

what you think of me!"

What indeed did she think of it?

Why should she feel like the culprit

before these two, her words desert-

ing her? It was Gerty's look that

made her feel guilty, as though she

Rickard Was With Her Sister-in-law.

gether, here at midnight, why should

not they feel ashamed? She had done

nothing wrong. And Tom down yon-

der fighting-and they make his ab-

"I'm looking for Sam!" The effort

"So are we. I want to send him

"She can go home with me. I am go-

ing directly. As soon as I give a mes-sage to Sam." She instantly regretted

her words, abruptly halting. It came

to her that Rickard would insist upon

delivering her message. Of course, he

would oppose her going. Some petty

reason or other. She knew from the

men that he was oppositional, that he

liked to show his power. Not safe, he

would say, or the horse was needed,

"You cannot go home alone, you

Give me your lantern, Miss

The light turned full on her

two. The town is full of strange In-

Rebelliously she gave him the lan-

A haughty Thusnelda followed him.

Sam was discovered asleep in the

only room where the windows had not

yet been attacked. His head rested on

a bundle of sacked trees which the

ladies of the Improvement club had

planned to plant the next day. Deep

"Here, Sam! I want you to take

these ladies home. Chase yourself.

They've been working while you've

slept. I thought you'd have all these

Gerty had to supply the courtesy for

two. She told Mr. Rickard in her ap-

pealing way that he had been very

kind; that she "would have been

Innes had to say something! "Good-

night!" The words had an insulting

The wind covered a passionate si-

lence, as the two women, followed by

Sam, yawning and stretching, made

their way down the shricking screet.

"It was true," Innes was thinking. She

had at last stumbled of the rout, but

it was not a matter of personal, but

moral untidiness; not a carelessness

of pins or plates, of tapes or dishes. It

was far worse; a slackness of ethics.

Her aching muscles told her that

she could not have slept four hours

when the darky was back, knocking at

Innes' horse loped through the

"I'll run past the levee; perhaps

Tom has come back." It occurred to

her that there might be a message at

the botel. She pulled on her left rein,

As she reined in her horse, Rickard

The scorn in the girl's face told him

that his question was stupid. For

He said he did not know, "You can see I have been dreaming!" She would

not smile back at him, but rode off

Was this the river? West of the

stepped out on the sidewalk. He, too,

was heavy-eyed from a snatched nap.

"Were you looking for me?"

"Has my brother come back?"

and swept past the descried adobe.

Bilent streets.

toward the levee.

It meant more unhappiness for Tom.

frightened to death to go home alone."

snores betrayed his refuge.

windows out by now.'

or Sam too busy to wait on her!

Hardin; I'll rout out that darky."

averted angry eyes.

home with Mrs. Hardin. She's worn

behind the words turned them into an

sence a cover for their rendezvous.

oratorical challenge.

out."

CHAPTER XVI.

Rickard in Town.

The town woke to a matter-of-fact day. The sensational aspect of the runaway river had passed with the night. The word spread that the flood waters were under control; that the men had gone home to sleep, so the women got breakfast as usual, and tidled their homes. The Colorado was always breaking out, like a naughty child from school. Never would the cry of "The river!" fall to drag the blood from their cheeks. But relief always came; the threatened danger was always averted, and these pioneer women had acquired the habit of swift

That afternoon, Mrs. Youngberg was to entertain at the A B C ranch the ladies of the Improvement club. It was a self-glorification meeting, to celebrate the planting of trees in the streets of Calexico. and to plan the campaign of their planting. Mrs. Blina drove into town to get Gerty Hardin. Neither woman had seen her husband since the interrupted drive the eight before.

"I don't know whether I should go," Mrs. Hardin hesitated, her face turned teward the A B C ranch. "Perhaps there is something we could do."

"I have just come from the levee." Mrs. Blinn's jolly face had lost its apprehension. "The water has not risen an inch since breakfast. Most of the men have been sent home. When Howard didn't come home to lunch, I grew anxious. But Mr. Rickard says had been spying. To meet them tohe sent him to Fassett's with more dynamite."

"There he is," thrilled Gerty. Mrs. Blinn's eye swept the street.

"Where? Your husband?" "No, Mr. Rickard. Passing the bank. There, he's stopped. I wonder if he is going in? You call him, Mrs. Blinn."

Obediently her friend hailed Rickard. He turned back to the windy street. He felt boyish; the crisis was giving him mercurial feet. He loved the modern battle. Elements to pit one's brains against, wits against

Gerty Hardin's face was flushing and paling. "The river," she faltered. "Should we be alarmed, Mr. Rickard?" Smiling, he assured her she should not be alarmed; the levees would pro-

tect the towns.

"Mr. Hardin is up at Fassett's ranch, he will be coming back today. I told your husband, Mrs. Blinn, to catch a nap and then relieve Mr. Har-

Gerty found a significance in his words. He had said "Mr. Hardin," and "your nusband, Mrs. Blinn." It was enough to weave dreams around.

"We can't do anything, Mr. Rickard, to help?" urged Gerty Hardin, her voice tremulous.

"I hope we won't have to call on you

There was no excuse to linger, Gerty threw a wistful little smile at

CHAPTER XVII.

The second night of the flood, the women of the towns dragged brush and filled sacks for the men to carry. It was past midnight when Innes Hardin left the levee. While her feet and fingers had toiled, her mind had been fretting over Tom. Two nights, and no rest! It was told by men who came down the river how Hardin was hero ically laboring. She yearned to go to him; perhaps he would stop for a few nours to her entreaty. But an uncertain trail across country, with the dust-laden wind in her face? She decided to wait for the dawn. A snatched sleep first, but who would call her? She would sleep for hours, so weary every muscle. Her mind fixed on Sam as the only man in town who had time to saddle a borse for a woman.

She went in search of him. She found that the long adobe office building had already taken on the look of viefeat, of ruin. The casements had been torn from the partitions; the doors and windows were out. The furniture had been hauled up to high ground farther away for safety. She went hunting through the ghoulish gloom for the darky, turning her lantern in every dark corner. She knew that she would find him sleeping.

Then she heard steps on the verauda. She ran toward them, expecting to see Sam. She swung her lantern full on two figures mounting the shallow steps. Rickard was with her sister-

"Oh, excuse me!" she blurted blunderingly. Of course Gerty would take a wrong intention from the stupid

The blue eyes met those of Innes with defiance. It was as though she had spoken; "Well, think what you will of it, you Hardins! I don't care levee, a sea of muddy water spread | that river? There was no one at the

rected herself, as her eye fell on the Mexican village across the ditch. For Mexicali was doomed. Some of the mud huts had already fallen; the water was running close to the station She saw Wooster standing near, cal-

culating the distance, the time, perhaps, before the new station would go. She halled Wooster, Ruin was presaged in the lines of his forehead.

"Pretty bad?" she cried. He shook his head,

"Is Tom back?"

"He's over there, now. Fighting like all possessed. He'll work till he Wooster was proud of that drops." method.

"We all know Tom!" Her pride sprang up. "But he's got to stop for a while. I'm going up after him." "Not if my name's Wooster. I'll go.

He'll mind me,"

She watched the flowing river, swollen with wreckage. She saw, with comprehension, a section of a fence; somebody's crop gone. There was a railway tie, another! The river was enting up Estrada's new rondbed? A cry broke from her as a mesquit on the right thing was not being done. the coffee-colored tide caught on a buried snag. The current swirled dangerously around it. Instantly, the water rose toward the top of the levee, Men came running to pry away the tree. A minute later, it was dancing down the strenm. They refised the bank against the pressing tapping again. They can down the sevee with their long poles. Each time that happened, unless the obstruction were swiftly disladged, she knew it meant an artificial fair somewhere, a quick | gest?" scouring out of the channel. The men were working like silent parts of a big car on the siding trembled. machine; the confusion of the first night was gone. From their taces one would not guess that their fortunes, their besses, hung on the subduing of that indesitable force which had not yet known defent, which has turned back expl .er mill conquistador. Ah, there was the lurking fear of hi! Victory still lay to its credit; the other column was blank.

She saw Wooster coming toward her. His snapping black eyes shot out sparks of anger.

"He won't let me go." "Who won't let you?" But she knew. "Casey. Says he'll send some one else. I said as nobody else'd make Hardin stop. He said as that was up to Hardin.

Ot course, he wouldn't let Wooster

"Orders me to bed." spat Wooster. Wonder why he didn't order gruel,



"Orders Me to Bed."

that's what it is!" She believed that, too. Tom was right. Rickard did take advantage of his authority. She did not see Rickard until he stood by her side.

"I'm sorry not to spare Wooster, Miss Hardin. But there's stiff work ahead. He's got to be ready for a call. If Hardin insists on spoiling one good soldier, that's his affair. I can't let him spoil two."

Wooster shrugged, and left them. "Spoiling good soldiers!

"I've taken Bodefeldt off duty. I

told him to relieve Hardin." Rodefeldt who blushed when anyone looked at him! He would be about as persuasive to Tom as a veil to a desert wind! She turned away, but not before Rickard suw again that transforming anger. Her eyes shone like topazes in sunlight. She would not trust herself to speak. Wooster was waiting for her. Rickard could hear the man repeat. "I'm sorry, Miss Hardin. It's an outrage. That's what it

Queer, they couldn't see that it was Hardin's fault; Hardin who was up the river fighting like a melodramatic hero; fighting without caution or redemoralizing discipline; he couldn't help admiring the buildog energy, himself. That was what all these men adored. He'd clenched the girl's antagonism, now, for sure! How her eyes had flashed at him!

Hello! There was a tree floating down toward the station house. "Bring your poles!" he yelled.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Passing of the Waters. Babcock came rushing down from Los Angeles that morning to see what in thunder it was all about. He asked every one he met why some one didn't

to save the towns, the town, she corhim! Why, the building was descried. Ogilvie's letters had prophesied ruln. It all looked wrong to him. Going on to the levee, he met MacLean, Jr., who was coming away. The boy told him vaggely that he would find Rickard around there, somewhere,

"I'll hunt him up for you." ."Why, they are letting it get ahead of them!" Babcock's manner suggested that he was aggrieved that nch carelessness to his revered coshould go unpunished. Somethi told MacLean, might have been before the situation got as b this!

His excited stride carried across the dividing ditch, whic was carrying no water, into Me MacLean had to lengthen his s keep pace with him. The havoc .. one to the Mexican village excited Babcock still more,

Estrada, just in from his submerged tracks, was lounging against an adobe wall. His pensive gaze was turned up-stream. The posture of exhaustion suggested Inziness to Babcock, who was on the hunt for responsibility. He was more than ever convinced that

"Estrada !" Estrada took his eyes from the river, Babcock tooked like a snapping terrier taking the ditch at a bound. Mac-Lean, Jr., a lithe greyhound, followed.

"What the devil are you doing to stop this?" A nervous hand indicated the Mexican station gleaming in its waves. There, the tree had struck fresh cont of paint; to the muddy water undermining its foundation.

Estrada drew a cigarette out of his pocket; lighted it before answering. "Not a thing. What do you sug-

A big wave struck the bank. The

"Another wave like that and that car'll go over," cried Babcock, jumping, mad. "Why don't you do something? Why don't you hustle-all of you?" He would report this incompe-

Down the stream came a mass of debris, broken timbers, ravaged brush, a wrenched fence post, a chicken coop. A red hen, clinging to its swaying

ship, took the rapids. "Hustle-what?" murmured Es-

Babcock glared at him, then at the river. His eye caught the approaching wreckage. Men came running with their poles. The caving bank was too far gone. The Instant the drifting mass struck it, there was a shudder of falling earth, the car toppled toward the flood waters, the waves breaking into clouds of spray.

Human responsibility fell to a cipher. The river's might was magnificent. Even Babcock, come to carp, caught the excitement. "Come, MacLean," he cried, "Watch this! The station's He joined Estrada by the adobe wall.

"Have a cigarette?" murmured Eduardo.

Ilis eyes glued to the lurching station-house. Babcock took a brownpaper-rolled cigarette from the proffered box. "Look," he cried, "There, she'll go.

See that-

There was a splash of splintering timber; a Niagara of spray as the building fell into the flood. A minute later, a wreckage of painted boards was floating downstream.

At table Babcock resumed his campaign. "The trouble with you all, you have cold feet. You're all scared off too soon."

Wooster, up from his nap, looked across the table. "Cold feet? So you'd have if you had been up for nights, wetting your feet on the levee, as some of us have, as Hardin has, Mine are cold all right." He lifted an amuzed foot. "Cold! Look here, boys, they're wet!" The men looked to find the water creeping in-Babcock climbed on his chair,

"This means the station," cried Wooster, Every man jumped. If the waters had got to them, it wouldn't be long before they were reaching the O. P. depot! The tracks would go-They were piling out of the door when the telephone caught them. It was a message from Rickard. A car was to be rigged up, papers, tickets and express matter taken from the station. The river was cutting close to the track. The car would be the terminal, a half-mile from town.

The situation looked black. Coulter, Eggers, began to pack their stock. The levee, it was said, would not hold -half of Mexicall was gone. Calexico would go next. Rickard's Indiana were kept stolldly piling brush and stuffed sacks on the levee. This, the word ran, would be the fierce nightno one expected to sleep.

They were preparing for the big battle, the final struggle, when the grade recession passed the town. Spectacular as was its coming, there was an anticlimax in its retreat. The water reached the platform of the depot, and halted. The town held its breath. There was some sleep that

The next day, the nerves of the valley relaxed. The river was not cut-The men at the levee ting back. dropped their shovels, and went back to the discussion of their lawsuits. Their crops were ruined; too much water, or too little. Whatever way they had, been hurt, the company

would have to pay for it! A small shift guarded the river. Rickard, in his room at the Desert hotel, and Hardin up the river, slept a day and a night without waking. The chair-filters picked up their argument where they had left it; was the railroad reaping a harvest of damage suits when they should be thanked reported, was trying to shift his re- physic. Biliousness, sick headache, everywhere.

o.acca of the company to report to sponsibility; he had appealed to the president. Their correspondence was



The Ranches Were Ruined.

published. The government was in no hurry to take the burden. A telegraphic sermon, preaching duty, distributing blame, was sent from Washington. Perhaps not Faraday himself was more disturbed than the debaters of the Desert hotel. "The milroad's no infant in arms!

It wasn't asleep when it took over the affairs of the D. R." Here spoke the majority. "A benefaction! It was self-interest! When the river is harnessed, who'll profit the most from the valley prosperity? It can afford to pay the obligations; that is, it could. It will find a way," the ravens croaked, "of shaking the Desert Reclamation company's debts; of evading the damage suits. Look how

Hardin was trouted

The feeling ran higher. For m of the ranchers were rulned; the was no money to put in the a year's crop unless the promises of a irrigation company were kept. few landowners, and others who ha not completed their contracts, di trusting the god faith of the conpany, or its ability to pay, had "quein disgust, to begin again somewhere else. Parish and Dowker and other of the 'Sixth' scoured district he secured the promise of employment at the Heading. Work, it was a pected, would be begun at once now that the danger to Calexico ha passed.

(To be continued next week.)

A position in the League of No. tions would probably be a good thing to keep America in peace. But un versal military training would be better one.

The wise people of the yorld are studying the question whether prices have risen or the value of currency has depreciated. But when we are paying 70 cents a pound for buter. it is not the reason as much as the fact that disturbs us.



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