

## Coal Operators Advised by Cassatt



Robert K. Cassatt, Philadelphia banker, prescribed for the ills of the bituminous coal industry at the eighth annual meeting of the National Coal association in Chicago recently. Several thousand coal operators and 700,000 miners are directly concerned with what this financial expert had to say.



## The Free Traders

By Victor Rousseau  
WNU SERVICE

### CHAPTER XIX

#### Flimsy Bars

Rathway confronted Estelle with bitter hate in his look as she came up to him.

"Well, where have you been?" he demanded roughly.

"What's that to you?" Estelle retorted.

"See here! You think I'm going to have you prowling all round the country, doing God knows what, when I'm keeping you here?" His eyes flashed over her. He saw that her clothes were splashed with muddy snow. He saw the fatigue in her bearing.

"By God, you followed me!" he cried.

He seized her fiercely by the wrists. Estelle looked into his face, laughing contemptuously. Rathway's eyes fell. He swore under his breath.

"You think you can frighten me by violence, Jim? You ought to have learned by now that that doesn't pay, when did you bring back the girl or the gold?"

Rathway writhed under the sting of her contempt. "You were eavesdropping outside the house, d-n you!" Suddenly he changed his tone. "Both!" he cried exultantly. "I've got the girl, and I've cached the gold here, where no one can find it."

His rage broke out again. "I've had enough of your tongue!" he cried.

"I'll have no spies in my camp. You could put a rope around my neck with what you know. By God, Estelle, a little common sense should tell you you're playing with fire when you try to cross me. I've never treated you mean with money. You'd have enough to live in comfort on for the rest of your life if—"

"What have you done with Anderson?" asked Estelle quietly.

"Anderson's where he'll cause no further trouble."

"You mean you've killed him, after your agreement?"

"De-n you, you heard that, did you?" shouted Rathway, turning livid with fear. "No, I didn't kill him, if you want to know. He met with an accident."

"See here, Estelle," he continued, "you and me've got to work together on this game and not try to cross one another. Play fair with me and I'll play fair with you. I want you to make that girl act sensible. She's like a tigress. Now you're an intelligent woman. You know how I feel about her, and quarrelling won't help matters. It won't last, and then I'll come back to you."

Estelle drew her hands out of Rathway's grasp and placed them on his shoulders, looking searchingly into his face.

"Now, Jim, I want you just to listen to me," she said. "You know you've never gone wrong when you've followed my advice. And I guess you know I'm the only friend you've got in the world, don't you, Jim?"

"Well, what if that's so?" he muttered.

"I told you you'd made a mistake in bringing that girl here before."

"Aye," he sneered, "and you told me old Pelly's mine didn't exist. And I've got the gold! I've got the gold, I tell you!" he cried exultantly.

"I was wrong, then, but that was a matter of fact and not of judgment."

Jim, you know this is nothing but an infatuation of yours. As you said, it won't last. And what are you going to do with her afterward? You know what I'll mean to you! Estelle was pleading now. "You know when McGrath learns the truth, he'll raise the whole country against you. Let her go, Jim. What do you mean to do?"

"You know what I mean to do!" snarled Rathway; but he could not meet her gaze.

Estelle laid her hand on his arm. "Jim, did you ever have pity on any one in your life?" she asked.

"Oh, maybe, when I was young and foolish."

"Did you ever feel respect for any woman, Jim?"

"Ah, cut out that line of talk, Estelle! Don't try to ride the moral horse when it's just plain jealousy—one female jealous of another. That's all it is."

"It's not, Jim. And you'll regret what you're planning to do. Jim, I—I feel you're slipping your neck into a noose."

He leaped back and swore violently at her. "Cut out that talk, I tell you!" he shouted, almost beside himself.

"Jim, listen—just listen. I guess I'm not what anyone would call a good woman, but I was like that girl once, and I can't bear it, Jim. Jim, I'll do anything in the world for you if you'll have pity on her. It may be there's jealousy, too, but it's much more—much more for her sake—and for yours."

Estelle was working herself into one of her hysterical frenzies. Rathway grew crafty. It is not easy for a man to fool a woman, except when she is in love with him. Then it isn't very hard. And Estelle was desperately eager to be deceived.

"See here, Estelle," said Rathway gently, "you know if I let her go what would happen. I've got to keep her here till I know there's going to be no come back. I've got to see this thing through. She'll come to no harm at my hands."

Estelle looked at him eagerly. "Jim, you mean that?" she cried. "You swear that you mean it?"

"I mean more than that. You know me and you are partners, through thick and thin, for a good while now, though we've had our quarrels. Well, I won't deny what you said about an infatuation. But I'd getting to see things reasonable. And you're my old partner, Stella."

What a fool the woman was! All women were! She was clinging to him, looking up at him with that absurd expression on her face that had once set his heart leaping. How he hated her!

"Jim, Jim, dear, I—I can't dare to believe what you're saying."

"Oh, I guess you can't believe me, Stella," Rathway answered easily. "I'll have to keep her here a week or so, just to show McGrath I'm not running away. You see, there's Anderson's accident. He fell down the cliff—killed at once, of course; and if I was to go away now, they'd think there'd been foul play or something."

"You—you swear it was an accident, Jim?"

"Sure it was! So you see, Stella, I've got to keep her here a little while. Then we'll get away from here forever, you and me, and the gold."

"Oh, Jim, you've made me happier than I've been since—since you seemed to cease to care. You do care for me a little, Jim?" she asked, nestling against him.

"As much as ever," answered Rathway.

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way. And, as she twined her arm about his neck, he bent and kissed her. It was the kiss of Judas. But Estelle, happy again to feel her love returned, only lifted her lips to his in a touch that made him wince at his own treachery.

"Then I'll go and stay with that poor girl tonight, Jim, dear," she said, "and tell her that there's nothing to be afraid of."

Rathway, taken by surprise, managed to keep his countenance, but when Estelle had departed for the hut, he broke into almost maniacal curses. D-n her! She had tricked him with her very innocence!

And once again he found himself in the old predicament; he could take the gold and leave the girl, or he could wait till the opportunity arose to take Joyce, certain that meanwhile his men would demand their shares. Eight of them!

He fell into a gnashing fury. He had risked so much, and this fool of a woman had balked him at the end!

Hour after hour that night Estelle sat beside Joyce in the hut among the reeds, soothing her, mothering her, coaxing her to eat, and trying to restore her tottering mind to sanity.

Hour after hour, Joyce, at her side, sat staring out into the darkness, and did not utter a word.

And hour after hour Rathway sat drinking in his hut on the promontory, and seeking that intoxication that persisted in eluding him, without which he could not shake off the uncertainties that oppressed him.

He must get Estelle out of the way. The thought of Joyce was unbearable. Joyce, whom he had caught a second time, only to find himself embroiled in a web of unforeseen things, flimsy, and yet like iron bars between them.

If he attacked Estelle she would shrink from nothing. She carried a pistol, too. He dared not stain his hands with another murder. He was afraid of her trust in him, which had disarmed him; and, to be fair with him, he shrank from such a finale to his association with her.

The face of Lee, upturned and white and ghastly in the current, stared at him from the walls, as Pelly's used to do. He shook his fist at it. It drove him out, to pace the promontory; then he would return and hurl himself into his chair savagely, and drink again. And again he would fling himself from the hut; and all the while the conflict raged in his soul.

He could hear his men muttering about the fire. They were drunk, no doubt, but they had never acted that way in drunkenness before. Something was brewing. He must act that night. He must act soon. He must act that wild cat, Estelle.

And the face of Lee rose up before his eyes again. He went back, drained his glass, put out his light. He waited a minute till the liquor began to race through his veins, planning what he should do—

"Jim!"

He started. His hands leaped to his pistol as two shadows glided in through the doorway. Shorty and Pierre advanced openly toward him.

"Stop there!" he growled. "Well? What do you want?"

"They shifted uneasily in front of him. 'Well, there's been some grumblin' about that gold, Jim,' Shorty vouchsafed. 'The boys kinder seem to think you ain't plannin' to play fair with 'em. They've put Kramer on guard to watch the motor boat in case you might be aimin' to git away with her.'"

"What's that?" snarled Rathway.

He sprang to his feet. From the door of the hut, he could discern a shadowy figure near the parapet. For an instant he was about to rush at it in his rage. But then his cunning came to his aid. He turned back into the hut.

"What's their game—and yours?"

Shorty hesitated. "Well, ya see, Jim, we and Pierre's alius stood by ya, and we kinder thought we'd let ya know the boys has been talkin' things over among themselves."

Rathway smiled sourly. He knew the pair of them would not have hesitated to side with the mutineers if they had thought there was any chance of outwitting him. Pierre and Shorty knew Rathway's vigilance, his infinite resource.

"Spit it!"

"Well, Jim, I guess they're gettin' ready to rush on you, now you've put out your light. They're aimin' to tie you up and git away with the gold in the motor boat."

"Just to tie me? They wouldn't hurt me?" Rathway snickered, and the pair shuffled their feet uncomfortably.

He laughed. And his plans to meet this situation leaped into his mind. He must let the men attack, and then, when he had finished with them, he'd make short work of Pierre and Shorty, and Estelle too. His confidence was coming back.

"They sent me and Pierre to see if you'd gone to sleep here."

"Well, I ain't," Rathway returned, laughing again. He knew his nonchalance at once discomfited and bound them to him through fear. "I've gone to the hut across the neck to say good night to the girl, and maybe, if she presses me, I won't be hurrying away. Get that?" he asked, as they guffawed back consciously.

"You'll go back and tell 'em I'm gone, Pierre. You got your gun, Shorty?" All right. You and me'll have a quiet little session in the swamp, waitin' for 'em to come along the trail one by one—eh, Shorty?"

He clapped each one on the shoulder. "There's gold enough in that sack to make us three millionaires, and there'll be a d-n sight less sharing," he said. "And listen, boys, I've cached it, so, if I'm croaked, nobody'll get it. See?"

The men were fools anyway, but trebly so when their cupidity was

aroused. Rathway imagined the greed leaping into their eyes, and laughed. He was reckless now. The hooch devil rode him at last. And in his mind's eye he saw the picture.

"And, what a holocaust for Joyce! No one could prove anything, either, even if they caught him. And the bodies of Lee and Pelly would never be found. There was Estelle, of course, but whatever happened, she would never give him away."

Curiously, Estelle, who had loomed so prominently as his chief difficulty, now assumed an insignificant part in the problem. He didn't even consider what disposition he was going to make of her.

"You get back, Pierre, and say you met me going over to the neck," he said. "And hold 'em twenty minutes."

Pierre departed. Rathway and Shorty went, softly out of the hut among the pines. Rathway felt sure enough of his companion to walk in front of him.

They heard the voices of the men about the fire rise into loud declamation as Pierre returned; then the sounds were cut off as they turned along the track through the morass. Presently the stables came into sight above the reeds, and the hut beyond, with a light in it.

Rathway could see the silhouetted figures of the two women, Joyce in a chair, motionless, and Estelle upon the bed beside her. He swore through his teeth as he watched them.

"I guess this place will do," he said to Shorty.

They squatted among the reeds, their pistols in their hands. It had been snoring intermittently through the night, and it was an eerie watch, even for the unimaginative, in the bitter cold and blackness. The night wind rustled the dead stalks of the reeds; the musk, more treacherous for the surface ice that concealed, but could never bind it, stirred and heaved imperceptibly, like a vast sea. Across the neck of land the flames of the camp fire flickered against the rocks.

Suddenly, after what seemed like an eternity of time, Shorty whispered hoarsely in Rathway's ear, pulled at the sleeve of his mackinaw, and pointed.

From where they lurked they could see figures moving against the background of fire in the direction of the neck.

Gripping their pistols they crouched motionless, tense with excitement. But on a sudden other figures appeared, moving toward the anglers. They heard a sharp "Hands up!"



They Heard a Sharp "Hands Up." Followed by an Oath, Cries, the Discharge of Firearms.

followed by an oath, cries, the discharge of firearms.

And Rathway, trembling like an aspen leaf, stared into Shorty's face.

"It's him! He's the come back," he babbled in superstitious terror.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.)

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## UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Scholarship and Entrance Examinations.

The examination for the award of vacant scholarships in the University of South Carolina and for admission of new students will be held at the County Court House Friday, July 10, 1925, at 9 o'clock a. m. Applicants must not be less than 16 years of age.

Scholarships are vacant in the following 23 counties:

Allendale	Charleston	Dorchester	Jasper	Oconee	Union
Barnwell	Cherokee	Fairfield	Laurens	Richland	Williamsburg
Beaufort	Clarendon	Hampton	Lexington	Saluda	York
Berkeley	Dillon	Horry	Marion	Sumter	

Applicants for scholarships should write to President Melton for scholarship application blanks. These should be filed with the President by July 7th. Scholarships are worth \$100.00, plus free tuition and fees. The next session will open September 10th, 1925.

For further information write to:

PRESIDENT W. D. MELTON,

University of South Carolina, Columbia, S. C.