



I drew a deep breath, comprehend am going to fight you tenows with ing now the full iniquity of his plot. and bracing myself to fight it. "And what about the other girl,

Kirby? for there is another girl." "Yes," rather indifferently, "there is another."

"Of course you know who she is?" "Certainly-a nigger, a white nig ger; the supposed illegitimate daughter of Adelbert Beaucaire, and a slave woman. There is no reason why I should fret about her, is there? She is my property already by law." He laughed again, the same ugly sneering laugh of triumph. "That was why was so particular about the wording of that bill of sale-I would rather have her than the whole bunch of field hands."

"You believe then the girl has never been freed-either she, or her mother?

"Believe? I know. I tell you I never play any game with my eyes shut." "And you actually intend to-to hold her as a slave?"

"Well, I'll look her over first before I decide-she would be worth a pot full of money down the river."

The contemptuous, utterly indifferent manner in which he volced his villainous purpose, would have crazed any man. To me this utterance was the last straw, breaking down every restraint, and leaving me hot, and furious with anger. I forgot the muzzle of the pistol pressed against my side, and the menacing threat in Kirby's low voice. The face of the man was indistinct, a mere outline, but the swift impulse to strike at it was irresistible, and I let him have the blow-a straight-arm jab to the jaw. My clinched knuckles crunched against the flesh, and he reeled back, kept from falling only by the support of the deckhouse. There was no report of a weapon, no outery, yet, before I could strike again, I was suddenly gripped from behind by a pair of arms, which closed about my throat like a vise, throttling me instantly into silent helplessness. I struggled madly to break free, straining with all the art of a wrestler, exerting every ounce of strength, but the grasp which held me was unyielding, robbing me of breath, and defeating every effort to call-for help. Kirby, dazed yet by my sudden blow, grew eager to take a hand in the affray, struck me a cowardly blow in the face, and swung his undischarged pistol to a level with my eyes.

"D- you!" he ejaculated, and for the first time his voice really ex-hibited temper. "I'd kill you with this," but for the noise. No, by God! there is a safer way than that to settle with you. Have you got the skunk, Carver?" "You can bet I have, Joe. 1 kin

choke the life out o' him-shall I?" "No; let up a blt-just enough so he want to find

every wennon I possess." Kirby chuckled, apparently greatly

amused. "Quite glad, I am sure, for the declaration of war. Fighting has always agreed with me. Might I ask the nature of those weapons?"

"That remains for you to discover," I ejaculated sharply, exasperated by his evident contempt. "Carver, take your dirty hands off of me."

In spite of the fact of their threat, the ready pistol pressing against my ribs, the grip of Carver's fingers at my throat, 1 did not anticipate any actual assault. That either would really dare injure me seemed preposterous. Indeed my impression was, that Kirby felt such indifference toward my attempt to block his plan, that he would permit me to pass without opposition -certainly without the slightest resort to violence. The action of the two was so swift, so concerted, as though at some secret signal, that, almost before I realized their purpose, they held me helplessly struggling, and had forced me back against the low rail. Here I endeavored to break away, to shout an alarm, but was already too late. Carver's hands closed remorselessly on my throat, and, when I managed to strike out madly with one free fist, the butt of Kirby's pistol descended on my head, so lacerating my scalp the dripping blood blinded my eyes. The blow partially stunned me, and I half fell, clutching at the rail, yet dimly conscious that the two straining men were uplifting my useless body, Carver swearing viciously as he helped to thrust me outward over the wooden bar. The next instant I fell, the sneering cackle of Kirby's laugh of triumph echoing in my ears until drowned in the splash as I struck the black water below.

I came back to the surface dazed and weakened, yet sufficiently conscious to make an intelligent struggle for life. The over-hang of the rapidly passing boat still concealed me from the observation of those above on the deck, and the advantage of permitting them to believe that the blow on my head had resulted in drowning, together with the knowledge that I must swiftly get beyond the stroke of that deadly wheel, flashed instantly through my brain. It was like a tonic, reviving every energy. Waiting only to inhale one deep breath of air, I plunged back once more into the depths, and swam strongly under water. The effort proved successful, for when I again ventured to emerge, gasping and exhausted, the little Warrior had swept past, and become merely a shapeless outline, barely visible above the surface of the river.

Slowly treading water, my lips held barely above the surface. I drew in deep draughts of cool night air, my mind becoming more active as hope returned. The blow I had received was a savage one, and psined dully, but the cold water in which I had been immersed had caused the bleeding to cense, and likewise revived all my faculties. The very fact that no effort was made to stop was sufficient proof that Throckmorton in the wheelhouse remained unconscious of what had oc-curred on the deck below. My fate might never be discovered, or suspected. I was alone, submerged in the great river, the stars overhead alone piercing the night shadows. A log swept by me, white bursts of spray illuminating its sides, and I grappled it gratefully, my fingers finding grip on the sodden bark. Using this for partial support, and ceasing to battle so desperately against the down-sweep of the current, I managed finally to work my way into an eddy, struggling onward until my feet at last touched bottom at the end of a low, out-cropping point of sand. This proved to be a mere splt, but I waded ashore, water streaming from my clothing, conscious then idly watched as they caught fire. now of such complete exhaustion that I sank instantly outstretched upon the sand, gasping painfully for breath, every muscle and nerve throbbing. The night was intensely still, black, impenetrable. It seemed as though no human being could inhabit that desolate region. I lifted my head to listen for the slightest sound of life, and strained my eyes to detect the distant glimmer of a light in any direction. Nothing rewarded the effort. Yet surely here on this long-settled west bank of the Mississippi I could not be far doctah say he done thought ye'd cum removed from those of my race, for I knew that all along this river shore were cultivated plantations and little frontier towns irregularly served by far away. "Have I been here long?" passing steamboats. The night air increased in chilliness as the hours approached dawn, and I shivered in my wet clothes, although mediate action. Realizing more than ever as I again attempted to move my weakness and exhaustion from the and stumbled forward along the narrow spit of sand, until I attained a bank of firm earth, up which I crept painfully, emerging at last upon a fairgrass, and surrounded by a grove of

they as a rather weir-dehned path leading inland. Assured that this must point the way to some door, as it was evidently no wild animal trail, I felt my way forward cautiously, eager to attain shelter, and the comfort of a

I came suddenly to a patch of cultivated land, bisected by a small stream, the path I was following leading along its bank. Holding to this for guidance, within less than a hundred yards I came to the house I was seeking, a small, log structure, overshadowed by a gigantic oak, and standing isolated and alone. Belleving the place to be occupied by a slave, or possibly some white squatter, I advanced directly to the door, and called loudly to whoever might be within.

There was no response, and, believing the occupant asleep, I rapped sharply. Still no voice answered, although I felt convinced of some movement inside, leading me to believe that the sleeper had slipped from his bed and was approaching the door. Again I rapped, this time with greater impatience over the delay, but not the slightest sound rewarded the effort. Shivering there in my wet clothes, the stubborn obduracy of the fellow awakened my anger.

"Open up, there," I called commandingly, "or else I'll break down your door.'

In the darkness I had been unobservant of a narrow slide in the upper panel, but had scarcely uttered these words of threat when the flare of a discharge almost in my very face fairly blinded me, and I fell backward, aware of a burning sensation in one shoulder. The next instant I lay outstretched on the ground, and it seemed to me that life was fast ebbing from my body. Twice I endeavored vainly to rise, but at the second attempt my brain reeled dizzily and I sank back unconscious.

CHAPTER V.

Picking Up the Threads.

I turned my head slightly on the hard shuck pillow and gazed curiously about. When my eyes had first opened all I could perceive was the section of log wall against which I rested, but now, after painfully turning over, the entire interior of the single-room cabin was revealed. It was humble enough in all its appointments, the walls quite bare, the few chairs fashioned from half-barrels, a packing box for a table, and the parrow bed on which I lay constructed from saplings lashed together, covered with a coarse ticking, packed with straw. I surveyed the entire circult of the room wonderingly, a vague memory of what had lately occurred returning slowly to mind. To all appearances I was there alone, although



in de middle ob de night, a-cussin', an' a-threatenin' fer ter break in, 1 just nat'arlly didn't wanter be licked, an'-an' so I blazed away. I's powerful sorry 'bout it now, sah." "No doubt it was more my fault

than yours. You are a free negro, then?"

"Yas, sah. I done belong onct ter Colonul Silas Carlton, sah, but afore he died, just because I done saved his boy frum drownin' in de ribber, de ol' colonul he set me free, an' give me a patch o' lan' ter raise corn on." "What is your name?"

"Pete, sar, Free Pete is whut mostly de white folks call me." He laughed, white teeth showing and the whites of his eyes, "Yer see thar am a powerful lot o' Petes round 'bout yere, sah.

I drew a deep breath, conscious of weakness as I endeavored to change position.

"All right, Pete; now I want to understand things clearly. You shot me, supposing I was making an assault on you. Your bullet lodged in my shoulder. What happened then?"

"Well, after a while, sah, thar wan't no mor' noise, an' I reckoned I'd either done hit yer er else ye'd run away. An' thar ye wus, sah, a-lyin' on yer back like ye wus dead. Just 80 soon as I saw ye I know'd as how ye never was no nigger-hunter but a stranger in dese yere parts. So dragged ye inside de cabin, an' washed up yer hurts. But ye never got no bettah, so I got skeered, an' went hoofin' it down fer de doctah at Beaucaire Landin', sah, an' when he cum back along wid me he dug the bullet outer yer shoulder, an' left some truck fer

a town?'

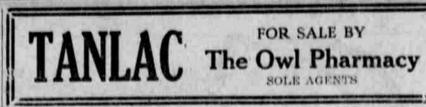
"A sorter town, sah; 'bout four miles down ribber."

The mentioning of this familiar word brought back instantly to my darkened understanding all those main events leading up to my presence in this neighborhood. Complete memory returned, every separate incident sweeping through my brain-Kirby, Carver, the fateful game of cards in the cabin of the Warrior, the sudden death of the judge, the mob. anger I sought to curb, the struggle on deck, my being thrown overboard, and the danger threatening the two innocent daughters of Beaucaire. And I had actually been lying in this negro hut, burning up with fever, helplessly delirious, for ten days. What had already occurred in that space of time? What villainy had been concocted and carried out?" "Now see here, Pete," I began ear-

nestly. "How did you learn what my name was?" "De doctah he foun' dat out, sah,

He done looked through yer pockets, sah, an' he took two papers whut he foun' dar away wid him. He done tol' me as how yer was an offercer in de army-a leftenant er sumthin'-an' thet dem papers ought fer ter he sint ter de gov'ner at onct. De las' time he wus yere he tol' me thet he wint down ter St. Lonee hisself, an' done gif bof dem papers ter Gov'ner Clark. So yer don't need worry none 'bout dem no mort."

I'sank back onto the hard pillow, greatly relieved by this information. The burden of official duty had been



TEST WELL WILL BE SUNK FOR OIL SOON

Drilling of a 2000 foot test well in Goose Lake Valley, will be started in the near future by an Oklahoma oll company which has just completed the leasing of 20,000 acres of land in the valley, according to H. A. Utley, of Lakeview, who is spending a few days in Bend. It is expected that the sinking of the first well will cost in the neighborhood of

\$25,000. The possibility that oil bearing strata might underlie Goose Lake valley, was first indicated when gas hubbled to the surface after artesian wells were sunk at certain points. The gas still persists after many months, indicating that it may accompany mineral oil.

In the Summer Lake country, natural gas jets are known to have been in existence for the past 20 years.

Put it in The Bulletin.

ent I want you to go down to the Landing and bring Lawyer Haines back here with you. Just tell him a sick white man wants to see him at once, and not a word to anyone clas." "Yas, sab," the whites of his eyes olling. "He done know of Pete, an'

I'll sure bring him back yere." It was dark when they came, the fire alone lighting up the interior of the dingy cabin with a fitful glow of red flame. I had managed to get out of bed and partially dress myself, feeling stronger, and in less pain as I exercised my muscles. Haines was a small, sandy-complexioned man, with a straggling beard and light blue eyes. He appeared competent enough, a bundle of nervous energy, and yet there was something about the lenow which instantly impressed me unfavorably-probably his short, jerky manner of speech and his inability to look straight at you.

"Pete has been telling me who you are, lieutenant," he said, as we shook hands, "and putting some other things together I can guess the rest. You came south on the Warrior?"

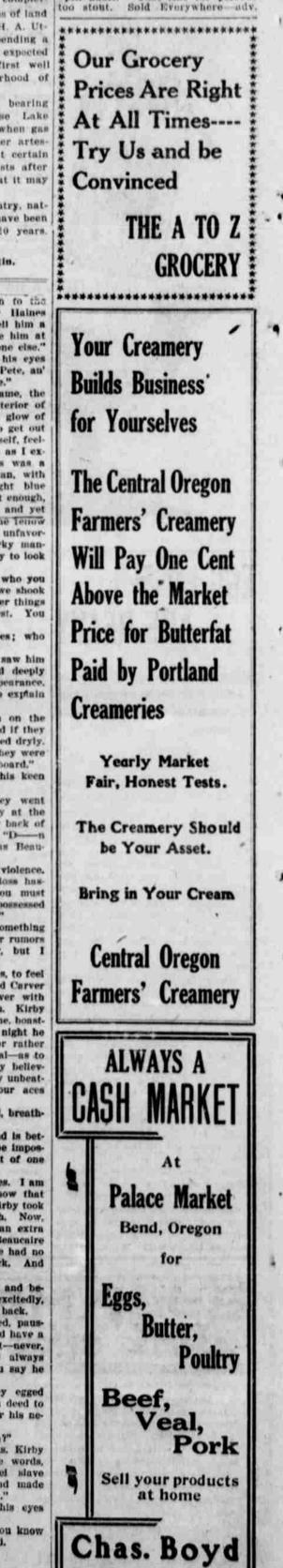
"From Fort Armstrong-yes; who told you this?"

"Captain Throckmorton. 1 saw him in St. Louis, and he seemed deeply grieved by your sudden disappearance. No one on board was able to explain what had occurred."

"Yet there were two men on the boat who could have explained if they had cared to do so," I answered dryly. "I mean Kirby and Carver; they were the ones who threw me overboard." He dropped into a chair, his keen ferret eyes on my face.

"Kirby and Carver? They went ashore with the judge's body at the Landing. So there is a story back of all this," he exclaimed jerkily. "D----n Your Attention, Please,

A Foley Cathartic Tablet is a prompt and safe remedy for sick headache, biliousness, bleating sour stomach, gas, bad breath, indigestion constipation, or other condition caused by clogged or irregular bowels. They cause no griping or nausea nor will they encourage the "pill habit." Just fine for persons. too stout. Sold Everywhere adv.



me ter giv' yer. He's done been yere three times, sah." "From Beaucaire Landing-is that

out what all this means. Now look

here, Knox, what is all this to you? Why are you butting in on my game? Was Beaucaire a friend of yours?" "I can hardly claim that," I admitted. "We never met v-til I came aboard this steamer. All I am interested in is justice to others."

"To others? Oh. I suppose you mean those girls-you know them then?" "I have never even seen them," I

said.

"I see; a self-appointed squire of dames; actuated merely by a romantic desire to serve beauty in distress. Extremely interesting, my dear boy. But, see here, Knox," and his tone changed to seriousness. "Let the romance go, and talk sense a minute. You are not going to get very far fighting me alone. You haven't even got the law with you. Even if I cheated Beaucaire, which I do not for a moment admit, there is no proof. The money is mine, and so is the land and the niggers.' You can be ugly, of course, but you cannot overturn the facts. Now, you acknowledge that what has occurred is pernally nothing to you; Beaucaire was no special friend, and you don't even know the two girls-all right then. drop the whole matter. I hold no grudge on account of your striking me, and am even willing to share up with you to avoid trouble." "And if I refuse?"

"Then, of course, we shall be compelled to shut your mouth for you. Self-preservation is the first law."

I looked about at them both, scarcely able to distinguish clearly even their outlines in the dense gloom. The seriousness of the situation, coupled with my helplessness, and inability to achieve the object proposed, was very evident. It might, under the circumstances, have been the part of wisdom for me to have sought some means of compromise, but I was young, and hot, flery blood swept through my veins. The words of Kirby stung me with this only served to arouse me into imtheir breath of insult-his sneering, insolent offer to pay me to remain still.

"You must rank me as one of your own kind," I burst forth. "Now you struggle, I succeeded in gaining my feet. listen to a plain word from me. If that was intended as an offer, I refuse it. You, and your confederate, have coolly robbed Beaucaire, and propose to get away with the spoils. Perhaps iy level spot, softly carpeted with you will, but that end will not be accomplished through any assistance of forest trees. The shadows here were mine. At first I only felt a slight in- dense, but my feet encountered a de-

"Is Yer Really Awake Agin, Honey?"

close beside me stood a low stool, supporting a tin basin partially filled with water. As I moved I became conscious of a dull pain in my left shoulder, which I also discovered to be tightly bandaged.

I presume it was not long, yet my thoughts were so busy it seemed as if I must have been lying there undisturbed for some time, before the door opened quietly and I became aware of another occupant of the room. Paying no attention to me, he crossed to the fireplace, stirred the few smoldering embers into flame, placing upon these some bits of dried wood, and The newcomer was a negro, grayhaired but still vigorous, evidently a powerful fellow judging from his breadth of shoulder, and possessing a face denoting considerable intelligence. Finally he straightened up and faced me, his eyes widening with interest as he caught mine fastened upon him, his thick lips instantly parting in a good-natured grin.

"De good Lord be praised !" ejaculated, in undisguised delight. "I8 yer really awake agin, honey? De round by terday sure, sah."

"The doctor?" I questioned in surprise, my voice sounding strange and "Goin' on 'bout ten days, sah. Yer was powerful bad hurt an' out o' yer head, I reckon."

"What was it that happened? Did someone shoot me?"

The negro scratched his head, shuffling his bare feet uneasily on the dirt floor.

"Yas, shh, Mr. Knox," he admitted with reluctance. "I's sure powerful sorry, sah, but I was de boy whut plugged yer. Yer see, sah, it done happened dis-a-way," and his black face registered genuine distress. "Thar's a mean gang o' white folks 'round yere thet's took it inter their heads ter lick every free nigger, an' serest in the affair, but from now on I pression in the soil, which I soon iden- when you done come up ter my door

aken from me. I was now on furough and free to act as I pleased. "Have you picked up any news late-

ly from Beaucaire plantation?" "I heerd dey done brought de body ob de of jedge home, sah-he died mighty sudden sumwhar up de ribber.

Thet's 'bout all I know." "When was this?"

"Bout a week, maybe mor'n dat, ago. De Warrior brought de body down, sah." "The Warrior? Did anyone go

ashore with it?"

"'Pears like thar wus two men stopped off at de Landin'. I disremember de names, but one ob 'em wus an ol' friend ob de jedge's."

I turned my head away silently, but only for a moment. The two men were in all probability Kirby and his satellite, Carver. Doubtless the Beaucaire property was already legally in Kirby's possession, and any possible chance I might have once had to foll him in his nefarious purpose had now completely vanished.

To be sure I had reasoned out no definite means whereby I could circumvent his theft, except to take legal advice, confer with Governor Clark, and warn those threatened girls of their danger. But now it was too late even to do this. And yet it might not be. If Kirby and his confederate believed that I was dead, were con-vinced that I had perished beneath the waters of the river, they might feel safe in taking time to strengthen their position; might delay final action, hoping thus to make their case seem more plausible. If Kirby was really serious in his intention of marrying Beaucaire's daughter he would naturally hesitate immediately to acknowledge winning the property at cards, and thus indirectly being the cause of her father's death. He would be quite likely to keep this hidden from the girl for a while, until he tried his luck at love .-- If love failed, then the disclosure might be made to drive the young woman to him-a

threat to render her complaisant. "Do you know a lawyer named Haines?"

"Livin' down at de Landin'? Yas, sah.'

I lifted myself up in bed, too deeply interested to lie still any longer.

"Now listen, Pete," I explained earnestly. "I've got sufficient money to pay you well for all you do, and just as soon ee von get me comothing to

4t. I thought as much. Was Beaucaire killed?"

"No-not at least by any violence. No doubt the shock of his loss has tened his death. Surely you must know that he risked all he possessed on a game of cards and lost?"

"Throckmorton knew something about it, and there were other rumors floating about the Landing, but I have heard no details."

"I have every reason, Haines, to feel convinced that both Kirby and Carver trailed Beaucaire up the river with the intention of plucking him. Kirby practically confessed this to me, boast-ingly, afterward. That last night he

so manipulated the cards-or rather Carver did, for it was his deal-as to deceive Beaucaire into firmly believing that he held an absolutely unbeatable hand-he was dealt four aces and a king."

The lawyer leaned forward, breathing heavily.

"Four aces! Only one hand is better than that, and it would be impossible to get such a hand out of one pack.

"That is exactly true, Haines. I am no card player, but I do know that much about the game. Yet Kirby took the pot with a straight flush. Now, either he or Carver slipped an extra ace into the pack, or else Beaucaire did. In my opinion the judge had no chance to work such a trick. And

that's the case as it stands." Haines jumped to his feet and began pacing the dirt floor excitedly, his hands clasped behind his back.

"By heaven, man!" he cried, paus-ing suddenly. "Even if he did have a chance the judge never did it-never. He was a good sport, and always played a straight game. ' You say he bet everything he had?"

"To the last dollar-Kirby egged him on. Besides the money a deed to his land and a bill of sale for his negroes were on the table."

"The field hands, you mean?" "Yes, and the house servants. Kirby insisted that he' write these words, "This includes every chattel slave legally belonging to me,' and made Beauchire sign it in that form."

Haines' face was white, his eyes staring at me incredulously. "God help us, man! Do you know

what that means?" he gasped.

