me just ten minutes of your time to tell you in my own way about this timber."

Blodgett wriggled impatiently, and glanced at his watch. Blodgett's attorneys rattled the papers in their laps, and glanced at their watches. The chairman glanced at his watch, and cleared his throat. The girl did not wait for him to speak: "Ten minutes is not a long time, gentlemen. It is a very short time for me to try and make you see this tract of timber as it is today. I could talk for ten hours, and still there would be more to tell. Can I have ten minutes?"

Again the chairman cleared his throat: "Well, Miss MacAlister, it's a bit irregular. The best ends of an inquiry of this nature are served by intelligent questioning, which eliminates a mass of irrelevant material, that would otherwise be brought to the attention of the committee. However, if my colleagues have no objection, out of deference to your sex, I will grant you the ten minutes you ask."

The violet eyes of the girl swept the faces of the colleagues, who proffered no objection, and she began to speak. Almost from her first words she held the attention of every person in the room. Without once referring to any note or memorandum she launched forth facts and figures with a convincing precision. The latest Bureau of Forestry survey, of the visible supply, the present rate of cut, the acreage of non-agricultural cut-over lands that lay a worthless waste in the track of the lumberman, fire loss figures, reforestation figures from the United States, Germany, and Denmark, the length of time required to produce a merchantable tree, and a dozen other timber facts that made even Blodgett forget to fidget, and sit at frowning attention. Then, suddenly, she swung to her own forest and in a few brief words told of the fire lines, the strips of young stuff, and the intelligent harvesting of the ripe timber. "So far as I know," she said, in conclusion,

“this little tract of ours is the only piece of privately owned forest in the State that is being intelligently handled. It is being administered, gentlemen, instead of being wickedly and wastefully despoiled. There has never been any intelligent logging done in the State of Minnesota, or Michigan or Wisconsin, either. If you gentlemen really want to accomplish something big, you have your work cut out for you—and you had better act while yet there is time. Pass reasonable timber tax laws, which will tax the cut, and not the standing timber—the same timber year after year. And establish a State standard of merchantable timber. Put a reasonable tax on everything cut in conformity to this standard, and a prohibitive tax on sub-standard cut, and you will have done more to save the remaining timber and insure a wise harvesting of it, than any body of men has ever done in these United States!

“This is not theory, gentlemen. The young stuff is there on our tract for people to see, and the merchantable stuff is there, scaling more board feet to the acre than when my father started to cut it more than twenty years ago. And that, gentlemen, is the tract of timber that Mr. Blodgett would flood and ruin! He has repeatedly tried to buy the timber, but always my father has refused to sell. As a matter of fact the timber on his back tract can easily be

floated down the Wild Goose by simply putting in a crew to clean out the stream, exactly as all other driving streams of that size have always been cleared of obstruction. A ten-foot dam at the point indicated in this bill could not possibly raise the water one quarter of an inch at Blodgett's back tract, which lies twenty miles above the location of the dam. As a matter of fact the north line of section ten, where he proposes to put in this dam is the lower, or south line of our timber. The only purpose of this dam is to flood our timber, and then to buy it in at the appraisers' figures—?"

"I object to that statement!" One of Blodgett's attorneys was upon his feet, waving his arm in the air, "As I understand it this inquiry is based upon matters of fact, and not upon the biased opinion of a party whose interests are adverse to ours."

The chairman glanced at his watch and snapped it shut. "The ten minutes is up," he announced. "I am sure we are obliged to Miss MacAlister," he said, ironically, "for the text-book information she has offered us, and also for the information that there has never been an intelligent lumberman in either Minnesota, Michigan or Wisconsin, until her father began work on his three quarters of land. Also, we are greatly obliged to her for her fore-

thought in outlining a policy for the State Legislature to pursue in regard to all future timber legislation." He paused and glanced around the room. "Is there anything further in the way of facts that anyone cares to bring to our attention?"

Blodgett himself arose to his feet: "Mr. Chairman, in order to disabuse the minds of any of the committee members of any false impressions that may have been created by any of the evidence brought forth, I should like to have you call upon Mr. Leonard, foreman of my Number Eight camp. Mr. Leonard is familiar with the MacAlister tract, having covered the ground thoroughly upon numerous occasions. And his opinion as a practical woodsman should be of value in this connection."

"Mr. Leonard, please," called the chairman.

All during the girl's recital, Shirly Leonard had sat with downcast eyes listening with bated breath to the rapid fire of facts. Only once he glanced up to see young Tom Regan leaning forward in his chair drinking in every word of the girl's utterance. He was conscious of a mighty pride as the convincing argument of the girl sank deep within him. "If I could only talk that," he thought, "But she'd ought to give Blodgett more hell." Then came the statement regarding Blodgett's motives, and the swift interruption, and he knew that the girl had done

wisely. The ironical words of the chairman angered him. He was afraid he was not going to be called on. "I didn't come down here fer nothin'," he determined, "If that guy don't give me a chance to tell 'em a thing er two, I'll butt in before this here meetin' busts up, an' believe me I'll spill 'em an earful!"

Then he heard his own name called, and rose quickly to his feet. Young Tom Regan had glanced up swiftly at the name, and now sat looking straight into his eyes. Leonard knew that the man recognized him, but Regan gave no sign, just sat there waiting. The usual questions as to name, residence, and occupation, were followed by another.

"Mr. Leonard, you are a practical woodsman?"

Leonard hesitated an instant, and Blodgett answered, smiling: "If I may be allowed, I'll answer for Mr. Leonard, whose natural modesty would rather forbid his doing himself justice. He is a practical, and very capable woodsman. My camp foremen are always practical woodsmen."

The chairman bowed acknowledgment, and proceeded: "Now, Mr. Leonard, you are familiar with the MacAlister tract?"

"Yes."

"Will you please state to the committee the present condition of this tract. I mean in comparison to

virgin stands of timber on contiguous or similarly situated lands.”

“Sure, I make you, all right. But I didn’t eat no dictionary fer breakfast, an’ I can’t spiel it off like you gents can. This here piece of timber of MacAlister’s is partly cut-over. Some of it has be’n logged off pretty clean. One quarter ain’t be’n touched yet, an’ it makes a good check stand to gauge the rest by. All the bad stuff’s be’n took out, an’ every year they’re takin’ out the sound stuff that’s ripe. MacAlister’s workin’ to a standard of his own. The whole tract is protected by fire lines, an’ the cut-over part ain’t the kind of cut-over you gents is use’ to seein’. It’s growin’ young stuff that’s comin’ on in strips. The stuff on the first strip replanted will average about six inches through, an’ standin’ thick as the hair on a dog, and sound as a dollar, because the fire’s be’n kep’ out. It’s stuff that’ll beat the virgin stand pretty near two-to-one. An’ the big stuff that’s be’n worked fer better’n twenty years will scale more to the acre today than the quarter that ain’t be’n touched. Fact is, gents, this here Blodgett’s a crook! His camp boss quit him night before last ’cause he was an honest guy an’ wouldn’t stand fer lyin’ MacAlister out of his timber—” Blodgett and his two attorneys were on their feet, shouting ob-

jections. One of the attorneys reached over and tried to drag Leonard into his seat. The chair was rapping for order. Above the hubbub sounded the voice of the greener: "Le' go me or I'll knock you fer a gool! I come down here to turn up a crook an' I'm a-goin to do it! He doubled my wages fer feedin' you guys a pack of lies! His timber that comes to within half a mile of the dam is nothin' but swamp—his real stuff is twenty mile away—" The chairman hurried over and stood directly before Leonard who was hurling his words so that they rose distinctly above the pandemonium of noise.

"Keep still! Shut up! Sit down! Do you hear? Before I order your arrest!"

"Have me arrested, damn you! Frame me, like Blodgett did Tim Neely, so he couldn't git here to tell the truth. But, I've told it—part of it!" A special officer, hearing the hubbub as he was passing through the corridor, opened the door and looked within. The chairman motioned to him: "Arrest that man for contempt!" he ordered.

Leonard submitted quietly enough, and order was quickly established. As the officer started for the door with his prisoner young Tom Regan rose to his feet: "Mr. Chairman."

The chairman bowed: "Senator Regan."

“As chairman of the Senate Committee of inquiry into this proposed legislation, I wish to call a joint session of the two committees for three o’clock this afternoon.”

“But—Senator, hem, it was understood, was it not, that should the House Committee recommend the passage of this bill, the Senate Committee would report it favourably? That was my—er—understanding of the situation.”

Young Tom Regan looked the chairman squarely in the eye: “Yes,” he answered, “I believe there was some such understanding. I, however, was not a party to it. I only heard of it this morning. And being adverse to any procedure that savours of rail-roading legislation through, I took the liberty of attending this meeting. I am glad I did. I have heard a great deal here that has interested me exceedingly, and I want to hear more. I am sure, also, that my fellow committeemen will want to inquire rather deeply into this matter.” He turned to the officer who held Leonard in charge: “You will have this witness in this room promptly at three o’clock this afternoon,” he ordered, and turned to the others, “You, also, will appear, prepared to answer questions before the joint committee.”

One of Blodgett’s attorneys was upon his feet, playing for time: “Senator, I move you this meet-

ing be carried over until next week. We cannot possibly prepare our case by three o'clock."

"Your case was prepared and ready at ten o'clock this morning," reminded Regan. "It should be the same case before both committees."

"But certain—unforeseen contingencies have arisen that——"

"Can doubtless be explained at three o'clock this afternoon as well as at any later date," interrupted the Senator, coolly, and smiled to himself, as he intercepted the look that the violet eyes of Mary MacAlister flashed upon Leonard, as he passed out through the door in custody of the officer.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE JOINT COMMITTEE

YOUNG Tom Regan had almost reached a turn of the corridor when Mary MacAlister and Pat MacCormack stepped from the door of the committee room. Leaving the hotel keeper to follow, his wooden foot clapping the floor noisily, the girl hurried after the retreating figure: "Senator Regan!" she called.

The figure halted and turned to meet her. "Yes, Miss MacAlister?"

The girl found herself groping for words: "I thought I'd ask—I wondered if—Oh, have they taken him to jail?"

"Taken who to jail?" the kindly blue eyes were twinkling.

"Shirly Leonard."

"No. Leonard is technically under arrest. He is in custody of a special officer who will see that he does not leave the building, and whose duty it will

be to bring him before the committee meeting this afternoon.”

“But, after that? After the meeting is over, what then?”

“Well, then,” smiled the Senator, “If Mr. Percy Browning, chairman of the House Committee, does not see fit to withdraw his charge of contempt, I think Leonard will have to stand trial.”

“Oh, if I could only see him—only tell him how sorry I am—how ashamed I am that I didn’t trust him! But Neely told us that Blodgett had bribed him——”

“Who is this Neely, and where is he?”

“He was foreman of Blodgett’s Number Eight, the camp where Shirly Leonard works, and when Blodgett offered to double their winter’s wages for appearing before this committee, Neely quit, and as the train pulled into the station last evening Blodgett had him arrested for forgery——”

“An’ a dorty frame-up ut wuz, Sinator! I’ve know’d Tim Neely since we wuz byes together, an’ they ain’t a squarer man iver stood on his two feet.”

“Your father, too, I believe, is under arrest?” questioned Regan.

“Yes, father is hard to manage when his ‘Irish’ is up, and he attacked the men who arrested Neely, and they dragged him off to jail, too.”

“An’ Sinator, I thryed me domndest to git bail fer um this marnin’ to git um befoor th’ committee, but it wasn’t no use.”

Regan nodded: “I’ll see what I can do between now and three o’clock,” he said, “And, let’s see, Miss MacAlister, you spoke a few moments ago of wishing to see young Leonard?”

“Oh, can I?” the girl’s face lighted as she looked up into the Senator’s eyes which were once more twinkling.

“I hope you won’t think too hard of me, Miss MacAlister,” he said, “if in my judgment, it seems necessary to place you in custody of a special officer to insure your appearance at the hearing.” And, without waiting for the girl to reply, he crossed the corridor and opened a door. Inside the room the girl saw Shirly Leonard seated comfortably at a window that looked out over the street, and at a desk sat the officer who had escorted him from the committee room.

“Another prisoner for you, Jerry,” Regan announced, “Just see that they get a good dinner, and don’t fail to bring them before the committee at three o’clock.”

The officer saluted, and with the utmost gravity, he asked: “Are they to be allowed to talk together, Senator?”

“I believe that the law is not very clear on that point, Jerry. I’ll have it looked up, and let you know in a couple of weeks. In the meantime you might just use your own judgment.” And, as the door closed on the prisoners and their jailer, the violet eyes flashed their thanks to the twinkling eyes of blue.

In the corridor Pat MacCormack grabbed young Tom Regan’s hand: “Thank th’ Lard, there’s wan honest man in the ligislater! Oi don’t know how ut happened, Sinator. Ye must av bruk in wid a jimmy!”

White with rage, Blodgett bundled King and his attorneys into a taxi and hustled them to his private office. “A fine pair of fixers, you are!” he stormed, when the door had closed behind them. “A pretty mess you’ve got us into—and God knows where it will end!”

The older of the two attorneys answered: “I told you you were not giving us time. I strongly advised, even insisted upon not bringing this matter up until we had had more time to work with the Senate Committee. We did the best we could. You certainly would not have advised approaching Young Regan! The best we could do in the time we had was to win the reluctant consent of a majority of the Senate Committee to report the bill favourably, providing it passed the House Committee.”

"Time! What's time got to do with it? Do you think that in a month from now that young jack-anapes would be any more approachable than at the present? He's a fool! He's a poser—a dangerous idealist—bah! He's got no business in politics!"

"Just so," admitted the attorney, dryly, "But the fact is, he's in. And, as chairman of this particular committee, he's in a position to make things rather uncomfortable for us. My idea in counselling delay until near adjournment was a two-fold one. First, because in the rush of last minute legislation, the Senate Committee would naturally be less inclined to spend time in detailed investigation, and in the second place it would have given us time to have thoroughly looked into this young Regan's past. It is possible that at some time or other he has—er, committed some indiscretion, or behaved in some manner that were it made public, might embarrass him in his present pose."

"Nonsense," cried Blodgett, "The young jackass has always been above reproach. Everyone in Minneapolis knows him. I had him looked up before election. I spent good money trying to defeat him. He is not the type of men we want in the legislature. Old Tom Regan before him was the same kind. He's an obstructionist!" Blodgett, who had been nervously pacing the floor halted suddenly, and

glared at the two attorneys: "Well, what are we going to do? Don't stand there making excuses—suggest something!"

The older attorney flushed: "As a matter of fact Mr. Blodgett, our present predicament is due wholly to the failure of the man, Leonard, to deliver the goods. This man was of your own selection. It is hard to understand how a man of your years and experience could have been so completely taken in."

The face of the lumberman purpled, then went white with rage. "That's right, blame me! It's all my fault because a job I hired you to do is bungled! Don't by any chance suggest anything that will get us out of the mess! Just stand there and try to unload the blame onto me!"

King interrupted the senseless tirade: "Hold on a minute, Mr. Blodgett," he advised, "I got an idee we kin handle this here business all right if we don't lose our head."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, the old feller there was right when he said it was the greener spilt the beans——"

"The traitor! The—the crook! I'll fix him for that, if it costs me——"

"You an' me, both," interrupted King, "But, we ain't got no time to waste now. The way I figger

it, this here greener will be the main witness this afternoon. Instead of wastin' time tryin' to git somethin' on this here Senator, why not get somethin' on the greener?"

"Get what on him? Out with it!"

"Why, if we could show him up fer a crook an' a double-crosser, an' 'a ginuyne Noo York tough, that's lived fer a while with a woman an' then throw'd her down, an' a coward to boot, an' lives under different names, wouldn't that kind of queer what he's got to say before this here committee? Looks like they wouldn't hang much weight onto what a bird like that told 'em!"

"How can you prove these things?"

"Easy enough. The woman that he throw'd down is here in St. Paul, right now, an' she knows all about him. I seen her an' talked to her las' night. She was askin' him to take her back—but he wouldn't."

"Where is this woman?"

"Down to the Tivoli."

Blodgett touched a button upon his desk. "Call a taxi, at once," he ordered, as a man appeared in answer to the bell. The lumberman turned to King: "Find this woman and bring her here as soon as possible."

"I'll git her, all right, but she'll prob'ly want to

see the colour of a little change before she'll come. Them kind's out fer the dough."

Blodgett handed the other a bill. "Tell her there will be more where that came from," he said, and seating himself at his desk discussed the personnel of the committees with his attorneys until the foreman returned with Lotta Rivoli.

For an hour Blodgett and the two attorneys listened while the girl talked. As she finished the lumberman's brow drew into a frown. "Good enough as far as it goes," he admitted, "But, isn't there something of a criminal nature that he has been guilty of? Has he ever been convicted of a crime?"

The girl shook her head: "No, not as I know of."

Blodgett tried again: "Hem, possibly there is some criminal act he has performed, for which he has never been arrested? If you could, hem, think of such an act I should be glad to, er, triple the amount I have promised to pay you for your trouble in appearing before this committee."

"I make you all right, bo. But there's nothing doing. You guys won't care a damn about me, once you've used me. If I go ahead and spill a lot of lies, and they caught me at it, I'd do a stretch for perjury or something. You guys would duck from under, and I'd be the goat. I won't tell nothing I

can't prove if it comes to a show-down. If you want what I've got, I'll sell it to you. If you don't, I'm on my way."

"Yes," interrupted King, "An' *he* don't care a damn about you, neither. He's got another gal, now——"

"Another girl!"

"Yes, another gal. An' if you don't spill enough to queer him with her you ain't got no show with him a-tall."

Hand in hand at the window of the room in the Capitol that looked over the street, Shirly Leonard and Mary MacAlister watched a taxi draw up at the curb. Blodgett and Sam King stepped out, followed by the two attorneys and a woman. Leonard started perceptibly at the sight of her, and the girl beside him looked quickly into his face. "What's the matter—dear?" she asked, in a whisper, and Leonard felt the tightening of the fingers within his own. For a moment he was silent as the trio crossed the sidewalk and ascended the broad steps. Then he looked down into the upraised violet eyes: "That's Lottie Rivoli, kid," he said, "She's a moll I used to know a long time ago. I ain't never told you nothin' about myself, kid. I ain't never had the chanct to. But this afternoon you're goin' to hear a few things

that I'd ruther told you alone. Maybe, when you've heard 'em, it'll be all off—what we've be'n figgerin' and dopin' out here in this room. Maybe you won't never want to see me again. If you feel that way, it'll be all right, kid. A guy's got to take what he earns, I guess. It'll be hard as hell, kid—I'd ruther die. But anyways I've learnt my lesson from knowin' you, an' young Tom Regan, an' Tim Neely—an' I'll go straight, wherever I'm at. Old Blodgett, he's prob'ly got her here to show me up, so these guys won't believe nothin' I say, but—" he paused abruptly, and a sudden gleam leaped into his eyes: "I'll beat 'em to it!" he cried, "If they'll let me talk I'll——"

"Hem-h-m-h-m," the special officer lowered the newspaper in which he had been absorbed for a couple of hours, and lowered his feet from the desk. "Five minutes to three," he announced, "I guess we'd better be goin'."

"Why there's dad, and Tim Neely!" cried the girl, as they stepped into the corridor, and Leonard summoned a smile as the old Irishman rushed forward and grasped him by the hand: "Ah, Linerd, bye, ye're a great lad! Pat MacCormack here has towld us all about ut! Ye had us fooled compleate! An' owld Blodgett, too. Ye'll niver be wantin' fer a job, bye, as long as Paddy MacAlister has got a stick av

timber to his name." The watery old eyes caught the slight flush upon the face of his daughter, "O-ho!" he cried, "So thot's th' way av ut! Well, Mary, gurl, ye'll niver git a foiner—" "Do hush, dad! Please! Come, we must hurry!" and she turned to follow the officer, as big Tim Neely grasped Leonard by the hand.

In the committee room Blodgett and King and the two attorneys were already seated. Lotta Rivoli was not with them, but an air of complacency seemed to have settled upon the four, who smilingly chatted among themselves. "Goin' to spring her as a surprise," thought Leonard to himself. "Well, I'll surprise 'em, if they'll only let me talk."

The meeting was called to order by Senator Regan who acted as presiding officer. A transcript of the record of the House Committee inquiry was read by a clerk, during which proceeding the chairman of that committee, together with several of its members fidgeted uneasily in their seats.

At its conclusion Senator Regan called upon Blodgett, who, through his attorney, stated that he had nothing new to offer, but begged the privilege of introducing witnesses if he so desired to rebut new evidence offered by the opposition.

This granted, the chair called upon Mary MacAlister to continue her remarks more particularly as

they referred to her father's timber. And for twenty minutes the girl talked, holding the undivided attention, as during the morning session, of every person in the room.

When she had finished, Regan called on Leonard: "The House Committee meeting adjourned, I believe, Mr. Leonard, during the course of your remarks." (Titters from the members of the Senate Committee, who had just listened to the transcript.) "We would be pleased to have you continue if you have anything further to say."

Leonard stood up: "Mr. Regan, yer honour—I've got a mouthful to say. Them birds this mornin' wouldn't let me say it, 'cause they didn't want to hear it——"

"I object to that statement!" Mr. Percy Browning, chairman of the House Committee, was on his feet.

"I'll say you do!" interrupted Leonard, "But, believe me, bo, there's a square guy runnin' this show——" Roars of laughter from the members of the Senate Committee, which were re-echoed from the throats of Neely and MacCormack, who shouted "Atta Boy!" until silenced by the furious pounding of Regan's gavel.

"Just confine your remarks to the chair, please, Mr. Leonard," advised Regan, when some semblance of order obtained, "You may proceed."

“All right, Mr. Regan. But before I finish up tellin’ what I know about this timber business, there’s somethin’ else I want to say. It won’t take long, an’ I want you gents to get me right. It’s like this: I ain’t born in the woods. I ain’t never seen no timber till last fall when I went to work for Tim Neely at Blodgett’s Number Eight camp. I was a truck driver in Brooklyn till old Red Casey got holt of me an’ showed me where I could make a lot more jack, an’ make it easier with the gloves than I could drivin’ a truck. It wasn’t long till I cleaned up on the amateurs around the clubs, an’ then I started in on the professionals. Old Red wanted to manage me but Lefty Klingermann butted in an’ took me over to Union Market precinct where he was the whole show. Lefty was shakin’ down the whole precinct an’ cuttin’ it two ways with the bulls. All the crooks an’ the gams, an’ the saloon keepers, an’ dive keepers in the precinct was kickin’ in to him. He was rich, an’ gittin’ richer, but he wasn’t satisfied. He’d got it in his head he wanted to manage a champ, an’ he picked me fer the one to go after the big feller. I took the name of Mike Duffy, an’ it run along, me knockin’ out one after another of the third raters an’ second raters, an’ a lot of has-be’ns, an’ goin’-to-be guys till it come to Kid Morowitz.”

"I object to all this nonsense!" cried Blodgett's attorney, springing to his feet, "What this witness is saying is neither relevant nor in any way pertinent to the case, and is inadmissible——"

Cries from members of the committee, interrupted the man, "Sit down." "Let the witness go on!" and the chairman rapped for order.

"It seems to be the desire of this committee to hear what this witness has to say. This is not a court of law, and is not amenable to any rules of evidence. The will of the members is the sole measure of what is, or is not, admissible as evidence in this inquiry. The witness will please proceed without further interruption."

"I guess all you gents remember how Patsy Gibson that lives right here in St. Paul was billed to fight Kid Morowitz of Philly, an' how the fight was off on account of Gibson gittin' all busted up in his auto. An' you remember how the winner of that fight was goin' to challenge the champ. Well that give me my chanct. Lefty slips over to Philly, an' he gets next to Keen, an' the Kid, an' arranges to have him fight me, instead of Gibson. It was a framed fight. The Kid was all in, on account his heart was bad, an' he know'd he couldn't never fight the champ anyways. But they made Lefty come acrost with a big bunch of jack an' I was to win

with a knockout in the seventh. We even rehearsed the round, an' had it all down pat. I was into it as much as Lefty was. Livin' the way I was amongst yeggs, an' con-men, an' dips, an' gams, an' gunmen, an' every other kind of crook there is, an' them all playin' up to Lefty, it didn't seem nothin' much out of the way fer to frame a fight. I ain't tryin' to make you gents believe I didn't know no better. I did. Old Red Casey he wouldn't stand fer no fram-in'. He was a square guy, an' he wanted me to be square, but I didn't have sense enough to see it that way. All I could see was the jack, an' I thought old Red was a fool. Easy money looked good to me no matter how it was got. I hadn't learnt my lesson yet. But the lesson come gents, an' I got what was comin' to me—an' so did all the rest of the crooks an' double-crossers.

"They was a moll in it, too. She was a shifter—shoplifter, you'd call it, an' she was the Kid's girl. She seen how he was slippin', so she switched over to me, an' tipped it off to me that the Kid's heart was bad. She was a smooth one, an' had me goin'. I didn't know then that she'd throw'd Bull Larrigan over fer Morowitz, nor that she was throwin' Morowitz over fer me. She claimed she hated the Kid, an' only found out by accident about his heart. I believed her. I was a fool, but I ain't the first guy

that's be'n gypped by a skirt, at that. I know now she was playin' us one agin' the other.

"Lefty he'd hired Bull Larrigan fer a sparrin' pardner fer me, an' Bull, he hated the Kid on account of Lottie—that was her name, Dago Lottie. When he found out she'd throw'd the Kid over fer me, he hated me, too—only I didn't know that then.

"The odds was heavy agin' me, an' Lefty figgered on cleanin' up big—him an' the Police Captain, he was in on it, too. I had all my jack up on the fight, an' so did Dago Lottie—an' Lefty, an' the Cap was robbin' kid's banks fer pennies to bet.

"But I wasn't satisfied with the framed knockout an' I figgered if the Kid's heart was bad I could get me a real knockout, so I got Bull Larrigan to train me up on a heart punch that would knock the Kid fer a gool, when he give me the openin' fer the fake knockout. Everything was set. Only it didn't work. The Kid beat me to it. I was gypped. When I made the play I had to give him an openin' that was all framed fer him to swing to my jaw an' miss—well, gents, he didn't miss. Believe me he landed, an' follered it up with another, an'—the next thing I know'd I was down on the canvas an' it heavin' an' pitchin', till it had me huntin' fer hand-holts. I could hear the referee countin' me out. I wouldn't of cared if he'd counted a hundred. Then the gong

rung. It saved me from gittin' knocked out that round—but I got mine in the next. The jolt he handed me got my goat. When the eighth started, I stepped onto the canvas but my nerve was gone. Seems like I always had a yellow streak in the ring—I never noticed it, other ways, but when I would face a man with gloves on his hands, it was always there, even when I know'd I could knock him out, way down inside of me, I know'd I was afraid. When Morowitz come at me in the eighth, I jest quit cold. Yes, gents, seemed like I couldn't face them eyes an' them gloves. So I turned an' run fer the ropes, an' believe me, gents, if they hadn't of be'n there I'd of run further. It was a cowardly trick, a yeller dog of a trick, but I done it. An' Red Casey throwed up the sponge.

“The sports had ought to mobbed me, but they didn't an' I got away. The worst of it was, if I'd of stayed a minute in that round I'd of got my man. He was all in—an' everyone seen it but me. All I could see was his eyes, an' his gloves.

“That's about all there is to it. I was broke, an' so was Lefty an' the Cap, an' Lottie—an' she didn't lose no time in lettin' me know how much she cared fer me. She throw'd in with Bull Larrigan agin. An' believe me gents, w'en I seen Lefty Klingermann whisperin' to a couple of his gunmen, I beat it. I

made my getaway an' hit the rattler fer Chicago. In the mornin' I seen in the paper where Kid Morowitz had got bumped off. An' they figgered I had, too. In the same paper was a piece about where the Cap blow'd his brains out. I was afraid to stay in Chicago—afraid Lefty would get me there like he got Coxy Wesson. Coxy gypped Lefty an' beat it, but Lefty got him—in Denver. So I hit fer Minneapolis, an' that day I seen in the paper where they was huntin' Mike Duffy fer bumpin' off Kid Morowitz. They'd got wise that the fight was framed, an' Lefty had steered the cops an' the reporters that it was me bumped him off fer gyppin' me. I was on the run right, then. Not only Lefty was after me but the bulls, too—an' believe me, I know'd I wouldn't have a chanct in the world if they brought me back. Them guys would of framed me an' it would of be'n the buzzer fer mine.

“I got a job in Minneapolis drivin' truck, The guy I worked fer was a square guy—a guy that worked harder than the men he hired. I'd had time to do a lot of thinkin' by that time, an' the more I watched this guy, the more thinkin' I done. I'd always said like all them guys I'd run with, that a guy was a fool to work. Easy money looked better to me, but I got to thinkin' about them easy money guys, an' how this here easy money don't never stick

to 'em long. Then there was this here gent I was workin' fer, he wasn't huntin' no easy money—he worked hard fer his, an' he had more jack than any of 'em. An' besides that he was square.

“So I learnt how it paid to be square, an' I figgered on keepin' square myself. Then, one day when I was haulin' a load along the street, I seen two New York dicks that I know'd. They was goin' up the court house steps the last I seen of 'em, an' believe me, I figgered that's the last I wanted to see 'em! So I run the truck to the garage where we kep' it, an' left it beside the curb, an' hit a freight goin' north.

“Other guys crawled into the box car next day, an' when they piled off so did I. I hired out to Tim Neely to run Blodgett's tractor, an' I be'n there ever since.

“You gents are wonderin' why I told you all this. That's easy. Last night I seen this Dago Lottie here in St. Paul. She told me Lefty Klingermann an' his gunmen was electrocuted yesterday fer bumpin' off Kid Morowitz. Sam King was along, an' when I left the place, I guess he pumped her about me. She's in this buildin' now. She come in with Blodgett an' his gang. I guess they figgered that after I'd told what I know, they'd ring her in to show where I come from, an' what kind of a guy

I am, so you gents wouldn't believe nothin' I told you. But, gents, the guy that was Mike Duffy, back there in New York, ain't the same guy that's talkin' to you here. Mike Duffy was a crook—jest as much as though he'd of be'n a dip or a stick-up. Shirly Leonard has learnt it don't pay, an' he's learnt who the real fools is. This here ain't no pretty story, an' it ain't no easy story fer a guy to tell about hisself, but, gents, I've come clean. There ain't no one got nothin' on me, now—an' believe me, there ain't no one goin' to have." He paused and looked squarely at the chairman, "So, now, Mr. Regan, yer honour, if there's anything you want to ask me about this here deal, I'll tell you all I know about it. An' I'll hand it to you straight."

"In the first place, Mr. Leonard, you may state whether or not you are in any way financially interested in this MacAlister timber?"

"No, sir. I ain't financially interested in nothin' except the wages I got comin' from Blodgett."

"I believe you gave your occupation as camp foreman?"

Leonard grinned; "Yes, sir."

"How long have you been a camp foreman?"

"Since night before last. When Tim Neely quit Blodgett give me his job. I told him he better get someone else, because there's a whole lot I ain't hep

to, about runnin' a camp. But Blodgett said he wanted me fer foreman till after this meetin' because you gents would believe what a camp foreman said about timber. He said after this meetin' was over I'd go back to the tractor work."

Blodgett's attorney was on his feet: "Mr. Chairman, I wish to call attention to the fact that the testimony of this man should have no weight whatever. Aside from being a self-admitted crook, and a coward, he has stated that he has never been in the woods until some three or four months ago, and that he has only been a camp foreman for a matter of a day or two."

"I think we can waive the point of his experience and capability, as Mr. Blodgett, himself, has gone on record before the House Committee with the statement that Mr. Leonard is a very capable and practical woodsman. As to the character of the witness, the committee will draw its own conclusions as to the value of his testimony.

"Mr. Leonard, do you know the reasons for Neely quitting his job?"

"Sure, I do. He quit because he wouldn't help Blodgett steal MacAlister's timber. He up an' told Blodgett to his face he was a crook, an' that a dam on the north line of section ten wouldn't raise the water at the back tract, an' that all he wanted to put

it in fer was to flood MacAlister's timber, an' kill all the young stuff an' buy in the merchantable stuff at appraisers' figgers. An' then Tim quit."

"At that time did you believe that Blodgett was not honest in his purpose in building this dam?"

"Sure, I did. I know a crook when I see one."

"Believing as you did, why didn't you quit when Neely did?"

Leonard smiled: "Say, Mr. Regan, Tim Neely ain't never had no dealin's with crooks till now. He ain't hep to 'em. Me, I ain't had no dealin's with no one else, hardly, till I hit Minneapolis last summer. I know 'em, an' I know that if you want to turn up a crook that's got a lot of jack, you got to get him from the inside. You can't come out an' fight 'em in the open. What show has a guy got that lays his cards on the table when the other guy has got his up his sleeve? I know'd Tim Neely wouldn't never get to that meetin' this mornin' to tell what he know'd. An' if I'd of quit I wouldn't neither. Tim's lucky to get off with gettin' a pinch framed on him."

Regan glanced at the transcript on the table before him: "You mentioned this morning that Blodgett was doubling your wages. Can you state the reason for this extra pay?"

"Yes, sir. He said he would double our wages, Neely's an mine, if we'd testify like he told us to.

After Neely had gone he says to me that Sam King would testify first, an' I was to back up what he said. I was to say that MacAlister's stuff was mostly cut-over, an' that the dam would raise the water so Blodgett could drive the logs down from the back tract."

"When, and in what form, were you to receive this money?"

"That's what I wanted to know, an' when I asked Blodgett, he says his agent would hand it to me in cash after I'd got through testifyin'. I says how would it be to split the jack fifty-fifty? I mean, come acrost with half of it now, an' the rest after I delivered the goods. That didn't make no hit with him, he seemed to take it sad that I didn't trust him, but he pulled out his leather an' peeled off the jack." Thrusting his hand into his pocket, Leonard withdrew the roll of bills and stepping forward, laid them on the table in front of Regan.

White with fear and rage, Blodgett leaped to his feet, a long trembling finger pointed toward the chairman: "It's a lie!" he shouted, "Every word of it is false! I never paid him any money! I never even saw that money. It is his word against mine——"

The pounding of the gavel interrupted the tirade. Regan spoke quietly: "Just so, Mr. Blodgett, and

the members of this committee, bearing that fact in mind, will draw their own conclusions.”

“Now, Mr. Leonard, just one thing more that does not seem exactly clear. Mr. King stated before the House Committee that in order to reach this back tract with a railroad it would be necessary to construct some twenty miles of track, about ten miles of which would necessitate driving piling in order to get a solid road bed through swamp land. Is that a fact?”

“Yes sir.”

“Then, later Mr. King stated that the dam would raise the water about two feet at this tract, and when asked if that meant at a distance of twenty miles, he answered, ‘No, only a half a mile.’

“Can you explain why twenty miles of railroad would have to be constructed to reach a point only a half a mile distant?”

“Yes, Blodgett told us he had just bought a strip along the river that reached from the back tract down to within a half a mile of the dam. He said he done that so we could say that the dam would raise the water at the tract without lyin’.”

“Does this strip contain good merchantable timber, such as for instance is on the back tract?”

“No, it ain’t nothin’ but swamp stuff, cedar, an’ tamarack, an’ balsam that ain’t worth nothin’.”

Several moments of dead silence passed, as Senator Regan turned the pages of the typewritten transcript. At length he looked up: "That will do, Mr. Leonard, I think." He turned to Blodgett, "Have you anything further to offer?"

"Nothing except to deny in toto everything that man has said. His whole testimony has been a pack of clumsy lies. And he has not heard the last of this. I'll prosecute him to the fullest extent of the law! I'll show him!"

"That will do. This committee is not interested in your threat excepting, of course, to defend any witness who has appeared before it from persecution." He turned and faced the members of the two committees. "Gentlemen, unless any of you desire to recall any witnesses for further questioning, I think we may consider this inquiry closed." He paused and glanced about him, but no one interrupted. "In your opinion is it necessary that we further consider this bill?"

"Kill it!" cried one of the members.

Another rose to his feet: "Mr. Chairman, in view of the evidence submitted, I am of the opinion that any further inquiry into the merits of this matter is more within the province of the Grand Jury, than of a legislative committee. I move you, sir, that this committee kill this bill, and that it take

steps to have the whole matter brought to the attention of the Grand Jury as soon as it is assembled.”

“Second the motion!”

As the motion carried it was noticeable that the faces of several members of the House Committee were nearly as pale as the face of Blodgett, who was making his way hurriedly toward the door, closely followed by King and the two attorneys.

CHAPTER XXV

WITHOUT GLOVES

FROM the little group that gravitated about the chairman's table the violet eyes of Mary MacAlister sought the face of Senator Regan:

"Oh, how can we ever thank you—for saving our timber? You don't know what it means to——"

From the corridor a nervous, querulous voice sounded shrilly through the open door: "I want my money! And I want it now!"

All eyes turned toward the door where Blodgett was endeavouring to push past the woman who blocked his path. "Keep still, you fool!" growled an attorney at Blodgett's side.

"I'm a fool, am I?" cried the voice, rising to a higher pitch of nervous intensity. "Well, maybe I ain't such a fool as you think I am! You can't get away with nothing like that with me! I wasn't made in a minute! I been here all the time waiting

to tell what I know about Mike Duffy, and if you didn't give me a chance to, it ain't my fault. You come across with that century, or I'll——” The sentence was interrupted sharply as King and the two attorneys forced their way between Blodgett and the woman, thrusting her roughly aside, two of them barring the way while one of the attorneys hurried Blodgett down a side corridor. Baffled, trembling with insane rage, the wild eyes of the woman in the doorway swept the group about the table, and came to rest for a moment upon the face of Shirley Leonard. Instantly her excited brain turned from Blodgett and the next moment she faced Leonard at arm's length: “You yellow dog!” she screamed, “you thought you could sneak away from me! But, I found you! I ain't good enough for you, now! You throw'd me down for her!” pointing a forefinger trembling with rage almost into the face of Mary MacAlister, who was staring at her in wide-eyed astonishment. A wild, shrill laugh issued from the heavily rouged lips: “Take him, then! I'll show you the colour of his yellow blood!” The voice rose to a shriek, and as she whirled upon Leonard the white hand flashed into the cheap fur muff. The next instant, in the back-drawn hand the horrified onlookers caught the glint of a long thin blade of steel. And in that instant,

too, the big hand of Tim Neely closed about the slender white wrist, there was a sharp cry of pain, and the stiletto rang upon the floor, as the woman fought with the ferocity of a trapped wild-cat to free herself from the grip of the big man who held her. Others went to his assistance, and a few moments later Dago Lottie was powerless, but still straining and writhing in insane fury, while from her lips poured a torrent of curses and vile epithets that struck shame to the hearts of the most hardened of the listeners.

“This is a case for the police,” said Senator Regan, “just call the wagon, Jerry.” At the mention of the police the curses redoubled in fury until they became but a succession of incoherent and meaningless shrieks.

“Can’t you give her something to quiet her, Doctor?” asked Regan, turning to one of the committee members.

The medical man had already reached the struggling woman’s side, and bending down, with thumb and forefinger he forced the lids apart, and stared closely into the glaring eyes.

“Case for the hospital first,” he said, turning away: “Coke. She’s a snow-bird. I guess she’s about—done.”

The committee members straggled from the room

in one's and two's, the policemen removed the shrieking woman, and as quiet was once more restored young Tom Regan turned to Leonard, with a smile. "So that's where you went, the day you left your truck standing in front of the garage, and my mixer men yelling for sand? I spent quite a little time, and some money hunting for you, and lots of the boys on the job hunted, too."

"Yes, sir. That's where I went," answered the younger man, "I hated to go. I know'd you'd think I snuck off on account of bustin' the mixer. But it wasn't that. It's just like I told it. I know'd they wanted me in Noo York fer a murder I didn't know nothin' about, an' I know'd with Lefty Klingermann agin' me I wouldn't of stood no show. He'd of framed me sure, to git even fer me losin' the fight, an' to save his own hide to boot. An' when I seen Boyle an' Barnes go into the court house I know'd Minneapolis wasn't no place fer me. 'Cause, believe me, when them two dicks goes after a guy they git him! I figgered on huntin' you up in the spring an' tellin' you about it, an' if what I had comin' wasn't enough to pay fer fixin' the mixer I figgered on comin' acrost with the difference. Maybe I hadn't ought to done it, with every hour countin' to finish the job, but I didn't have much time to figger it out, an' if that car of

steel had of hit them cement cars it would of strung dead wops clean to the main track. But, at that, I'd of stayed an' faced the music. I know I'm yeller—but I ain't that yeller."

Young Tom Regan's eyes were twinkling: "Yes," he answered, dryly, "I have heard that you were yellow. Clarity told me about the time you wouldn't stand up to his boy, Denny, with the gloves on. But the fact is, I'm hunting for a man that's afflicted with just your brand of yellowness. In the first place I don't often catch men working nights and omitting to turn in their overtime. And in the second place it is still harder to find a man that's got a clear enough head to know exactly the right thing to do in an emergency. And in the third place, it's hardest of all to find a man that has got nerve enough to go ahead and do that thing when he's got to look death squarely in the eyes to do it." He paused and let his eyes rove over the faces of the others: "You people who know this man," he said, "ought to know just how yellow he is. He worked for me last summer, driving truck. One day he was waiting beside the mixer to unload, when a car of steel broke away on an incline and came rushing down the track straight for a couple of cars of cement that a gang of wops were unloading. Everyone else on the job began to run

and yell, or else froze in their tracks. There was a derailing device near the foot of the incline—but no one thought to throw it. Leonard saw the danger and deliberately ran his truck onto the track in front of the onrushing car and dumped his load of sand. The car hit the sand just as he was pulling off the track, tipped over, whirled around and brought up against the concrete mixer platform. There wasn't a man hurt." He paused and turned abruptly upon Leonard, "Where would you be now if your truck had stalled on the track, or if that car of steel had whirled the other way when it hit?"

"Well—hell," stammered Leonard, "a guy couldn't set there an' see them wops all smashed up, could he?"

Tim Neely snickered: "They was some talk up in the woods about him bein' shy on guts," he said, "on account he wouldn't fight a couple of King's men that kind of throw'd it into him. But I take notice that when they come a blizzard that would of snowed the log road over fer all the rest of the winter, he run his tractor up an' down it, fer forty straight hours—with the storm that bad the teamsters was tyin' one another together to git from the bunk house to the stables to feed the horses. An' agin, when the hay shed was afire an' the wind blowin' the blaze right onto a carload of gasoline

the greener, here, he run his tractor right through flames that would of burnt the devil hisself to a cinder, an' us yellin' to him to go back, an' hooked onto the car an' drug it down the track—the boys up there in the woods, they kind of quit playin' him fer a coward. A man that would call him one around Number Eight would kind of git hisself in a argument. If that's what it means to be yeller——”

“I'm yeller, all right, an' I know it,” interrupted Leonard. “I hate a yeller guy, same as everyone else does. An' I've tried to git over it, an' I can't. I don't never notice it till I face some guy with gloves on—then it hits me all to onct. I can't face 'em! It's what kep' me from bein' a champ.”

Young Tom Regan placed his hand on Leonard's shoulder: “Never you mind that, my boy,” he said in a voice a trifle more gruff than usual, “I doubt if there's a man living that isn't afraid of something. It is the heritage of our cave-men ancestors. Just you remember this, that the big thing—the big fight—the big battle that really counts in this world is fought *without gloves*. And in this battle you are proving yourself to be very much a man. There is a moral courage that has nothing whatever to do with physical courage. The moment you left the environment of the underworld

behind you, this moral courage, all unknown to yourself, began to assert itself—to develop. And, that it has made rapid and healthy progress is evinced by your testimony before this committee. Easy money don't look good to you any more and you have learned to detest a crook."

"You said it," answered Leonard.

Regan smiled: "But, I didn't come here to preach any sermons. The point is, what are you going to do, now? I rather imagine you will find yourself out of a job."

"Not while Paddy MacAlister's got a stick av timber standin', he ain't out av no job!" cried the little old Irishman, who had been an interested listener to all that had been said.

Leonard shot a swift glance into the eyes of the girl who stood close beside him. It was a questioning glance—a glance of world-old appeal, straight from his heart to hers. She knew now—had heard from his own lips the story of his sordid past. What would her verdict be? For those two standing there side by side, the others ceased to exist. In all the world they two stood alone. Leonard felt the blood pounding at his eardrums as he restrained an impulse to reach out and gather the girl into his two arms and strain her close against his breast. In that moment he knew, as he had never known before,

the meaning of love—a strong man's love for the one woman in the world. And then—fingers were closing about his own—and deep within the violet eyes a light glowed—soft and warm and all-encompassing, it was—and he knew it for the light of love. A voice was whispering into his ear: "Wherever you go, dear, I will go, too. You are my man, now—mine."

Young Tom Regan cleared his throat gruffly and moved some papers on the table. "As I was going on to say, I need a man of your calibre—need him badly. I——"

Leonard interrupted him, "Mr. Regan, I'd ruther work fer you than anyone I ever seen, an' that's the truth. But, I can't do it. I wouldn't never be satisfied out of the woods no more. I don't know if I can put it acrost to you—like I see it. It ain't just a job—it's more than that. It's—it's somethin' so big that you can't see the end of it—only the beginnin'. Ever since I seen MacAlister's timber, I be'n thinkin' about it. I bought books an' I be'n readin' about it. An' the more I think an' the more I read, the bigger the job gits. It's a job that's too big fer any man to handle, but it's a job that's got to be done. She told you a little bit about it, but there's a lot more to it than that. If you ain't never been up there in the timber country, you won't make

me. I wisht I could make you see it like I'm beginnin' to see it—millions of acres of cut-over, that onct was big timber, goin' to waste—the young stuff that's tryin' to git a start killed off every few years by fires that could be prevented—an' the loggers addin' to that waste acreage as fast as God will let 'em! Thousands of square miles that ain't worth one cent to the State, nor to no one else—an' all on land that could be producin' a crop that would make all the money in the State now look like a shoe-string!"

Regan looked puzzled as he stared into the eyes that were gazing so earnestly into his own: "But, surely, most of this land is not fit for growing crops! It has been tried. We, ourselves, tried it. Years ago the Regan Construction Company was the Regan Lumber Company. My father was the active head of the concern then, and he logged off some forty thousand acres. There are still some ten thousand acres of virgin stand on the tract, but the point is, this cut-over land is not fit for farming. At first my father sold off a few forties cheap to settlers, but they made a dismal failure of their attempt at farming. The sand wouldn't grow crops. And between the droughts and the frost they all went under." The man paused and smiled, "So he gave them their money back, and got called a fool.

After that he hired an expert to make a land survey, but his report was unfavourable to any attempt at colonization, so he dropped the matter. But, he proved that it can't be farmed."

Leonard listened breathlessly and when the man finished he broke in: "But, it can be farmed! The trouble was that your old man an' this here expert wasn't hep to the right kind of farmin'! Farmin' to them meant raisin' grain, an' potatoes, an' a lot of stuff like that. Listen, Mr. Regan, what did that land grow to start out with? What did God Almighty seed it down to, an' what did he raise on it?"

"Why—timber, of course."

"Yes, sir, timber! An' land that will grow timber onct will grow timber an' better timber than it ever did grow. I ain't runnin' down God, Mr. Regan, but he's got a lot else to tend to besides raisin' timber. Reforestin' this here cut-over ain't no sideline. It's got to be the main job of them that tackles it. Timber can be raised at a profit just like any other crop—an' it ain't just book talk, neither—MacAlister here is doin' it—an' he's be'n doin' it fer better'n twenty years. Folks says he's crazy, but, Mr. Regan, if they was thousands more that was crazy like him, a few years from now they'd be a forest where there's nothin' but worthless cut-over

land today! An' there ain't no one had ought to know how bad that forest's needed better than you do. What are you payin' fer lumber, now—an' what did you pay twenty or thirty years ago? An' what's more, what are you goin' to pay fer it twenty or thirty years from now? When there ain't any more timber left what are you goin' to do? An' the guys that knows says that twenty or thirty years will see the finish! What are you goin' to do about it?"

Young Tom Regan stared in astonishment at the young man who, with face flushed with excitement, hurled these questions at him. "Why—why—I don't know. I never gave any particular thought _____"

"Well, it's time you was givin' it some particular thought, an' damn' particular thought! You can do a lot of good here in the legislature if you onct see the need of laws that'll make it harder an' harder to destroy forests, an' easier an' easier to grow 'em! You've got little kids—I seen 'em one day down on the job. What are they goin' to do fer timber? This here reforestation business is only just startin'. When folks wakes up to the importance of it—it's goin' a-whoopin'—it's goin' to be one of the biggest things in the whole country. What are you goin' to leave them kids—a lot of worthless cut-over—or

a forest that's a better forest than the virgin stand yer old man butchered?"

Young Tom Regan's eyes lighted, suddenly: "Do you mean that this land of *mine* can be reforested? That a forest—as good or better than the virgin stand can be grown on my tract?"

"Yes, I mean that—just exactly that! An' you can make money doin' it, an' yer kids'll make more money on the same ground than yer old man made."

"But—how? What will it cost? Who can do it?"

"I can do it!" came the reply quick as a flash, "You say there's ten thousand acres that ain't be'n cut yet. I can make them acres pay fer reforestin' the forty thousan' acres that ain't nothin' but a liability to you, now. It ain't no guess work. It's facts. You turn me loose on that tract, an' I'll never ask you fer one cent of money fer wages nor expenses nor nothin' after the first two years. An' in the next five years I'll pay you back out of the profits, what you put in, an' I'll show you young pine comin' on in strips on yer cut-over. An' what's more, before you an' me cash in you'll be drawin' down a profit out of the first strips of young stuff—box stuff an' the like of that. An' when we're through, yer kids an' their kids will be loggin' real pine." He paused and, raising his hand, let it rest

lightly upon Mary MacAlister's shoulder: "Let me try it, Mr. Regan, let *us* try it! If you'll let us put a camp in the big stuff, an' give us Tim Neely fer boss we can do it—can't we, girl?"

"We certainly can!" cried the girl, her eyes shining, "Oh, Mr. Regan, if you would only let us try! It would be our big chance. We can make good—I know we can!"

The big hand of Senator Regan smote his thigh a resounding whack: "By George! I believe you can!" he cried. "All right, Leonard—go ahead!" He paused and the blue eyes twinkled as he glanced into the face of the girl, "Only I guess you want Neely, here, for camp foreman—not boss."

THE END

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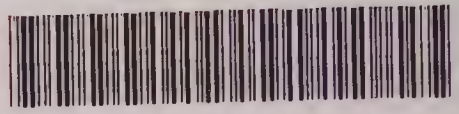
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