

The River

When the Colorado
Burst Its Banks and
Flooded the Imperial
Valley of California

By
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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. Arizona. "Casey" is an enigma to the service force; he wears "dude" clothes, but he has resigned a chair of engineering in the East to go on the road as a foreman 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 Hardin of the Desert Reclamation Company. This Hardin had been a student under Rickard and had married Gerty Holmes, with whom Rickard had fancied he was in love.

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

CHAPTER III-Rickard journeys to Mexicali, 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, Rickard, 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 VI-Rickard attends a meeting of the directors and asserts his authority. Hardin rages. Estrada tells Rickard of his foreboding that his work will fail. "I can't see it finished."

CHAPTER VII-Innes is discovered in her garden. She tries to cheer up Hardin, who is furious against Rickard.

CHAPTER VIII-A family luncheon of the Hardins which throws light on them.

CHAPTER IX-Hardin discovers that Rickard is planning a levee to protect Mexicali and puts him down as incompetent. Gerty thinks her lord jealous.

CHAPTER X-The Hardin dinner to Rickard discloses further the family characteristics. Hardin is suave and kindly, but is hardly popular. Gerty plans a "progressive ride" in Rickard's honor.

CHAPTER XI-Rickard encounters the subordination of the company's engineers. Hardin, stirred by the Indians' statement that this is the most natural way to a cycle when the Great Yellow Dragon, the Colorado, grows restless. He makes various preparations, pushes work on the Mexicali levee and is ordered by Coronel to "take a fighting chance" on the completion of Hardin's pet project, a gate to shut the break in the river.

CHAPTER XII-San Francisco is destroyed by earthquake and fire, and dredge machinery, which Rickard had ordered Hardin to have shipped, is burned through Hardin's neglect. Rickard secretly equips the big water tower as a signal station.

CHAPTER XIII-Gerty Hardin decides that Rickard still loves her and plans a campaign that promises trouble.

CHAPTER XIV-The progressive ride is begun under adverse condition—wind and rain, with the gate of honor absent from MacLean, Rickard's secretary, brings word that the river is raging and every man is wanted on the levee.

CHAPTER XV-Hardin motors off with a load of dynamite, leaving everything in suspense on the levee. Innes, through a friendly engineer, issues orders to her brother. "We have her written down, the levee and the signal tower, we'll blow Coronel till Rickard's return."

CHAPTER XVI-Gerty Hardin begins to get really interested in Rickard. The wind shows a gale and the levee is in danger again.

CHAPTER XVII-Women as well as men work on the levee the second night. Innes finds Rickard and Gerty together and begins to suspect her sister-in-law. Her brother's wrongheadedness and Rickard's evident efficiency only serve to embitter Innes against Rickard.

CHAPTER XVIII-The river washes away half of Mexicali, Calexico's Mexican twin city, but Calexico still stands.

CHAPTER XIX-A stormy public meeting is held in which representatives of the settlers, the Overland Pacific and Mexico speak. A telegram from Rickard that the river has broken out again saves a big row and forces united action by all.

CHAPTER XX-The scene shifts from Calexico to the construction camp at the break in the river bank where Rickard's forces are constructing Hardin's gate. Innes comes from Los Angeles to stay with the Hardins. Rickard's revelation.

CHAPTER XXI-Estrada gives Innes a new viewpoint of her brother and Rickard. Gerty arranges for her family to eat in the mess tent and the two Hardins understand why.

CHAPTER XXII-Rickard visits the home of Maldonado, a house of mystery.

CHAPTER XXIII-Gerty Hardin gets permission from Rickard to direct Ling, the Chinese mess cook. Senora Maldonado betrays her husband through jealousy.

CHAPTER XXIV-Ling says, "Woman the stay, Ling go." Rickard sides with Ling and makes a bitter enemy of Gerty Hardin. Hardin finds Senora Maldonado in Rickard's tent.

CHAPTER XXV-Gerty hints to Innes of disgraceful relations between Rickard and the Mexican woman. Innes is much disturbed, but thinks it is entirely because she hates scandal.

CHAPTER XXVI-A time of great activity and anxiety—will Hardin's gate stand? Gerty tries to get her husband to report the "scandal" to Marshall. He refuses and discovers he has lost his wife's love.

CHAPTER XXVII-Rickard escorts Innes home from Marshall's private car; they find the Mexican woman in his tent. Innes goes on alone, furious with Rickard. The Maldonado woman has come to tell Rickard of her husband's murder.

CHAPTER XXVIII-Innes is frightened by the Maldonado murderer and runs to Rickard. A great light burns upon them both. Gerty Hardin watches them.

CHAPTER XXIX-Godfrey, the world famous tenor, comes to visit the camp.

He and Gerty Hardin are mutually attracted. Gerty begins to see "a way out."

CHAPTER XXX-The Hardin gate goes out.

CHAPTER XXXI-Spectacular strike of the Indian tribes on the work.

CHAPTER XXXII-Godfrey sings in the moonlight with varying effect on various people.

CHAPTER XXXIII-The final battle with the Colorado. Why Estrada couldn't see the finish.

CHAPTER XXXIV-Godfrey and Gerty Hardin slope.

CHAPTER XXXV-Casey and Innes.

up the bank toward the camp, Molly following.

The river was humping out yonder; the rolling mass came roaring, flanking, against the dam.

"Quick, for God's sake, quick!" yelled Rickard. His signals sounded short and sharp. "Dump it on, throw the cars in!" Marshall was dancing, his mouth full of oaths, on the bank edge. Breathlessly all watched the rushing water fling itself over the dam. For several hushed seconds the structure could not be seen. When the foam fell a cheer went up. The dam was standing. Silent, it was supposed, was bringing in his train.

Above the distant jagged line of mountains rose a red ball. A new day began. And again the Dragon rose; a mountain of water came rolling onward.

Three trains ran steaming on the rails.

"Don't stop now to blast the big ones. Pour 'em on!" ordered Rickard.

There was a long wait before any rock fell. Marshall and Rickard waited for the pour. The whistles blew again. Then they saw what was wrong. The morning light showed a rock weighing several tons which was resisting the efforts of the pressing crew. Out of the gloom sprang other figures with crowbars. The rock tottered, fell. The river tossed it as though it were a tennis ball, sent it hurtling down the lower face of the dam.

Things began to go wild. The men were growing reckless. They were sagging toward exhaustion; mistakes were made. Another rock, as heavy as the last, was worked toward the edge. Men were thick about it with crowbars. They hurried. One concerted effort, drawing back as the rock toppled over the edge. One man was too slow, or too tired. He slipped. The watchers on the bank saw a flash of waving arms, heard a cry; they had a glimpse of a blackened face as the foam caught it. The waters closed over him.

There was a hush of horror; a halt.

"God himself couldn't save that poor devil," cried Marshall. "Have the work go on!"

Pour rocks on that wretched down there? Pin him down? Never had it seemed more like war! "A man down? Ride over him to victory!" Soberly Rickard signaled for the work to go on.

The rock-pour stuttered as if in horror. The women turned sick with fear. No one knew who it was. Some poor Mexican, probably.

"Who was it?" demanded Rickard, running down to the track.

"The young Mexican, Estrada. He tried to 'elp. 'E wasn't fit."

"Who was it?" Marshall had run down to see why the work paused.

Rickard turned shocked eyes on his chief. "Estrada!" The beautiful mournful eyes of Eduardo were on him, not Marshall's, horrified. Now he knew why Estrada had said, "I can't see it finished."

"Rickard!" The engineer did not recognize the quenched voice. "The work has got to go on."

It came to Rickard as he gave the orders that Eduardo was closer to Marshall than to him. "As near a son as he'll ever have." He turned a minute later to see his chief standing bare-headed. His own cap came off.

"We're burying the lad," said Marshall.

The minute of funeral had to be pushed aside. The river would not wait. Train after train was rushed on to the trestles; wave after wave hit them. But perceptibly the dam was steady. The rapid fire of rock was telling.

Another ridge of yellow waters rose.

The roll of water came slowly, dwindling as it came; it broke against the trestle weakly. For the first time the trestle never shuddered. Workers and watchers breathed as a unit the first deep breath that night. There was a change. Every eye was on the river where it touched the rim of the dam. Suddenly a chorused cry rose. The river had stopped rising. The whistles screamed themselves hoarse.

And then a girl, sitting on the bank, saw two men grab each other by the hand. She was too far away to hear their voices, but the sun, rising red through the banks of smoke, fell on the blackened faces of her brother and Rickard. She did not care who saw her crying.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A Desertion.

When the afternoon waned and Godfrey did not call on her Gerty was roused to uneasiness. Had she angered him by refusing to make the definite promise? Could it be love, the sort of love she wanted, if he could stay away like this when they could have the camp to themselves, every one down at the break, no Hardins running in every minute? Their first chance and Godfrey slighting it!

He would surely come that evening, knowing that she would be alone! The little watch Tom had given her for an almost forgotten birthday set the pace for her resentment. Nine, ten, eleven! How dared he treat her so? She blew out the lamps when she found that she was shaking with anger and undressed in the dark. She could not see him, if he came now, her self-control all gone! But she could not go to bed. She stood in her darkened tent, shaken by her angry passions.

"God, man, you can't go like that!" cried Estrada.

"Who's going?" demanded Silvert, his tongue thick with thirst and exhaustion.

"I will!" The train moved out on the trestle, as the whistle blew angrily twice. Only Molly and Silvert saw Estrada go. Silvert staggered unseeingly

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

falling away. He could see now the step ahead that had been taken; the last trestle was done; the rock-pouring well on; he thought that going some!

He felt pleasantly languid, but not yet sleepy. His thoughts 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 awoke 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 orchestra 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 reproof he had teased her with that afternoon in the ramada.

He gave for encore a balled 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.

Silvery 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.

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

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

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

off.

He Found Wooster at the River Bank.

billions pile. Two new trestles were

to supplement the one which had been

burned out of line by the weight of set-

ting drift. Marshall's plan was being

followed, though jeered at by reclama-

tion 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

blown," the beady eyes sparkled at

Hardin. "Now he's cut his own

thrust."

"By the eternal!" swore Hardin.

MacLean, left the two engineers match-

ing oaths.

There was an ominous quiet the next

day. Not an Indian offered to work at