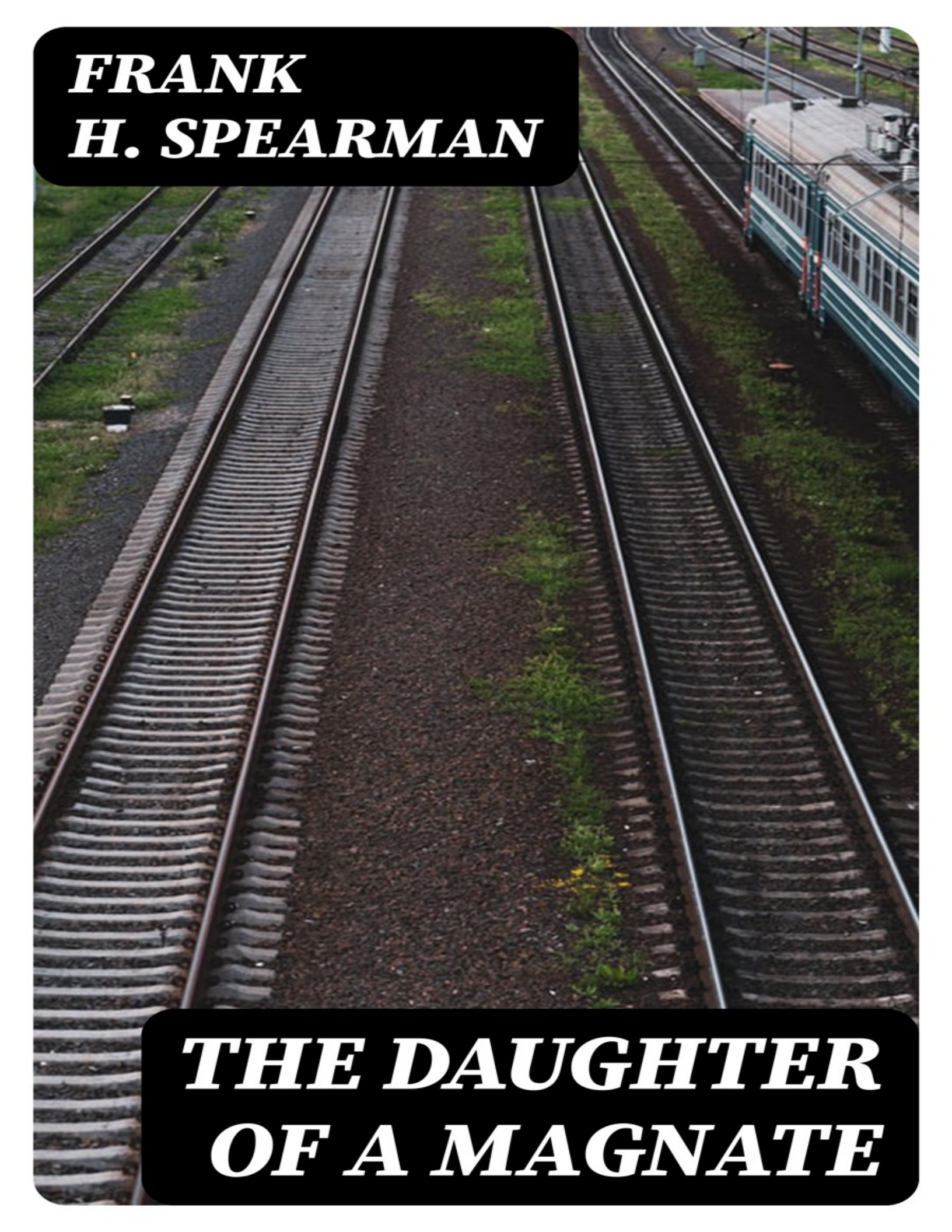




***FRANK
H. SPEARMAN***

***THE DAUGHTER
OF A MAGNATE***

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The Daughter of a Magnate

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

A JUNE WATER

CHAPTER II

AN ERROR AT HEADQUARTERS

CHAPTER III

INTO THE MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER IV

AS THE DESPATCHER SAW

CHAPTER V

AN EMERGENCY CALL

CHAPTER VI

THE CAT AND THE RAT

CHAPTER VII

TIME BEING MONEY

CHAPTER VIII

SPLITTING THE PAW

CHAPTER IX

A TRUCE

CHAPTER X

AND A SHOCK

CHAPTER XI

IN THE LALLA ROOKH

CHAPTER XII

A SLIP ON A SPECIAL

CHAPTER XIII

BACK TO THE MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER XIV

GLEN TARN

CHAPTER XV

NOVEMBER

CHAPTER XVI

NIGHT

CHAPTER XVII

STORM

CHAPTER XVIII

DAYBREAK

CHAPTER XIX

SUSPENSE

CHAPTER XX

DEEPENING WATERS

CHAPTER XXI

PILOT

CHAPTER XXII

THE SOUTH ARÊTE

CHAPTER XXIII

BUSINESS

CHAPTER I

A JUNE WATER

[Table of Contents](#)

The train, a special, made up of a private car and a diner, was running on a slow order and crawled between the bluffs at a snail's pace.

Ahead, the sun was sinking into the foothills and wherever the eye could reach to the horizon barren wastes lay riotously green under the golden blaze. The river, swollen everywhere out of its banks, spread in a broad and placid flood of yellow over the bottoms, and a hundred shallow lakes studded with willowed islands marked its wandering course to the south and east. The clear, far air of the mountains, the glory of the gold on the June hills and the illimitable stretch of waters below, spellbound the group on the observation platform.

"It's a pity, too," declared Conductor O'Brien, who was acting as mountain Baedeker, "that we're held back this way when we're covering the prettiest stretch on the road for running. It is right along here where you are riding that the speed records of the world have been made. Fourteen and six-tenths miles were done in nine and a half minutes just west of that curve about six months ago—of course it was down hill."

Several of the party were listening. "Do you use speed recorders out here?" asked Allen Harrison.

"How's that?"

"Do you use speed recorders?"

"Only on our slow trains," replied O'Brien. "To put speed recorders on Paddy McGraw or Jimmie the Wind would be like timing a teal duck with an eight-day clock. Sir?" he asked, turning to another questioner while the laugh lingered on his side. "No; those are not really mountains at all. Those are the foothills of the Sleepy Cat range—west of the Spider Water. We get into that range about two hundred miles from here—well, I say they are west of the Spider, but for ten days it's been hard to say exactly where the Spider is. The Spider is making us all the trouble with high water just now—and we're coming out into the valley in about a minute," he added as the car gave an embarrassing lurch. "The track is certainly soft, but if you'll stay right where you are, on this side, ladies, you'll get the view of your lives when we leave the bluffs. The valley is about nine miles broad and it's pretty much all under water."

Beyond the curve they were taking lay a long tangent stretching like a steel wand across a sea of yellow, and as their engine felt its way very gingerly out upon it there rose from the slow-moving trucks of their car the softened resonance that tells of a sounding-board of waters.

Soon they were drawn among wooded knolls between which hurried little rivers tossed out of the Spider flood into dry waterways and brawling with surprised stones and foaming noisily at stubborn root and impassive culvert. Through the trees the travellers caught passing glimpses of shaded eddies and a wilderness of placid pools. "And this," murmured Gertrude Brock to her sister Marie, "this is the Spider!" O'Brien, talking to the men at her elbow,

overheard. "Hardly, Miss Brock; not yet. You haven't seen the river yet. This is only the backwater."

They were rising the grade to the bridge approach, and when they emerged a few moments later from the woods the conductor said, "There!"

The panorama of the valley lay before them. High above their level and a mile away, the long thread-like spans of Hailey's great bridge stretched from pier to pier. To the right of the higher ground a fan of sidetracks spread, with lines of flat cars and gondolas loaded with stone, brush, piling and timbers, and in the foreground two hulking pile-drivers, their leads, like rabbits' ears laid sleekly back, squatted mysteriously. Switch engines puffed impatiently up and down the ladder track shifting stuff to the distant spurs. At the river front an army of men moved like loaded ants over the dikes. Beyond them the eye could mark the boiling yellow of the Spider, its winding channel marked through the waste of waters by whirling driftwood, bobbing wreckage and plunging trees—sweepings of a thousand angry miles. "There's the Spider," repeated the West End conductor, pointing, "out there in the middle where you see things moving right along. That's the Spider, on a twenty-year rampage." The train, moving slowly, stopped. "I guess we've got as close to it as we're going to, for a while. I'll take a look forward."

It was the time of the June water in the mountains. A year earlier the rise had taken the Peace River bridge and with the second heavy year of snow railroad men looked for new trouble. June is not a month for despair, because the mountain men have never yet scheduled despair as a West

End liability. But it is a month that puts wrinkles in the right of way clear across the desert and sows gray hairs in the roadmasters' records from McCloud to Bear Dance. That June the mountain streams roared, the foothills floated, the plains puffed into sponge, and in the thick of it all the Spider Water took a man-slaughtering streak and started over the Bad Lands across lots. The big river forced Bucks' hand once more, and to protect the main line Glover, third of the mountain roadbuilders, was ordered off the high-line construction and back to the hills where Brodie and Hailey slept, to watch the Spider.

The special halted on a tongue of high ground flanking the bridge and extending upstream to where the river was gnawing at the long dike that held it off the approach. The delay was tedious. Doctor Lanning and Allen Harrison went forward to smoke. Gertrude Brock took refuge in a book and Mrs. Whitney, her aunt, annoyed her with stories. Marie Brock and Louise Donner placed their chairs where they could watch the sorting and unloading of never-ending strings of flat cars, the spasmodic activity in the lines of laborers, the hurrying of the foremen and the movement of the rapidly shifting fringe of men on the danger line at the dike.

The clouds which had opened for the dying splendor of the day closed and a shower swept over the valley; the conductor came back in his raincoat—his party were at dinner. "Are we to be detained much longer?" asked Mrs. Whitney.

"For a little while, I'm afraid," replied the trainman diplomatically. "I've been away over there on the dike to see

if I could get permission to cross, but I didn't succeed."

"Oh, conductor!" remonstrated Louise Donner.

"And we don't get to Medicine Bend to-night," said Doctor Lanning.

"What we need is a man of influence," suggested Harrison. "We ought never to have let your 'pa' go," he added, turning to Gertrude Brock, beside whom he sat.

"Can't we really get ahead?" Gertrude lifted her brows reproachfully as she addressed the conductor. "It's becoming very tiresome."

O'Brien shook his head.

"Why not see someone in authority?" she persisted.

"I have seen the man in authority, and nearly fell into the river doing it; then he turned me down."

"Did you tell him who we were?" demanded Mrs. Whitney.

"I made all sorts of pleas."

"Does he know that Mr. Bucks *promised* we should be in Medicine Bend to-night?" asked pretty little Marie Brock.

"He wouldn't in the least mind that."

Mrs. Whitney bridled. "Pray who is he?"

"The construction engineer of the mountain division is the man in charge of the bridge just at present."

"It would be a very simple matter to get orders over his head," suggested Harrison.

"Not very."

"Mr. Bucks?"

"Hardly. No orders would take us over that bridge to-night without Glover's permission."

"What an autocrat!" sighed Mrs. Whitney. "No matter; I don't care to go over it, anyway."

"But I do," protested Gertrude. "I don't feel like staying in this water all night, if you please."

"I'm afraid that's what we'll have to do for a few hours. I told Mr. Glover he would be in trouble if I didn't get my people to Medicine Bend to-night."

"Tell him again," laughed Doctor Lanning.

Conductor O'Brien looked embarrassed. "You'd like to ask particular leave of Mr. Glover for us, I know," suggested Miss Donner.

"Well, hardly—the second time—not of Mr. Glover." A sheet of rain drenched the plate-glass windows. "But I'm going to watch things and we'll get out just as soon as possible. I know Mr. Glover pretty well. He is all right, but he's been down here now a week without getting out of his clothes and the river rising on him every hour. They've got every grain bag between Salt Lake and Chicago and they're filling them with sand and dumping them in where the river is cutting."

"Any danger of the bridge going?" asked the doctor.

"None in the world, but there's a lot of danger that the river will go. That would leave the bridge hanging over dry land. The fight is to hold the main channel where it belongs. They're getting rock over the bridge from across the river and strengthening the approach for fear the dike should give way. The track is busy every minute, so I couldn't make much impression on Mr. Glover."

There was light talk of a deputation to the dike, followed by the resignation of travellers, cards afterward, and ping-pong. With the deepening of the night the rain fell harder, and the wind rising in gusts drove it against the glass. When

the women retired to their compartments the train had been set over above the bridge where the wind, now hard from the southeast, sung steadily around the car.

Gertrude Brock could not sleep. After being long awake she turned on the light and looked at her watch; it was one o'clock. The wind made her restless and the air in the stateroom had become oppressive. She dressed and opened her door. The lights were very low and the car was silent; all were asleep.

At the rear end she raised a window-shade. The night was lighted by strange waves of lightning, and thunder rumbled in the distance unceasingly. Where she sat she could see the sidings filled with cars, and when a sharper flash lighted the backwater of the lakes, vague outlines of far-off bluffs beetled into the sky.

She drew the shade, for the continuous lightning added to her disquiet. As she did so the rain drove harshly against the car and she retreated to the other side. Feeling presently the coolness of the air she walked to her stateroom for her Newmarket coat, and wrapping it about her, sunk into a chair and closed her eyes. She had hardly fallen asleep when a crash of thunder split the night and woke her. As it rolled angrily away she quickly raised the window-curtain.

The heavens were frenzied. She looked toward the river. Electrical flashes charging from end to end of the angry sky lighted the bridge, reflected the black face of the river and paled flickering lights and flaming torches where, on vanishing stretches of dike, an army of dim figures, moving unceasingly, lent awe to the spectacle.

She could see smoke from the hurrying switch engines whirled viciously up into the sweeping night and above her head the wind screamed. A gale from the southwest was hurling the Spider against the revetment that held the eastern shore and the day and the night gangs together were reinforcing it. Where the dike gave under the terrific pounding, or where swiftly boiling pools sucked under the heavy piling, Glover's men were sinking fresh relays of mattresses and loading them with stone.

At moments laden flat cars were pushed to the brink of the flood, and men with picks and bars rose spirit-like out of black shadows to scramble up their sides and dump rubble on the sunken brush. Other men toiling in unending procession wheeled and slung sandbags upon the revetment; others stirred crackling watchfires that leaped high into the rain, and over all played the incessant lightning and the angry thunder and the flying night.

She shut from her eyes the strangely moving sight, returned to her compartment, closed her door and lay down. It was quieter within the little room and the fury of the storm was less appalling.

Half dreaming as she lay, mountains shrouded in a deathly lightning loomed wavering before her, and one, most terrible of all, she strove unwillingly to climb. Up she struggled, clinging and slipping, a cramping fear over all her senses, her ankles clutched in icy fetters, until from above, an apparition, strange and threatening, pushed her, screaming, and she swooned into an awful gulf.

"Gertrude! Gertrude! Wake up!" cried a frightened voice.

The car was rocking in the wind, and as Gertrude opened her door Louise Donner stumbled terrified into her arms. "Did you hear that awful, awful crash? I'm sure the car has been struck."

"No, no, Louise."

"It surely has been. Oh, let us waken the men at once, Gertrude; we shall be killed!"

The two clung to one another. "I'm afraid to stay alone, Gertrude," sobbed her companion.

"Stay with me, Louise. Come." While they spoke the wind died and for a moment the lightning ceased, but the calm, like the storm, was terrifying. As they stood breathless a report like the ripping of a battery burst over their heads, a blast shook the heavy car and howled shrilly away.

Sleep was out of the question. Gertrude looked at her watch. It was four o'clock. The two dressed and sat together till daylight. When morning broke, dark and gray, the storm had passed and out of the leaden sky a drizzle of rain was falling. Beside the car men were moving. The forward door was open and the conductor in his stormcoat walked in.

"Everything is all right this morning, ladies," he smiled.

"All right? I should think everything all wrong," exclaimed Louise. "We have been frightened to death."

"They've got the cutting stopped," continued O'Brien, smiling. "Mr. Glover has left the dike. He just told me the river had fallen six inches since two o'clock. We'll be out of here now as quick as we can get an engine: they've been switching with ours. There was considerable wind in the night——"

"Considerable *wind*!"

"You didn't notice it, did you? Glover loaded the bridge with freight trains about twelve o'clock and I'm thinking it's lucky, for when the wind went into the northeast about four o'clock I thought it would take my head off. It snapped like dynamite clear across the valley."

"Oh, we heard!"

"When the wind jumped, a crew was dumping stone into the river. The men were ordered off the flat cars but there were so many they didn't all get the word at once, and while the foreman was chasing them down he was blown clean into the river."

"Drowned?"

"No, he was not. He crawled out away down by the bridge, though a man couldn't have done it once in a thousand times. It was old Bill Dancing—he's got more lives than a cat. Do you remember where we first pulled up the train in the afternoon? A string of ten box cars stood there last night and when the wind shifted it blew the whole bunch off the track."

"Oh, do let us get away from here," urged Gertrude. "I feel as if something worse would happen if we stayed. I'm sorry we ever left McCloud yesterday."

The men came from their compartments and there was more talk of the storm. Clem and his helpers were starting breakfast in the dining-car and the doctor and Harrison wanted to walk down to see where the river had cut into the dike. Mrs. Whitney had not appeared and they asked the young ladies to go with them. Gertrude objected. A foggy haze hung over the valley.

"Come along," urged Harrison; "the air will give you an appetite."

After some remonstrating she put on her heavy coat, and carrying umbrellas the four started under the conductor's guidance across to the dike. They picked their steps along curving tracks, between material piles and through the débris of the night. On the dike they spent some time looking at the gaps and listening to explanations of how the river worked to undermine and how it had been checked. Watchers hooded in yellow stickers patrolled the narrow jetties or, motionless, studied the eddies boiling at their feet.

Returning, the party walked around the edge of the camp where cooks were busy about steaming kettles. Under long, open tents wearied men lying on scattered hay slept after the hardship of the night. In the drizzling haze half a dozen men, assistants to the engineer—rough looking but strong-featured and quick-eyed—sat with buckets of steaming coffee about a huge campfire. Four men bearing a litter came down the path. Doctor Lanning halted them. A laborer had been pinched during the night between loads of piling projecting over the ends of flat cars and they told the doctor his chest was hurt. A soiled neckcloth covered his face but his stertorous breathing could be heard, and Gertrude Brock begged the doctor to go to the camp with the injured man and see whether something could not be done to relieve him until the company surgeon arrived. The doctor, with O'Brien, turned back. Gertrude, depressed by the incident, followed Louise and Allen Harrison along the path which wound round a clump of willows flanking the campfire.

On the sloping bank below the trees and a little out of the wind a man on a mattress of willows lay stretched asleep. He was clad in leather, mud-stained and wrinkled, and the big brown boots that cased his feet were strapped tightly above his knees. An arm, outstretched, supported his head, hidden under a soft gray hat. Like the thick gloves that covered his clasped hands, his hat and the handkerchief knotted about his neck were soaked by the rain, falling quietly and trickling down the furrows of his leather coat. But his attitude was one of exhaustion, and trifles of discomfort were lost in his deep respiration.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gertrude Brock under her breath, "look at that poor fellow asleep in the rain. Allen?"

Allen Harrison, ahead, was struggling to hold his umbrella upright while he rolled a cigarette. He turned as he passed the paper across his lips.

"Throw your coat over him, Allen."

Harrison pasted the paper roll, and putting it to his mouth felt for his matchcase. "Throw *my* coat over him!"

"Yes."

Allen took out a match. "Well, I like that. That's like you, Gertrude. Suppose you throw your coat over him."

Gertrude looked silently at her companion. There is a moment when women should be humored; not all men are fortunate enough to recognize it. Louise, still walking ahead, called, "Come on," but Gertrude did not move.

"Allen, throw your coat over the poor fellow," she urged. "You wouldn't let your dog lie like that in the rain."

"But, Gertrude—do me the kindness"—he passed his umbrella to her that he might better manage the lighting

—"he's not my dog."

If she made answer it was only in the expression of her eyes. She handed the umbrella back, flung open her long coat and slipped it from her shoulders. With the heavy garment in her hands she stepped from her path toward the sleeper and noticed for the first time an utterly disreputable-looking dog lying beside him in the weeds. The dog's long hair was bedraggled to the color of the mud he curled in, and as he opened his eyes without raising his head, Gertrude hesitated; but his tail spoke a kindly greeting. He knew no harm was meant and he watched unconcernedly while, determined not to recede from her impulse, Gertrude stepped hastily to the sleeper's side and dropped her coat over his shoulders.

Louise was too far ahead to notice the incident. After breakfast she asked Gertrude what the matter was.

"Nothing. Allen and I had our first quarrel this morning."

As she spoke, the train, high in the air, was creeping over the Spider bridge.

CHAPTER II

AN ERROR AT HEADQUARTERS

[Table of Contents](#)

When the Brock-Harrison party, familiarly known—among those with whom they were by no means familiar—as the Steel Crowd, bought the transcontinental lines that J. S. Bucks, the second vice-president and general manager, had built up into a system, their first visit to the West End was awaited with some uneasiness. An impression prevailed that the new owners might take decided liberties with what Conductor O'Brien termed the "personal" of the operating department.

But week after week followed the widely heralded announcement of the purchase without the looked-for visit from the new owners. During the interval West End men from the general superintendent down were admittedly on edge—with the exception of Conductor O'Brien. "If I go, I go," was all he said, and in making the statement in his even, significant way it was generally understood that the trainman that ran the pay-cars and the swell mountain specials had in view a superintendency on the New York Central. On what he rested his confidence in the opening no one certainly knew, though Pat Francis claimed it was based wholly on a cigar in a glass case once given to the genial conductor by Chauncey M. Depew when travelling special to the coast under his charge.

Be that as it may, when the West End was at last electrified by the announcement that the Brock-Harrison

syndicate train had already crossed the Missouri and might be expected any day, O'Brien with his usual luck was detailed as one of the conductors to take charge of the visitors.

The pang in the operating department was that the long-delayed inspection tour should have come just at a time when the water had softened things until every train on the mountain division was run under slow-orders.

At McCloud Vice-president Bucks, a very old campaigner, had held the party for two days to avoid the adverse conditions in the west and turned the financiers of the party south to inspect branches while the road was drying in the hills. But the party of visitors contained two distinct elements, the money-makers and the money-spenders—the generation that made the investment and the generation that distributed the dividends. The young people rebelled at branch line trips and insisted on heading for sightseeing and hunting straight into the mountains. Accordingly, at McCloud the party split, and while Henry S. Brock and his business associates looked over the branches, his private cars containing his family and certain of their friends were headed for the headquarters of the mountain division, Medicine Bend.

Medicine Bend is not quite the same town it used to be, and disappointment must necessarily attend efforts to identify the once familiar landmarks of the mountain division. Improvement, implacable priestess of American industry, has well-nigh obliterated the picturesque features of pioneer days. The very right of way of the earliest overland line, abandoned for miles and miles, is seen now

from the car windows bleaching on the desert. So once its own rails, vigorous and aggressive, skirted grinning heaps of buffalo bones, and its own tangents were spiked across the grave of pony rider and Indian brave—the king was: the king is.

But the Sweetgrass winds are the same. The same snows whiten the peaks, the same sun dies in western glory, and the mountains still see nestling among the tracks at the bend of the Medicine River the first headquarters building of the mountain division, nicknamed The Wickiup. What, in the face of continual and unrelenting changes, could have saved the Wickiup? Not the fact that the crazy old gables can boast the storm and stress of the mad railroad life of another day than this—for every deserted curve and hill of the line can do as much. The Wickiup has a better claim to immortality, for once its cracked and smoky walls, raised solely to house the problems and perplexities of the operating department, sheltered a pair of lovers, so strenuous in their perplexities that even yet in the gleam of the long night-fires of the West End their story is told.

In that day the construction department of the mountain division was cooped up at one end of the hall on the second floor of the building. Bucks at that time thought twice before he indorsed one of Glover's twenty-thousand-dollar specifications. Now, with the department occupying the entire third floor and pushing out of the dormer windows, a million-dollar estimate goes through like a requisition for postage stamps.

But in spite of his hole-in-the-wall office, Glover, the construction engineer of that day, was a man to be

reckoned with in estimates of West End men. They knew him for a captain long before he left his mark on the Spider the time he held the river for a straight week at twenty-eight feet, bitted and gagged between Hailey's piers, and forced the yellow tramp to understand that if it had killed Hailey there were equally bad men left on the mountain pay-roll. Glover, it may be said, took his final degrees in engineering in the Grand Cañon; he was a member of the Bush party, and of the four that got back alive to Medicine one was Ab Glover.

Glover rebuilt the whole system of snowsheds on the West End, practically everything from the Peace to the Sierras. Every section foreman in the railroad Bad Lands knew Glover. Just how he happened to lose his position as chief engineer of the system—for he was a big man on the East End when he first came with the road—no one certainly knew. Some said he spoke his mind too freely—a bad trait in a railroad man; others said he could not hold down the job. All they knew in the mountains was that as a snow fighter he could wear out all the plows on the division, and that if a branch line were needed in haste Glover would have the rails down before an ordinary man could get his bids in.

Ordinarily these things are expected from a mountain constructionist and elicit no comment from headquarters, but the matter at the Spider was one that could hardly pass unnoticed. For a year Glover had been begging for a stenographer. Writing, to him, was as distasteful as soda-water, and one morning soon after his return from the valley flood a letter came with the news that a competent

stenographer had been assigned to him and would report at once for duty at Medicine Bend.

Glover emerged from his hall-office in great spirits and showed the letter to Callahan, the general superintendent, for congratulations. "That is right," commented Callahan cynically. "You saved them a hundred thousand dollars last month—they are going to blow ten a week on you. By the way, your stenographer is here."

"He is?"

"She is. Your stenographer, a very dignified young lady, came in on Number One. You had better go and get shaved. She has been in to inquire for you and has gone to look up a boarding-place. Get her started as soon as you can—I want to see your figures on the Rat Cañon work."

A helper now would be a boon from heaven. "But she won't stay long after she sees this office," Glover reflected ruefully as he returned to it. He knew from experience that stenographers were hard to hold at Medicine Bend. They usually came out for their health and left at the slightest symptoms of improvement. He worried as to whether he might possibly have been unlucky enough to draw another invalid. And at the very moment he had determined he would not lose his new assistant if good treatment would keep her he saw a trainman far down the gloomy hall pointing a finger in his direction—saw a young lady coming toward him and realized he ought to have taken time that morning to get shaved.

There was nothing to do but make the best of it; dismissing his embarrassment he rose to greet the newcomer. His first reflection was that he had not drawn an