

# THE RIVER....



By EDNAH AIKEN

(Continued From Tuesday)  
CHAPTER XXII.

### A Visit to Maldonado.

Mrs. Hardin's descent on the office that afternoon was successful, but not satisfactory. She had found the manager brief to curtness. She was given no excuse to linger. She traced Rickard's manner to the presence of MacLean, and snatched at her cue. She, too, could be businesslike and brief. Her errand was of business; her manner should recommend her!

Rickard had seen her making straight toward the ramada. It was not the first time; her efforts to line her nest had involved them all and often. But today, he was in a bad humor.

"For the Lord's sake," he groaned to MacLean as she approached.

MacLean's grin covered relief. He had never heard Rickard express himself on the subject before. "The dead-set Hardin's wife was making at Casey," was the choice gossip and speculation of the young engineers on the Delta. MacLean had a bet up on the outcome. He grinned more securely.

"I am not going to spare any more carpenters," growled Rickard. It was an inauspicious day for Mrs. Hardin's visit. Things had gone wrong. Vexations were piling up. A tilt with Hardin that morning, a telegram from Marshall; he was feeling sore. Desperately they needed labor. Woostee had just reported, venomously, it appeared to Rickard's spleen, increasing drunkenness among the Indians.

Gerty's ruffles swept in. Her dress the blue mull with the lace medallions accented the hue of her eyes, and looked deliciously cool that glaring desert day. Her parasol, of pongee was lined with the same baby hue. Her dainty fairness and childish capability should have made an oasis in that strenuous day, but Rickard's disintegration of temper was too complete. He rose stiffly to meet her, and his manner demanded her aid.

She told it to him, plaintively. Her eyes were appealing, infantile. Would it be too much to ask, would Mr. Rickard mind in the least, he met at perfectly frank and tell her if he would be in the way at all, but while this hot spell lasted, could they, the three of them, eat in the mess tent with the men?

"Surely!" Rickard met it heartily. She would find it rough, but if she could stand it, yes, he thought it a good idea.

And then there was nothing for her to do but go. Her retreat was graceful, without haste, dignified. She smiled a farewell at MacLean, who was watching the approach of Innes Hardin and Estrada. Rickard did not see the aborted entrance of Hardin's sister and the young Mexican. He was itching to be at his work.

He let out a growl when Mrs. Hardin was out of earshot.

"Shucks! What in Halifax do women come to a place like this for? There's Hardin—brings in two women to cook for him, and now, please may they all eat with the men?"

His secretary subdued a chuckle. He was visualizing a procession of boxes of choice Havanas—from Bodefeldt, Hamlin and the rest of the gang. He need not buy a smoke for a year.

Rickard threw himself back in his chair. "Take this letter, MacLean. To Marshall." Then his worry diverted him. "Who in thunder is selling liquor to my Indians?"

"Hold on; that letter can wait. You get the horses up, MacLean, and we'll ride down to Maldonado's. It's his place to stop this liquor business, not mine."

A few hours later they were approaching the adobe walls of Maldonado. They found the gate locked. A woman, whose beauty had faded into a tragic whiter, a ghastly twilight of suggestion, came to their knock, and unbarred the gate for the white strangers. Mystery hung over the inclosure like a pall.

Rickard told his errand. Maldonado sputtered and swore. By the mother of Mary the Virgin, that thing would be stopped. He showed to the seniors, with pride, his badge. He was a rube; he was there to uphold the law. He had caught some of those drunken Indians on the road. He had brought them here.

Maldonado showed three men in a locked shed, deep in drunken stupor. He thought the liquor was obtained somewhere back in the sandhills. He would find the place. But the senior must be patient; his hands were so full.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

### A White Woman and a Brown.

For a few weeks Mrs. Hardin found the mess tent diverting. Before the Delta had expanded the capacity of the camp her soft nook had been overtaxed, her hospitality strained. The men of the reclamation service, thrown into temporary inactivity, were eager to accept the opportunity created for another. Failing that other, her zeal had flagged. Events were moving quickly at the break; Rickard was absorbed. Mrs. Hardin told herself that it was the heat she wished to escape; not to her own ear did she whisper that she was following Rickard, nor that the percolator and chafing dish, her shelves and toy kitchen were a wasted effort. She kept on good terms with herself by ignoring self-confidence.

Rickard, the discovery unfolded slowly, took his meals irregularly. His breakfast was gulped down before the women appeared; his dinners where he found them.

"No wonder!" reflected Gerty Hardin. "Ling's cooking is so bad." Small wonder the manager foraged for his meals.

She worked out a mission as she lay across her bed that hot afternoon. Her duty became so clear that she could no longer lie still. Immediately she must retrieve her weeks of idleness; what must Rickard think of her? She buttoned herself thoughtfully into a frock of pale colored muslin, cream slipping toward canary. White was too glaring on a red-hot day like this. Pink was too hot, blue too definite. A parasol of pastel green, and she looked like a sprig of fragrant mignonette.

She found the open space of the trapezium swarming with strange dark faces. So silent their coming she had not heard the arrival of the tribes. She isolated the Cocopahs, stately as bronze statues, their long hair streaming, or wound mud-caked under the brilliant headcloths. Foregathered with them were men of other tribes: these must be the Yumas and Deguiños, the men needed on the river. These were the men who were to work on the rafts, weave the great mattresses. A squad of short-haired Pimas with their squaws and babies and their gaudy bundles, gaped at the fair-haired woman as she passed. The central space was filling up with Pimas and Maricopas, Papagoes, too; she knew them collectively by their short hair. These were brush cutters. This, then, meant the beginning of real activity. Tom would at last be satisfied. He would no longer sulk and rage alternately at the hold-up of the work.

Before she reached Rickard's ramada she saw that another woman was there. She caught an impassioned gesture. Her only surmise rested on Innes. Gerty saw that she was dark; she looked the half-breed. The brown woman drew back as the white woman entered. Gerty smiled an airy reassurance. She herself would wait. She did not want to be hurried. She told Rickard that she had plenty of time.

"There is something you want to tell me?" Rickard's patience was courteous but firm. He would hear her errand first. Gerty, remembering the imploring attitude of the stranger, determined that she would not be sent away.

"Will you excuse me, senora? It will be only a minute."

She was to tell her errand, and briefly! Gerty swept past the intruder.

"Sit down, Mrs. Hardin."

Resenting the infection, she said she would stand. Her voice was a little hard, her eyes were veiled, as she told her mission. Her usual fluency dragged; she felt a lack of sympathy. In short, she proposed a commissary department, herself in charge.

"I'd like to feel I was of some use," urged Gerty. "My heart is bound up in this undertaking; if I'm allowed to stay, I'd like to help along. This is the only way I can, the woman's way."

"Aren't you taking a good deal on yourself, Mrs. Hardin?"

Then she forgave his hesitation quite, as it was of her he was thinking. "Not if it helps." Her voice was low and soft, as if this were a secret between them.

"Why, of course, anything you want, Mrs. Hardin." And, remembering her former position, he added, "The camp's yours as much as mine."

A glad smile rewarded him. She went out, reluctantly. There was a new significance in MacLean's absence from the ramada. What could that woman have to say that MacLean must not hear? For the first time the weak tenure on her old lover came to her. Not a sign had he yet given of their understanding, of the piquant situation. Themselves old sweethearts, thrown together in this wilderness. What had she built her hopes on? A

word here, a translated phrase, or magnified glance. She would not harbor the new worry. Why, it would be all right. In the meantime she would show them all what a woman with executive ability could do.

"Sit down, senora," said Rickard to the brown woman, Maldonado's wife. "Don't be frightened. We won't let him hurt you." Rickard vulgarized his Castilian to the reach of her rude dialect. Familiar as was Rickard with the peons' speech in their own country, he could not keep up with her story. Lurid words ran past his ears. Out of the jumble of abuse, of shame and misery he caught a new note.

"You say Maldonado himself sells liquor to the Indians?"

"Ssh, senor!" Someone might hear him! She looked over a terrified shoulder. That had slipped out, the selling of the liquor. She could have told her story without that; she wanted to deny it. Relentlessly Rickard made her repeat it, acknowledging the truth.

"What makes you tell me now?" Rickard hunted for the ulcer. He knew there was a personal wrong. "What has Maldonado been doing to you? Has he left you?"

The veil of fear was torn from her eyes. The trembling woman was gone, a vengeful wildcat in her place. "Left me, Maldonado? Left his home, where he traps the Indian with one coin in his pockets? No, senor. He brought her to our home, there; Lupe, the wife of Felipe, the Deguino. I told him not to fool with Felipe; the Indian was dangerous; he had hot blood. Maldonado struck me—he kicked me—he said I was jealous—and hit me again.

"Maldonado told me to get a big meal. I told him that it was for Felipe. When I said I would not cook for that treacher he cursed me, he kicked me again." She threw off the reboso, dragging her dress loose. "Don't," frowned Rickard. He had seen a welt across her shoulder—a screaming line of pain.

She wound the reboso around the disheveled shoulder. "I cooked his dinner! There was a lot of liquor—

Felipe was drunk; the tequila made him mad, quite mad. He seemed to know something was wrong; he fought as Maldonado dragged him to the cell, the senior remembers the cell? The next day Maldonado sent for two rurales. They started the next day for Ensenada, taking Felipe; that day Maldonado brought Lupe home. I said she could not stay and he laughed in my face, senor. He put me outside the walls. I beat that



"You Will Help Me, Senor?"

gate until my fingers bled. I remembered the kind face of the senior, and then I came here. You will help me, senor?"

Rickard shook his head. "I shall have to look into this thing. If this is true it's prison for your husband. You won't have to fear Lupe."

"When he gets out he will kill me, senor."

The terror was seizing her again. Before she could begin her pleading he called to MacLean.

"Ask Ling to find a tent for Senora Maldonado. Tell him to give her a good meal."

He must trap the rogue. That infernal place must be closed. The woman had come in the nick of time. Those tribes were to be guarded as restless children.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

### Rickard Makes a New Enemy and a New Friend.

The coming of the Indians gave the impetus the work had lacked. Under Jenks of the railroad company a large force was put on the river; these, the weavers of the brush mattresses that were to line the river bed. On the banks were the brush cutters; tons of willows were to be cut to weave into the forty miles of woven wire cable waiting for the cross strands. Day by day the piles of willow branches grew higher, the brush cutters working ahead of the mattress workers in the stream. In the dense undergrowth the stolid Indians, Pimas and Maricopas and Papagoes, struggled with the fierce thorn of the mesquite and the overpowering smell of the arrow weed. As tough as the hickory handles they wielded, they fought a clearing through dense thickets in the intense tropic heat.

Down stream the Brobdignagian arm of the dredge fell into the mud of the by-pass, dropping its slimy burden on the far bank. Down the long stretch of levee the "skinners" drove their mules and scrapers; two pile drivers were setting in the treacherous stream the piles which were to anchor the steel-cabled mattresses to the river bed. It was a well-organized, active scene. Rickard, in his office, dictating letters and telegrams to MacLean, Jr., felt his first satisfaction. Things were beginning to show the result of months of planning. There were rushing in from north and south the quarry between Los Angeles and Tucson requisitioned for the work.

A shadow fell on the glass. Ling, in blue overalls and white butcher apron, waited for the "boss" to look up. He had worn the perspiration from his head hairless except for the long, tapered queue. "Well, Ling?"

"I go tamale." His voice was soft as silk. "I no stay."

It was a thunderclap. There was no one to replace Ling, who was drawing down the salary of a private secretary. Lose Ling? It would be more demoralizing to the camp than to lose an engineer.

"Money all lite. Bossée all lite. No likee woman. Woman she stay, Ling go."

"Mrs. Hardin!" Rickard woke up. "She all time makee trouble. She crazy. She think woman vellee fine cook. She show Ling cookee plunes. Teachee Ling cookee plunes! I no stay that woman." Unutterable finality in the leathern face. Rickard and MacLean, Jr., exchanged glances which deepened from concern into perplexity. They could not afford to lose Ling. And offend Mrs. Hardin, the camp already Hardnesque?

Rickard grew placating. He spent a half hour wheedling. They met at the starting place. "Ling go tamale."

"Oh, Lord," groaned the manager, capitulating. "All right, Ling."

With the dignity of an oriental prince, Ling pattered out of the tent. Rickard was puckering his lips at the secretary. "I'd rather take a walk in the sun."

(To Be Continued Tuesday)

### NOTICE TEACHERS' EXAMINATION.

The Regular Spring Teachers' Examination will be held in the County Court House at Abbeville, on Saturday, May 3rd, between the hours of 9 a. m., and 4 p. m. W. J. EVANS, Co. Supt. of Education.

### COLD SPRING NEWS.

Cold Springs, April 22.—Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Hagen spent Sunday at T. F. Uldrick's. Misses Lillian and Elliott Coleman spent Saturday with Miss Ruby McCord. Mr. Fred Uldrick spent Saturday night with R. S. Uldrick and family. Mr. Allen King has been spending a few days with home people. Miss Eunice Uldrick spent the week-end with home people. Miss Ola Winn spent Thursday night with her sister, Mrs. T. M.

## REAL ESTATE - I offer for immediate sale the following country and city property. These are good investments—Ask About Them

- 100 ACRE TRACT—Six and one-half miles from Abbeville in Sharon neighborhood; close to school and church. Three-room house and barn. Price per acre ----- \$25.00 **SOLD**
- 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 **SOLD**
- TWO STORY DWELLING—6-room, hall, electric lights and sewerage, 5 minutes walk from square. Bargain at ----- \$1,250.00
- 120 ACRES—Four miles South East of Abbeville, dwelling, tenant house, well, 500 cords wood, some saw timber. Cheap at ---\$17.50 per acre.
- 166 ACRES—6 miles from Abbeville. Good dwelling, barn tenant house, located in Lebanon section, close to school and church. Price per acre ----- \$30.00
- FOR QUICK SALE—120 Acre Tract of Land with 6 Room dwelling, barn, good pasture, enough to pasture 40 head of cattle. Rents for 5 bales cotton. Price \$60.00 Per Acre
- 5-ROOM DWELLING—On South Main Street, at Cotton Mill. Price, \$1,125.00.
- 5-ROOM COTTAGE—Right at High School, on Parker St. Lot 80x198. Price, \$1,600.00.

List Your Property With Me for Sale, Rent or Exchange.  
**Jno. F. Sutherland**  
Abbeville, - - - South Carolina.

Cochran. Mr. Frank Uldrick dined at W. B. Uldrick's Sunday. Messrs. Guy and Tom Osborn spent Sunday with Mr. Sanders, Abbeville. Mr. Joe Winn spent Saturday night with Mr. William Uldrick.