

When the Colorado
Burst Its Banks and
Flooded the Imperial
Valley of California

The RIVER

By
Ednah Aiken

Copyright, Bobbs-Merrill Company

CHAPTER XXXII.

The White Night.

"Lord, I'm tired," groaned Rickard, stumbling into camp, wet to the skin. "Don't you say letters to me, Mac. I'm going to bed. Tell Ling I don't want any dinner. He'll want to fuss up something. I don't want to see food."

The day, confused and jumbled, burned across his eyeballs; a turmoil of bustle and hurry of insurrection. He had made a swift stand against that. He was to be minded to the last man-jack of them, or anyone would go, his threat including the engineers, Silent, Irish, Wooster, Hardin himself. This was no time for factions, for leader-feeding.

In bed, the day with its irritations fell away. He could see now the step ahead that had been taken; the last trestle was done; the rock-pouring well on; he called that going some! He felt pleasantly languid, but not yet sleepy. His thought wandered over the resting camp. And then Innes Hardin came to him.

Not herself, but as a soft little thought which came creeping around the corner of his dreams. She had been there, of course, all day, tucked away in his mind, as though in his home waiting for him to come back to her, weary from the pricks of the day. The way he would come home to her, please God, some day. Not hearing his burdens to her, he did not believe in that, but asking her diversions. Contentment spread her soft wings over him. He fell asleep.

Rickard awoke as to a call. What had started him? He listened, raising himself by his elbow. From a distance, a sweet high voice, unreal in its pitch and thrilling quality, came to him. It was Godfrey, somewhere on the levee, singing by the river. It brought him again to Innes Hardin. He pulled aside his curtain which hung over the screening of his tent and looked out into a moon-flooded world. Rickard's eyes fell on a little tent over yonder, a white shrine. "White as that flax sweet soul of hers!"

Wandering into the night, Godfrey passed down the river, singing. His voice, the footlights, the listening great audiences were calling to him. To him, the moon-flooded levee, the glistening water, made a star-scene. He was treading the boards, the rushing waters by the bank gave the orchestration for his melody—"La Donna e Mobile." He began it to Gerty Hardin; she would hear it in her tent; she would take it as the tender reproach he had teased her with that afternoon in the ramada.

He gave for encore a ballad long forgotten; he had pulled it back from the cobwebs of two decades; he had made it his own.

"But, my darling, you will be. Ever young and fair to me."

It came, the soaring voice, to Tom Hardin, outside Gerty's tent on his lonely cot. He knew that song. Disdained by his wife, a pretty figure a man cuts! If his wife can't stand him, who can? He wasn't good enough for her. He was rough. His life had kept him from fitting himself to her taste. She needed people who could talk like Rickard, sing like Godfrey. People, other people, might misconstrue her preferences. He knew they were not flirtations; she needed her kind. She would always keep straight; she was straight as a whip. Life was as hard for her as it was for him; he could feel sorry for her; his pity was divided between the two of them, the husband, the wife, both lonely in their own way.

On the other side of the canvas walls, Gerty Hardin lay listening to the message meant for her. The little sex, he had called her, no constancy in women, he had declared, fondling her hair. He had tried to coax her into pledges, pledges which were also disavowals to the man outside.

Silver threads! Age shuddered at her threshold. She hated that song. Cruel, life had been to her; none of its promises had been kept. To be happy, why, that was a human's birthright; grab it, that was her creed! There was a chance yet; youth had not gone. He was singing it to her, her escape—

"Darling, you will be. Ever young and fair to me."

Godfrey, singing to Gerty Hardin, had awakened the camp. Innes, in her tent, too, was listening.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Battle in the Night.

Gathering on the bank were the camp groups to watch the last stand of the river against the rock bombardment. Molly Silent had crept down from the Crossing, full of fears. Out there, somewhere on the trestles, on

one of those rock cars, was her Jim. She saw on the bank by Innes and Mrs. Marshall.

Mrs. Hardin, floated by in her crisp muslin. A few feet behind strided Godfrey, his eyes on the pretty figure by his side. Innes turned from his look, abashed as though she had been peering through a locked door.

Gerty, with a fluttering of ruffles, Gerty established herself on the bank, a trifle out of hearing distance. A hard little smile played on the lips accented with Parisian rouge. The childish expression was gone; her look accented life of having trifled with her. But they would see.

"Don't look so unhappy, dearest," whispered the man at her side. "I'm going to make you happy, dear!"

She flushed a brilliant, finished smile at him. Yes, she was proud of him. He satisfied her sense of romance, or would, later, when she was away from here, a dull pain pricking at her deliberate planning. Godfrey found her young, young and distracting. His life had been hungry, too; the wife, up there in Canada somewhere, had never understood him. Godfrey was ambitious, ambitious as she was. She would be his wife; she would see the cities of the world with him, the welcome wife of Godfrey; she would share the plaudits his wonderful voice won.

His eyes were on her now, she knew, questioning, not quite sure of her. She had worried him yesterday because she would not pledge herself to marry him if he sued for his divorce. She had told him to ask her that after the courts had set him free. She could not have him sure of her.

An exclamation from him recalled her. She found that he was no longer staring at her; his eyes were fixed on the trembling structure over which a "battleship," laden with rock, was creeping.

"I want to stay with you, you know that dearest. But it doesn't feel right to see them all working like niggers and me loafing here. You don't mind?"

Oh, no, Gerty did not mind! She was tired, anyway! She was going back to her tent!

He thrust a yellow paper into her hands. "I sent that off today. Perhaps you will be glad?"

She flung another of her inscrutable smiles at him, and went up the bank, the paper unread in her hands.

The long afternoon wore away. They were now dynamiting the largest rocks on the cars before unloading them. The heavy loads could not be emptied quickly enough. Not dribbled, the rock, but dumped simultaneously, else the gravel and rock might be washed down stream faster than they could be put together. Many cars must be unloaded at once; the din on Silent's train was terrific. His crew looked like devils, drenched from the spray which rose from the river each time the rock-pour began; blackened by the smoke from the belching engine. The river was ugly in its wrath. It was dumping itself for its final stand against the absurdity of human intention; its yellow tail swished through the tents of the trestle.

The order came for more speed. Rickard moved from bank to raft; knee deep in water, screaming orders through the din; directing the gangs; speeding the rock trains. Hardin oscillated between the levee and dams, talking orders, giving orders. His energy was superb. It had grown dark, but no one yet had thought of the lights, the great Wells' burners stretched across the channel. Suddenly, the lights flared out brightly.

Not one of those who labored or watched would ever forget that night. The spirit of restlessness entered even into the stolid native. The men of the Reclamation forgot this was not their enterprise; the Hardin faction jumped to Rickard's orders. The watchers on the bank sat tense, thrilled out of recognition of aching muscles, or the midnight creeping chill. No one would go home.

To Innes, the struggle was vested in two men, Rickard running down yonder with that light foot of his, and Hardin with the fighting mouth tense. And somewhere, she remembered, working with the rest, was Estrada. Those three were fighting for the justification of a vision—an idea was at stake, a hope for the future.

Rickard passed and repassed her. And had not seen her! Not during those hours would he think of her, not until the idea failed, or was triumphant, would he turn to look for her.

Something was wrong. She left her place in time to see Silent, his face shining ghastly pale under the soot, pull himself up from the "battleship" where he had been leaning. Estrada, sent by Rickard to find out why the train did not pull out, saw him at the same instant as did Molly. Silent swayed, waving them back unseeing, like a man who is drunk.

"God, man, you can't go like that!" cried Estrada.

"Who's going?" demanded Silent, his tongue thick with thirst and exhaustion. The whistle blew again.

"I will!" The train moved out on the trestle, as the whistle blew angrily twice. Only Molly and Silent saw Estrada.



"God, Man, You Can't Go Like That!"

trada go. Silent staggered unseeing up the bank toward the camp, Molly following.

The river was humming out yonder; the rolling mass came roaring, blank, against the dam.

"Quick, for God's sake, quick!" yelled Rickard. His signals sounded short and sharp. "Dump it on, throw the cars in!" Marshall was dancing, his mouth full of oaths, on the bank edge. Breathlessly all watched the rushing water fling itself over the dam. For several hushed seconds the structure could not be seen. When the foam fell a cheer went up. The dam was standing. Silent, it was supposed, was bringing in his train.

Above the distant jagged line of mountains rose a red ball. A new day began. And again the Dragon rose; a mountain of water came rolling downward.

Three trains ran steaming on the rails.

"Don't stop now to blast the big ones. Pour 'em on!" ordered Rickard. There was a long wait before any rock fell. Marshall and Rickard waited for the pour. The whistles blew again. Then they saw what was wrong. The morning light showed a rock weighing several tons which was resisting the efforts of the pressing crew. Out of the gloom sprang other figures with crowbars. The rock tottered, fell. The river tossed it as though it were a tennis ball, sent it hurtling down the lower face of the dam.

Things began to go wild. The men were growing reckless. They were sagging toward exhaustion; mistakes were made. Another rock, as heavy as the last, was worked toward the edge. Men were thick about it with crowbars. They hurried. One concerted effort, drawing back as the rock toppled over the edge. One man was too slow, or too tired. He slipped. The watchers on the bank saw a flash of waving arms, heard a cry; they had a glimpse of a blackened face as the foam caught it. The waters closed over him.

There was a hush of horror; a halt. "God himself couldn't save that poor devil," cried Marshall. "Have the work go on!"

Four rocks on that wretch down there? Pin him down? Never had it seemed more like war! "A man down? Ride over him! to victory!" Soberly Rickard signaled for the work to go on.

The rock-pour stuttered, as if in horror. The women turned sick with fear. No one knew who it was. Some poor Mexican, probably.

"Who was it?" demanded Rickard, running down to the track.

"The young Mexican, Estrada. E tried to 'elp. E wasn't fit."

"Who was it?" Marshall had run down to see why the work paused.

Rickard turned shocked eyes on his chief. "Estrada!" The beautiful mournful eyes of Eduardo were on him, not Marshall's, horrified. Now he knew why Estrada had said, "I can't see it finished!"

"Rickard!" The engineer did not recognize the quenched voice. "The work has got to go on."

It came to Rickard as he gave the orders that Eduardo was closer to Marshall than to him. "As near a soul as

he'll ever have." He turned a minute later to see his chief standing bare-headed. His own cap came off.

"We're burying the lad," said Marshall.

The minute of funeral had to be pushed aside. The river would not wait. Train after train was rushed on to the trestles; wave after wave hit them. But perceptibly the dam was standing. The rapid fire of rock was telling.

Another ridge of yellow waters rose. The roll of water came slowly, dwindling as it came; it broke against the trestles weakly. For the first time the trestles never shuddered. Workers and watchers breathed as a unit the first deep breath that night. There was a change. Every eye was on the river where it touched the rim of the dam. Suddenly a chorused cry rose. The river had stopped rising. The whistles screamed themselves hoarse.

And then a girl, sitting on the bank, saw two men grab each other by the hand. She was too far away to hear their voices, but the sun, rising red through the banks of smoke, fell on the blackened faces of her brother and Rickard. She did not care who saw her crying.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A Desertion.

When the afternoon waned and Godfrey did not call on her Gerty was roused to uneasiness. Had she angered him by refusing to make the definite promise? Could it be love, the sort of love she wanted, if he could stay away like this when they could have at the camp to themselves, every one down at the break, no Hardins running in every minute? Their first chance and Godfrey slighting it!

He would surely come that evening. Knowing that she would be alone! The little watch Tom had given her for an almost forgotten birthday set the pace for her resentment. Nine, ten, eleven! How dared he treat her so? She blew out the lamps when she found that she was shaking with anger and undressed in the dark. She could not see him, if he came now, her self-control all gone! But she could not go to bed. She stood in her darkened tent, shaken by her angry passions.

Suppose that he were only trifling with her? What was that paper he had thrust in her hand? With a candle she found the yellow paper. It was a copy of a telegram to Godfrey's lawyer. "Start divorce proceedings at once. Any grounds possible. Back soon. Godfrey."

The frightened blood resumed its normal flow, if he had done this for her then she had not lost him. An apparent elopement, why had she never thought of that before? That would cement their bond. Her scruples could grow on the road. Oh, she could manage Godfrey! She would go with him. She remembered that she must go to bed if she were to have any looks in the morning.

When Godfrey came to her next afternoon, pent, refreshed after a morning's sleep, he found a charming hostess. She was shy about his telegram. Enchantingly distant when he tried to reach her hand!

"I can't go without you," he cried. He had discovered her interpretation of his telegram and it delighted him; he began to believe in his own intention. "I know. You shrink from it all. You dread the steps that will free you. You need me beside you to help you. Let's cut the knot. Tonight!"

"Not tonight. Maybe tomorrow," whispered Gerty, and then she managed a few tears and he was allowed to kiss her. It was all arranged before he left the ramada. They were to leave together the next day. Her object would be accomplished by their leaving together. He would feel that he owed her his name.

Of course Gerty must do it in the conventional way! She would have used rope ladders had they been needed. The conventional note was pinned to her bureau scarf.

Innes was with Tom when he found it. They came in together from the river. Neither had noticed the odd looks from the men as they passed through the encampment. A dozen men had seen Hardin's wife leave for the North with Godfrey.

Gerty's letter told Tom that it was all over. She had tried to stand it to be true even through his cruelty, but a feeling stronger than she was made her true to herself, and so true at last to him!

Innes' revulsion lacked speech. The common blatter sickened her. She could offer no comfort. His eyes told her it was worse than death.

He struck off her hand when it touched his shoulder. Gerty's hand had coerced him that way. He was done with softness.

His silence oppressed her. This was a man she did not know; inarticulate, smitten. She told herself that even a sister was an intruder—but she was afraid to leave him alone. She took a station by her own tent door. She would not go down to dinner. For hours she watched his tent. When it grew dark she could no longer endure it. She found him where she had left him. She forced herself toward the vol-

canoe's edge; and the swift eruption scorched her. It was the pitiable wreck of dignity, of pride. His words were incoherent; his wrath involved his sister, crouching in tears. Innes shrank from him, the man she did not know. The coarse streak was uncovered in all its repulsiveness. He turned on Innes suddenly. She was crying, a huddled heap on the couch.

"I've had enough crying—between you and Gerty. Will you get out? I've got to have some sleep."

Through her sobs he could make out that she was afraid to leave him. "Well, then, I'll go. I'm used to having to leave my own tent. A dog's life." He flung out into the night.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A Corner of His Heart.

The second evening after the closure Rickard was dining with the Marshalls in their car. The Palmyra was to pull out the next day. Hardin's name was brought up by Tod Marshall. "She was light potatoes," he dismissed the woman. "But she's broken the man's spirit."

Rickard, it was discovered, had nothing to say on the subject of the elopement.

"I'm sorry his sister is not here tonight," began Marshall mischievously. "I did ask her, Tod" Claudia hastened to interrupt her lord. "But she would not leave her brother her last evening."

"Her last evening?" exclaimed Rickard. "Is she going away?"

"Marshall subdued his twinkling. "We are carrying her off. She is to visit Mrs. Marshall while I am on the road."

Rickard gulped down his coffee, boiling. "Mrs. Marshall, will you let me run away early? Why should he give any excuse? They know what he was running away for!"

He made his way to the little white tent on the far side of the trapezium. Innes, by the door, was bidding goodbye to Senora Maldonado.

He forgot to greet the Mexican. She stood waiting; her eyes full of him. Surely, the kind senior had something to say to her? He had taken the white girl's hand. He was staring into the white girl's eyes. Something came to her, a memory like forgotten music. Silently, she slipped away into the night.

Rickard would not release Innes' hand; her eyes could not meet the look in his.

"Come out and have a walk with me! You were not going to tell me you were going. You were running away from me?"

"You know that I love you! I have been waiting for this minute, this woman, all these lonely years."

Her head she kept turned from him. He could not see the little maternal smile that ran around the curves of her mouth. Those years, filled with his brim with stern work, had not been lonely. Lonely moments he had had, that was all.

"Nothing for me?" He stopped, and made her face him, by taking both of her hands in his.

She would not look at him yet, would not meet the look which always

compelled her will, stultified her speech. She had something to say first.

"We don't know each other; that is, you don't know me!"

"Is that all?" There was relief in his voice. "I don't know you? Haven't I seen you day by day? Haven't I seen your self-control tried, proved—haven't I seen your justice, when you could not understand—Look at me!"

She shook her head, her eyes on the sand at her feet. He could scarcely catch her words. They did not know each other. He did not know her!

"Dear! I don't know whether you

Phys
YOU kno
doctor
hearts: tho
as in the l
Castoria
for childre
Flet
ment. We
You
on the ma

Net Co
A
AV
simi
ling
IN
The
Che
neit
Min
A
Cor
a
resu
35
Exact

Grow
Chief of Police
geles was questio
through mistake,
on a vagrancy of
that she was quit
a working woman
in France. They
and Butler remar
"You seem to be
a business woman
"You bet I am,"
right now I'm ju
husband of mine
spring the old gag
able to get along

One E
woman's possess
matter with spea

Biblical Town of Gaza.
Al-Mintar, or the watchtower, still
exists to the east of the town of Gaza.
It is where Samson is said to have
carried the gates of the city. On the road
from Gaza to Jaffa are ancient olive
trees, many of them more than one
thousand years old, with gnarled bark
and immense trunks. There is an old
legend which credits Gaza with the
invention of the first mechanical clocks.
These were perhaps the sand clocks
which are still used in some mosques.

Little Things Cause Sunshine.
The sunshine of life is made up of
very little beams that are bright all
the time. To give up something, when
giving up will prevent unhappiness;
to yield, when persisting will chafe and
fret others; to go a little around rather
than come against another; to take an
ill look or a cross word quietly,
rather than resent or return it—these
are the ways in which clouds and
storms are kept off, and a pleasant
and steady sunshine secured.—Aiken.

Beginning of Pittsburgh.
November 25 is the anniversary of
the raising of the English flag over the
ruins of Fort Duquesne in 1754. The
place was then named Pittsburgh, in
honor of Britain's famous prime minister.
It owes its great growth to its
proximity to coal and iron fields of
vast magnitude.

Daily Thought.
He who begs timely courts a re-
fusal.—Seneca.