The RIVER

By EDNAH AIKEN

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Discovery.

The murder of Maldonado shook the camp next morning. Three rurales, in brilliant trappings, rode up to Rickard's ramada. The leader, entering the office, announced that they were on the track of a criminal, the murderer of a rurale, Maldonado. He was an Indian named Felipe. He repeated the story Rickard had heard before. Would the senor give his respected permission for notices to be posted about the camp? A description of the Indian, a reward for his capture; the favor would be inestimable.

Rickard saw the notice later that day. It was nailed to the back platform of the Palmyra. He was on Marshall's trail, his chief having failed to keep an appointment with him. They were to test the gate that afternoon; Marshall was returning soon to Tucson.

Rickard turned back toward camp, deep in thought; so intent that a sharp cry had lost its echo before the import came to him. He stopped, hearing running steps behind him. Innes Hardin was loping up the bank like a young deer, with terror in her eyes.

"Mr. Rickard!" she cried. "Mr. Rickard!"

She was trembling. Her fright had flushed her; cheek to brow was glowing with startled blood. He saw an odd flash of startling beauty, the veil of tan torn off by her emotion. The wave of her terror caught him. He put out his hand to steady her. She stood recovering herself, regaining her spent breath. Rickard remembered that this was the first time he had seen her since the murder of Maldonado, since the meeting with the Mexican woman at his tent. "What was it frightened you?"

"The Indian, the murderer. Just as they describe him on those notices. I must have fallen asleep. I'd been reading. I heard a noise in the brush and there was his face staring at me." Her breath was still uneven. "I screamed and ran. Silly to be so scared."

He started toward the willows, but she grabbed his sleeve. "Oh, don't." She flushed, thinking to meet the quizzical smile, but his eyes were grave. He, too, had had his fright. They stood staring at each other. "I'm afraid—" she completed. How he would despise her cowardice! But she could not let him know that her fear had been for him!

He was looking at her. Suppose anything had happened to her! He had a minute of nausea. If that brute had hurt her—and then he knew how it was with him!

He looked at her gravely. Of course. He had known it a long time. It was true. She was going to belong to him. If that brute had hurt her!

She shrank under his gravity; this was something she did not understand. They were silent, walking toward the encampment. Rickard did not care to talk. It was not the time; and he had been badly shaken. Innes was tremulously conscious of the palpitating silence. She fluttered toward giddy speech. Her walk that day, Mr. Rickard! She had heard that water had started to flow down the old river bed; she had wanted to see it, and there was no one to go with her. Her sentence broke off. The look he had turned on her was so dominant, so tender. Amused at her giddiness, and yet loving her! Loving her! They were silent again.

"You won't go off alone, again." He had not asked it, at parting. His inflection demanding it of her, was of ownership. She did not meet his eyes.

Later, when she was lying on her bed, face downward, routed, she tried to analyze that possessive challenge of his gaze, but it eluded words. She summoned her pride, but the meaning called her, sense and mind and soul of her. It cried to her: "I, Casey Rickard, whom your brother hates, once the lover of Gerty Holmes, I am the mate for you. And I'm going to come and take you some day. Some day, when I have time!"

Oh, yes, she was angry with him; she had some pride. "Why didn't he tell me then?" she cried in a warm tumult to her pillow. "For I would have given him his answer. I had time, ample time, to tell him that it was not true." For she wanted a different sort of lover, not a second-hand discard; but one who belonged all to herself; one who would woo, not take her with that strange sure look of his. "You'll be waiting when I come." Ah, she would not, indeed! She would show him!

And then she lay quite still with her hand over her heart. She would be waiting when he came for her! Because, though life had brought them together so roughly, so tactlessly had muddled things, yet she knew. She would be waiting for him!

Before he had left her, Rickard had followed a swift impulse. Those bronze lamps averted still? Was she remembering—last night? No mistake like that should rest between them. He must set that straight. That much he allowed himself. Until his work was done. But she knew—she had seen—how it was with him!

"I wonder if you would help me, Miss Hardin? Would you do something for that poor crazed woman? I wanted to ask Mrs. Hardin, but for some reason I've got into her black books. Just the little kindness one woman can give another. A man finds it difficult. And these Mexican women don't understand a man's friendship."

Her eyes met his squarely. His tantalizing smile had gone. He was making a demand of her—to believe him, his request his defense. The glances, of yellow eyes and gray, met with a shock, and the world was changed for both. Life, with its many glad voices, was calling to senses and spirit, the girl's still rebellious, the man's sure.

Rickard put out his hand. "Good-night!" To both, it carried the sound of "I love you!" She put her hand in his, then tore her fingers away, furious with them for clinging. Where was her pride? When he had time! She fled into her tent.

Neither of them had seen Gerty Hardin watching them from her tent door.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A Glimpse of Freedom.

The siding was deserted. The Palmyra had run out to Tuscon. Marshall had gone without apprehension. They did not expect now to have setbacks, to have to extend the time set for the ultimate diversion. The days were flowing like oil. The encampment was filling up with visitors, newspaper men who came to report the spectacular capture of the river.

Rickard's day badly begun, piled up with vexations. By sundown, he was wet to the skin, and mad as a sick Arizona cat.

In this jaundiced juncture, MacLean, Jr., brought down his dispatches to the river. He read of the burning of a trainload of railroad ties. Rickard swore.

"Anything else pleasant?"

"A letter from the governor—from dad." MacLean read that his father begged a small favor of Rickard.

"Godfrey, the celebrated English tenor, is on my hands. His doctors have been advising outdoor occupation. I am sending him to you, asking you to give him any job you may have. He is willing to do anything. Put him at something to keep him occupied."

MacLean saw Rickard's face turn red. "Suffering cats! A worn-out opera singer! What sort of an opera does he think we're giving down here? Why doesn't he send me a fur coat, or a pair of girl twins? Give the tenor a role! Anything else? Pile it all on."

"Oh, and one from Godfrey himself. He's in Los Angeles. He says he'll be here tomorrow." He did not wait for his chief's reply.

At the supper table, Rickard, dry and in restored humor, alluded to the invasion of high notes. "Pity the parts are all assigned! The only vacancy is in the kitchen. I wonder how he would like to be understudy to Ling!"

The next day when the incident had been forgotten, and while Rickard was up at the Crossing on the concrete gate, Godfrey blew into camp. He

Godfrey Blew Into Camp.

was like a boy out on a lark. His brown eyes were dancing over the adventure. He explored the camp and came back bubbling.

"It's the biggest I ever saw. But say, Junior, that's what they call you, isn't it? I'm the only idle man here. Can't you give me something to do? I'll do anything. I'd like the boss to find me busy when he comes in."

MacLean softened the offer. Perhaps until Mr. Godfrey learned the ropes he could be of general use. They were short-handed the present moment—there was another hesitation—in the kitchen! Ling, the Chinese cook, was overcrowded—so many visitors—

"Great," crowed Godfrey, slapping him on the shoulder. "I don't want to feel in the way. I want to earn my board. Lead me to the cook!"

That evening, the dinner was helped on its way by the best-paid singer of England. In an apron, borrowed of Ling, he was "having the time of his life." Ling, pretending to scold, had been won immediately. Rickard, hearing of the jolly advent, forgot his vexation, and immediately on his return made his way to the mesquit inclosure—to greet the friend of George MacLean.

After dinner, MacLean carried off his prize to the Delta, where Godfrey earned his welcome. Gerty Hardin forgot to flirt with the engineers; she had discovered a new sensation. The wonderful voice twisted her heart-strings; it told her that the heart that has truly loved never forgets, and she knew that she could never have really loved, yet, because the youth in her veins was whispering to her that she could still forget. Godfrey saw a mobile plaintive face turned up to the gibbous moon; he swept it with thrills and flushes. She was a wonderful audience; she was also his orchestra, the woman with the plaintive eyes. He played on her expressions as though she were a harp.

Later, he was presented to Mrs. Hardin. She told him that the camp would no longer be dull; that she had tea every afternoon in her ramada. She convicted him archly of British-hood. "She knew he must have his tea!"

"You American women are the wonders of the world! Nothing daunts you. In the desert, and you give afternoon teas. I'll be there every day!"

He gave her open admiration; she looked young and wistful in her soft flowing mulls, the moonlight helping her. She fell into a delicious flurry of nerves and excitement. Later, she wandered with him from a rude gaping world into a heaven of silvered decks and gleaming waters. He told her of himself, of his loneliness; his music had dropped him to self-pity.

Gerty Hardin heard her bars drop behind her. She snatched her first glimpse of freedom.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Dragon Scores.

The Palmyra was once again on its siding. Marshall was at the front again; having made another of his swift dashes from Tucson. This time he expected officially to close the gate. Claudia was with him. She never left the car, unless it were to step out to the platform to see what she could from there of the river work.

Hardin and Rickard had been devoting anxious weeks. A heavy rainfall and cloudburst in the mountains of northern Arizona had swollen the feeders of the Gila river which roared down to the Colorado above Yuma. The eroding streams carried mountains in solution which settled against the gate, a scour starting above and below it. Relief had to be given on the jump. A spur track was rushed across the by-pass above the gate, as the closing of the ill-fated gate with the flashboards was no longer possible. A rock-fill was the only means of closure. In the distant quarries men were digging out rock to fill the call from the river.

Marshall came down to see the completed spur. Before he reached the intake, the first rock train had moved onto the spur track. The trestle had settled, the train had been thrown from the rails and wrecked.

Marshall came in from the damaged trestle, bringing Rickard and Crothers. Mrs. Marshall had invited Innes Hardin to dine with them. Innes fell to flushing, and chilling, as a lithe-muscled figure came directly to her. His eyes—where was the look she had feared, of possessive tenderness? The quizzical gleam was gone. On guard! A solemn business, loving, when you know that it means—life! On guard, though, to her! She pulled her fingers from his strong lingering clasp, and joined Mrs. Marshall.

Rickard had his soldier look on. She was watching him covertly as he talked with his host and Crothers, as though she were not there; as though something were not waiting for him to claim. How could he be talking, oblivious of everything else in the world except the river? Was that—loving? Could she think of anything else when he was in the same room with her? He was a soldier of the modern army. It came to her, a sort of tender divination, that he would not divide his thoughts, even with her, with love, until his battle was won. Well, couldn't she understand that? What her accusation against Gerty? Sex honor—keep off the track! Wasn't that her own notion? Oughtn't she to be proud of him?

She had brought a nest of waspish thoughts tumbling about her ears, Gerty! He had loved Gerty. He couldn't love her, if his thoughts had ever lingered, with that same seriously solemn look on the false little face of her sister-in-law.

After dinner they were standing in the shade of the Palmyra. It was a soft still afternoon. The fierceness of the savage desert had melted to her days of lure. Beyond, the turbid waters of the Colorado bore a smiling surface. There was nothing to hint of treachery.

It was a minute of pleasant insolitude, snatched from the turmoil. Rickard had succumbed to the softness of the day and his mood. He was enjoying the thought of Innes' nearness, though she kept her face turned from him. He knew by the persistence of those averted eyes that she was as acutely conscious of his presence as he was, restfully, of hers. Deliberately, he was prolonging the instant.

A stir on the river had caught the alert eye of Tod Marshall. He swore a string of picturesque Marshallian oaths. Rickard's eyes jumped toward the by-pass. The placid waters had suddenly buckled. Majestically the gate rose and went out. Months of work swept away! The gate drifted a hundred feet or more. Some unseen obstruction caught it there, to mock at the labors of man.

Innes, aghast, turned toward Rickard. His face was expressionless. There was a babel of excited voices behind them, Bodefeldt, MacLean, Tony, Crothers, Bangs, all talking at once. Her eyes demanded something of Rickard. A fierce resentment rose against his calmness. "He knew it," she rebelled. "He's been expecting this to happen. It's no tragedy to him!" There was a stab as of physical pain; she was visualizing the blow to Tom.

She heard Marshall's voice, speaking to Rickard. "Well, you're ready for this." She did not hear the answer, for already Rickard was heading

Rickard Was Heading for the By-Pass.

for the by-pass. Marshall and the young engineers followed him.

To Innes that wreck down yonder was worse than failure; it was ruin. It involved Tom's life. It was his life. This would be the final crushing of his superb courage—her thoughts released from their paralysis were whipped by sudden fear. She must find him, be with him. The next instant she was speeding toward the encampment.

Estrada met her on the run.

Had Gerty heard? The pity that she must know! She would not be tender to Tom; her pride would be wounded. She must ask her to be tender, generous. Her footsteps slackened as she came in sight of the tents.

She heard voices in the ramada, a man's clear notes mingling with Gerty's childish treble. "Godfrey!" Her mind jumped to other tete-a-tetes. Of course! So that was what was going on. And she not seeing! If not one man, then another! Horrid little clandestine affairs!

The meeting was awkward. Speedily Innes got rid of the news. Mrs. Hardin shrugged. "I believe I'll go out." Plaintively, she made the announcement, as though it were just evolved. "Now, the camp will be horrid. Everybody will be cross and everybody will be working."

As she left the tent beyond, Innes could hear the vibrant voice of Godfrey persuading Mrs. Hardin to stay there a few weeks longer. She could hear him say, "This will delay the turning of the river at the most but a few weeks. Rickard told me so a week ago. And think what it would be here without you!"

"They were all expecting it!" resisted Innes Hardin. She turned back toward the river. She must find Tom.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A Sunday Spectacle.

Trouble with the tribes was well grown before it was recognized. Disaffection was ripe, the bucks were heady, the white man's silver acting like wine. Few of the braves had dreamed of ever possessing sums of money such as they drew down each Sunday morning. Rickard began to suspect liquor again. In the Indian camp Sunday was a day of feasting, followed by a gorged sleep; the next day one of languor, of growing incohesion.

Rickard spoke of it to Coronel.

"Like small baby," hunched the old shoulders. "Happy baby. Pretty soon stop."

With the next wages went a reprimand, then a warning. Still followed bad Mondays. Rickard then issued a formal warning to all the tribes.

"The situation with the Indians is serious," said Rickard to MacLean.

"They're getting liquor in here, some way, the Lord only knows how. Anyway, they're not fit for burning Monday morning. I've just sent them word by Coronel that it's got to quit, or they do."

"Suppose they do?" MacLean was startled. Not an Indian could be spared at that stage of the game.

"Bluff!" Rickard got up. "They won't take the chance of losing that money. I'm off now to the Crossing. I'll leave you in charge here."

The next morning Wooster broke into the ramada where MacLean sat clicking his typewriter.

"Everything's up. Rickard's done it now. Sent some all-fired, independent kindergarten orders to the Indians. Says they have to be in bed by ten o'clock, or some such hour on Saturday and Sunday nights. It's a strike, their answer. That's what his monkeying has brought down on us."

"They're not going to quit?"

"They've sent word they won't work on Mondays, and they will go to bed when they choose Saturday nights. Losing one day a week! We can't stand for that. Luck's been playing into his hands, but this will show him up. This'll show Marshall his pet clerk. Tell Casey there'll be no Indians tomorrow." He sputtered angrily out of the office.

Rickard seemed pleased when MacLean made the announcement a few hours later.

His secretary was weighing him. "What do you intend to do about it?"

"Call their bluff," grinned Casey, showing teeth tobacco had not had a chance to spoil. "Boycott them."

MacLean found Wooster at the river-bank with Tom Hardin. The two men were watching a pile-driver set a re-

He Found Wooster at the River Bank.

bellious pile. Two new trestles were to supplement the one which had been bent out of line by the weight of settling drift. Marshall's plan was being followed, though jeered at by reclamation men and the engineers of the D. R. company.

"Stop the mattress weaving and dump like hell!" had been his orders.

"Boycott the Indians, well I'm blowed," the beady eyes sparkled at Hardin. "Now he's cut his own throat."

"By the eternal!" swore Hardin. MacLean left the two engineers matching oaths.

There was an ominous quiet the next day. Not an Indian offered to work at the river. A few stolid bucks came to their tasks on Tuesday morning; they were told by Rickard himself that there was no work for them. Rickard appeared ignorant of the antagonism of the engineers.

An unfathered rumor started that Rickard was in with the Reclamation Service men; that he wanted the work to fail; to be adopted by the Service. MacLean broke a lance or two against the absurd slander. He was making the discovery that a man's friendship for a man may be deeper than a man's love for a woman. He was a Rickard man. He was made to feel the reproach of it.

Wednesday not an Indian reported. Coronel passed from camp to camp, his advice unpopular. Scouts sent out to watch the work on the river reported it was crippled. The white man would be sending for the Indian soon. The waiting braves sat on their haunches, grinning and smoking their pipes.

Saturday night the camp went gloomily to bed. On the Indian side there was no revel, no feasting or dancing.

Rickard did not turn in until after midnight, planning alternatives. He was sleeping hard when MacLean, at dawn, dashed into his tent.

"Quick, what does this mean?"

It was a splendid spectacle, and staged superbly. For background, the sharp-edged mountains flushing to pinks and purples against a one-hued sky; the river-growth of the old channel uniting them, blotting out miles of desert into a flat scene. On the opposite bank of the New river, five hundred strong, lined up formidably, their faces grotesque and ferocious with paint, were the seven tribes. The sun's rays glinted up from their firearms, shotguns, revolvers, into a motley of defiance! Cocopahs, with streaming hair, blanketed Navajos, short-haired Pimas, those in front reining in their silent pinto ponies, and all motionless, silent in that early morning light.

"What does it mean?" whispered MacLean. Rickard did not answer. He had one nauseous instant as he looked toward Innes' tent. Then he broke into laughter.

"See, the white horse, he, in front—"

"By jove," MacLean slapped his thigh. "Coronel! They had me buffaloed. What do you think it is?"

Rickard stepped out into the wash of morning air and waved a solemn salute across the river. Gravely it was returned by Coronel.

"What does it mean?" demanded MacLean.

"It means we've won," chuckled his chief, coming back into his tent.

An hour later Coronel led in a picked group of the tribes. If the white chief would recall the boycott the Monday strike was over. The white man's silver had won.

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 feeling.

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 bearing 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 wakened as to a call. What had startled 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 fine 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-set 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 fickle sex, he had called hers; no constancy in woman, 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.

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

So that is the miracle, that wild rush of certain feeling! Yesterday, doubting, tomorrow, more doubts—but tonight, the song, the night isolated them, herself and Rickard, into a world of their own. Life with him on any terms she wanted.

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 sat on the bank by Innes and Mrs. Marshall.

Mrs. Hardin, floated by in her crisp muslins. A few feet behind stalked 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.

Gayly, 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 accused 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 welcomed 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 humping itself for its final stand against the absurdity of human intention; its yellow tail swished through the bents 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, taking 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 recklessness 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.

Visibly, the drama moved toward its climax. Before many hours passed the river would be captured or the idea forever mocked. Each time a belching engine pulled across that hazardous track it flung a credit to the man-side. Each time the waters, slowly rising, hurled their weight against the creaking trestles where the rock was thin, a point was gained by the militant river. Its roar sounded like the last cry of a wounded animal in Innes' ear; the Dragon was a reality that night as it spent its rage against the shackles of puny men.

(Concluded next Saturday.)