



The RIVER

EDNAH AIKEN

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—K. C. Rickard, an engineer of the Overland Pacific, is called to the office of President Marshall in Tucson, Ariz. "Casey" is an enigma to the force; he wears "duke" clothes, has had resigned a chair of engineering in the East to go on the road as a man and his promotion had been spectacular. While waiting for Marshall Rickard reads a report on the ravages of the Colorado, despite the efforts of Thomas Din of the Desert Reclamation company. This Hardin had been a student of Rickard and had married Gerry mes, with whom Rickard had fancied "as in love."

CHAPTER II—Marshall tells Rickard Overland Pacific has got to step in and save the Imperial Valley and sends to the break. Rickard declines because he does not want to supplant Harbut is won over. "Stop the river in the expense," says Marshall.

CHAPTER III—Rickard journeys to Calexico, sees the irrigated desert and learns much about Hardin and his work.

CHAPTER IV—At the hotel he meets Mr. and Mrs. Hardin and Innes Hardin, Hardin's half sister. Disappointed in her husband and an incorrigible coquette, Mrs. Hardin sets her cap for her former lover and invites him to dinner.

CHAPTER V—Rickard visits the company's offices and takes control. He finds the engineers loyal to Hardin and hostile to him. Estrada, a Mexican, son of the "Father of the Imperial Valley," tells him of the general situation.

CHAPTER V.

(Continued From Last Friday)

"I want you to do something for me, not at all agreeable!" His tone implied that the boy was not given the chance to beg off. "What time does the train pull out in the morning?"

"Six-fifteen."
"I'll have a letter for you at the hotel at six. Be on time. I want to catch Hardin before he leaves for Los Angeles. If he's really going, I'll give him today to think it over. But he can't disregard an order as he did my invitation. I didn't want to rub it in before the men."

MacLean stared, then said that he

thought he was not likely to! Rickard left the office in time to see Hardin shutting the outer gate behind him. His exit released a chorus of indignant voices.

"An outrage!"
"A d—d shame!" This from Wooster.

"Hardin's luck!"
On the other side of the door Rickard deliberated. The hotel and its curious loungers, or his new office, where Ogilvie was making a great show of occupation. He had not seen Estrada. He was making a sudden dive for his hotel when the gentle voice of the Mexican hailed him.

"Will you come to my car? It's on the siding right here. We can have a little lunch and then look over some maps together. I have some pictures of the river and the gate. They may be new to you."

Rickard spent the afternoon in the car. The twin towns did not seem so hostile. He thought he might like the Mexican.

Estrada was earning his father's mantle. He was the superintendent of the road which the Overland Pacific was building between the twin towns and the Crossing; a director of the Desert Reclamation company, and the head of a small subsidiary company which had been created to protect rights and keep harmonious relation with the sister country. Rickard found him full of meat, and heard, for the first time consecutively, the story of the rakish river. Particularly interesting to him was the relation of Hardin to the company.

"He has the bad luck, that man!" exclaimed Estrada's soft, musical voice. "Everything is in his hands, capital is promised, and he goes to New York to have the papers drawn up. The day he gets there the Maine is destroyed. Of course capital is shy. He's had the devil's own luck with

men: Gifford, honest but mullish; Sather, mullish and not honest—oh, there's a string of them. Once he went to Hermosillo to get an option on my father's lands. They were already covered by an option held by some men in Scotland. Another man would have waited for the three months to pass. Not Hardin. He went to Scotland, thought he'd interest those men with his maps and papers. He owned all the data then. He'd made the survey."

Estrada repeated the story Brandon and Marshall had told, with little discrepancy. A friendly refrain followed the narrative. "He has the bad luck, that man!"

"And the Scotch option?" reminded Rickard, smiling at his own poor joke.

"It was just that. A case of Hardin luck again. He stopped off in London to interest some capital there; following up a lead developed on the steamer. He was never a man to neglect a chance. Nothing came of it, though, and when he reached Glasgow he found his man had died two days before—or been killed, I've forgotten which. Three times Hardin's crossed the ocean trying to corner the opportunity he thought he had found. It isn't laziness, is his trouble. It's just infernal luck."

"Or over-astuteness, or procrastination," criticized his listener to himself. He knew now what it was that had so changed Hardin. A man cannot travel, even though he be hounding down a quick scent, without meeting strong influences. He had been thrown with hard men, strong men. It was an inevitable chiseling, not a miracle. "I want to hear more of this some day. But this map, I don't understand what you told me of this by-pass, Mr. Estrada."

Their heads were still bending over Estrada's rough work bench when the Japanese cook announced that dinner was waiting in the adjoining car. MacLean and Bodefeldt and several young engineers joined them.

It had been outwardly a wasted day. Rickard had lounged, socially and physically. But before he turned in that night he had learned the names and dispositions of his force, and some of their prejudices. Nothing, he summed up, could be guessed from the gentleness of the Mexican's manner; Wooster's antagonism was open and snappish. Silent was to be watched, and Hardin had already shown his hand.

The river, as he thought of it, appeared the least formidable of his opponents. He was imaging it as a high-spirited horse, maddened by the fumbling of its would-be captors. His task it was to lasso the proud stallion, lead it in bridled to the sterile land. No wonder Hardin was sore; his noose had slipped off one time too many! Hardin's luck!

CHAPTER VI.

Red Tape.

At ten o'clock the next morning Hardin, entering the office, again the general manager's, found there before him George MacLean, the new director, and Percy Babcock, the treasurer, who had been put in by the Overland Pacific when the old company was reorganized. They had just come in from Los Angeles, the trip made in MacLean's private car, to attend a director's meeting.

Rickard entered a few minutes later, Estrada behind him. Ogilvie followed Rickard to his desk.

"Well?" inquired the new manager. Ogilvie explained lengthily that he had the minutes of the last meeting. "Leave them here." Rickard waved him toward Estrada, who held out his hand for the papers.

Reluctantly the accountant relinquished the papers. His retreating countenances looked ludicrously whipped but no one laughed. Hardin's scowl deepened.

"Showing his power," he thought. "He's going to call for a new pack."

Estrada pushed the minutes through with but a few unimportant interruptions. He was sitting at the same desk with Rickard. Hardin, sensitive and sullen, thought he saw the meeting managed between them.

Several times he attempted to bring the tangled affairs of the water companies before the directors. Rickard would not discuss the water companies.

"Because he's not posted! He's beginning to see what he's up against," ran Hardin's stormy thoughts.

He was on his feet the next minute with a motion to complete the Hardin headgate. Violently he declaimed to Babcock and MacLean his wrongs, the injustice that had been done him. Marshall had let that fellow Maitland convince him that the gate was not practicable; had it not been for him the gate would be in place now; all this time and money saved. And the Maitland dam, built instead! Where was it? Where was the money, the time, put in that little toy? Sickening! His face purpled over the memory. Why was he allowed to begin again with the gate? "Answer me that. Why was I allowed to begin again? It's all child's play, that's what it is. And when I am in it again up to my neck he pulls me off!"

This was the real Hardin, the uncouth, overaged Lawrence student! The new manner was just a veneer. Rickard had been expecting it to wear thin.

"I think," interjected Rickard, "that we all agree with Mr. Marshall, Mr. Hardin, that a wooden headgate on silt foundation could never be more than a makeshift. I understood that the first day he visited the river with you he had the idea to put the ultimate

gate, the gate which would control the water supply of the valley, up at the Crossing on rock foundation. Mr. Marshall does not expect to finish that in time to be of first use. He hopes the wooden gate will solve the immediate problem. It was a case of any port in a storm. He has asked me to report my opinion."

"Why doesn't he give me a chance to go ahead then?" growled the deposed manager. "Instead of letting the intake widen until it will be an impossibility to confine the river there at all?"

"So you do think that it will be an impossibility to complete the gate as planned?"

Hardin had run too fast. "I didn't mean that," he stammered. "I mean it will be difficult if we are delayed much longer."

(To be Continued Friday.)

RAILROADS NOT LAYING OFF MEN GENERALLY

Washington, March 7.—Railroads generally are not laying off employes as a result of the failure of congress to appropriate funds for the railroad administration, it was stated at the office of Director General Hines. A few cases of dismissal of a number of men have been reported to head-

quarters here, but in each case, it was stated, the reasons were local and related to operating conditions rather than to the financial predicament.

Railroad administration officials explained that there is no intention of issuing specific instructions forbidding the dismissal of employes nor to make any general investigation of cases in which men have been laid off. Regional directors, however, may make inquiries in any cases where it

appears undesirable to decrease the working forces.

Director General Hines' statement that he plans to continue railroad operations as usual to avoid disturbance of industrial and employment conditions have been, circulate among railroad executives and it is the belief at railroad administration headquarters that his policy will be pursued.

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6-ROOM RESIDENCE—On S. Main St., containing 4 acres, more or less. Good barn, 1 tenant house, rat proof crib, with branch running through property. Cheap at \$2,100.00
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