

Pay Gravel

By

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Passing down the hall he led Dinsdale into a room next to the kitchen. Pushing forward a chair he genially said:

"I'm mighty glad you dropped in, Dinsdale. I've been expecting you for two days. If you hadn't shown up tonight I should have sent you a message." He paused as if undecided just how he would proceed.

"Play," prompted Dinsdale. "It would be awkward to say it if we hadn't rode through the canyon together. Do you know there's talk being made about you since I saw you last? I'm afraid, Pete, that Kitty is getting in her work. She isn't called the 'Schemer' for nothing."

"You're breaking bad news, eh?" "Let's hope it hasn't reached the point where we must call it 'bad.' But it might be much better. That little devil has started talk about you, and others are passing it on. You came here without even a pack animal. You're connected with no outfit. You don't seem keen to get into business, or do any prospecting. You're well heeled with guns and money. And you arrive in a way that makes you a marked man."

"The hour is late for me, Joe," yawned Dinsdale. "Get down to cases." "You tipped me off to tell the crowd about the Ogalala holdup, and the crowd knew you passed the word. First they had heard of it. Then the Sidney stage driver arrives and inside an hour is bleating about the robbery to the men at the L. X. L. He tells them that the robbers got a large amount of new greenbacks."

Dinsdale blew a ring of smoke and quietly remarked: "And on top of tipping you about the holdup I gave some greenbacks to Lottie Carl. I understand, Joe, as well as if you talked a month. Folks are wondering, Greenbacks 'd it. Well, what comes next? You wouldn't tell me this unless you had something to add."

"French Curly will try for another game tonight and, I think, he'll blow some of his winnings at Kitty's place. Before morning the town will be telling how you lost an enormous amount of money—in new paper money. Well, here is the true word. Get an outfit and go prospecting at once. Make believe you're a winner. With so many strangers floating in and out a week's absence may see the loose talk forgotten. Old Dinsdale starts in a day or so on one of his fool trips. Why not go along with him? I'll pretend I'm tired of grub-staking him and you can take my place; and let on you believe all his yarns."

"Thanks. That might be good medicine. Will he agree?" "He'd take a grubstake from the devil and old Satan for a pard if no other way was open to him. Where are you stopping?" "Bed Rock. Chicken fixings and flour dolings."

The gambler smiled whimsically and applauded: "Good nerve. Need any money?" "You didn't clean me, Joe." And Dinsdale tapped his breast pocket. "The man Curly did something I didn't like in picking a chip from the floor. I felt I was your guest, so I quit before going to a showdown with him. Then again the fellow is three-fourths dead already."

"Dinsdale, I like you. Curly seldom is awkward. But you're after my own style. So you don't need money. Breast pocket. Must be more greenbacks."

"Easier to pack than dust." "San Juan's black eyes sparkled in keen appreciation of the other's bearing. "Words aren't necessary between us, Pete. If it wasn't for that woman! It's in the cards that I'll make a fool of myself. I'll have a talk with Mayor Farnum. Accidental-like, I'll find out if Kitty has passed a bad word to him, or the city council. Wild Bill's death makes the situation ticklish."

"But folks are saying the gamblers planned that. I'm done out of three thousand my first game in town. Can't brand me as much of a gambler."

"I drop," surrendered San Juan. "But I feel that you and I ought to have another talk—one that might lead to you getting some work—highly paid work."

"The only kind that would interest me, Joe. I'll think over the prospecting proposition. Perhaps I've made a mistake in being too free with greenbacks and not going to work. But work hates me."

"You'll make no mistake in listening to my next talk. It's work that'll suit you fine."

This ended their conversation. Each

had refused to speak plainly, yet each was working toward the point where he could talk plainly. San Juan returned to the card room and Dinsdale passed out into the big tent.

Keeping close to the canvas wall he avoided the congestion around the different games and gained the open space. He glanced over the assemblage and finally focused his gaze on the bar. Then he advanced to the side of Horseshoe Webb and invited:

"Have another little touch of trouble?" "Who the h—l are you?" viciously growled Webb. It was plain he had entered the dangerous stage in his drinks.

"I'm the galoot that's just been done for three thousand in greenbacks and yet has something left for the bottle," Dinsdale murmured.

Webb's drunken malevolence slowly died out and he stared thoughtfully at Dinsdale. "Huh. I'll drink with you," he mumbled.

After bolting his drink Webb slyly remarked: "You tote a likely lot of paper money round with you, I reckon."

"Always like to be well heeled—with money and guns."

Webb nudged at his mustache and furtively studied Dinsdale's profile. "Have another," he grunted.

"Thanks. But not tonight. We'll make it on demand. I must be going."

As he strode to the exit he could feel Webb's gaze boring into his back. As he stepped into the darkness of the street a hand touched his arm and caused his own hand to close on a gun. Two round yellow eyes were blazing at him. The voice of Scissors addressed him, and he knew the eyes belonged to the big owl.

"Get my two ounces," exultingly whispered Scissors. "That satisfies me some of the Ogalala gang is in the tent tonight."

"You'd better keep that talk to yourself," shortly warned Dinsdale. "And keep away from that man Webb. He's feeling ugly."

"Oh, I know when to catch him. Scissors knows when to get them. He's wakan witsahasha. Old Sitting Bull here knows more'n most humans. I can tell by his eyes whether to go

ahead or draw back."

"He's telling you now to shut off that talk about train robbers being in town," Dinsdale sternly warned him. "That talk is poor medicine."

As he walked away he could hear Scissors chuckling and mumbling.

CHAPTER V

A Bad Break for Dinsdale. In a dark room at the back of a Chinese washhouse several men sat in



Then the Mongolian Stationed Outside the Door Raised a Sing-Song Voice.

silence, waiting. Then the Mongolian stationed outside the door raised a sing-song voice and was answered briefly in Chinese. The group in the room straightened to attention. Some one crossed the room and drew the inside bolt. The door opened, but even had there been a light the inmates of the room would have beheld a figure so heavily muffled as to defy recognition. As it was, no man could see his neighbor.

"Who comes?" softly demanded the man who had admitted the other men.

"The one who always comes last, Number One."

"We are ready for your talk," announced the first speaker, returning to his chair.

"How are you known?" asked Number One.

"The one who always comes first to the meeting place, Number Two."

"Whom have you admitted?"

"Three, Four and Six."

"Five?" "Unreliable tonight. Drink."

"Unreliable this night from drink, he will be unreliable on other and more important nights," said Number One. "He should be dropped from the rolls even as we have threatened to drop him twice before this. He might send us all to the noose. How do you vote?"

There was a slight pause, then in sequence the different voices called out: "Two."

"Three."

"Four."

"Six."

"One. It is unanimous. How shall it be best done? He must have no chance to talk."

"If it can be left for me, Number Two, to arrange."

"It is left for you to arrange within forty-eight hours," ruled Number One. "Now let us finish quickly. None of us is satisfied with the results. Only fifteen thousand taken from the stages within the last six weeks. Passengers have been warned at Cheyenne and Sidney to bring but little money in on their persons. The horse-ranch, even, is better paying. There is but one job in the hills that is worth while—one of the treasure-coaches. One coach captured means at least two hundred thousand dollars, perhaps two hundred and fifty thousand. And the time soon comes when it will be useless to try for such a prize."

"Then let's get the next one to go out. It's been held over and will carry a full load," eagerly said Number Two.

"First, we've got to have more men," croaked a harsh voice. "We ain't strong enough to handle twelve guards and get away with the bullion."

"Number Three, you speak only a half truth," corrected the leader. "We have enough men. It's too late to take in new hands. But we can't handle a dozen until we plan to place our men to the best advantage. Then it will be simple. We must have at least two of our men among the guards, thus cutting their number down to ten."

"Two of the regular guards will get through just before the coach makes the trip. Two of our men must at once ask for jobs as guards. The time will be too short for the management to hesitate. Number Three will be one of the men. Number Four shall be the other man. In brief the plan is this:

"The day and spot being known, Number Three must ride ahead with the advance guard. Number Four must be one of the eight riding beside the coach. When Number Three gets opposite our ambush he should be out of sight of the coach, as the ambush will be beyond a bend in the road. He will strike his man down. We in ambush will pull the fellow out of the road and take care of his horse. Number Three will ride back a bit and signal for one of the coach guards to join him. If more than one rides up, all the better. This guard, or guards, must be disposed of quietly as was the first. We in ambush will help, using the noose if possible. Their horses must not be frightened and must be secured in the woods. At the very least we will have cut down the number of guards to eight, with but seven by the coach, one of these being Number Four. Number Three will wait opposite the ambush until the coach comes up. He and Number Four will take the six guards by surprise, covering them with four six-guns. We in ambush will instantly take a hand and secure the six. Three and Four will then gallop back to meet the two rear guards and take them by surprise. I already have a safe cache for the bullion. This is the plan in outline. Any suggestions or questions?"

"The only drawback is that Three and Four will be marked men," spoke up Number Two.

"Bad for us on the inside less we settle the hash of the ten," grumbled Number Three.

"That would be going it too strong," protested Number Four, with a shiver in his voice.

Number One sharply said: "Both Three and Four are already wanted for murder. One in Idaho; the other in Nevada. Yet they live here in Deadwood City and move about openly. Once we get the treasure we will scatter. The hills game is nearly played out. Let others stay and pick up the crumbs and a rope."

"Seems as if I was getting the hot end of the poker," growled Number Three.

"Might as well sentence me to death and be done with it," bitterly complained Number Four.

"Howards are offered for both of you and you haven't done a scaffold-dance yet," grimly replied the leader. "A swift horse, a change of stamping grounds, a new name, and with forty or fifty thousand dollars to blow you'd be fools to be caught. But if either of you refuse to play the part I pick for you, say so now."

There was an uneasy shuffling of feet, but the threat concealed but poorly in the leader's words was fully understood.

"I'm game," muttered Number Four.

"I never squeaked yet," snarled Number Three.

"Then that's settled, and woe to the man who tries to back down," said the leader. "Anything else?"

"I have a suggestion to make," spoke up Number Two. "Let Three and Four draw lots to see who shall take the inside job and leave the second place vacant until I can try to secure another man for the second guard. It

doesn't much matter what happens to him after the job is finished. He will know nothing about the rest of you and if, by any chance he is captured there will be nothing he can tell."

Both Three and Four were eager to accept any scheme which would give one of them a chance to dodge the dangerous position of coach guard. Both proclaimed their satisfaction and wished the lot-drawing to be conducted on the spot.

Number One said: "No lights to be shown at our little meetings. We must remember the rules. Lots may be drawn within a few days if we decide to adopt Number Two's plan. I rely on his judgment. I will talk with him about this new plan of his. But until I have decided, the first order stands and there will be no drawing of lots. You will now wait the usual time before leaving the room."

While this secret conference was being held—and the hour was yet early for Deadwood's night life—Dinsdale was forgetting San Juan Joe's warning of the night before and was busily making local history. He began in "Keno" Frank's place. The moment Dinsdale entered the hall he drew the attention of all. Even those placing their bets took time to glance at the "greenback man."

The story of his game at San Juan's place was commonly known, thanks much to French Curly's advertising; only his losses were said to have been twenty thousand. Curly was at the faro table, losing his poker winnings, when Dinsdale entered and brusquely walked to the bar and invited the house to join him.

Because of his losses Curly was more venomous than usual, if that be possible. He fingered his few remaining chips and stared at Dinsdale, convinced it was a personal misfortune that the newcomer should throw away money which might so easily be taken from him at cards. The "greenback man" had forgotten his losses at San Juan's place, or else they were immaterial to him, and now was in a rare humor. Carelessly throwing more money on the bar he directed that drinks be served again to all who might care to partake. The acceptance was general.

French Curly could endure the spectacle no longer. He rose and sauntered to the bar and took a position beside Dinsdale, his cadaverous face attempting to assume a genial expression. Dinsdale smiled genially and invited:

"Name it."

"No, thanks," declined Curly, his eyes eagerly watching the hand dipping into the breast pocket for more paper money. "But what say to a little game in Frank's room?"

"This is my drinking night. I never mix cards with liquor," laughed Dinsdale.

"A man of spirit finds one time as good as another."

"So he does; and tomorrow is as good as today. But if you're banking for action I'll cut the deck for a thousand a cut; any one of the men here to shuffle the cards for us, lightly countered Dinsdale. "Cutting the deck doesn't call for much brain work, and luck's with me tonight."

French Curly began to lose his evil temper. Heads were twisting, necks were craning, as Dinsdale's reckless offer was made; and the gambler—willing to stake his soul on a game of chance—had no thousand dollars to risk, nor any respectable portion of that sum. Had the invitation to the small room been accepted he had planned to borrow money from Keno Frank. With a sneer on his pallid face he said:

"You'll need lots of luck. You'll do well to stick to luck."

"Especially after I find a game is crooked," loudly retorted Dinsdale.

"What was you doing at that side table when you pretended to be using the gold scales?"

Those who had emptied their glasses gently replaced them on the bar. Those about to drink postponed the ceremony, and there was a general withdrawal to the opposite side of the room. French Curly wet his pale lips and quietly said:

"You'll explain those words if you can. If you can't you'll eat them."

Dinsdale tossed off his drink and laughed vacuously and retorted:

"Then I prefer explaining. Something happened in the game last night I didn't like. I let it pass, as I didn't want to raise a row in Joe's place the first time I was there. It was when you stooped and picked up a chip and placed it on the table beside the little gold scales."

"Mentioning I worked something crooked?" hissed French Curly.

"Darned if you haven't hit it dead center! Have a drink."

"Swallow it!" curtly commanded the gambler, pulling a large horse deringer from a side coat pocket.

(To be continued)

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News Notes

(Continued from page 1)

A Lane county bridge crew started work Monday repairing all the bridges on the Willamette highway between Reserve and Oakridge. Travelers over the highway may expect to experience delays.

The Douglas county court signed an agreement with the bureau of public roads for construction of a forest road which will become a part of the Impqua highway. Under the terms of this agreement the county appropriates \$10,000 to meet \$30,000 to be expended by the government.

Oregon pensions have been granted as follows: Alfreda Thompson, Gresham, \$15; Charles C. Kinzer, Hubbard, \$12; Artlissa Handy, Cottage Grove, \$30; Thomas G. Blevins, Roseburg, \$18; Anton Kerowski, Portland, \$12; Arthur Johnston, Portland, \$12; Andrew A. Hickey, Portland, \$15.

Official reports received at the offices of the state forester from the Bald Mountain holdings of the Spaulding Logging company indicate that the fire loss there will be far less than first estimated. Little green timber was destroyed, the loss being confined to the destruction of seven bridges.

Frank A. Pim, illuminating engineer and representative of the Traffic Officers' association, with headquarters at Washington, D. C., was in Salem last week conferring with Sam A. Koser, secretary of state, with reference to starting a campaign in Oregon to standardize of automobile lighting equipment.

The annual southern Wasco county fair will be held September 16, 17 and 18. This will be the only fair in Wasco county this year, the regular fair have been discontinued and money appropriated for this purpose devoted to preparing a county exhibit for the state fair and the holding the southern Wasco county fair.

When water from the McKay dam reservoir, now under construction by the government, is available, a new plot of land east of Hermiston, not at present under irrigation, will be utilized by the state and federal government for a new experiment station. A quarter section of government-owned land has been set aside for this purpose.

In attempting to open a headgate of the Pine lake reservoir, M. A. Christenson blew out the whole gate and let the water escape. The lake is about 18 miles from Halfway, but the water is used on land around the town and is counted on for second-crop water by several hay farmers. The loss of water is more serious than the injury to the headgate.

There were three fatalities due to industrial accidents in Oregon during the week ending July 24, according to a report prepared by the state industrial accident commission. The victims were: John T. O'Hara, Knappton, timekeeper; George W. Hutchinson, Klamath Falls, carpenter, and A. Debois, Elgin, carpenter. A total of 595 accidents was reported during the week.

The Monmouth commercial club has issued a call for a celebration by all the towns of Polk county at Helmick park on the Luckiamute river, five miles south of Monmouth, on completion of the west side Pacific highway. The surfacing of the last connecting link has progressed to within 1 1/2 miles of Monmouth and it is expected the highway will be open for

traffic about September 10.

Federal agents, deputy sheriffs and members of the Point Adams coast guard crew raided scoping fishing craft, seizing about 175 cases of imported liquors and arresting five men. Two motor boats and a truck into which the liquor was being unloaded are being held for confiscation. The raid took place on the Skipanon river, near Warrenton, where the boats were discharging their cargo.

The cherry growers of Eugene and vicinity who pooled their Blings with the Eugene Fruit Growers' association, a county-wide cooperative farmers' organization, received 8 1/2 cents per pound for them, according to an announcement by J. O. Holt, manager of the association. More than 180 tons of this variety of cherries were disposed of at this price. It was stated. This is a new high record for the postwar period.

Jealousy and business reverses are believed by authorities to have caused J. A. Horck, automobile stage line proprietor, whose license last week was revoked by the public service commission, to shoot his wife three times, twice in the body and once in the head, in a room in the Somerset hotel in La Grande, killing her almost instantly. The shots were fired in the presence of their 19-year-old daughter, Lucile. Horck then dropped from a window 20 feet to the ground, ran down an alley and shot himself, fatally through the head.

Over 29,000,000 pounds of prunes are already signed up in the new cooperative prune exchange, according to an announcement given out by C. E. Spence, state market agent. Mr. Spence said that the new organization would commence operations in Oregon and southern Washington with ten local organizations. Other units it is declared will be organized and it is expected that a large majority of the orchards of the two states will soon be signed up.

Halsey Happenings

(Continued from page 1)

W. A. Allen went to Eugene, Saturday, where he is under the doctor's care.

Miss Mary Smith went to Albany Friday to secure medical aid for a lame arm.

W. H. Robertson and family from Edmondton, Canada, who have been visiting R. F. and W. H. Robertson, returned to their home Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. Marion Pike are campers in Halsey while Mr. Pike is employed with the Pugh thrashing machine. Both Mr. and Mrs. Pike were former residents of Halsey. Mrs. Pike was known as Miss Vera Stewart.

Ierman Stenke and two children, Blanche and Lloyd, took Saturday's train for Eugene, Blanche going to have troublesome tonsils removed.

D. W. Knapp and wife, bound from their home in Eugene to Salem in a car, ran into the ditch opposite the Halsey Christian church Sunday afternoon, making a job for the Foots garage. The damage amounted to \$30 or \$40. People on the street reported that the young man lost control of the car while lighting a cigarette. He and his wife say he fell asleep at the wheel. His father, E. L. Knapp, was the owner of the car, but this is not the E. L. Knapp of the Register Publishing company.

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