

THE RIVER.....



By EDNAH AIKEN

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was a battle of big numbers, a duel of great force where time was the umpire. Any minute hot weather might fall on those snowy peaks yonder, and the released waters, rushing down, would tear out the defenses as a wave breaks over a child's fort made of sand. This was a race, and all knew it. A regular train dispatch system was in force that the intruding cars might drop their burden of rock and gravel and be off after more. The Dragon was being fed rude meals, its appetite whetted by the glut of pouring rock.

Tod Marshall came down from Tucson in his car. The coming of the Palmyra and Claudia rippled the social waters at the front for days ahead. Gerty Hardin, too proud to tell her astonished family that she wanted to desert the mess tent, snoot herself from her injury, and "did up" all her lingerie gowns. Mrs. Marshall was not going to patronize her, ever if her husband had snubbed Tom. It was hot, ironing in her tent, the doors closed. Everything carried a sting those indoor hours. She was a flame with hot vanity. Twice, she had openly encouraged Rickard; twice, he had flouted her. That was his kind! Men who prefer Mexicans! She would never forgive him, never!

She followed devious channels to involve Tom's responsibility. There was a cabal against the wife of Hardin. Working like a servant! she called it necessity. Everything, every one punished her for that one act of folly. Life had caught her. She saw no way, as she ironed her mull ruffles, no way out of her cage. Her spirit beat wild wings against her bars. If she could see a way out! Nothing to do but to stay with Tom!

Maddening, too, that at the mess table, she caught Rickard's eyes turning toward, resting on, Innes Hardin. The girl herself did not seem to notice—artful, subterranean, such stalking! That was why she had come running back to the heading! That the reason of her anger when she had hinted of the Maldonado. She learned to hate Innes. Bitterly she hated Rickard.

"Tom," she said one day. He turned with a swift thrill of expectation, for her voice sounded kind; like the Gerty of old. "I have always heard that Mr. Marshall has terribly strict ideas. I think he ought to hear of that Mexican woman. It is demoralizing in a camp like this."

"I tell Marshall anything against his pet clerk?" The Hardin lip shot out. "He'd throw me out of the company."

The pretty scene was spoiled. To his dismay, she burst into a storm of tears, tears of self-pity. Her life lay in tatters at her feet, the pretty fabric rent, torn between the rude handling of those two men. She could not have reasoned out her injury, made it convincing, built out of dreams as it was, heartless, scheming dreams. Because she could not tell it, her sobbing was the more violent, her complaints incoherent. Tom gathered enough fragments to piece the old story. "Ashamed of him. He had dragged her down into his humiliation." His sweet moment had passed.

He spent a few futile moments trying to comfort her.

"Don't come near me." It burst from her; a cry of revulsion. He stared at her, the woman meeting his eyes in flushed defiance. The hatred which he saw, her bitterness, corroded his pride, scorched his self-love. Nothing would kill his love for her; he knew that in that blackest of moments. He would never forget that look of dread, of hate. He left her tent.

That night, the cot under the stars had no tenant. Hardin had it out with himself down the levee.

That valley might fulfill Estrada's vision and his labor; might yield the harvest of happy homes; but his was not there. He had been the sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Walk Home.

Claudia Marshall sat at the head of her stately table in the Palmyra, mute as a statue but for the burning eyes which followed her Tod. To Innes, her guest, it was a tragic presence, of brooding solicitude.

Late hours, excitement, might abridge the life she so passionately policed; but she would not demand the sacrifice of his cigar.

Marshall's cigar followed the coffee. Tony, the white-capped Italian cook of the Palmyra, was removing the cups. Innes was carrying her double inter-act, listening to Tod Marshall's broad sweep, getting a new viewpoint as he minimized the local scheme—feeling that silent presence at the head of the table.

Then something drove Claudia from her mind. What Mr. Marshall had said swept a disturbing calcium on Tom. What if, truly, the river fiasco could be traced to that overzealous hand? To Tom, this undertaking blotted out the rest of related big endeavor; but that was not the way her host was looking at it. He was too courteous to give her discomfort; he had not said it directly. But always it met her, rose up to smite her, wherever she was. Was it not egotism, personal pride, that was making her cover her eyes, like any simple ostrich? Her brother—assume him anybody else's brother! The dredge fiasco—the wild night at the levee—no isolated accidents those. Hardin's luck!

A flush of miserable shame came to her. How they had all been trying to spare her—Eduardo, these kindly Marshalls—MacLean! She was turning, impulsively, to ask Tod Marshall if he thought, could he think it probable that they would fall, when a step that sent the blood to her face took the car's stairs at two leaps. Now, indeed, the dinner was spoiled.

"That's Rickard. I forgot to tell you that I asked him to dinner. He couldn't get away. He said he'd run in for coffee. Hello, Rickard. Thought you'd forgotten us!"

She hadn't thought of that contingency! She found herself shaking hands with him. Could he not hear her mind, ticking away at the Maldonado episode?

Of course he would insist on seeing her to her tent. Punctilious, always. Well, she just wouldn't. Perhaps she could slip out some way. She would watch her chance.

"Can I talk shop for a while?" asked Rickard.

They withdrew to a casino to window seat. Innes had found her chance. She asked to be shown over the car. Innes confided her plan. She wanted



"Thought You'd Forgotten Us."

to slip out. "She would not interrupt their evening; Mr. Marshall had business to discuss—"

Mrs. Marshall would not hear of it. She said that Mr. Marshall would never forgive her if she let Miss Hardin go home alone. Her opposition was softly implacable.

Innes went back to the sitting room of the car angrily coerced. Rickard was still closeted, conversationally, with his superior.

At last, desperately, she rose to go. Of course, he must insist upon going with her. Of course!

"I was going back early, anyway. I'm to be up at dawn tomorrow."

The good-bys were said. She found herself walking rebelliously by his side. "No, thank you!" to the offer of his arm.

The night was bright with stars. "Bright as day, isn't it?" Because her voice was curt, and she had not used his name, the rising inflection helped a little! Hateful, to stumble over a rut in the road! Of course, he'd make her take his arm! Of course!

Rickard grasped her elbow. She walked along, her head high, her cheeks flaming, anger surging through her at his touch.

Stupid to press this companionship, this awkward silence on her. If he thought she was going to entertain him, as Gerty did, with her swift chatter, he'd be surprised! Any other two people would fall into easy give-and-take, but what could she, Innes Hardin, find to chatter about with this man stalking along, grimly grasping her arm? Close as they were, his touch reminding her every minute, between them walked her brother and her

brother's wife—and there was the Mexican—hateful memory! Of course she could not be casual. And she would not force it. He had brought this about. Let him talk, then!

Oppressive that silence. Then it came to her that she would ask him the question that his coming had aborted. A glance at his face found him smiling. He found it amusing? Not for worlds, then, would she speak. And they stalked along. Unconsciously she had pulled herself away from him. He took her hand and put it in the croch of his arm. "That's better," he said. She wondered if he were still smiling.

Their path led by his tent. Neither of them noticed a subdued light through the canvas walls. As they reached the place a figure darted from the door.

"Oh, señor, I thought you would never come." It was the wife of Maldonado. Her expression was lost on Innes. The face was quivering with terror.

"Mr. Rickard," Innes' words like icicles, "I will leave you here. It is quite unnecessary to come farther." Quite unvelled her meaning!

It came so quickly that he was not ready; nor indeed had Gerty's innuendoes yet reached him. But the situation was uncomfortable. He turned sharply to the Mexican.

"Come in," he took her roughly by the arm. She would wake up the camp with her crying. He put her in a chair. "Now tell your story." The woman had got to be a nuisance. He couldn't have her coming around like this. He had seen that look in the girl's eyes—"Murdered? Who did you say was murdered?"

She lifted a face, frightened into haggardness. "Maldonado and the girl."

The night was stripped to the tragedy. "You found them?"

Her face was lifted imploringly to him. "Oh, señor, it was not I. By the Mother of Christ, it was not I."

Rickard was not sure. Her fear made him suspect her. "Who was it, you think?"

"Felipe," she gasped. "He got away from the rurales—he came back. He went home—there was no one there. Some one told him where she had gone. He came to Maldonado's. Lucrezia, the eldest, opened the gate. He was terrible, she said. He rushed past her. And when he came out his hands were red. The children heard cries. They were afraid to go in. I got there last night. I went in. They were not quite cold—I was afraid to stay. It would look like me, señor. Will they take me, señor?" She was a wreck of terror.

"Not if what you tell me is true. Now, get to bed. I'll give you something that will make you sleep." He hustled her out and prepared the draught.

He wondered as he got into bed as to the truth of her story. Disgusting, such animal terror! Awkward hole, that. Fate seemed possessed to queer him with those Hardins!

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 señor 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 palpating 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 infection 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!

(To be Continued Tuesday)

UP-TO-DATE CAFE.

The Columbia Candy Kitchen has leased the storeroom formerly occupied by the Longshore Auto Company and will put in an up-to-date cafe. The present front will be torn out and a new front with six folding doors will be placed.

The new concern promises a cafe modern in every respect, sanitary and equipper to serve the public in an efficient manner.

BACK AT HOME.

The announcement that Maj. J. C. Hemphill is to resume editorial work in his native State as editor of the Spartanburg Journal will be received with great pleasure by South Carolinians generally and particularly by his fellow editors in the State.

Maj. Hemphill is an editor of rare good taste and judgment, of high ability as a writer and he will make the editorial page of the Journal one of the most readable in the country.

The Journal is to be congratulated on securing his services.—Greenwood Index-Journal.

Greer, April 29.—Triplets, all girls, were born in Gree Saturday afternoon to Mr. and Mrs. H. D. Reddick. The babies lived only a short while and were buried on Sunday morning in Mountain View Cemetery in the same casket.

Engraved Cards and Invitations—The Press and Banner Co.

BLOWOUTS

do not ruin tires if properly repaired.

Let us examine and advise you before throwing away your casings.

Tube repairing, 25c, up; Casings, 50c. up.

MARTIN and PENNAL.

At City Garage.

PREDOMINANT SPECTACLE

OPERA HOUSE

TWO DAYS ONLY

FRIDAY and SAT. MAY 9-10

Afternoon at 3 P. M.
Prices, 75c. - - \$1.00.

PLUS
WAR
TAX

Nights at 8:30 P. M.
Prices, 50c \$1.00, \$1.50

Children Under 12 years, 50c. Plus War Tax.

D.W. GRIFFITH'S

HEARTS

OF THE

WORLD

Eighteen months in the making in France securing the historical material that makes up the latter part of the play. David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of England, and other British and French officials co-operated with Mr. Griffith in securing the many important scenes, with the result that the producer has been able to show, in complete detail, all the interesting events of the recent struggle in France. Aside from this feature there is a love story of great tenderness and charm, and a wealth of comedy.

Company's Own Symphony Orchestra of
Twenty Pieces