



# The RIVER

## EDNAH AIKEN

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Marshall's Voice Rang Out.

Sharply he sat down before the audience realized that his message was finished. The house had not found its voice, when Babcock's gavel was pounding again for attention. The question, he felt, had not been put to them completely. Perhaps, they did not gather the full import of Mr. Marshall's message. Mr. MacLean would follow Mr. Marshall.

MacLean's superb figure rose from a tree-paneled background. "He should sing 'Brown October Mo,'" suggested Brandon to Hardin humorously.

Hardin's eyes were on MacLean. What did he know about it? What could he tell those men that they did not know? MacLean was a figurehead in the reorganized irrigation company. Why hadn't they called on him, Hardin? He knew more about the involved history of the two companies than the whole bunch on the stage down yonder. He could have told them, he could have called on their justice, their memory—

MacLean was speaking. "Mr. Marshall has likened the river project to the old man of the sea. He has it on his back, while it is busily sticking him in the shins!

"Mr. Marshall has given you Mr. Faraday's message. He has asked you to do more than that. Put your hands in your pockets! Come out and help us. You don't want the government. I am told that is the sentiment of the valley. When you called to them, they wouldn't help you; they wouldn't give you an adequate price. Congress will soon be adjourning. What is Mr. Faraday to say to Washington? Is he going to close that break? That depends on you. Withdraw your suits. Do more. Stop fighting against us. Fight with us—"

The audience stirred ominously, angrily. Before MacLean was done, a voice screamed from the balcony. "You can't quit. That's a threat. You're in too deep. You can't fool us. You've got to save yourself. You've got to go on. Tell Faraday to tell that to Washington."

The uproar was released. Black, from the Wistaria, jumped on his chair. "I am speaking for the valley. We can't help. You know it. We're stripped. We're ruined. You think to threaten us with the government—if we wait for the government to decide, the valley is gone—and the railroad's money with it. I tell you, your bluff won't go. We want justice. We are going to have justice."

"Justice" came from the surging ranchers. "Fair play," yelled Black. "You can't trick us. We were not born yesterday. We have rights. The company brought us here. What did we give our money for? Desert land? What good is this land without water? We bought water. Give us back the money we've put in—that's what we're asking for. We won't be scared out of our rights." There was a growling accompaniment from the back rows, herding together. "Order," cried Babcock, thumping his gavel. "Let Mr. Black have the floor."

Black had not stopped. Wildly his hands cut the air. His speech, though high-pitched, had a prepared sound; it worked toward a climax. He gave individual instances of ruin. "Grace, Willard Grace, his crop gone, his place cut in two. Hollister and Wilson of the Palo Verde, the ranch a screaming horror. Scores of others." He would not mention his own case; and then he itemized his misfortunes. Partridge, his place scoured beyond all future usefulness. What had they come

into the valley for? Who had urged them? There were pledges of the D. R., water pledges. That was all those ruined men were pleading, the redemption of those pledges. Individual ruin, what did it mean? A curtailing of luxuries, of personal indulgence. "I tell you, it means food, bread, potatoes; milk for the babies; or starvation."

Black had touched the deep note. This was the answer. This was what they wanted to say. "You ask us to help you, us, we who are taxed already to our breaking point. You say your company won't go any further. What does that help mean to you? Poverty? A few thousands, a million to the O. P., a corporation, what does a loss mean to them? Poverty? I tell you, no. A smaller dividend, maybe, to whom? Yes, to whom? To the men who live in Fifth avenue, whose wives are dragged about in limousines. Withdraw their suits! Help Faraday, and ruin men like Partridge? Men of the valley, what is your answer to Faraday?"

The crowd was on its feet, swaying and pushing. The air was filled with breaths. Wilson's crowd had forgotten its forgotten. "No," yelled the ranchers. "We say, no."

A boy made his way from the wings, a yellow envelope in his hand.

Babcock waved him on to Marshall. The audience was crying itself hoarse. Babcock lost control of the meeting in that minute of turning. Hollister, of the Palo Verde, was striving to be heard; Babcock's hammer sounded in vain. But Marshall's eye had caught a spark from the yellow sheet. He sprang forward, throwing the dispatch toward MacLean. His excitement caught the eye of the crowd. "The river!" There was a sudden hush. "The river's out again!" A groan swept through the house, there was a break toward the doors.

Marshall's voice halted them. "Men of the valley!" The audience, swayed again, listened. "Hear me. The river's running away again down yonder. This is a message from Rickard. It's broken through the levee. It's started for the valley. Now, who's going to stop it? Can you? Where's your force, your equipment? Who can rush to that call but the company you are bounding? I gave you Faraday's message. His hand's on the table. Not another cent from him unless you withdraw those suits. You say you have given me your answer, Black's answer. Now the river plays a trick. It calls your bluff. Shall we stop the river, men of the valley? We can. Will you withdraw your suits? You can. What is your answer now, Imperial valley?"

The scene broke into bedlam. Men jumped to their chairs, to the velvet rim of the boxes, all talking, screaming, gesticulating at once. The Yellow Dragon was never so fearfully visualized. Out of the chaos of men's voices came a woman's shriek. "For God's sake, save our homes." It pitched the panic note. "Save the valley! Stop the river!"

Marshall's Indian eyes were reading that mass of scared faces as though it were a sheet of typed paper. "Barton," he called through the din. "Where's Barton?"

Two men lifted Barton's puny figure upon their shoulders. His vibrant voice rolled above the shouting. "The valley withdraws its suits against the company."

"Then the company," yelled Marshall's oratory, "the company withdraws the river from the valley!" Pandemonium was loose. There were cheers, and the sound of women sobbing. Barton was carried out on the shoulders of his henchmen. Black led a crowd out, hurraing to the street.

On the street, Marshall fell back to MacLean. "That was a neat trick the river threw in our hands. His voice had dropped from oratory; the declaiming fire was gone from the black eyes. "It's only a break in the levee, Rickard says he can control it; estimates two weeks or so. It may cost the O. P. a few thousand dollars, but it saved them half a million. Now we'll have that game of poker, MacLean!"

In the balcony, Hardin was staring at Brandon. "If that wasn't the devil's own bluff!"

### CHAPTER XX.

#### A Soft Nook.

Innes traveled, gleefully, in a caboose, from Hamlin Junction to the Heading. She could not stay away a day longer! Never before had Los Angeles been a discipline. Why had it fretted her, made her restless, homesick? Then she had discovered the reason: history was going on down yonder. Going on, without her. She knew that that was what was pulling her; that only!

The exodus of engineers had started riverward in July. Gerty went with Tom, and she had made it distinctly clear that it was not necessary for Innes to follow them. Ridiculous for two women to coddle a Tom Hardin! Unless Innes had a special interest!

Her pride had kept her away. But Tom did not write; Gerty's letters were social and unsatisfactory; the newspaper reports inflamed her. The day before she had wired Tom that she was coming. She had to be there at the end!

Gerty welcomed her stiffly. Assuming a conscientious hostess-ship, she caught fire at her waning enthusiasms.



Gerty Welcomed Her Stiffly.

Gerty looked younger and prettier. Her flush accentuated her childish features which were smiling down her annoyance over this unwelcome visit.

"We have all the home comforts, haven't we? Why shouldn't we be comfortable when we are to be here for months? I'm going to brave it out—to the bitter end, even if I take. It is my duty—"

"There ought to be at least one cozy place, one soft nook that suggests a woman's presence. We have tea here in the afternoon, sometimes. Mr. Rickard drops in." The last was a delicate stroke.

"Afternoon tea? At the Front? Is this modern warfare?" The girl draped her irony with a smile. Gerty was stealing a peeped survey in the mirror through the rough door that opened into the division called her bedroom. The sunburned, unconscious profile of Innes was close to her own. Pink and golden the head by the dark one. She looked younger even than Innes! Good humor returned to her.

"We are going to dine on the Delta tonight." She pinned up a "scolding lock," an ugly misnomer for her sunny clinging curls! The mirror was requisitioned again. "That's the name of the new dredge. It was christened three weeks ago, in champagne brought from Yuma."

"You said dine on the Delta. Do you mean they have meals there?"

"You should see it," cooed Gerty. "It's simply elegant. It's a floating hotel, has every convenience, the camp cook, Ling, has his hands full."

"Going to wear that?" They were standing now by the door of Gerty's dressing tent. Over the bed a white lingerie gown was spread.

"I live in them. It's so hot," shrugged Mrs. Hardin.

"The look like your maid, Gerty!" Innes' exclamation was rueful. "I didn't bring anything but khakis. Oh, yes! I remember throwing in, the last minute, two plumes to fill up space."

"Why, we have dances on the Delta, and Sunday evening concerts. You know the work at Laguna dam is being held up? The government men of the Reclamation Service are down here all the time. But it's time to be getting ready."

Later, Tom flatly refused to accompany them.

"I thought as much," Gerty shrugged an airy irresponsibility. Innes could detect no regret.

"They passed a cot outside the tent. Who sleeps there?"

"Tom." The eyes of the two women did not meet.

Innes made no comment. "He finds the tent stuffy," Gerty's lips were prim with reserve. They walked toward the river in silence. As they reached the encampment, Gerty recovered her vivacity.

"That's Mr. Rickard's office, that ramada. Isn't it quaint? And that's his tent; no, the other one. MacLean's is next; there's Junior, now."

But his eyes were too full of Innes to see Gerty's dimples. The difference in the quality of his greetings smote Gerty like a blow. And she had never considered Tom's sister attractive, as a possible rival. Yet, after a handshake, she saw that to MacLean, Jr., she did not exist.

Gerty was deeply piqued. Until now, the field had been hers. She might perhaps have to change her opinion of Tom's sister. Boys, she had to concede, the younger men, might find her attractive. Boyishly congenial; older men would fall to see a charmer!

"It isn't a battle," Innes looked around the gay rectangle. "It's play!" The thought followed her that evening. Outside, where the moonlight was silvering the deck, and the quiet river lapped the sides of the dredge, Jose's strings, and his "amigo's" thrumming from a dark corner, made the illusion of peace convincing. This was no battle. It was easy to believe herself again at Mare Island—the Delta a cruiser.

Later, Gerty passed her, two-stepping divinely. Before her partner turned his head, Innes recognized the stiff back and straight poised head and dancing step of Rickard. She admitted he had distinction, grudgingly. She could not think of him except comparatively; always antithetically, balanced against her Tom.

"I'm tired; let's rest here." Innes drew into the shadow of the great arm of the dredge. They watched the dancers as they passed, MacLean playing the woman in "Pete's" arms, Gerty with Rickard, two other masculine couples. The Hardins were the only women aboard.

It was because of Tom that Innes felt resentment when the uplifted appealing chin, the face ruffled by Tom, lying outside an unfriendly tent!

It was easy, in that uncertain light, to avoid Rickard's glance of recognition. Estrada, who had come aboard with the manager, sought her out, and then Crothers of the O. P. Again, she saw Rickard dancing with the lingerie gown. There seemed to be no attempt to cover Gerty's preference; for Rickard, she was the only woman there! Because she was Tom's sister, she had a right to resent it, to refuse to meet his eye. Small wonder Tom did not come to the Delta!

Going in with MacLean, Jr. to the messroom for a glass of water, she met Rickard, on his way out. She managed to avoid shaking hands with him. She wondered why she had consented to give him the next waltz.

"He'll not find me," she determined. MacLean followed her gladly to the dark corner of the deck where Jose's guitar was then syncoating an accompaniment to his "amigo's" voice.

To her surprise, Rickard penetrated her curtain of shadows.

"Our dance, Miss Hardin? Give us 'Sobr' Las Olas,' again, Jose."

The hand that barely touched his arm was stiff with antagonism. She told herself that he had to dance with her—poitiveness, conventionality, demanded it. But, instantly, she forgot her resentment, and forgot their awkward relation. It was his dancing, not Gerty's, then, that was "superb." Anybody could find skill under the leadership of that irresistible step. And then the motion claimed her. She thought of nothing; they moved as one to the liquid falling beat.

The music dropped them suddenly, isolating them at the stern of the deck. The silence was complete. Rickard broke it to ask her what she thought of the camp.

Her resentments were recalled. She blundered through her impression of the lightness, the gaiety.

"A work camp does not have to be solemn. You'll find all the grimness you want if you look beneath the surface."

The guitars were tuning up. "Shall I take you back? I have this dance with your sister."

She thought of Tom—on his lonely cot outside his tent. She forgot that she had been asked a question. He was dancing again with Gerty! If that silly little woman had no scruples, no fine feeling, this man should at least guard her. If he had been her lover, he should be careful; he must see that people were talking of them. She had seen the glances that evening! The business relation between the two men should suggest tact, if not decency! It was outrageous.

Rickard stood waiting to be dismissed; puzzled. Through the uncertain light, her anger came to him. She looked taller, older; there was a flame of accusing passion in her eyes.

It was his minute of revelation. So that was what the camp thought! The wife of Hardin—Hardin! Why, he'd been only polite to her—they were old friends. What had he said to call down this sudden scorn? "Dancing—again—"

Had he been all kinds of an ass? "My turn, Miss Innes!" demanded MacLean, Jr.

"Oh, yes," she cried, relief in her tone.

Rickard did not claim his dance with Mrs. Hardin. He stood where the girl had left him, thinking. A few minutes later, Gerty swept by in the arms of Brock. Later, came Innes with Junior; the two, thinking themselves unseen, romping through a two-step like two young children. He was never shown that side of her. Gay as a young kitten, chatting merrily with MacLean! Should her eyes discover him, she would be again the haughty young woman!

He'd gone out of his way to be polite to the wife of Hardin. What did he care what they thought? He'd finish his job, and get out.

A minute later, he was being rowed back to camp.

(Continued next Saturday)

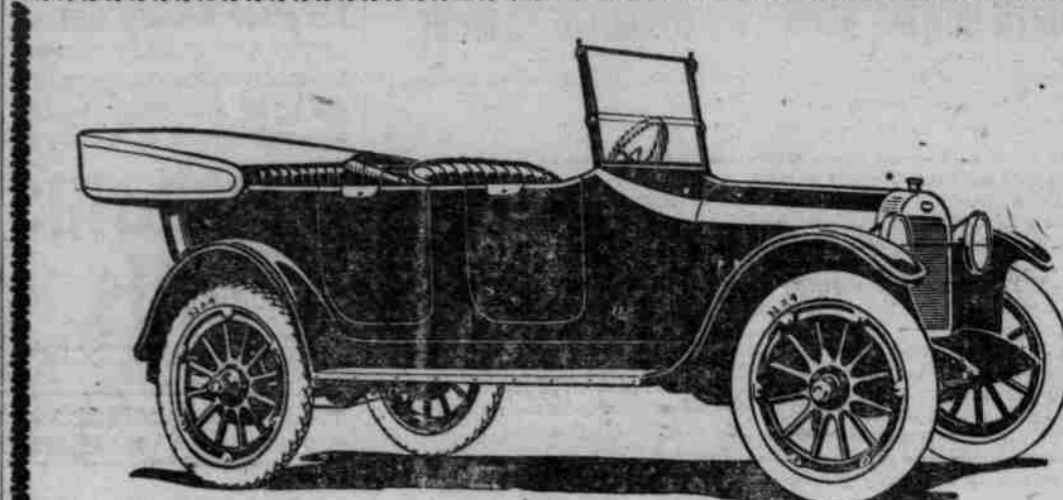
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## COLLEGE STUDENTS TO LEARN AVIATION

### Plan Is To Pave Way For Future Commercial Aerial Activities.

New York, Mar. 22. — Paving the way for future commercial aerial activities and at the same time making ready an air force for military needs, the Division of Military Aeronautics has arranged a training program for college students which will not interfere with their prescribed college courses but will, at the end of three years, turn them out prepared for commercial, sport or military aviation duties.

The plan, as announced by the War Department, in connection with its exhibit at the aeronautical exposition here, permits the college student to absorb the courses previously included in the curricula of the ground schools while working for his degree.

The assumption of the War Department is that aviators must be young men, and they point to the experience of the war to prove their point. For this reason, they say, there must be a constant stream of candidates going through the schools.

The government's detailed plan as explained at the aeronautical exposition by Colonel B. E. Castle, formerly of the control board, division of military aeronautics, is as follows:

**To Keep Up Supply.** "We are proceeding on the assumption that aviators will become superannuated more rapidly than any other kind of officer, so that it is imperative that the supply of trained personnel be kept up. In view of the strength of the air service at the cessation of hostilities and in view of the depreciation among our reserve officers of not less than ten per cent a year, it is estimated that we must draw about 1000 pilots, 850 airplane and balloon observers, and 100 engineer officers every year."

"In order not to take the better part of a year of a man's time to train him as a pilot or observer, the machinery of

the reserve officers' training corps was chosen as most likely to bring about desired results.

"In outline the plan is to give the equivalent of the work formerly done in the ground school exclusive of military practice—that is, airplanes, engines, gunnery, navigation and maps, infantry and artillery co-operation, and signalling—at the college and universities during the college year and give flying and military training during the six weeks summer camps held at northern flying fields."

New Books Received At Public Library

"Structure of lasting peace," an inquiry into the motives of war and peace by N. H. Kallen.

"Ten months in a German raider" the story of an American captain aboard the Wolf, J. C. Cameron.

"With the Russian pilgrims to Jerusalem," Stephen Graham relates his experiences as he made the pilgrimage with 360 Russian peasants from Constantinople. He holds it one of the extraordinary events of his life.

"Development of the U. S.," a history of the development of American personality rather than a political life.

"Relief from floods," an explanation of some of the means of flood prevention for the protection of life and property, by J. W. Alvord.

"The gun book for boys and men" by T. H. McKea.

"The 20th century toolmaker and steel worker," a book on the use, repair and manufacture of steel tools, by H. Helford.

"Wild animals of North America," an illustrated description of American mammals, the illustrations being in color from Louis Agassiz Fuertes' paintings, description by E. W. Nelson.

"The dress you wear and how to make it" by Mary Jane Rhoe.

"School and home gardening," an illustrated text book full of suggestions by K. C. Davis.

"Commercial letters," discussion of letters for various purposes with samples of successful ones, by J. B. Opl. yoke.

"Journalism for high schools," a guide book for conducting a school paper, and for preparation for journalism, by Charles Dillon.

"French scientific reader," a selection of some of the finest French

prose written on scientific subjects, edited by Francis Daniels.

"Joan of Arc," a biography by Francis C. Lowell.

"The New Testament" from Kent's Shorter Bible, which aims to present in logical order the practical and vital parts of the Bible.

"Easter," a selection of articles and stories on its history and spirit by R. H. Schauffler.

"What every woman knows," a play which Maude Adams has made famous, by J. M. Barrie.

"Quality street," also played by Maude Adams, written by Barrie.

"The eyes of Asia," the war as seen from India according to Rudyard Kipling.

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Henry Albers is no longer a member or stock holder in the Albers Bros. Milling Co. He has no connection what ever. Although an officer at one time, he was inactive in the affairs of the company and held only ten per cent of the stock. These facts are a matter of record and open to your investigation.

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