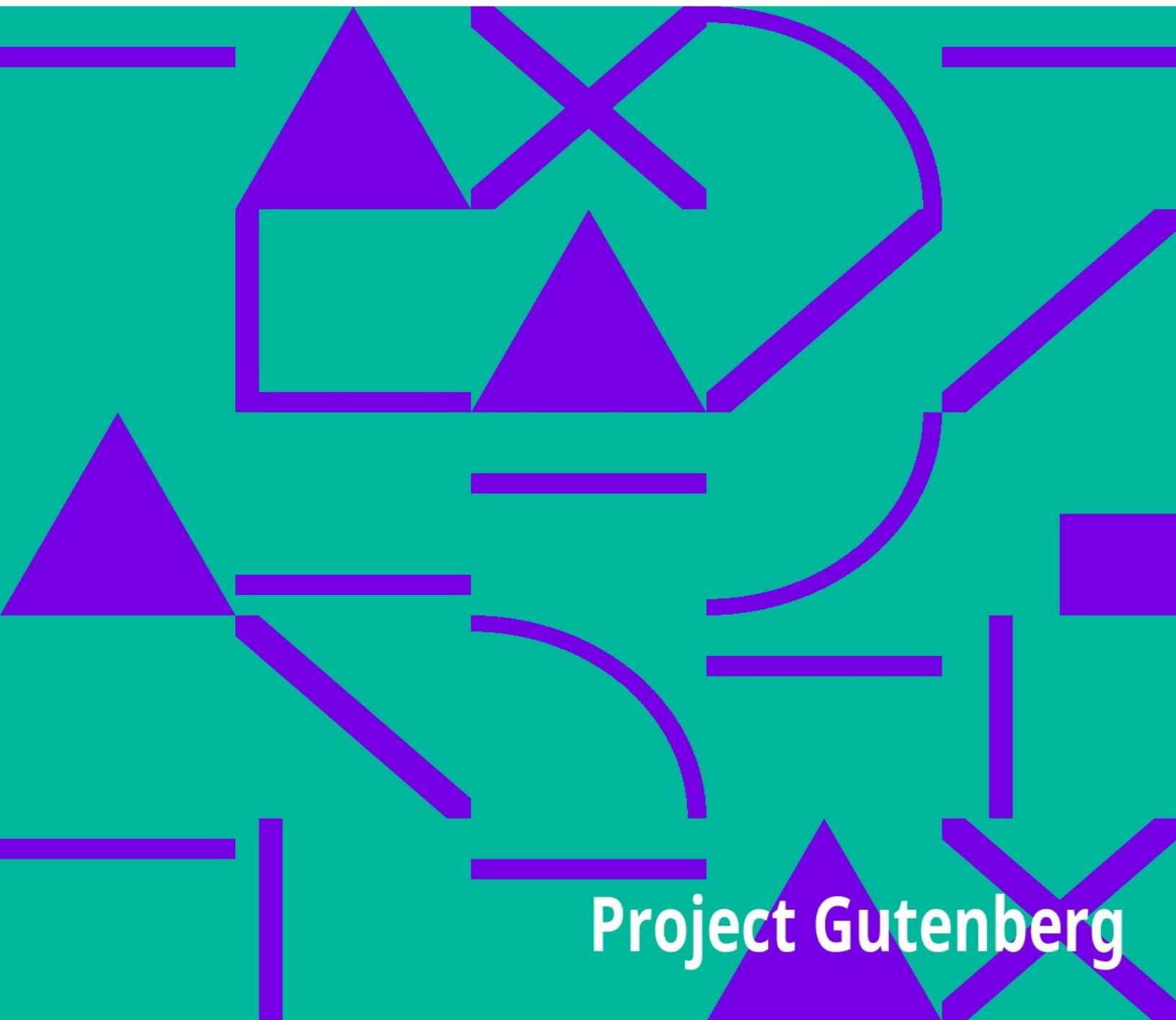


David Lannarck, Midget

An Adventure Story

George S. Harney

An abstract geometric pattern composed of various shapes including triangles, rectangles, circles, and lines, all rendered in a teal color against a white background. The shapes are scattered across the lower half of the image, creating a complex, non-representational design.

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Obvious typographical errors have been corrected in this text.

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David Lannarck, Midget

An Adventure Story

by GEORGE S. HARNEY

David was small, but Oh my!

Circus life was exciting enough, but young David Lannarck was tired of being stared at and bullied because of his small size. So when a tall Westerner saved his life in Cheyenne, and David and he became friends, why, the circus midget decided to make his home in the wide open space.

With big, rangy Sam Welborn, David started out to become a rancher and live out his days in peace and quiet. But excitement seemed to follow the circus midget wherever he went. The big man and the little one ran into gunman, thieves and rustlers, and where big Sam's strength was not enough,

David's wit had to get them out alive.

Circus life and Western adventure are a highly unusual as well as a delightful combination, but the author George S. Harney has a first-hand authentic knowledge of both. As a young man in Indiana, he was a personal friend of Lew Graham, the circus announcer for the Big Show, Barnam & Bailey's Circus. Lew Graham, handsomely dressed, told the big audience what came next on the program. During the long winter lay-ups, they would swap yarns in the unique circus lingo, which Harney has recorded in *David Lannarck, Midget*.

Later, Mr. Harney served in the Spanish-American War. After the war, "Cap" Harney became active in the development of southern Idaho, and although he sold his holdings there 1945, he confesses that he is still "haunted by the wild isolation of that district west of Cheyenne."

Mr. Harney is a native Hoosier, a resident of Crawfordsville, Indiana.

David Lannarck, Midget

AN ADVENTURE STORY

by GEORGE S. HARNEY

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*It is very true, that the small
things in
life are sometimes the most
important.*

—CHURCHILL

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PART ONE



1ToC

In all her days of presenting the spectacular, Cheyenne had never witnessed a more even contest than was now being staged this day in the early autumn of 1932, at the circus grounds in the city's suburbs. It was a race between a midget and a lout.

The little man ducked under the garish banners portraying the wonders of the Kid Show, raced the interval to the "big top" of the Great International, then back again, closely followed by a lanky oaf whose longer strides evened the contest.

"I'll cut yer ears off," the pursuer snarled, as the midget swung around the pole supporting the snake banner, thus gaining a distance on his enemy. "En I'll cut yer heart out," the big one yelled as he stumbled and almost fell.

As evidence that he would make good his terrifying threat, the lout flourished a clasp-knife in his right hand; with his left, he made futile grabs at the midget's coat tail.

The crowd that watched this contest was not of the circus. It was a gathering of those who came to the lot at an early hour to watch the Circus City set up shop for the one-day stand in this western metropolis. Some of the onlookers were railroad men, off duty; some were cow hands from nearby ranches; a few Indians from the reservation beyond the willow-fringed Lodgepole Creek, lent their stoical presence, while several soldiers from the newly christened Fort Warren with or without official sanction, were on hand to witness the setup.

It was the accepted judgment of those present that the midget and the lout were staging a ballyhoo—a "come-on"—preliminary to the opening of the Kid Show. There was no applause as the little man outwitted his follower by an adroit dodge under the ticket wagon. No one tripped the lout as the race led through the assembled crowd. If the contest was a part of the day's program, no spectator seemed willing to play "stooge" in this preliminary performance.

Some distance to the north where the two great tents of the main show came together, a group of workmen were operating a stake driver. In this gang the midget knew he would find understanding friends. If he could gain sufficient distance to undertake this straightaway, he would find help. He dived between a spectator's legs, turned to the right, and ran for this haven of hope.

Two things interrupted his plans. A ramshackle auto moved across his path. To avoid collision, the midget veered his course to step in a hole and fall sprawling at the feet of the man clambering out of the machine. His pursuer was on him in an instant. "I tole ye I would cut yer heart out," he panted as he brandished the knife. But before he could execute the threat, the knife was struck from his uplifted hand.

The lout screamed with pain as he grabbed his wrist. "Yu've broke my arm," he shouted as he danced around the big man. "Why don't ye pick on one of yer size?" The stranger took in the situation at a glance. The slanting forehead and the evil though childish face revealed a moron with whom words of reason would have little effect. He said nothing.

It was the midget who took charge. He scrambled to his feet, took a few deep breaths, brushed the dust off his coat, and ordered the moron back to the side show. "Go back to your mother," he commanded. "Go right back to Mamie and tell her what you've been doing, and tell her all of it. Don't look for your knife; I'll get that for you when you get over your tantrum."

The midget watched the retreating figure. "His mother is a fine woman," he explained to the stranger. "Has charge of costumes and assists in makeup. That dunce is with her on a few days vacation from a school for the feeble-minded.

"And now, Mister, I want to thank you for your timely help. You probably saved my life, for you can't tell what a half-wit will do, when in a tantrum and armed with a knife. All my life I've had the enmity of half-wits. The big ones tease 'em and they take it out on the little fellow.

"Well, that's that, as dear Marie Dressler says. I certainly am indebted to you, Mister. What's your name, Mister? I surely ought to know the name of the man

that probably saved my life."

"My name is Welborn, Sam Welborn. I live quite a distance back in the hills."

"And my name is David Lannarck, and I've got a score of other names besides, to include Shorty, Prince, Runt, Half-Pint, and others. I'm with the Kid Show. I was getting my stuff in shape for the opening when Alfred decided to work on me with that knife. And he about got it done, because there were none of the show people around to take him off me. The spectators thought it was some sort of a pre-exhibition.

"And now, Mr. Welborn, let's go down to the cook tent and get a cup of coffee, and then you can look around the lot until the shows open. I want you to be my guest for the day. I feel that I can never repay you for what you have done. If you ever want any help or aid that a little fellow like me can give, call on me; there are a few things that I can do."

"Well I do need some help, right now," said Welborn. "I want to dispose of a couple of bears."

"Bears? What kind of bears?"

"Two black bear cubs, fat and fine and just ready to be trained. I caught them up in the hills, and find that I have about as much use for them as I would have for a yacht, or a case of smallpox. I've tried turning them loose, but they won't go. Knowing that the show was to be here today, I brought them down in the trailer, hoping some one wanted two healthy cubs to fit into an act or exhibition."

"Bears, bears," mused the midget. "Truth is, Mr. Welborn, I'm not posted on the bear market. Offhand, I would say that they were not worth much to a show that was losing money by the bale. You see, this good old year of '32 is a bust. A depression hits a circus first and hardest. Just now, we are cutting the season and have planned a straightaway back to winter quarters. Instead of going down through Fort Collins, Greeley, Denver, Pueblo, with a swing through Texas, we have canceled everything. We play this Union Pacific right through to Omaha and thence back home by direct rails. So a pair of bear cubs wouldn't be much of an asset right now."

"Anyhow, let's look 'em over while I think up a plan." The midget recovered Alfred's knife from the dust and walked over to the trailer that he noted had a wooden coop of slats aboard. He climbed up on the wheel where he could see two black, wooly objects, scarcely a foot high, and nearly that size in length and breadth.

"They do look fat and in good fur," he commented, "and from the way they are working on the slat on yon side, you won't have them long. They would be out of the pen in another half-hour."

"That's the point to the whole matter. You just can't keep 'em penned in, and you can't keep 'em barred out. They have reached the pest stage and are incorrigible. Now I didn't expect to get much out of them anyhow," continued Welborn. "If I could find a home for them, where they would earn their keep, I would be willing to give them to such a party. Oh, I know it sounds sort of mushy," he hastened to explain as he noted the questioning look on David's countenance, "but I killed their mother for raiding our truckpatch and hogpen and I found these little fellows up near the den, starving and unable to fend for themselves. I took them home, fed them milk and bread and sugar and brought them up to where they are. But they have reached the stage where something must be done. As you see, they are hard to pen up and it's worse to turn them loose. Life to them is one continuous round of wrestling, scrapping, knocking over anything that's loose, and tearing up anything in reach. Whipping them does no good. They cry and beg until you are sorry and then it's to do all over again. I just couldn't kill them; it would be like killing a pet dog. So I just thought that if I could find someone to take them and care for them, it would be good riddance and give me time to go back to my work."

"Well, that solves the problem," said the midget, gleefully. "I've got your party. He's old Fisheye Gleason right here with the show. We can deal with that old buzzard as freely and as profitably as if we were in a cutthroat pawnshop. Hey, you fellows," he called to some passing laborers, "have any of you seen old Fisheye in the last hour?"

"Fisheye is linin' up the wagons in the menag," said one of the men.

"Er he may be up at the marquee tellin' the boss where to route the show," said another. "Maybe he's got Beatty cornered, tellin' him a new plan fer workin' the cats this afternoon," leered another. The leader pointed to the far end of the big animal tent.

"I've got him located," said David. "Now you fix that slat so the bears won't leave for the next hour and we'll work on Fisheye. He has been with this plant ever since Uncle Ben took it out as a wagon show. Hear him tell it, he set Barnum up in business and loaned the Ringling boys their first money. Fisheye is a romancer, unhampered by facts. But he's a wise old man at that.

"Fisheye Gleason still has his first dollar. He wears the same corduroy pants

that Uncle Ben gave him on his twenty-first birthday. If we had the time he would tell us his personal experiences with every celebrity in the circus world. We haven't the time, and we've got to work fast and cautious.

"Now Fisheye would balk and walk away on us if we offered him these bears for nothing; he just wouldn't understand it. He dickers in animals a little; trains 'em and has 'em doing things right away. He likes 'em and they like old Fisheye. Why, he can take these little bears and have 'em turning somersaults, dancing, and climbing to their perches in no time. Then he sells 'em into some big act.

"Fisheye is our meat for this play, but don't sell out too quick."

Leaving the cubs to the further destruction of their cage, the prospective salesmen wended their way through a maze of sidewalls, poles, unplaced wagons, cages. On past the refreshment booth that was setting up in the central area; past a score of elephants, swaying in contentment over the morning hay; past camels, llamas, zebras, and other luminaries, to the far end of the big tent where a group of laborers were aiding two elephants to line up the last of the cages and vans in a proper circle around the enclosure.

It was all confusing enough to the big Westerner, but the little man knew where to go. He pressed forward to where a little, old, dried up "razorback" was regaling two of the workmen with words of experience if not wisdom.

"En I told Shako," he declared with emphasis, "that he never could win back old Mom's confidence, till he got a big armload of sugarcane en doled hit out to her. En shore enough when we got to Little Rock and Shako got holt of some sugarcane, he win that old elephant's respect instanter. En that ain't all! When we got to Memphis en hit into that big storm, why ole Mom—" But the audience died away to one man as the midget's voice interrupted.

"Say, Fisheye, I want you to meet a friend of mine, Mr. Welborn. Meet Mr. Welborn, Mr. Gleason. Mr. Welborn here dickers a little in native animals and has a couple of the slickest, fattest, neatest bear cubs I've seen in years. He's got too much business to give any time to training them and I told him of your success with animals and he wants to make a deal with you."

"What kind of a deal? And where's yer bars?" Fisheye was alert to the business up to knowing the full import of the deal.

"They are out here in a coop—on a trailer. He brought them down out of the mountains this morning."

"Did ye ketch 'em this mornin'?" queried Fisheye as he followed the two

salesmen to the truck.

"Naw, he's had 'em in training for two months. Best of all, he knows how to take care of their hair, how to feed 'em. Look, there they are, alike as two peas and ready to climb a pole or turn a somersault."

Fisheye was peering through the slats. "I wish we had 'em out whar I could see 'em better. Now what's yer deal, Prince? Ye said somethin' about a deal?"

"Well, it's like this, Fisheye. Mr. Welborn could go right on training these bruins and peddle them through an ad in *Billboard* for a sure two hundred smackers, surely by Thanksgiving—"

"Two hundred nothin's," retorted the wary Fisheye, who was not to let a fancy price go by without protest. "Thar's no bar in the world wuth a hundred dollars. Why up in the Yallerstone, they offer to give 'em away!"

"Sure they do, or did last year. They are the old mangy bears that bother tourists, Jesse James bears, that they want to get rid of. But they wouldn't sell you a cub for love or money. Bears are scarce this year. They hint of a bear famine up there.

"And anyhow, you didn't let me finish. Why if you owned these bears and had 'em climbing an injun ladder right up to their perch in the animal act, had 'em dancing, turning somersaults, you would ask a half grand for them and never bat an eye. They would be worth it, and you know it. But rather than go through the work of getting them ready, Mr. Welborn is willing to take an even hundred for the two. Better still, he'll let you make a note for the hundred due in ninety days—or say Christmas. By that time you've got the bears sold and your note paid, and jingling the difference."

Fisheye was squinting through the slats. "I wish we had 'em out whar a man could see what he's buying."

"Haven't you got an empty cage where we could turn them out in the daylight?" asked the sales manager.

"Shore I have. I jist got pie Rip's cage all cleaned out an ready fer what come."

"Well, get it open. Cut loose the trailer, Mr. Welborn, and we will back it in by hand. Here, Happy, you and Joe help push this trailer in to where Fisheye shows you. These cubs need initiating anyhow."

The trailer was unhooked and carefully backed in through a passage laid out by the versatile Fisheye. A door was opened in one of the unplaced cages and the

little bears pushed out into a new world. They scrambled to a far corner, faced about, and waited for the next move.

"There they are," cried the midget enthusiastically, "black as midnight, fat as butterballs and ready for work." To be sure, the little salesman could not see up to the level of the cage floor, but his sales talk never ceased. "How much am I offered, men," he called out in a voice simulating an auctioneer. "How much for the two?"

"Now you jist cut out yer comedy until I can squint 'em over," said Fisheye impatiently. "Kin ye move 'em around a little, Mister?"

Welborn reached his hand through the bars and clucked to the little scared bruins. Hesitatingly they crept up to the extended hand and then sat up. They were surely butterballs as the midget proclaimed.

"You can't tell which is Amos and which is Andy. Can you, Fisheye?" challenged the salesman.

"Naw! I don't know 'em by name but that un is the oldest. In twins or even litters thar's one that's oldest. That un is the oldest, he starts to doin things fust. Now you jist tell me all over again, what's yer proposition about me owning these little b'ars?"

"Well, it is as I said. Mr. Welborn here will take your note for an even hundred for both bears. The note will be due Christmas. We can go right over to the ticket wagon and have Lew draw the note, payable at the Wabash Valley Trust Company for an even hundred, and the cubs are yours. And here's another thing," David motioned Fisheye over to another wagon and out of Mr. Welborn's hearing. "Here's the rest of the plan. I am going to offer this man Welborn ninety dollars for your note. He won't be bothered by having to send it to the bank, and he'll take my offer. There's where I come in; I make a ten spot without any investment."

"How come?" squawked the amazed Fisheye. "Ye don't own no bars, ye ain't out no cash, en ye draw a sawbuck. Now jist why can't this mountain man take ninety dollars in folding money offen me and cut out all this bankin' stuff. I don't want any note at the Wabash Valley nohow. They'd jist harass me into payin' it. Jist cut all that out and let him take the foldin' money."

"Well, maybe he will," sighed the super salesman. "But I thought as cheap as they were, I ought to have a ten spot out of it. But I resign in your favor. It's all among us folks anyhow. Just you go over and spot him the ninety and see if you

win."

Fisheye went back of a neighboring cage to search himself for the needed cash. The salesman turned to Welborn who in the whole deal had said never a word. "It worked out all right," chuckled the midget. "Fisheye is saying spells over his bankroll and is kissing some of the tens and twenties a fond and reluctant farewell. He will offer you ninety dollars and you take it. It's better than I'd hoped. You see, Fisheye has his money sewed to him and it makes it hard to acquire. Some of it will be plastered together, for Fisheye hasn't taken a bath since part of the Barnum-Jenny Lind Special went off the bridge at Wheeling. The little bears will always know their Fisheye, day or night."

At this juncture Fisheye returned and counted down the cash. Two of the twenties and one ten, were printed in the early twenties.

"And now, Mister Welborn, we will have that cup of coffee and I must go to work. I want you to see the Kid Show and the Big Show as my guest. I'll have the boys park your machine and trailer right back of our show where it will be safe until you want it. After the main performance we will have dinner, say about four o'clock and we will call it a day."

"I think you should have this money," said Welborn as they drank their coffee. He handed Fisheye's keepsakes to David. "I did not expect anything and I am satisfied that the bears are in good hands."

"Not a cent," said David, waving the money aside. "I still owe you more than I can ever repay. Besides all this, we've done Fisheye a good turn. He'll have those cubs doing things before snow flies."

"He has always wanted a Happy Family Act, and now he's got a start. From time to time he will add native animals like foxes, raccoons, badgers, and maybe a porky or two and label them 'Native Americans' and sell them to someone, cage and all, before next season."

"Fisheye is versatile. Every winter he has a bunch of misfit dogs, and out of the outfit he'll get some smart ones that will train well. He is good, too, on a dog and pony act. Once a zebra got its leg broke in swinging one of the big poles in place. It looked like there was nothing to do but shoot it. But Fisheye salvaged the cripple; he taught it to get up and down with the leg in splints; cured him, except for a slight limp, and finally sold the beast as the only zebra that was ever broken to harness. Fisheye is a grand old liar but he's a fine animal man."

2ToC

Circuses—the big ones, with menageries—have a tradition: "the show must go on." Storms, fires, rail disasters, major accidents—even death—shall not deter. The show *must* go on. The Great International had lived fully up to this tradition. In all of its growing years, it had met and overcome any and all obstacles that might hinder its progress and promises. In the years past, a versatile routing agent could and did avoid many minor financial losses by routing the show to other fields. If a mine strike prevailed in one section, that district was missed by careful routings; if the boll weevil prevailed, the cotton belt was a closed field; if wheat failed in the Northwest, or mills were closed in Gary, the bookings were deflected to other marts.

But the year 1932 was different; fertile fields there were not. It was not a case of dodging; it was a plain case of trying to hit. And there was no place.

The Great International was making a brave effort to stem the tide of depression. Its great spread of canvas billowed over many new and novel attractions. It boasted of the largest herd of tame elephants in all the world. Its aerial acts were new to the circus lovers of America. Its grand opening was a riot of splendid colorings and beauty, never surpassed in all pageantry. Yet old Depression was winning at every stand. Historic Cheyenne, with its years of background in gathering humanity to its playdays, was little better than the rest. Business prudence dictated the routings from here on, and the route led to winter quarters. It was as David Lannarck said: "We play the U.P. to Omaha and then home."

Sam Welborn, the man from the mountains, enjoyed the Kid Show, immensely. The trained cockatoos, the big snakes, the many freak people, the brief but snappy minstrel show, were some of the varied features. But best of all, Welborn watched the antics of his little friend of the morning adventure. He came on the little stage, first as a swaggering general, then as an admiral, last as

a real doughboy of the United States Army. Dancing, bowing, and waving the flag, he won generous applause. Later, he came on as Cupid with bow and arrow, and made some fine shots into a target representing a heart. His song number was appropriate to this act.

Following this performance, David conducted his friend to the marquee of the Big Show and passed him in to greater glories. "I will see you before the performance is over," he said in parting.

The Big Show was not cut or curtailed. From the grand opening to the closing number the full production was given without a hitch. Sam Welborn, seated in the reserve section was back to boyhood days. He watched the many features of the bewildering panorama with childish enthusiasm. It was a great show. Just before the finale, he was joined by his little friend.

"Our next stop will be the dining car," said Davy as they followed the crowd out the main entrance. "I have something I want to talk over with one of you Westerners and I think you are the man."

"Maybe I am not a Westerner," said Welborn quietly.

"Why you live out here, don't you?" retorted Davy.

"Yes, I live out here, a great ways out, clear out to the rim of things. If it wasn't for the mountains hemming the horizon, our 'wide open spaces' would be without limit. I live beyond the Medicine Bow Mountains over next to North Park. My nearest neighbor is two miles away. I am fifteen miles from a filling station."

"Why, I didn't know there was a place in America that was fifteen miles from a filling station. The oil companies are surely overlooking a bet. Anyhow, every word you speak confirms my opinion that you live at the right place." The two had arrived at the dining tent where a head waiter was assigning the guests to their places among the many tables.

"We'll sit here, Tony, if you don't mind," said Davy as he ushered his guest to a table apart from the rest. He carried a high chair from another table and signaled a waiter. "This is what I have in mind, Mr. Welborn; I want to run away—run away from the yaps and yokels and the gawkers and get out where nobody can see me and where I can act just like a man. I am twenty-nine years old. For fifteen years I have been the 'objective' of the gawking squad. I'm sick of it. I want to run away when I see a crowd coming. When I am on the platform, I see nothing but dumb faces; if I am on the ground, I see nothing but legs. It's too

tough a lifetime assignment. You understand I am not complaining of my lot as a midget, but I am fed up on the role. I want a rest—a change. And just now, is a good time to make the change from a game where I've grown stale. My financial affairs are in good shape, thanks to one of the finest men in all America, and I want to lay off this freak business until I can look on it without vomiting.

"Two things woo me to this country: your wide open spaces, where seeing a human being is reduced to the very lowest limit; and second, I find that in playing vaudeville houses in the winter time, I develop a sinus trouble that sticks with me until I get back here to the mountains where it disappears entirely. Yes sir! When I hit the table lands of Denver, Pocatello, Casper, Rawling, Laramie, or this town, old Sinus passes right out of the system. For the last five years I have been planning to come to these Highlands and dig in—where humanity is the scarcest. Just awhile ago, you described the exact spot of my dreams. Now what's your reaction? Can I do it?"

"Do you mean that you would want to spend the winter with me, back in the hills?" The big man's question was quietly put but he stopped eating, awaiting the answer.

"Sure, that's what I mean. Next winter, next summer, and then some. I want to get away from this," waving his hand in a circle to include the showgrounds. "And get to that," and he pointed west. "I want to get out where I can wear overalls; have a dog—or maybe five dogs—out where I can ride a hoss and chaw scrap-tobacco and spit like a man. I want to get away from being gawked at during all my waking hours. This thing here, is getting on my nerves. I feel like I want to commit murder when a simpering Jane looks at me, snickers and says, 'ain't he cute?' I want a ball bat to club every country jake doctor that looks me over and asks about my pituitary gland. Gee, gosh, but I do want to get away from that. I want to exchange these human nitwits for cows, calves, sheep, hosses,—broncho hosses, pintos—but not little round-bellied shetlands. I want to boss around among chickens, geese, turkeys, pigs—"

"How about a couple of burros?" interrupted the listener.

"That's it! Burros! I hadn't thought of burros—me on one of 'em—slapping with my hat to get two miles to the gallon! That's it, burros! Two of them is better!"

"And how about snows? There may be a snow yet this month that is deeper than you are tall."

"Whoopee for the snow!" yelled the midget. "Me with a mackinaw and boots,

and mittens and a shovel. Snow! Clean white snow! I love it! But I haven't seen any clean snow for years. All that you ever see now is the dirty slush that they scrape off the streetcar tracks. I sure would be disappointed, Mister Welborn, if you didn't have a lot of clean snow. And you have some sort of a shack, don't you? And we can cut a lot of wood, and have plenty of blankets—en books and magazines. And we can haul out a lot of grub, and a first-aid kit and such. And you don't have a big family, do you, Mister Welborn, and I wouldn't be much in the way, would I?"

"No, I am all alone," said Welborn trying as best he could to answer the many questions. "I have no family and I do have a shack that is very comfortable. It has a fireplace and a stove. I have plenty of blankets and wood and grub. But what about sickness—home-sickness! What about the terrors of loneliness that sometimes drive people mad! The wide open spaces have their handicaps, as I well know. For a year or more I have had just that experience. I have suffered, along with the joys of being wholly alone. Truly, I went into it with a bigger aversion to human society than you have, and I have not escaped.

"Yes, I have a shack, a good one, and a few score acres, but it's not a ranch. It's not stocked, has no barn or stables, and no crop but the native grass. It was a dreamer's plaything and I bought it with scant savings that should have been spent on another project. But it looked like I just had to own it in order to carry on."

"What's your other project?" asked Davy, curious to know why a man with a ranch would not be ranching.

"Mining," replied Welborn. "Placer mining back in a canyon or gulch that never felt a human footfall before I stumbled into it. It's a limited thing—limited to this ravine that is not more than fifty feet wide and a half a mile long. It was probably the old stream bed back before the Tertiary ages, but when the troubled mountain took another surge, it was left high and dry, twenty feet above water. I was working it this summer but the little bear cubs took most of my time. It takes a full day to lug enough water up to the canyon levels to wash out a pan of gravel. It takes the big part of the day to lower a sack of gravel down to the water, but at that, I have made wages. Now, I have an old rocker that was abandoned in the stream bed, but I need a pump so I can use the rocker right on the gravel bar. As it is a one-man job, it should be a force pump with a gasoline engine. All this costs money and it takes a long time to pan out enough dust to pay the bill. Really I had the money, but I just had to spend it in buying the cabin and land that was the only entrance to the placer bed. I just couldn't work the one

without owning the other. Then too, I will have to blast a hole in the rock wall to get the pump located, after that, one year is all I want. One year's work will clean up all that one man ought to have. Of course I have practically lost this summer on account of the bear cub capers, and winter is at hand, but the outlook is better, thanks to your diplomacy and aid. With the money, I can live this winter and accomplish many things. By spring, I should be under full production."

"But you wouldn't stay up there in that solitude with no person around but an old grouch that probably would not have a word to say for days at a time?"

"Yes I think I would," said Davy slowly but firmly. "I think I can risk my case as to care and friendship with a man who is considerate to little bears."

Some of the circus people had finished the meal and were filing out of the tent, but Davy stayed, grimly determined to win his point. "About what would be the cost of this proposed mine equipment, and could I do some ranching around there while this was going on?"

"I figure it will take three hundred dollars to buy the pump, pump-jack and engine; these, with a few lengths of hose and some dynamite, are all that's required. Of course there will be some labor costs in getting the pump installed, but three hundred will pay all bills."

"Is that all? Why we can get that amount from Lew up at the ticket wagon. He will cash my check for that amount and be glad to do it. Holdups, you know, pass up checks. Therefore, Lew likes checks. When do you want it? Let's get it now while there is a lull in business, and you can take the pump and pipe and other gadgets right back with you in the truck."

"Do you mean that you will go with me—now—on the truck? It's more than a hundred miles to Carter's filling station and fully twenty miles more over the roughest roads—or rather no roads—to the Gillis place and then two miles more. Why, it's an all-night trip if we were to start right now!"

"No, I am to stick with the show to Omaha. We are to be in North Bend, tomorrow; Grand Island, Friday; Omaha, Saturday; and then the payoff. I will have some things to do in Omaha. I want to telephone home and ask about some friends; I will talk to my financial boss and learn if he is still weathering the financial storm and then I am ready for the big jump out to your place. Can you meet me here with this truck-trailer outfit, say about Wednesday? I will have about three hundred pounds of baggage, and we must stock up with grub against getting snowed in. Can you meet me here Wednesday? Or, if you are too busy, can you send someone?"

"Why sure I'll meet you—Wednesday or any other day—here or any other place you say." The man of the mountains was absorbing some of the little man's enthusiasm. "Sure I'll meet you, but you work so fast and drive right through that I can hardly keep up. Why, we hardly drive through with one thing until you have another. If I seem indifferent and not very responsive, it's because I haven't caught up yet. Think of it! Ten hours ago I was coming out of the hills with a serious problem that was hindering my work. Now, I am rid of the problem, have ninety dollars in cash; have the offer of all the funds I need, and prospects of a fine companion all through the dreaded winter. The change from poverty to riches has been so rapid that it's more like a dream than a reality. And here's the worst feature of the whole business," continued Welborn as the two made their way to the ticket wagon. "Here's the fly in the ointment. My side of the equation has been nothing but plus, plus. I am fearful that yours will be more than minus. You are tired of the mob; you want to get away from the crowds. You have a mental picture of the ranching business; horses, cattle, cowboys, knee-deep grass billowing through the great open spaces. It's your dream to land right in the midst of such surroundings, and your disappointments will be terrible to endure. I have no such ranch and there's none nearer than ten miles of my place. Most of the cattle nowadays are purebred; the cowboys are cow hands, feeders, and caretakers—without a mount—and many of them never saw a pair of chaps and few wear ten gallon hats like the picture books show. That stuff belongs to the rodeos and dude ranches. Why the Diamond A Ranch over on Mad Trapper Fork is a model for any manufacturing plant. It has bookkeepers, salesmen, feeders from 'aggy' schools. You won't like that; it's not up to the standards of your dream. Of course you will like old Jim Lough of the B-line Ranch. He's ninety and used to be a tough hombre of the old school. But now he's out of the picture, his son Larry runs the ranch, and he is soon to give way to a young college girl who is up on foreign markets and the like.

"My fears are that what you see and experience will not be the picture of beauty and action that you had dreamed about. My poor little place, without livestock or feed—or action—will be a terrible disappointment."

"Well we will make a ranch out of it. The building of a ranch will be more pleasure than the possession of the finished product," rejoined Davy stoutly. "We will raise some feed, buy a few sheep and from there on, watch us grow! But early in this venture, I must get me a pony—a pinto, preferably—small enough for me to ride and big enough to go places. Then I'm all set. Hi, Lew!" The midget had climbed up on the wheel of the ticket wagon and was tapping on the window. "Cash my check for three hundred dollars and meet my podner, Mister

Welborn."

"Your partner in what?" queried the accommodating Lew, as he slid back the window and began to count out the cash. "What's your racket now, Prince? Have you hooked up with Ben-a-Mundi in that Crystal Readings graft, or is it a short-change racket?" Lew aided Davy up to the shelf where he could sign the check. "Better look out, Mister Welborn, your partner here is a slicker—a regular city grafter. He skins his friends just to keep in practice. Paying you this little lump is just a bait. Later, he'll spring the trap for the big money." Lew slipped a rubber band around the money and handed it to Davy.

"You had better look 'em over for counterfeit bills," retorted Davy as he handed the money to Welborn. "This bird puts out more counterfeit money than he does genuine. And say, Lew, you and Jess think of me when you are huddled around the stove this winter with a lot of razorbacks—me out in the great open spaces feeling fine, and clear of mobs and nitwits. You fellows will have the razorbacks throw another basket of cobs in the old smoky stove, and I and Mr. Welborn here, will be toasting our feet before a log fire in the big fireplace—"

"Oh ho, it's that ranch thing that you have been chinning about for the last five years," chuckled the treasurer of the Great International. "How many calves will you brand next year? And where's your chaps and your spurs? And say, that three hundred won't buy your bridle, let alone a ranch and a hoss. You remember Carter, don't you, Prince? The broncho-buster that we had in the grand opening last year. Why his saddle cost an even grand and he paid fifty per for his Stetsons. Where's your outfit, kid?"

"Why my outfit is still in the supply house in Omaha," countered the midget. "I am to take it out when you and Jess come back through here with the Adkins-Helstrom Great Congress of Living Wonders. I'll meet you here on that date in my full regalia. Anyhow, much obliged, Lew, and Mr. Welborn I will help you out with the car and trailer so that you can load out tonight." Down at the edge of the lot where the city streets pointed to the business district of the city, the ancient model paused for the final conference between the new partners.

"Now what's your address, Mr. Welborn?" asked Davy, searching about for pencil and paper. "If any of our plans go haywire, I would want to let you know."

"And that's just another inconvenience in the business," replied Welborn in a cautious manner. "My mail address is Adot. I get—"

"Adot? Adot? Where? What?" interposed the midget. "A dot on what?" "The post office is Adot," replied the miner. "Capital A-d-o-t, Adot. It was probably so

named from its importance on the map. It's just a wide spot in the road and a dirt road. We get mail twice a week and I am fifteen miles away. Neither will the telegraph lines help; there's no station nearer than this town. I have no telephone. The only way I could be reached, would be for you to go to the broadcasting station in Omaha and put through an S.O.S. on Tuesday night, as I have a radio. But you would have to put the call in early as I am going to be in this town bright and early Wednesday morning."

"That's the spirit," crowed the little man. "Both of us, right here in Cheyenne, Wednesday morning. I will be here unless this Union Pacific folds up and quits. Why when you come to think of it, I wouldn't want to be where there was mail deliveries, telephones, and such; that's what I am running away from, that and the mob. Good-by, Sam," he called out, as the car took the green lights. "I'll meet you here on the A-Dot."

"Good-by, Prince," said the big man as the car got under way.

That night, an ancient model T followed by a ramshackle, home-made trailer, pulled away from the shipping platforms of the Cheyenne Outfitting & Supply Company loaded to the guards with pump, pump jack, pipe, lag-screws, wrenches, hand drills, dynamite, fuses and caps, and a hundredweight of groceries. Cramped under the wheel, driving as carefully as his cargo would warrant, sat Sam Welborn, the second happiest man west of the Missouri. The happiest man west of the big river was flouncing around in his berth on the third section of the Great International Circus trains bound for North Bend, Nebraska, planning his outfit to be purchased in a few days at Omaha.

3ToC

An hour in advance of the arrival of the Pacific Limited, Sam Welborn paced the platform of the Union Pacific passenger station at Cheyenne, awaiting the

arrival of his little partner from Omaha. He was a different man in appearance from the one who, the week before, had come down from the mountains in charge of two obstreperous bear cubs. On that occasion, he had worn overalls, a sheepskin jacket, heavy, clumsy shoes, and an eared cap of ancient vintage. On the day of his appointment, he was dressed as the ordinary business man about to take the train for Ogden or points west. His fairly well-worn, black, pin-striped suit, neatly pressed, fitted his six-foot-two frame as if built by a professional clothier; a rolled-collar shirt, a blue polka dot tie, freshly shined shoes, and a soft crush hat completed the outfit. Over his arm he carried an overcoat. Other prospective travelers wore their topcoats, but Sam Welborn was of the outdoors.

He had parked the Ford with its trailer attachment at the west end of the platform. If his partner's impedimenta was not too bulky, the ancient model was ready for another trek to the hills. Back and forth along the long brick platform he strode in the bright autumn sun. It was no sloven's gait. An observer would have said that somewhere, sometime, in his career of maybe thirty years, he had faced a hardboiled old topper who insisted with piratical invectives that "heads up, shoulders back, stomachs in" was the proper posture for humans who were eating government grub and drawing government pay.

Very true, Welborn was not in immediate need of exercise. In the last week he had worked, and worked hard, during every daylight hour. He had not slept in the last thirty hours. But these were figments, incidents, to be disregarded now that success was just back of the curtain. Now he was to meet the little man who had made this prospect of success possible. Now his greetings must be cordial and appreciative. Nothing should be left undone to overcome the disappointments the midget must endure. In his first meeting with Davy, Welborn had tried to discourage the plan of "holing up" in a remote section, far removed from the things to which he was accustomed. He pictured himself as an old grouch, soured on the world, and surely uncompanionable. He dwelt on the lonely hours, the big snows, and other bad features but it was of no avail. Davy was on his way. In other days, in vastly different surroundings, Sam Welborn had known the tactful duties of a genial host; now he would revert to that role.

David Lannarck was the first passenger to alight as number twenty-one came thundering in from the east. The porter helped with his grips. Davy searched the platform for his friend.

"Why, why, I didn't know you! You look like another fellow!" he exclaimed, as Welborn reached for his grips. "You are younger, better looking, different."

"I am younger, but not different," chuckled Welborn. "I've been taking a tonic—the tonic of hard work. I've nearly completed my big job, and I've located your horse for you."

"Hurray!" yelled Davy, "And can I get him right away?"

"There you go, jumping the gun again. Why that little horse is a hundred miles from here. He's not broken to ride. He might not suit your fancy, and it might take a lot of diplomacy to get him. He belongs to a girl."

The baggage—two trunks, a showman's keyster, two suitcases, a big duffle bag and handbags—was loaded on trailer and backseat. "Well, I don't see much room for groceries," said Davy, as he climbed in. "We've got to have pickles and beans, and plenty of vitamins and calories to balance the ration. Really, before starting, I should have consulted Admiral Byrd on outfitting a polar expedition. Aren't we to stock up on food—here—or somewhere?" He questioned, as he noted that Welborn drove across the tracks and away from the city.

"The eating question is practically solved," said Welborn. "Solved through the providence and frugality of good neighbors. They are overstocked and it's up to us to reduce the surplus. I took out rice, sugar, salt, and a lot of extras on my last trip, and with their surplus of meat, fish, fowl, flour, fruits—canned and preserved, vegetables—canned and raw, we should live like pigs at a full trough. However, if you need tobacco, chewing gum, toothpaste, any special kind of medicine, we can get that at the Last Chance, further down the road."

"No, I'll not need any such sidelines for many a week, but I thought you said we did not have any neighbors? Who runs this fine market and canning factory out in the wide open spaces?"

Welborn laughed. "Wait till we get out of this traffic and on a straightaway; there's much to tell and we've got a lot of time. I have arranged for dinner about twenty miles down this road, and we will push things pretty hard this afternoon so that we can eat a late supper right at this Market and then you will understand.

"You see, this old car, loaded like she is, and pulling a trailer, can do about twenty-five miles per, on this federal road, but it's not all federal road, and the last fifteen miles will take a lot of good luck and fully two hours to make the grade. I would like to get home in daylight."

The general direction of the national roadway, was west. The traffic to and from Cheyenne at this noon hour was not heavy. Tourists were still touring, notwithstanding the fact that this section of the country might be snowed under

at any time; truckloads of livestock, were encountered, and far down the highway, where the traffic thinned down, the partners met a big band of sheep that required care and diplomacy in passing. Presently, Welborn turned the car into a driveway at a neat farm home.

"Hungry?" he asked.

"Yes, I am always hungry, although I had breakfast somewhere this side of Julesburg."

"Well, I arranged for dinner here, and we will also stock up on gas and oil for the long trek. Of course I carry an extra five gallons in the can on the running board, but this is about our last place to stock up on eats."

A woman came to the door. "You are right on time," she said. "I hope you have brought your appetites, as the lunch is just ready."

Somebody was thoughtful; there was a high chair at the dining table. After a very satisfying meal, Welborn shoved back his chair. He found a piece of wrapping paper that he spread in front of Davy and drew a rough map.

"We are near the line of two states," he said. "The Medicine Bow Mountains are here. Geologists point out that this range so interrupted the route of the Continental Divide that it turned it back to the north in a big curve and made it hard to find. We go through a pass in the range. On this side, we run into the little streams that form the Laramie River. On yon side is the North Platte. Both run north and both find sources in the North Park. Those who know, say that for beauty and grandeur no section of the world beats the North Park country. Personally I do not know, as my contacts have been limited. It is said, too, that this is the northern limits of gold. At this point, the mountains seemed to have changed their content, or else those to the north were made at a different era. All these things are speculative and have their exceptions, as I well know.

"North Park, however, is a great grazing country. Its grass wealth may be greater than its mineral. The government owns the land, except tracts here and there suitable for farming. Our destination is the Silver Falls Project, a fine body of rolling land, suitable for either grazing or farming. It was laid out in convenient tracts for homesteads. Each parcel was a half section. If there was rough land adjoining a tract, that was included for good measure. It was opened for settlers and many came, but none stayed. There was no central organization to hold them—no church to rally around—no one established a central trading post—no outstanding personage to collect and hold, as is always the case in community building in America. Then, too, there were no roads; therefore no

market outlet. The road over which we are going, is the only inlet and there's no outlet. A half mile of blasting and building would have made an entrance to the Tranquil Meadows district and to trails and highways that led to market towns in two states, but the blasting and building was never done. The Silver Falls Project never grew big enough to make its decline noticeable.

"Of those who came to try it out, only four stuck to a final deed. Two of these are at this end of the project. Carter runs a filling station at the forks of the road and Withrow, next to him, hunts, traps, and plays a fiddle. I acquired the two tracts at the far end of the project and Gillis, our enterprising neighbor, owns two parcels next to me and operates the abandoned tracts under grazing allotments. This is a real ranch; small, as compared to others, but modeled as a farm in the East, for Gillis is a real farmer. I make the guess that when you grow homesick and tired of the loneliness at my place you will headquarter at the Gillis place, in fact I have made that kind of arrangement with them. They have a telephone, a radio, a phonograph, and take plenty of newspapers and magazines, and, best of all, there is a kindly, enterprising woman there to manage, to cook and can the fruits and vegetables, and do the homey things that makes life fit to live.

"They have cows, chickens, turkeys, pigs, and raise plenty of feed. But they are an oasis in a desert. Except for our place, they have no neighbors within fifteen miles. Mrs. Gillis is a worker and a planner. She sells pigs, turkeys and calves, in Laramie and Cheyenne, more than one hundred miles away; she has a working arrangement with the filling station down at the roadside, whereby they sell quite a lot of her canned stuff and preserves. She's always got something to sell and sells it, market or no market.

"I depend on them for almost everything. Even the car and trailer out there belongs to them. I bought a stock of chickens off of them, and I rent a cow and calf from them. Really, while you have come out here to my place, you will subsist for the most part off the Gillis family."

"Well the outlook gets better and better each time you add a chapter," said Davy as they walked out to the car. "How many in the Gillis family?"

"Just two, Jim and his wife. But staying with them is Landy—Landy Spencer, Mrs. Gillis' brother. He's older, is an oldtime cow hand that has retired, when Mrs. Gillis will let him. He's been in the West since boyhood and knows the game, but doesn't play it. He just putters around, when Mrs. Gillis isn't after him to do something, and that's the reason he stays up at our place most of the time. You will like Landy. He is the one that located your horse over at Lough's B-line

Ranch. I had told him of your wanting a little horse, and this week, while Gillis and I were blasting out the rock and setting the pump, Landy strayed over to Lough's and located the nag. Landy says as soon as he sees you, he can tell instantly if the horse will fit."

"I've got a saddle in that keyster, and he can measure by that," said Davy, "and anyhow I don't want a little, low-headed, round-bellied hoss that can't go places. If he is a cowboy, he will know the kind."

For five or more miles, the route led over a national highway. Then Welborn turned to the right, drove a few hundred feet and stopped. "Look out here to the left" he said. "See that big mound with its head in the clouds? That's Longs Peak, the highest in the country. On a clear day, it can be seen from Cheyenne. From here on, you are to see mountains and more mountains, but Longs Peak is the daddy of them all."

Now the roadway was not so good, but the ancient car labored on in full vigor. Fences had disappeared; the roadway no longer held to section lines but took the course of least resistance, generally following the stream bed which it crossed and re-crossed many times. The direction was generally west and up. Twice on the trip, Welborn took a bucket out of the car, dipped water from the stream, and cooled the heated engine. On one of these occasions, he washed his face in the cooling waters, explaining that he did this to overcome drowsiness.

Davy saw everything. This was his country. Except for meeting a lone herder in charge of a band of sheep, they had not met a human being in the last fifty miles. Yet there was plenty of life. They were never out of sight of cattle—not the big herds as Davy thought it would be—just a few here and there. There were some horses around the little pole barns off the roadway. High up on distant hills, bands of sheep were grazing.

Overhead, but not too high, hawks skimmed the levels or tilted over knolls and hills in search of a quarry; larks gathered in flights for a final powwow before beginning the long trip southward. Magpies flitted through the shrubbery of the creek banks. In crossing a little wooden bridge near a waterfall, Davy saw an object in the water, then in the air, and then in the water where the spray fell and where foam formed. Later, he was to know this little slate-colored bird as the water ouzel, a bird that was neither wader nor swimmer, yet took his subsistence from the foam and spray.

"That road leads to Laramie," said Welborn pointing out a trail to the right. "Laramie is closer to our place, and one less mountain range to cross."

"Why didn't we come that way?" asked Davy.

"Well, the big circus didn't show in Laramie, and I had to get to Cheyenne for contact. There I met a fellow who freighted me down with pump tools and I had to take back some of the wrenches I borrowed. Then this fellow made an appointment for Cheyenne, and I would not have missed the appointment for anything."

"Oh yeah," said Davy, "I suppose out here, the matter of a few mountain ranges is all in a day's work. Anyhow, we are seeing some country, and the lizzie is going fine."

For several miles it was downhill and around many hairpin turns. Then many small streams were crossed and followed. Several times the sun seemed to set, only to reappear again through a cleft in the hills. Where the terrain was level enough, hundreds of jack rabbits were seen. They were not the nervous, string-halt jacks of the prairies, but the smaller black-tailed variety.

And then they came to a store and filling station. "Well of all the places for a filling station," exclaimed Davy. "Many times I've seen 'em located at places where there was little business, but I never before saw one located where there was absolutely no business. What's the big idea?"

"He is probably like another fellow I know," answered Welborn. "He wanted to get somewhere, where he wouldn't see anyone. But at that, he does some business, seemingly as much as he wants."

More gas was taken on, and the reserve tank filled.

"Adot is on ahead about eight miles, but we turn here for the final dash."

The final dash was but a creep. Except for the bridge over Ripple Creek, the roadway was just a trail. The sun had gone down for good. The lights, none too good, revealed little of the hazards. It was a long, steady grind, mostly uphill. At last a light appeared ahead. A dog barked. A lantern shone. Welborn turned the car through a gate. "Gillis Station," he called out to the midget who had remained very quiet.

"Have them drive up next to the house," a woman's voice called from within. "We will throw a canvas over the trailer. They will stay here tonight. It's too cold to stay in a house that has had no fire."

"There's your orders, Welborn. Drive right over here next to the chimney. Howdy, Mr. Lannarck, you and Welborn get out and limber up for there's

prospect for a fine supper." It was Gillis speaking as he aided Davy out of the cab.

"I am Davy to you folks," said the little man as he stamped around to limber up from the long confinement. "You are Mrs. Gillis, I know, and you are Landy, aren't you? Will I fit that hoss that the girl owns?"

"You are about a half-hand short right now," the old man chuckled, "but after a few hikes up to Pinnacle Point, you should fit that little hoss jist like a clothespin fits the line."

It was a fine supper. There was also a home-made high chair that just fit Davy's needs.

"Before I go to bed," said Davy earnestly and firmly, "I am going to write down that supper menu and send it to poor old Lew and Jess, who are wearing out shoe leather trying to find a restaurant where the steaks aren't made out of saddle skirts and the potatoes and the candle grease have parted company. Lemme see, there was fried chicken and the best cream gravy I ever tasted, mashed potatoes, creamed peas, fluffier biscuits than those birds ever saw, two kinds of jelly, strawberry preserves, some other preserves, and apple pie with whipped cream on it.

"A long time ago—it was my first year in vaudeville—Mr. Singer gave his midget performers a dinner at one of the celebrated New York restaurants, I think they called the place Shanley's, a swell place with a private dining-room, lots of waiters, food in courses. Well, that big feed would be a tramp's handout compared with this dinner tonight." Davy was either talking to himself or was trying to interest Welborn in the conversation as the two were undressing by the light of the kerosene lamp in Mrs. Gillis' spare room. Welborn seemed not interested. He was soon in bed and snoring.

"Feathers, by golly," muttered Davy as he snuggled down deep in the bed.



The Gillis menage was well managed. Mrs. Gillis saw to that. Jim, aged fifty, slim of build, sinewy, even-tempered, quiet, willing, was the farmer and handyman. Crops grew, orchards bloomed, vines bore a full vintage, and bushes yielded because he made them do so. Without splutter or fuss, he did his work, and liked to do it.

The teamwork of Mrs. Gillis was equally effective. One could not say however that her work was done as quietly. Landy, the cow hand brother was wont to say—not in her presence however—that "as a child, Alice was sorta tongue-tied, and she has to ketch up somehow."

And Landy—well, Landy made his contributions. As a young cowboy, Landy had had his fling. He came into the game as the cattle-sheep wars were at their peak and he played it strenuously. But with it all, Landy Spencer kept his moral slate fairly clean. Then as the sober days of manhood came, and Landy witnessed the finish of the improvident and foolish, he began to save and skimp. "Hit's the pore house fer a cow hand," was his terse aphorism on the subject, and Landy had never seen a "fitten" poor house.

Landy was working for the Crazy-Q outfit, at the time the government proposed to open the Silver Falls Project. He looked it over and filed on two of the homesteads. One for himself and one for James Gillis. Then he went to Illinois where his younger sister and her husband were share-cropping.

"Come out whar yu've got room, whar ye own it, whar you do it your way. I'll pay freight on yer car to Laramie, and keep up the supplies for three years. Then if you're not satisfied, I'll move ye back."

It was Landy too, that planned as to the cows and calves. He bought purebred cows from the B-line folks, and sold them the big, weaned calves. And in view of the fact that the calf sale in 1931 was larger than Alice's big turkey sale to the dealers in Laramie by fully two hundred dollars, Landy had a modicum of peace on finances. The Gillis menage was well managed. It made money in a depression.

Davy was awakened by what he thought was gunfire. He bounded out of bed and ran to the window. Day was breaking. In the dawnlight he saw Welborn and Landy tinkering with the old model that had brought them so valiantly through the mountains. She was backfiring her protests but presently settled down to her accustomed smoothness. Davy hustled into his clothes. Mrs. Gillis knocked on the door. "There is a pan and water right here on the bench," she said. "I told

them fellers not to monkey with the old car, but Mr. Welborn is anxious to git started, he thought he'd tune her up before breakfast."

Gillis came from the barn with a brimming bucket of milk. "Howja rest, Davy?" he asked.

"Fine! I hit the feathers and never moved until I heard this bombardment that I thought was an uprising of the Utes."

"Breakfast is ready," called Mrs. Gillis. "How do you want your eggs, Davy?"

"I want them the way you fix 'em," the little man replied promptly. "After that supper last night, I wouldn't have the nerve to tell you anything about cooking."

Mrs. Gillis beamed her appreciation. "I hope you will tell that to Jim and Landy. To hear them complain, you would think I was serving their grub raw or burnt. Didn't the circus people feed ye?"

"A circus always hires good cooks. It buys the best meats in the local markets, and that's about as far as they can go. The vegetables are out of cans, except the potatoes and cabbage, and the fruits are either dried or canned. Preserves and jellies are factory made, so it gets pretty monotonous. I had a good breakfast on the diner yesterday morning. We had a fine lunch out this side of Cheyenne, but the supper last night was far beyond anything I have ever enjoyed. I jotted down some of the menu and as soon as I unpack I am going to write to a couple of those old circus razorbacks and tell 'em what they have missed." Davy was talking and eating; the men were eating.

"Now, Laddie, we are ready for the final dash," said Welborn, as he rose from the table. "The farther we go, the tougher it gets. And we are on the last leg."

"Landy and I had better go along," said Gillis. "Ye might get stuck, and we will be needed to help unload."

"You men come back here for dinner," called Mrs. Gillis from the doorway. "You will be too busy to stop and cook."

The old machine described a big curve in getting out of the enclosure, but was again headed west. Gillis rode in the front seat with Welborn. Landy and Davy found room on the trailer. "I want to see everything," said Davy as he climbed to a perilous perch on one of the trunks.

The mountains towered in the west, south, and southwest. The terrain was fairly level, but a spirit level would have shown a marked tilt to the east. There was a fringe of timberland on every side. Landy pointed out places of interest.

"That's Ripple Creek off to the left. Ye crossed hit last night on the bridge, and we meet hit agin right up by the house. That's Brushy Fork over at the right. They 'most come together up here. Right up that canyon about two mile is whar Welborn found the b'ar cubs. Way 'round that timber-covered nose to the right is the B-line Ranch—hit's about ten miles. Right down that draw, in the timber and brush, I killed two wolves last year. And if yer on a hoss, ye can foller a trail down to brushy fork and out on yon side. That's a short cut to the B-line, else ye'd have to go cl'ar back to the fillin' station, then over to Adot and back across another bridge to git thar. It's twenty-five miles thataway. When ye git all settled, we'll sneak over to the B-line and take a squint at that little hoss."

Landy continued to point out the places of interest. "Right along about here is Welborn's line. He's got two homesteads—bought 'em off a crazy bird that had bought out both homesteaders. That's one of the shacks over there and the other one he uses for a cowshed. En thar's yer home a-settin' up on that bench of land."

Davy craned his neck as the trailer moved down hill. Perched up on a shelf, he saw a yellow dot against a gray wall that ran to the sky. As they neared the place he outlined a tiny cabin. Later it proved to be a two-roomed affair with a porch and lean to at the rear. This was to be his domicile—for how long, time would tell.

The car described a big curve that took them to the brink of the Ripple Creek Canyon. In second gear it labored and twisted off to the right, and then left again, and came to a stop right at the front porch of the yellow-brown log cabin.

Davy climbed down from his perch. He walked around the cabin, surveying it from three sides. "She's an Old Faithful," he announced at last. "Modeled, matched, and built by the man that built Old Faithful Inn. Why did he do it and when?"

"It was built the summer before last and it took all summer," explained Welborn. "The crazy galoot called himself the Count of Como. He came barging in here and bought out Clark and Stanley, the homesteaders, and brought in two men who had been building fancy cabins in Rocky Mountain Park and tourist camps. He left them here on the job while he drove the roads like a madman, in a big, black, powerful coupe to Laramie, to Cheyenne, to Denver, anywhere he could get whiskey and dope. He would come back, rave around, threaten everybody with a gun, but paid out money like he had the mint back of him, and finally got it done. You notice that the logs are "treated," stained or shellacked, to retain their first color. The mechanics did that, and the count was mightily pleased until he found out that it made the shack stand out so that it could be seen for a long distance, and then he threw a fit. He went wild, ran 'em off the job, then I came into the picture.

"I was prospecting down Ripple Creek Canyon and living in that shack that you can see from the rim over there. I was trying to locate a claim, mining claim. But from the homestead lines, this cabin was off the reservation, built off the edge of Stanley's claim and on the government's land where I wanted to stake off a mineral right.

"I came up out of the canyon on the day he had gotten the men back and explained the error and showed him his predicament and then bought him out...."

"Ah, tell hit right," growled Landy. "Tell him like them scairt men told hit to me." Landy took up the recitation of how the home was acquired. "He made that greasy counterfeit eat his gun that he whipped out from under his left arm. He kicked him in the ribs, he did, after he'd knocked him down a coupla times. Made him go down thar and look at the old survey stakes, he did, then made him drive his crazy car over to Adot, and old Squire Landry made out the deed and he signed hit and Welborn here paid him in a sack of gold dust that they weighed on the grocery scales. That's how 'twas done. Tell hit right, so's Davy here will know the story."

Welborn laughed at Landy's recitals. "No, I didn't intimidate him. I made him see the matter in the right light. The proposition to sell-out came from him. I didn't want to buy him out, I had nothing to buy with, but the dust that it took me all summer to acquire. Truth is, this drink-crazed madman was a hoodlum gunman from Chicago or Saint Louis, that had lost his nerve. A killer who couldn't take the finish that was due him. He had run from it, and like an ostrich, he thought he was hidden up here. He didn't want me as a neighbor and when he found out that he had infringed on government land he was so scared that he would have given the place to me or anyone that wanted it. In fact, he didn't want to take the dust. He was afraid that the government would run him down for selling something that he didn't own, and maybe then find out about some of his killings back East. At any rate, he showed more speed in getting away from Adot than he had ever shown before, and that's saying a lot, for he surely burnt up the roads. We will unload your plunder right here on the porch, and we can place them as you want them later."

Davy got his personal grip out of the car, but that was about as far as he could go in the matter of unloading the baggage. While the men were engaged in the task, he looked the house over carefully. One with artistic temperament would have turned his back to the house and looked on the tremendous spectacle that offered itself to view in the south, in the east, and north. A vast brown meadow, rimmed with the dark greenery of the ancient conifers; and high above, a blue arch that draped down curtains of white to hide the sombre shades of cliffs and hills and peaks innumerable. It was a wonderful sight.

But Davy's eyes were on this house. He looked it over carefully. The general plan was as if a crib of logs had been built up to a square of, say, nine feet. Then another crib of logs built fifteen feet away. These were connected by a log structure in the center that allowed a recess in the porch at the front, and by a log extension enclosure that made a kitchen at the rear. It had been roofed with gray-

green shingles and the porch ornamented by sturdy log columns, with rustic rails at the side. The logs had been closely fitted so that there was no space between that needed the chinking of the cabins of the pioneer.

The floor was in narrow, rift-sawed planks. The walls and ceilings were covered with wallboard, properly paneled and carefully and tastefully decorated. There was a big fireplace in the east room. The west room was heated by a stove that found vent in the kitchen chimney. Entrance to any room was from the porch. The general plan of the structure was the same as that of many cabins being built in public parks and dude ranches. Davy had not seen these. His comparisons were with the fine, substantial inn, built at Old Faithful. There was little furniture in the cabin.

"Well, what's your reaction, Laddie?" asked Welborn kindly as he marked the serious look on Davy's face.

"Well, I don't know whether to sit out there on the porch and have a good cry or go in the spare room and put up a small dance. For five years I have been dreaming about this place, and now it's a reality. Outside of dreaming about it, and in sober moments, I just knew that there couldn't be such a place, so I contented myself with plans for a little shack, maybe a teepee, or a tent where I could spread out and rest up. But here it is—just like the dream said."

"Wal, jist wait till a good winter blizzard comes through here like they do," interrupted Landy. "Jist wait, ye'll be sorry that ye ever had a dream. Why, it's six thousand feet up here, and the wind don't monkey and dally around, hit gits right down to business. Last winter hit most took the leg off 'en one of them burros old Maddy brought in here, 'en mighty nigh whipped the fillin' outen his shirt."

"Let her blow," retorted Davy. "I've been in two circus blow-downs, and we had to stake the elephants down to keep 'em from blowing over into Texas."

Landy was a good loser. He grinned, and began wrestling the trunks. All of Davy's plunder was moved into the fireplace room.

"We will live in here this winter, and when spring comes, we can expand into the other room or out on the porch," explained Welborn. "And now, before you begin to unpack, I want you to see what Jim and I have been doing this last week. Let's take a look at the pump and engine before a snow comes and covers it all." Welborn led the way down near the brink of the canyon. "Over on the other side of the creek, you can see a shack. I headquartered there for several months and panned out some dust. From there I could see this opening here that looked like it had a floor, and maybe some prospects. Well, I climbed those trees

down by the creek, but could not quite see what I wanted. As the madman was working over here, I climbed and slipped, and cut steps in the rock face of the cliff, on yon side. I wormed and twisted around until I got up to that coulee, and sure enough, it was what I thought. The floor of the old stream bed that had been thrown out of line and out of use, by some secondary action in mountain-making.

"Ripple Creek has been noted for its placer workings. It has been panned and panned, many times, and always yields something. But here was a part of the stream bed that was virgin, that had never seen a miner or a pan. I walked over it and tested it. It stood the test. When it was the bed of the stream, gold was being ground out, washed out and carried down stream from the quartz-gold veins above. There it was! I couldn't get to it—couldn't work it without an entrance from this side of the creek. Landy has told you how I acquired the entrance, and a farm and a house with it." Still talking, Welborn led his guest back in the ravine back of the house, then through a tunnel in the razor-edge cliff, the party walked out on the floor of the old stream bed. "Jim and I made that tunnel. We dragged those logs through it, to make a foundation for the engine and pump. Now all we have to do, is blast out a sort of well-hole down at the creek so that the intake will be on the claim, and we are all set for production. We can do this today. Tomorrow, we will have water back on this old stream bed. Jim and I will take a hand drill, dynamite, fuse and caps into the gorge, and bust out a space about as big as a washtub, while you and Landy are unpacking your plunder. Build a fire, Landy, to take the chill off."

Unpacking suited Davy. While Landy brought in some pine knots and lighted a fire against the charred backlog, Davy wrestled the dufflebag open and began to take out the contents. It was a hodge-podge of parts of every old costume he had ever used. The trunks and suitcases yielded good property. "There," he pointed to a separate pile, "there is my notion of where I was going, without seeing the place. That's a sleeping bag and these are a pair of Hudson Bay blankets. You see, I didn't know if I was to sleep out of doors or sleep in a barn—surely, I didn't plan that it was a place like this! Here's my mackinaw, boots, and mittens, and here's my hardware." He produced a small rifle that had been packed between the blankets and handed it to Landy for his inspection. "She's a thirty caliber, carries two hundred yards at point blank and won't kick over a little fellow like me.

"And this is what I want you to see in particular." Davy fumbled in the keyster and brought out a small saddle with a fair leather bridle, to match. It was not a

pad saddle such as jockey's ride, nor yet a civilian outfit without horn and only one web. It was a genuine western, with high horn and high cantle and two cinches, but much reduced in every dimension. "Will that fit the pony you saw over at the B-line?"

Landy looked the saddle over carefully. "Hit's made by a saddle-maker all right, and will fit that hoss to a tee. They used to have some fancy saddles back in the early days. I've seen 'em that cost a thousand—Chauchaua—made and covered with silver do dads, en maybe they'd have 'em flung on a hoss that wasn't wuth his feed. I mind the time when ole Lem Hawks made a right smart lot of change, a-sellin' ole saddles that he swore come out'n the Custer massacre. Lem finally got to believin' that he was a survivor of that carnage.

"They finally caught up with Lem however. He had sold more saddles than Custer had men, and the old cow saddles with their big horns and high cantles didn't look like an army saddle nohow. But Lem kept right on a-bein' a survivor—him en about a thousand others. Hit's like Lincoln's bodyguards—thar's been more of them folks died than Grant had in his whole army. Yer saddle is all right, son, and we shore ort to talk the B-line folks outa that little hoss."

"I want to take the saddle over when we go," said Davy enthusiastically. "They could see how it fit, and that might influence their decision. I could put it on one of the burros and ride it over."

Landy laughed uproarously. "Why son, ye wouldn't git thar by Febwary. A burro ain't geared to ride en go places. He will foller ye right up the side of a glacier, but he ain't mentally constructed to take the lead. Why, if ye was on one of 'em, backward, en paddlin' him with a clapboard, he'd back right up agin hit."

"Well, what do they keep them for? Who do they belong to, anyhow?"

"Them two a-roamin' around here, belong to ole Maddy, the ole miner gent. He left 'em here while he went romancin' around up Ripple Creek. He goes up thar, and has got a way out to the top. He goes in North Park, cl'ar over to Granby and Grand Lake. He swings 'round by Steamboat Springs and Hahns Peak, and comes a-driftin' back, mebbe from the north. He left 'em here three months ago. He'll git 'em when he gits 'em, en he won't lose much if he don't.

"Ole Maddy has been in the hills—so hit's told—since the days of Jim Beck with and Bridger. Some say he was in Virginia Vale when Slade rubbed out Jules, the Frenchman. They say too, that he knew Carson, but that ain't so! Yit I do know that he pardnered with Will Drannon, the boy that ole Kit raised, because I heard Maddy tell a lot about Drannon, and later I read Drannon's book

en right in the book, was ole Maddy. Oh, he's an oldster all right. He jist projects around in the hills, pans a little gold en rambles around by himse'f. He's not 'gold mad,' he jist likes to roam. He's clean, don't talk much, en anybody will keep him until he gits ready to pull out."

"Well, I am sure disappointed about that burro thing," said Davy regretfully. "I wanted to ride that saddle over there and maybe they could see that the saddle, the hoss, and the midget ought not be separated."

"Don't worry. We'll lengthen the girths, en I'll put ye on ole Frosty. When they see ye, way up thar', they'll know by every law of mathematics en justice, that the boy and the saddle belong on the colt."

A roar reverberated out of the canyon. "Well, that's that," said Landy, "en now the next big job is to git Welborn out of the coulee fer dinner. If you leave him alone, he'd stay right thar messin' around till dark. I git provoked at his ways, but after I heard them decorators tell how he beat the gunman to the draw and busted him on the jaw en kicked him till he squawked like an ole hen, then I grew more tolerant. Welborn's all right, but he works too hard."

Presently Welborn and Jim came up from the coulee. The auto was started and headed for the Gillis place. The original Gillis cabin had been augmented by the addition of two rooms on the south, a porch on the west, and another and better cabin on the north. It was sufficient for the family needs. The farm was fenced for the most part, and the neighboring range was allotted by the grazing master to Gillis, Landy, and their co-homesteaders at the far limits of the tract. Except for a small forty-acre tract, the Gillis land was dry farmed. The forty was irrigated from a spring developed on the premises. It was in alfalfa. Other meadows raised timothy mixed with alsike. Even in unfavorable years, the ranch yielded more than a hundred and fifty tons of hay. Besides hay, a lot of oats and barley was produced.

"But thar's Jim's patent," Landy was showing Davy over the premises. "Jim keeps everything offen that big medder, en the grass comes on, en cures itse'f. Then hit snows, and the grass lays down like a carpet. Then hit blows the snow off en around, en stock can graze thar until near Christmas. Hit's a great savin' on hay. En a great saving on the hay feeder," Landy added with a grin.

Besides three score cows with their calves, a dozen horses and colts, turkeys, chickens, ducks, and geese galore, the Gillis ranch had three dogs, two collies, and a short-tailed sheep dog. The dogs followed Davy around like they had found a friend.

"They think I am a kid," Davy said. "Dogs sure like children."

After another sumptuous meal, Welborn went out to tinker with the Ford. Mrs. Gillis called Davy to the kitchen. "I want you to speak to Welborn," she said. "He works too hard. From daylight to dark, he does two men's work at that old mine. He'll kill himself before he gets the money out of it. You can talk to him—he likes you. Why, he sat up all night, the night before he went to Cheyenne after you, pressing his pants, making your chair, tying his tie, tinkering on the Ford. He cautioned all of us not to talk about your being smaller than common, being a midget. He said you were coming out here to get away from "the mob," the people who stared and commented. He wanted everything here to be different. He likes you, would do anything for you, but he's got something pushing him, driving him, faster and harder than one man can stand. He'll break if he don't stop and take things easier. If you get a chance, talk to him, tame him down, make him rest, change his mind to something different. He's a fine man, big and rugged and a gentleman. He never hints at what's eating his life out, and we don't know. But it ought to stop."

"I think you are right, Mrs. Gillis. Sam does work too hard and too long. I know nothing about his past, and I'll never ask him until he gets ready to tell it all. This I know, he's well educated, has trained in big business and is used to good society. I think he is rather hot-headed and maybe stubborn, if he thinks he's right. It will be a delicate thing to do, to try to switch him off from what he's doing and the way he's doing it, but I'll try, because I think it ought to be done."

Landy did not go in the return trip to "Pinnacle P'int" as he termed the mine and its environments. He had some "cipherin' around" to do. "With that pump a-goin' and the water a-flowin', hit don't resemble a place of rest to me," he said.

Mrs. Gillis brought a loaf of bread out to the car. "There's enough for your supper and breakfast, and you folks come back here for dinner tomorrow."

"En say, Jim, you bring the kid's little saddle back with yer," called Landy. "I want to lengthen the cinches to fit old Frosty. Me en the kid are aimin' to do a lot of romancin' eround—mebbe tomorry."

Arriving at the cabin, Welborn took a can of gasoline through the opening out to the pump. He tinkered with the engine and presently a steady "chug-chug-chug" reverberated down the valley. Mechanical mining was on at the Silver Falls Project.

Welborn laid the hose at a favorable place on a gravel-bar and scooped up a pan of dirt and sand that he held under the stream while he whirled it around in

the pan. The contents took up the motion and spilled over the pan-brim until there was little left. The miner examined the remainder and then gave it more water and more swirling around in the pan. This process he repeated several times. Presently he held the pan where Davy and Jim could see a fifth of a thimble full of tiny flakes and two small dots not much larger than pinheads. "That's the object of the meeting, gentlemen," Welborn said grimly. "That's gold.... Tomorrow," he added, "we will get the old rocker going, but just now, I want to 'sample around' for good locations."

All this was nothing to Davy. He watched the men awhile and went back to the cabin to arrange his personal belongings. Pinnacle Point was a place of sudden sunsets and prolonged twilights. At near five o'clock, Davy built a fire in the little cook-stove and put several slices of bacon on to fry. He "set the table" as best he could and broke several eggs in the bacon grease. He set out a jar of jam, sliced the bread. Then he went to the tunnel and called: "Supper."

"Say, Laddie, I don't want you to do this," said Welborn as he surveyed the supper. "You are my guest, you know, and I'll do what cooking there's to be done. We'll eat our dinners at Gillis', we'll sleep here, and I will get breakfast and supper. The fine dinners will offset my poor cooking, and besides you ought to stay outdoors and look around as much as you can, before we get snowed in for the whole winter."

"Well, I do plan to go with Landy over to see about that colt," said Davy, "and I thought maybe you would want to go along."

Welborn laughed. "Not for me! If you and Landy can't skin those B-line people out of one little horse, you are no traders. I've got to get that rocker going tomorrow. Look what we did today!" Welborn showed a little canvas bag that he took out of his pocket. "There is fully an ounce of dust in there, and we didn't try, just sampled around. With the rocker going, I can take out ten ounces a day by myself. It's fairly well distributed all over the tract, but better if you can hit the potholes right in the old stream bed."

"And when you get it all out, then what?"

Welborn looked rather perplexed. He studied a moment. "Then what?" he asked slowly, "Why we'll stock that ranch, lay out a flying field, and visit a lot of places. Truly, I had never planned so far ahead as to get to the place where I wouldn't be doing anything excepting clipping coupons."

"Yes, the mine is a fine thing," Davy said earnestly. "Why, there is enough gold there to make a great fortune. But what's the use in taking it all out at once?"

It will keep. You can work awhile, rest awhile, play awhile, and still be just as rich as if you had worked yourself to death. You are young, strong, and healthy, just right to enjoy life. Why work so hard now?"

"Yes, I am healthy, feel pretty strong, but not so young. Right now, I would like to take a few thousand dollars out of that gulch before snow flies, for we are going to have a lot of enforced loafing. We are in good shape to loaf however, all bills are paid and I still have thirty-five dollars of your money!"

"That's fine. I have been wondering how I would pay for the colt, in the event we bought him. The B-line folks might not want to take my check, and it might take more cash than I have on me."

"Mrs. Gillis will take care of that, she has money, plenty of it. She will tell Landy what to do, and Landy's word is like a bond. They do a lot of trading with the B-line. Buy cows, sell calves, and trade paper back and forth. Mrs. Gillis is better than a bank. Since the banking situation went bad, she has been accumulating government bonds. She hardly ever comes back from town without at least a hundred-dollar bond. She's a wonder, that woman. She's not an isolated hill billy that goes to town on Saturdays and anchors herself in the doorway of the five-and-ten-cent store to visit and gawk around. She's full of business. Sells her stuff, buys what she needs, and hits the trail for home. I expect Mrs. Gillis has seven or eight thousand dollars in bonds and cash stowed around in their cabin."

"Now that's my notion of living," cried Davy as he edged his chair back from the cracking sticks that Welborn had added to the smouldering embers in the fireplace. "Own a fine little ranch, a decent run of livestock and poultry, raise plenty of feed, and have something to sell right along. They don't have to meet a daily schedule, don't have to spread canvas in the rain or look at a mob tittering yokels all the time. That's the life for me and the Gillis outfit is my pattern."

"They are fine people," said Welborn. "We will keep in close contact with them. We need them now. The time may come when they will need us."



"Jim stayed to milk the cows," Landy explained as he rode up to Pinnacle Point the next morning leading Frosty, a rangy bay with a diminutive new saddle on his back. "Alice don't like my milkin' methods. I jist turn the calves in with the cows and let nature take her course, so she lets Jim do the milkin'. Put on yer jacket, son, hit's crimp around the edges, and let's git goin'."

Seated on Ole Gravy, a sturdy gray horse, Landy Spencer was like a picture page out of the book of the old west. His stubby, gray mustache, standing out under an aquiline nose and squinting eyes, failed to conceal a mouth much given to smiles and laughter. He had cautioned the little man that it was cool, yet his blue shirt was open at the neck. He wore a slouch hat, dented and battered to unconventional shape, a dingy knitted waistcoat, unbuttoned of course, gray jeans, tucked into high boots with long, pointed heels, and spurs of ancient pattern. Hung to the horn of his old, but generous saddle was a lariat.

The chuck-chuck-chuck of the gas engine told that Welborn was already on the job at the mine. Davy ran into the house and returned wearing his mackinaw and boots. "My, he's a giraffe," he said, as he looked over Frosty and his equipment.

Landy dismounted and lifted Davy to his saddle. "Did ye ever ride a hoss, son?"

"Sure, I've ridden some of the big fat ring-horses, but I either had to lie down or stand up, they were too big around for my legs. Once I was to ride a shetland in the Grand Entry, but they had a monkey on another pony and I walked out on 'em." Davy picked up the reins and Frosty began tiptoeing around and arching his back.

"Jist turn him loose, son," called Landy. "The old simpleton was expectin' some weight when ye got on, and he's disapp'inted."

Landy led the way down the hill and Frosty followed like a pack horse. The sun had pushed above the clouds. Frost was flying in the air. It jeweled the grass of the table land and sparkled amid the green of the conifers along Ripple Creek. Farther down the indistinct path they met Jim in the car.

"Are you fellers goin' to git back in time for dinner," he called to the horsemen.

"Mebbe not," replied Landy. "We are aimin' to bring back that little hoss, en he may not want to come."

Landy turned from the path and rode down a coulee that led to Brushy Fork. It was a winding way through brush and stunted hemlocks. Presently they came to the creek. "Thar's Steelheads en Rainbows up in them pools," said the leader. "These streams have been stocked en hit's good fishin', if ye know how."

They followed down the stream bed for a distance and then Landy turned up a draw on the left bank, that finally led out to level land. At first it was a narrow way between the stream and foothill, but presently the landscape broadened to a meadow similar to that on the right bank of the creek. At one place, where the way was narrow, there was the crumbling remnant of rough walls of rock.

"That's a relic of them ole wars in here, but I never could git the hang of the tale. Ole Jim Lough knows all about it but he's too shut-mouthed and contrary to tell the tale.

"Ye see, I'm not a native son," explained Landy, as they rode abreast on the widened road. "I got started in the cattle game over to the north on Crazy Woman Creek en the range betwixt that en Sun Dance on the Belle Fourche. I was romancin' round when Teddy Roosevelt made camp up thar. Teddy liked to listen in on some of them Paul Bunyans of the cattle game, en they shore told some tall ones. I think he encouraged 'em in their romancin' jist to git a line on their capacity. Ye see, we were located jist betwixt ole Fort Fetterman and the Little Big Horn, sorta betwixt Red Cloud en Sittin' Bull, en one massacre en another. Ours was a period jist follerin' these history-makin' times en every man had a right to tell hit his way as they were all unhampered by airy lick of facts.

"Therefore, I didn't git up here in the headwaters of the Platte until years after, but from what I ketch they had some right stirrin' time in here, 'twixt cattle rustlin' and sheep crowdin'. Ole Jim knows the whole story, but he don't broadcast none." Topping a swell of the meadow lands another stream basin was encountered. "Hit's a little Ranty," explained Landy. "That's a dam downstream aways en the B-line waters a couple o' hundred acres." In these meadows there were cattle—cows and calves and some scrub yearlings. Crossing the Ranty, the horsemen mounted to the levels again. Here, there were fences. Farther on, stables, sheds, and a cluster of houses. The B-line ranch.

Landy maneuvered the horses through the gates without dismounting and rode up to the central stable. "Whar's yer reception committee eround here?" he yelled. "Call out the guard en parade them colors," he commanded as he

dismounted and assisted Davy down. He threw the reins over the horses' heads. A man came out of the stable-room, two more came from back of a shed.

"Well, if it haint the ole buzzard from Ripple Creek, a sailin' around lookin' fer his dinner. Nothin' dead around here Landy," said the short, stubby man that came from the stable room.

"Howdy, Potter. 'Lo, Flinthead. Howdy, Hickory. All you cimarrons wipe yer hands real clean en shake with my friend Mister Lannarck. We jist took time outen our busy lives to come over here en watch you birds loaf around," said Landy after introductions had been acknowledged. "En my pardner here has a broken handled knife that he would trade for a little hoss."

"Well, it's a shame, Mister Lannarck," said Potter thoughtfully, "that ye have to carry sich a load as bein' introduced by sich a double-barreled, disreputable ole renegade of a crook like this. But we understand and will try to he'p ye live it down. Now, as to that little hoss. He belongs to Miss Adine. She's at the house. Flinthead, you move them hosses in here! Hickory, go tell Adine that the circus party that Landy told her about is here to see the colt."

Both men set about their tasks. Flinthead led out a horse, mounted and rode down a lane, propping the gates open as he went. From a corral back of the stables came a drove of horses, mares, colts, and yearlings. Trotting, prancing, and snorting as they came down the lane, they settled down once they were in the stable lot.

Davy was between two fires. He sought a safe place from being run down by the drove and yet he wanted to catch a glimpse of any kind of horse suitable to his size. He noted plenty of small ones but their short, bushy tails revealed colthood. The others were too large. As the drove settled down a colt came from out the center of the milling herd and walked up to Potter, extending his muzzle as if expecting something.

"That's the one!" said Dave excitedly.

He was a red sorrel with three white feet and legs and a flaxen mane and tail. Experts in such matters would have said he was nearly eleven hands high. Unlike his pony prototypes, his was a lengthy, arched neck, held high from narrowing withers and a short back. He was dirty. His mane and tail needed attention. Potter put out his hand. The colt walked near enough that he placed his arm over his neck and led him to a post where a rope dangled. This, he secured around the colt's neck.

"Good morning, everybody."

The colt parley was thus interrupted. Landy's several gallon headpiece was off and he nearly swept the ground with it. "Why, howdy, Miss Adine. We was a-lookin' this little hoss over to see if he'd fit a pattern. Meet Mister Lannarck here. He's the pattern."

"My name is Lannarck all right," said Davy, acknowledging the abrupt introduction. "But among homefolks, I would rather be called Davy, as I have always been sceptical of anyone calling me Mister, afraid he would want to sell me something I didn't want."

The girl laughed. "I am troubled that way myself. If anyone calls me Miss Lough, I pay no attention, thinking they mean someone else. Won't you men come to the house? Father is in Omaha on business and Mother and I are changing things around for the winter. Granddaddy picked out this busy time for one of his visits, so we are all together. Granddad will want to see you Landy, so come up to the house. I want to tell you about that colt, and tell you why it is that I am not to sell him."

There was little else for the mystified Landy and the now, heartbroken midget to do but to follow along, through the gate and along the well-kept bordered path to the immense porch. They loitered at the gate for parley.

"... and he's the handsomest horse I ever saw," complained the little man, "and she said she was not to sell him. I suppose it's some parental promise she's made, or some skin-game buyer has been through here and threw a wrench in the gears. Why, Landy, this is a high-school horse! He's showy, fine color, fancy markings and anyone can see that he's smart. We've just got to work it out somehow. A high-school horse, pony size, he's worth a thousand."

"Well, I ain't up on school classifications for hosses," said Landy dryly. "He may be a colleger fer all I know. But, we're dealin' with a woman en thar's no accountin' fer what's the matter. Hit may be, yer complexion don't match, er she may be a-keepin' him to contrast with some letter paper she's goin' to buy. Ye jist can't tell a dern thing about hit till we hear her story. After that, well, we can tell if it's worthwhile to go on with the struggle."

When first introduced, Davy was certain that Miss Adine Lough was about the handsomest girl he had ever seen. Surely not more than twenty years of age, of medium height, a peach complexion, tanned a little but fair to look at. She stood on the Colonial porch of the big Lough homestead, her hands in the pockets of her black horse-hide jacket awaiting the arrival of her reluctant guests.

She ushered the two into the wide hallway. "You had better see Granddaddy first, Landy, he's camped in here by the fire. Then we'll go in the library and talk over our business."

Jim Lough, ancient Nestor of the North Park district, was seated in a big Morris-chair in front of the smouldering fire. "Well, if it ain't ole Turkeyneck in person," he called in a high falsetto voice, as the two entered. "I've been wantin' to see you, Landy. I told the sheriff to bring you over the next time he had you in charge. I want to find somebody that can sing 'The Cowboy's Lament' and sing it right, as I am plannin' a funeral party and I want to work out all the details. Can you sing 'The Lament' so it's fitten to hear?"

"Yer dern tootin' I can sing 'The Lament'," retorted Landy, "all forty-four verses of hit, en the chorus betwixt every verse. I'm a prima donna when it comes to singin' that ole favorite. I learned it off a master-singer, ole Anse Peters, up in God's country whar men are men—en the women are glad of it. But what's led ye off on that wagon track, Jim? Why don't ye git a saxophone en tune in on some jazz? Be modern, like the rest of us fellers. Here you are, slouchin' around without a dressin' jacket er slippers en talkin' 'bout an ole song that's in the discard. Shame on ye! But before ye apologize, meet my friend here, Mister Lannarck, lightweight circus man, who's visitin' us here en lookin' around for relics en sich. That's why I brought him over."

Old Jim took the extended hand of the little man and held it while he talked. "Thar's been a lot of people had their necks stretched up in this deestrick for being caught in bad company, young man. You're borderin' on that condition right now in runnin' around with ole turkeyneck here. If the Vigilance Committee finds it out, you are a goner.

"Circus man, hey? I mind the time when a lot of us fellers rode to Cheyenne to see Barnum. Last man in had to pay all bills—it was some pay, by the time we got through. We saw the show all right and we saw Barnum. He was a fine man. But circus er no circus, ye ain't a goin' to sidetrack me out'n them funeral arrangements. If ye can sing 'The Lament,' yer engaged."

"Why, who's dead, Jim?" asked Landy innocently. "Did ole Selim die, er is hit yer favorite hound dawg?"

"None sich," replied the old man heatedly. "It's me—my funeral—en I'm aimin' to make a splendid time outen it. The boys on hosses, firin' salutes as they see it, a preacher sharp to give it dignity, en the 'Cowboy's Lament,' as sung by ole Landy Spencer. That's a fitten program, en you are engaged fer the job."

"En about when do ye plan to stage this splendid event?" drawled Landy.

"Why, when I die, ye idiot, mebbe now, mebbe later, jist whenever I bed down fer the last time. Here I am, over ninety years old. I can't go on livin'! It's agin nature. I want to make ready when it comes. I'm ready and I want everything else to be jist as ready as I am."

Landy Spencer drummed his knotty fingers on the armchair and looked thoughtfully at the old Nestor seated at his fireside. Ninety years old! Seventy years of activity in a territory where activity was enforced, if one were to live. Strange stories, legends now, were told of the doings of this gaunt, eagle-beaked, shaggy-browed old man who now, chatted complacently of death. Very true, none living was able to verify them. Those who had passed on told only fragments, and Jim Lough, neither verified nor denied.

One legend persisted. Landy had heard it long before coming to the district. It related to the beginning days of the great cattle game of the grasslands—days before the coming of the vast herds and the problems they brought. It concerned the destinies of those who followed fast in the footsteps of the trailmakers and sought to establish a business where there was neither law nor precedent. Sordid days, these. The honest men were not yet organized; the dishonest and criminal were unrestrained by laws. Cattle and kine were taken furtively or openly to these very hills and vales where Jim Lough now lived in quietude and peace. Here they were held until a sufficient number was collected for the drive to the marches and markets that lay east of the Virginia Dale.

Jim Lough was a youngster then, without ownership of herds or home, but he was not content to see the weak and unorganized robbed, without recourse. Alone, he made trips over the forbidden trails to the places of the illicit exchange; then back to the grasslands again he organized a posse of five and laid his trap. In a narrow pass this robber band was successfully ambushed and by effective gunfire, reduced from eight to three. The three surrendered. By every rule of the game, in a new land where there was neither law, nor courts nor sheriffs, the culprits must be hung, and hung on the spot where apprehended. But to this Jim Lough demurred. "We'll swing 'em where it counts," he announced grimly, and the cavalcade set out on the two-days' journey to the Skeel's cabin, the reputed hangout of the lawless and criminals of the new country. The posse found the cabin deserted, except for the presence of a lame, old man who was reported as the cook for the outfit. He was loaded on a horse and headed northward out of the country. The rest of the livestock was turned from the corrals and the cabin and stables set afire. Then, as a fitting finish to the work of

the hour, the three culprits were hung on extended limbs of trees bordering the ruins.

"Now the skunks will have something to look at when they come back here to plan their stealing," Jim Lough had said as the posse dispersed.

But "the skunks" never came back, and through the long winter and most of the following summer the ghastly mementos of early justice swayed and swung, until the ravens and winds made merciful disposition of the bodies.

In the next few years there was peace in the grasslands, and the settlers prospered as others joined. But it was not always so. For with more settlers came greed and avarice. Laws were made, regulations were had, rules announced and they were not always fair. Greed, sometimes sat in the councils, and the avaricious bent the rules. Then, there were other wars in which justice and fairness ran not parallel with Greed-made law.

Grassland remembered young Jim Lough and his stern and speedy methods and now as an older man, he was often called to council and to lead.

But the problems were not of easy solution; the 'right side' of the controversy was not always obvious, but under Jim Lough's leadership the greedy must surrender self-appropriated water holes, odious fences were banished and grazing allotments went to the needy as well as the greedy. In these things, Jim Lough made enemies as well as friends, but cared as little for the one as he appreciated the other.

Landy Spencer, drummed knotty fingers on the arm of his chair as he listened to Jim Lough's explanations of his arrangements for a splendid funeral. At last he spoke. "Jim, I used to think that ye'd make a fine gov'ner. I know ye make a dandy good district marshal, but ye are slippin'—goin' addled 'bout this funeral business. A-settin' here tryin' to run things en you deceased, that-a-way. Ye know, well en' good, that the folks livin' will take charge of them obsequies; hit'll be about ten years from now, I figger; en yore plans will fit in about like a last-year's birdnest. Ye have jist about as much to do a-bossin' that party as ye'll have in selectin' yer harp en halo when ye git inside the pearly gates. Ten years from now, thar won't be a cow hand ner a gun outside a dude ranch er a rodeo. Singin' 'The Lament' would be about as well understood as recitin' a Latin epic."

"Pshaw, Jim, yer wastin' valuable time," said Landy, wanting to get a last word, before the old man had time for a reply. "Come over next week—Alice is to have a turkey dinner with all the fixin's—en we'll plan a funeral that's modern. Aryplanes, automobiles, jazz, en dancin' en sich. That's the kind I'm plannin' en I

ort to kick-in long before you do."

Landy backed out and crossed the hallway before the ancient could reply.



6ToC

Adine Lough ushered her guests across the hall into what seemed to be her workshop. Seated around a library table, Davy perched on a big dictionary, Landy at the end, drumming his fingers as usual, the girl plunged at once into the business at hand.

"At the very start," she said in a serious manner, "I must tell some personal things. I've been going to school at Boulder. I am staying out this semester to work on my graduate thesis, 'Social Work in Rural Communities.' When you consider my restricted field, it's a big job. But I like that kind of work—studying people, their individualities, their shortcomings, their accomplishments. From what I hear of you, David, you have an aversion for those things—in fact have run away from the mob. I like it. I would want nothing better than to stand along side of you on a platform at the circus opening and watch the general populace pass in review. Then and there, I could study all phases of humanity; classify them as they passed; and then investigate each case personally to see if I had made the right appraisals at first sight."

"—And right there is where you would miss the trapeze bar by a foot, and no net under you," interrupted Davy disgustedly. "They are all alike, from Bangor to Los Angeles. You can throw 'em all into one of two groups: yokels and shilabers. They are either out with a skin game or else they are goats, about to lose their hide."

Adine laughed. "Oh, you surely could subdivide the Yokels. Why in my observations they alone, could be classified under many heads. But to go on with my story. Adot, the town, and the neighboring ranches, is my limited field of

research and I have gone over the field in detail. Last month, I had up the matter of the Methodist church in Adot. It was a-once-a-month affair, the minister living in Weldon and no chance to ride circuit in the winter months. No budget, no money, and worse, yet, no outlook.

"Now, I didn't go into the matter to do church work and help them; my business was to appraise them as they were; but I got involved. The few members thought I was trying to do a bit of missionary work. The upshot of the affair was, that I found myself with a roster of the church membership and a list of names of nearly everybody else. I had my own figures as to needs, debts, and community possibilities. So, carrying the thing to a finish, I took up the matter of putting them on a budget and providing the funds.

"First I made them elect Brother Peyton treasurer. He wasn't doing anything except waiting for the bank to resume business. Then I canvassed all the names on the rosters and combed the neighboring ranches for small monthly contributions. I got enough subscriptions to pay the minister and paint the church house. But it was some job. It took two weeks. Two weeks of joy and rebuffs, of elations and disgust. I was tired. I planned to rest up a couple of weeks and wait for my halo, or wings, or whatever a Christian gets for doing his whole duty; when right on the heels of my labors, came the greatest catastrophe that could have happened."

"Did the meetin' house burn down?" interrupted Landy, who had followed the recitals intently. "Did the preacher gent die, er did Brother Peyton jump the game, taking the jackpot with him?"

"No, nothing like that. The Nazarenes moved in! You both know about the Nazarenes?"

Davy did. He had noticed their meetings in cities. But with Landy, the subject was a blank page and he withheld comment. In later months he confessed that he thought that the Lough gal was nuts in tryin' to project the Saviour en some of his kin onto Adot.

"The Nazarenes are new in this country," continued the girl, "and they have all the enthusiasm of the new convert. Really, they seem to have the early zeal that some of the churches have lost. And they are a stubborn lot. That the field seems barren, is nothing to them. They set up shop in a desert and carry on just the same. To them, poverty is an asset. Christ's admonition to the rich man, to give his substance away and follow Him, is a literal command to be obeyed.

"In the week following my campaign for the Methodist, two Nazarenes, a

young man and his wife, came barging into Adot and set up for business. She took up cooking and waiting table in Jode's restaurant for their board, and he went about the street preaching and about the house praying, day and night. They were both good singers and he played an accordion. In that week they talked Joe Burns into letting them have the use of the old mercantile warehouse, and they set up meetings in that big, barn of a place. That same week they came out here, in a truck they had borrowed, to get me to help them as I had the Methodists.

"Well, of all things, you just cannot say 'no' to such people. Why, I almost insulted them; told them Adot was a barren field, overworked and already supplied with their spiritual needs. But I failed to impress them. They even wanted to pray for me. Me, who thought I was already sainted for my work with the Methodists! Then I went on another tack; I explained that I had already exhausted my resources in my work with others; that I had canvassed everyone and could not, consistently, go over the field asking for subscriptions for another organization. That failed. They insisted that they wanted only a start, just a little influence; and that I should come and assist them some night!

"They trapped me. To get rid of them, I half-way promised to aid in some sort of an entertainment to help them get their first money; after that, they were to be on their own resources. And while I was berating myself and wondering how to get out of it, or how to get in it, Landy here came with the news that a little showman was to visit us here on the plateau and that he wanted a horse. Right then and there the clouds lifted; the problem was solved."

Adine let her voice fall, pushed her chair back from the conference table and folded her arms. Landy drummed on the table and looked thoughtful. Davy wiggled around on his high perch and nearly fell off the dictionary.

"Well, that's a fine story, Miss Adine, and well told, but I don't get the connection as to why you are not to sell the little horse."

The girl laughed. "Sure, I will not sell him, but I'll trade him. Trade him for that entertainment that I promised those impractical and improvident Nazarenes."

"Do you mean that me and Landy here must put on some sort of a show in Adot? Why—why, I don't know a soul here. I know nothing of the community's talent. Surely I am not a church entertainer; my dances and songs won't fit into a church entertainment. You can't preach or exhort, can you Landy?" asked Davy anxiously. "We've just got to have that horse. I will agree to go over to Adot and

stand on my head, in some show-window if that gets him. But you wouldn't want to sponsor that kind of entertainment," the little man appealed to Adine. "What's needed is something half-way refined and where the patron would get his money's worth. And I can't produce that kind of a show."

"Oh, yes, you can," said Adine smiling, "and the patron would get his money's worth. Why you, yourself know that little people—or what shall I call them?"

"Midgets," interposed Davy, "midgets is our classification, not dwarfs, nor gnomes, nor half-pints, just midgets."

"Thanks, that helps, and you see how little I know about it and how anxious I am to learn. Well, midgets, as a class are attractive and a rarity too. Except for yourself, I do not know of another. People want to see them. They go to circuses and theaters just to see little people. I have no doubt, that in many cases, people are ill-mannered—stare and giggle—and say uncalled for things, but that's to be expected from the run of persons, yet the fact remains, midgets are attractive.

"Now you've been before the public, know how to handle crowds and know what they want. You could supplement your appearance with a lecture or talk on midgets, your experience with them, and something of your travels with the circus and with the troopers of the theater. Why, it's just what the public wants."

"That little hoss is sold," said Landy exultantly. "One speech fer one hoss. Fair enough!"

"Now you hold on, Landy," Davy interrupted. "You are getting me out in deep water and no oars. I am a good Presbyterian all right, but they wouldn't stand for my stuff in their church and these Nazarenes surely have the same standards of propriety. Now, Miss Adine, let me give you fifty or a hundred dollars for this colt and you give that to these needy Christians."

"And leave me out as a promoter! Not much! Why, I want to see this show myself. I wouldn't miss it for anything."

"Ner me," cried Landy in much glee. "Why me en Potter en Flinthead en Hickory and some of the boys from the Diamond-A, will git us front seats and cheer yer ev'ry utt'rance. Come to think of hit, we could hold a big afternoon parade, with a lot of yippin' around, and git up more excitement than they've had in that sleepy ole burg since the women swarmed down on Gatty's quart shop en wrecked hit."

"Well, you and Mr. Potter and Mr. Flinthead just keep out of it," said Adine emphatically. "You would ruin everything."

"No just let 'em come, I've been kidded by experts and their stuff might prove an added feature. But Adine, you had better let me hand you the cash...."

"No, that would be a departure from what we are trying to do. The object of the affair is publicity, not cash. And besides, the colt isn't worth a dime to me—or anyone else but you. He's too little for anyone to ride, and he ought to be trained and made to be useful. As it is, he's just one in the drove and would remain so, until he died.

"But you can take him, train him, and make a beautiful show-horse out of him. Why, I can see you riding, parading, and having him doing stunts such as are rarely seen in a circus.

"Now I want you to ride him home today. The trade is made. You have the horse and are obligated to give an entertainment for the Nazarenes in Adot. I think we can arrange it for next Saturday night week. The little weekly newspaper, the *Adot Avalanche*, comes out Thursday. I will run a display ad that a famous Midget and circus performer will give a lecture at the warehouse Saturday night under the auspices of the Nazarenes. The little paper goes all over the district and the town won't hold the people. It will be Adot's premier event.

"So you come over here Saturday morning, Davy," continued Adine, "we will drive over to Adot in the afternoon in my roadster. We'll lay the top back and drive over the town so the public will know that you are there in person! It will be Adot's biggest day."

Landy had been ready to get back to the stables for some time. He was standing, twirling his ancient headpiece, awaiting the word to start. In all his years of dealing in horseflesh, this trade interested him deeply. He wanted his little friend to have that horse.

As the three walked down the path to the stables, Adine was insistent that Davy should ride the colt home. "He's not a range horse," she explained, "not a westerner, as they sometimes describe horses that are out of a drove. This colt doesn't need to be broken. He was sired by our Allan-a-Dale, a registered saddle horse; his mother is Janie, that I used to ride barebacked and without a bridle. He was her last colt and will be three years old this month."

Davy was just a little skeptical about attempting his first riding of the colt in company. He would much rather have him over on his own range with no other company but Landy. He wondered, as they walked along, if Potter and the boys at the stables had framed a rodeo spectacle for themselves and were to witness some worm-fence bucking by midget contestants. He was much relieved as

Landy took charge, transferred the saddle from lofty Frosty to the diminutive colt, fitted the cinches and shortened the stirrup leathers to what he thought was about the right length. Then he slipped the bit in the colt's mouth and took up the cheek leathers of the bridle. Before Davy realized what was going on, Landy had lifted him to the saddle, mounted Gravy, clucked to Frosty and the procession moved out the gate.

"I'll see you all in Adot, Saturday," called Davy without turning his head.

"Good luck and bon voyage," called Adine.



7ToC

On the way down to the Ranty, the colt behaved remarkably well. He followed closely in the wake of Frosty, occasionally shaking his head in an effort to throw the bit from his mouth. At the ford, Landy adjusted the bridle so as to withdraw the bit and allow the colt to drink his fill.

It was a proud moment in the varied career of David Lannarck, midget and showman, as the little cavalcade gained the level land near Pinnacle Point after a strenuous half-hour on the hazardous trail that led up from Brushy Fork. He waved a cautious hand to a man and woman standing near a car parked in front of the cabin.

Landy lifted Davy from his saddle, removed the bit from the colt's mouth, made an improvised halter out of his bridle and tied the reins to a sapling. The older horses were left standing with reins down.

"Well! If it ain't my ole scatter-about-friend, James Madison Stark, in person!" cried Landy as he and Davy made their way to the car. "Now I know that winter is not two days away. Hi, Maddy! Howdy, Mis Carter! Must be big news in the wind, if you two hit Pinnacle Pint same time, same day. What's up?"

"Maddy is anxious to see Mr. Welborn," Mrs. Carter replied gravely to Landy's facetious banter, "but I don't know how to get back to where that gas engine is chuffing. Welborn will have to come out here to Maddy, for the hoodlums over at Grand Lake have burnt his feet and tortured him until mind and body are a wreck."

"Tell Sam to come out here," was Landy's command to Davy. "Well, somebody has shore mussed ye up a heap, en right in yer gaddin' about department," he added as he noted the bandaged feet and ankles of the old fellow. "Sandals and a crutch don't become ye at all, Oldtimer. Who's been disturbin' yer dogs that away?"

"I got all that and a lot more, off the killer that built this cabin," said the oldster firmly, "and I want to warn this newcomer as to his threats to come over here and kill him."

Welborn, accompanied by Davy, came through the arch and approached the car. He had never seen the oldster but had heard, in full, the story of his idiosyncrasies, his wanderings, and persistent research for the hidden mineral wealth of a vast and varied district. In his life's story there were no paragraphs that old Maddy was a hoarder of gold or a promoter or exploiter of things found. His research yielded amply for his needs. It was known that he owned the filling station and that his summer accumulations of mineral wealth was more than sufficient to meet the annual upkeep of that establishment. James Madison Stark's pleasures had been the joys of solitude rather than the raptures of vast accumulations. He preferred that the mineral wealth of earth remain in the veins of its native rock rather than be taken out en masse, to be later hoarded, manipulated, and juggled to create distress and poverty and want.

Old Maddy had not reduced his life's philosophy to writing, but the midget, David Lannarck, as he had heretofore heard the fragments of the stories of this long and varied career, wondered if he too was not in the same groove. His present-day problem was the life-story of the ancient Nestor who preferred solitude to the mob; who would leave nature's treasures to remain hidden and unclaimed, awaiting the investigations and industry of the generations to follow. Davy gazed in awe at the old man, who in general appearance resembled the accepted portrayals of Santa Claus, but whose face was now seamed with lines of pain.

Landy made hasty introductions. Maddy proceeded with the business at hand. "I've come to warn you," he said to Welborn, "that the mobster who built this

cabin says he is going to kill you. He's been hiding out at some of the resorts over in the Grand Lake district, but like others of his kind, he just couldn't keep his mental cussedness hidden and the better element over there is making it too hot for him. It's his next move and he's evidently going to make a big jump, leaving the state, maybe the nation. But before he goes, he swears he is coming over here and kill the only man that ever beat him to the draw—that ever knocked him down. So be on your guard, my friend. He's a fiend, a maniac, and that incident preys on him."

"Well, I am certainly obliged to you for this warning," said Welborn quietly. "If I only knew the date of his proposed visit, we would provide him with a fitting welcome—a welcome that would add a climax to his book of hate."

"When he's to come, or how, I don't know," Maddy replied. "It's been a week since I heard him make the threat, then he made it twice in one night, accompanied by all the profanity he could muster. He and his gang were dissolving partnership on account of recent publicity. Two of 'em would go over to Las Vegas to look over the new dam at Boulder, one was returning to Denver and this Count Como—he has several other names—was to come here, get his revenge, and seek another hideout."

Pressed by Landy as to how he contacted the gangsters and received his injuries, the oldster related the story of his summer's wanderings. He had spent some time on the other side of the Divide in the Hahns Peak district, skirted Steamboat Springs on his way to Oak Creek. In his wanderings, he had panned the alluvium of many small streams and had recovered more than the usual amount of gold. Now he would work his way back home through the Middle Park and cross the tortuous windings of the Divide by the way of his secret pass.

Approaching the Grand Lake district he encountered two men who said they were looking for lost sheep. Both were maudlin drunk and each was trying to impress the other with his wisdom, his repartee and boldness. Upon Maddy's refusal to accompany them, they seized him bodily, searched him, searched the burro to find the gold and then pushed, dragged, and drove him and the burro to a nearby cabin.

Here, he was to encounter two other drunken fanatics whose maudlin quarrels were interrupted by the exhibition of the pouches of gold. Now, they would know the exact location of the find. The explanation of the aged wanderer that the dust and particles came from many sources, seemed to enrage them further. "Just where was this mother-lode?" They wanted to know. "Here was wealth

aplenty-enough to buy everything."

And they applied the third degree with all the fiendish deviltries of their distorted minds, to get the exact location of this rival of the Comstock lode. The aged man was tied hand and foot and beaten and abused the whole night long. In pushing splinters under his toenails, the lamp was upset, kerosene was spilled over his feet to catch fire. A quarrel ensued as to whether the fire should be extinguished or allowed to burn. A fist-fight developed and they abandoned the cabin, leaving Maddy to his fate.

"It was young Byron Goff that found me," concluded the aged narrator. "I recognized his voice when I came to, the next day. He was looking for lost sheep and stopped to inquire. He took me to his home, doctored me, cared for me, and brought me home. I owe him my life, not only for the rescue, but for his kindly nursing. Due to him, my feet will be all right in a few days. While he would accept nothing from Mrs. Carter, we've got a plan to part-pay him for his kindness."

The disclosures as made by Maddy, awakened much interest among the five dwellers of Pinnacle Point. Mrs. Gillis arranged for the evening meal at the Gillis home where plans could be made to thwart an invader. Landy and Davy rode their horses to the Gillis barn; Welborn and Gillis came later in the car. It was following the meal that the problem was talked over in detail.

It was agreed by all that the invader would come in his car; there was no other way. He would have to come to the filling station to gain the roadway to Pinnacle Point. He would have to pass the Gillis cabin and a warning could be phoned if a wire was strung from the Gillis home to Welborn's cabin. But in that case the wire would have to be extended to reach the mine as Welborn was up in that canyon during the day. Jim proposed a fence across the road with an electric alarm on it when the gate was opened. Landy suggested felling a tree across the road at a narrow place and thus reduce the uses of the thoroughfare to journeys on horseback; Davy offered to keep watch at a favorable place where he could shoot the tires of the intruder's auto.

Welborn took but little part in the discussions. As the conversation lagged he briefly summarized the situation. "This gangster is a killer all right and drink and dope may have overcome the usual cautions of the breed. All of 'em are cowards; they prefer unarmed victims that are hog-tied. Sometime in his career this buzzard was the killer for some liquor gang. He evidently double-crossed his associates in getting this money that he's spending. He hides from them as well

as the law. There is little we can do except to keep alert. I'll keep my gun with me up at the canyon and a shot through his windshield would drive him frantic. He's liable to miss the bridge in his zeal to get away. He will have to come in the daytime and the folks at the filling station will warn us now that they know his intentions."

However the matter of the proposed visit of the killer had an exciting and ludicrous interruption when, on the next morning, Mrs. Gillis heard the labored chugging of a car coming up the hill to the east. Landy and Davy were at the barn. They too heard the noise and saw a small ancient roadster turn into the driveway and stop. A young man got out of the car and came to the door. This was not the killer but it might be news of his plans. Landy and Davy entered the house by the back door.

"Why, it's young Goff," said Landy, interrupting the introduction. "I met you last spring over at Rawlins. You were in a confab with some sheep men over there."

The visitor laughed. "Yes, these Rawlins folks are big operators," the young man explained. "I have to visit 'em about once a year to let 'em know that I am still alive and still grazing a few head over east of their allotment. Why, my little band isn't big enough to make up their summer shortage. If one of their herders rambles over in my district and there is a mixup, I could easily lose a lot of grass and some sheep. I can't talk Spanish, and the herder says that he no savvy 'Meriky' and it's up to me to sort and claim.

"But they are a fine lot of fellows, these Rawlins operators, once they understand that you are on the square. I visit with them every spring when I sell my fur and pelts. Yes, I have to trap in the winter to get enough money to pay my grazing allotment, and in my contacts with these sheep owners, I find that they are always willing to cooperate."

The young visitor had taken the proffered chair. Mrs. Gillis, Landy and Davy joined to complete the half-circle. It was apparent that he had a mission more important than reciting the details of herding and trapping. Landy had introduced Davy as a new-comer, "Wuth a lot more than his size would indicate."

"I came over to Carter's last evening to buy some gas and see how old Maddy was getting along and to tell him how his friends, the gangsters, finished their orgy. I found the oldster was doing fine—would be fully recovered by next spring—but they wouldn't sell me any gas." The raconteur allowed an interval for the astonishing news to be absorbed. "No sir, not a spoonful would they sell

me. They wanted to give it to me—by the tankful. And after I told my news of the gangster's finish and the complications incident thereto, Maddy and the Carters insisted that I take all the gas—that I come up here with the news, and the problem, and work out the solution.

"You see, I was over to Northgate Saturday on the matter of trading some bucks with Andy Pelsner and encountered the astonishing news that the whole gangster mob, those that stole Maddy's dust, were in jail. They had been arrested, and convicted, on about all the crimes in the book. Reckless driving, drunkenness, inciting a riot, possessing stolen property, and finally contempt of court, when they offered Judge Withers, Maddy's two sacks of dust if he would let 'em off. On this last charge the Judge added four months in jail. It was a grand finish of an awful mess.

"I went over to the country seat to verify the news. It was no mere rumor, it was a fact. Sheriff Bill White had 'em all in hock; had the two bags of gold dust and their guns. He wants to get rid of the dust if he can find the true owner, and get a disclaimer of ownership from the gangsters. I told him it was Maddy's, and Bill wants Maddy to come and prove ownership and take the property. Maddy is willing, but there's a hitch to it. Just now, I want to see Mr. Gillis, or you Landy, and unhitch the hitch."

"Well, Jim is up at Pinnacle Pint helpin' Welborn scrape the bottom of the canyon fer what dust he can find, en I'm shore busy gittin' this youngster acquainted with his new hoss," said Landy thoughtfully. "But we ort to take time out to recover Maddy's property. Let's go up to the canyon en sign Jim up fer the job. That dust up in the canyon won't run away. It will still be thar even if Jim knocks off work fer a couple a days."

The young visitor readily concurred in the plan, he wanted to see the house that the gangster had built anyhow. He started out to the car, but was detained by Landy. "You wait here," the veteran cautioned, "ye might git a bullet through yer windshield if ye drive up thar unannounced. My podner here and I will saddle up and ride ahead, to prevent accidents."

Following his equestrian escort, the visitor presently reached the Point where introductions were made and the purpose of the visit explained. Jim asked many questions and for the most part the answers were satisfactory. Really, the judge and sheriff wanted to get rid of these malefactors if the serious charge of robbery was eliminated. They were a burden to the state and community. "I begrudge feeding the dirty skunks," was the sheriff's scornful comment. "Hanging 'em

would terminate expense and trouble."

But two problems hindered a quick solution; would these culprits leave the country if given a suspended sentence. Judge Withers was giving them a few days for reflection. Meanwhile Sheriff White was making their stay as uncomfortable as possible in order to hasten a favorable decision.

"What's the other problem?" asked Gillis, casually.

"Why, if the dust is recovered, old Maddy wants to give it to me, says that I earned it. And I'm not going to take it."

During the interview, Welborn had been a quiet listener. On hearing this last declaration from the visitor, he straightened up to make a quick inquiry. "Why won't you take it?" he demanded.

"I haven't done anything to earn it," replied young Goff in a low but firm tone.

There was an interval of silence.

"You see, Maddy is old," the visitor explained. "The awful experience he's gone through affected him. He wants to contrast the little service I gave him with what the gangsters did to him. His sentiment outruns his judgment. I didn't do anything out of the ordinary—just fed him and doctored him as best I could. I didn't do any more—"

"Is your mother living?" interrupted Welborn. "She must be a gentle, thoughtful woman, well-grounded in the old fashioned ideas of kindness in social service, to have raised a son with such ideals. People, now-a-days, expect pay, even for their charities. You will have much trouble and many disappointments if you approach a sordid world with such sentiments."

"Hold on Mister," said the younger man, with much spirit. "Old Maddy's case is different. His case was not a business transaction, it was a duty." The young visitor ducked his head to chuckle a little while he scraped the gravel with the toe of his shoe. "If you run into Andy Pelser, in about a month from now, you will know what I mean. Andy is young and bright, but old in the sheep game. I had no scruples in giving him a good cross-lifting in that sheep trade we made. But this Maddy case is different. I don't want pay for being neighborly, for doing my duty to oldsters."

"Back the car out, Jim!" commanded Welborn. "This young man is irresistible. We had as well take a day off to do our part in this entanglement. Back the car out while I spruce up a little to meet the law as well as the law-breakers."

Presently Welborn came out of the house, dressed as a man of business. His attitude was as one in authority. "I have a plan in mind that might work. It has about one chance in fifty of fitting the case, but we'll take that chance. But we must do two things if it is to succeed," cautioned Welborn. "We must not let the Judge see poor old Maddy in his present plight. It would infuriate the Judge to sentence those buzzards to the hoosegow for life. Then too, I must see this sheriff alone, if the plan is made to work. Drive on, my boy," he said to Goff, "and we'll try to keep in sight. See you tomorrow night, maybe," he called to Landy and Davy as the two cars got underway.



8ToC

A busy little man was David Lannarck in the week that followed. With a horse to break and a speech to make, the time was fully occupied. The colt was quartered at the Gillis barn. Davy stayed with the colt. Of mornings, Landy assisted with the colt's grooming and education. His white mane and tail were washed and brushed and his red coat fairly shone from the attention given. Landy rasped his feet to evenness and cautioned that he would have to be shod if used on hard-surfaced roads. "Potter can shoe him all right," he explained, "but we'll have to send an order for a set of little shoes to fit."

The morning rides were usually on the rather level roadway that led up to Pinnacle Point, but there were sidetrips down ill-defined paths to the little creeks. Landy sometimes went along to advise as to road gaits. The Gillis dogs were constant companions. In fact, since the night of Davy's arrival they waited around until he made his appearance and followed him constantly. Except for the

fact that he was scheduled to make a public appearance at Adot next Saturday night, David Lannarck was now enjoying the rest and joys that he had dreamed of and planned when he was oppressed by the mob.

"I am not writing out a speech," Davy explained to Mrs. Gillis as he bent over the pad of paper, pencil in hand. "I am just jotting down some incidents of circus life that the public might want to know. This girl over at the B-line—My, oh, my, but she's got a compelling line of chatter. If she would do the ballyhoo for a Kid Show, she would pack 'em in to bust down the sidewalls. Now this girl said I was to talk about midgets and circuses. What I know about midgets and circuses would fill two books. My problem is to leave out the commonplace routine and tell 'inside stuff.'"

Mrs. Gillis had cleared a side table where Davy, in his high chair, could jot down the items that he would use in his talk. It was while he was thus engaged of afternoons and evenings that Mrs. Gillis heard the life story of the only midget she had ever known.

"My name wasn't always Lannarck," Davy explained one afternoon when Mrs. Gillis detailed something of her ancestry and early childhood. "My name was O'Rahan, and I was christened Daniel. I am Irish—both sides. My Dad was a young, happy-go-lucky Irish lad, a hard worker, a free liver, and surely improvident. Foot-loose and free he joined a party in the rush to the Klondike. Three years later he came back with enough money to fill a pad saddle. And they took it away from him as fast as he had accumulated it.

"He met my mother, Ellen Monyhan, at a party, and he was as speedy at courting as he was at spending. They were married but a short while when the financial crash came. He was ashamed and humiliated but not beaten. He wanted another try at this fascinating game. He went back to the Klondike—and to his death at sea.

"I was born in a hospital in Springfield. My young, heartbroken mother died there. There were no relatives nearer than cousins. In due time I was committed to an orphanage. I have no memory of either parent and my information concerning them is meager and second hand. Now this orphanage was well conducted, but it wasn't a home; it was an institution. With anywhere from thirty to sixty children to care for, it lacked the personal equation. It was mass production—you did things by rote, en-masse—no individuality. But I have no complaint. As a babe and child I was well-fed and clothed, in a uniform common to all.

"And then I started to school along with all the others. But something was happening to me that did not happen to the others. I quit growing. Mentally I was like the others—kept up with my grades—but I never grew taller than thirty-two inches and never weighed more than thirty-eight pounds. Other children would shoot up like corn stalks, but I stayed right where I had been in the months and years past.

"To me, it was a heart breaking disclosure. I wanted to play ball, to make the team, only to find that as the slow months crept on, I was assigned to the playground of the little kids, babes, toddlers. The balls, bats, mitts, and other playthings were too big for me. But I kept up with my classes in school and maybe the disappointments in sports urged me to win somewhere else. I won the eighth-grade prize in arithmetic and mechanical drawing. And then came high school, and the great disaster, quickly followed by an entrance into an Orphan's Heaven—a home in a private family. In the shifting personnel at the orphanage, there were fewer high-school pupils. We went to a different building over different streets. It was no doubt a singular sight to the residents to see a midget with six-footers, but it was just that way. And it must have been a singular sight to Loron Usark, a big childish lout that lived on Spruce Street. We would pass the end of the alley back of his house and he was out there every day to watch us go by. Now this Loron was too weak, mentally, for school. Ordered around by everybody and pestered and teased by many, the moronic-minded will seek a victim that he can abuse and bend to his own will, and this Loron party was on the lookout. One day he caught me tagging along behind the others. He grabbed me and would have beaten me, but my companions rescued me. After that, I had to be on the lookout. I was marked for slaughter by this fool.

"Mrs. Gillis," Davy changed his tone of voice to a deeper bass, as was his wont when he desired to impress a listener. He shook his pencil at his deeply interested audience of one. "Mrs. Gillis, I've seen a lot of people in my time. Except for old-time circus people and theatrical troopers, I've seen a million more than my share. And you can set this down on your mental calendar as an established truth: whenever you see a Big One taunting a Little One, you can set him down as a big coward. And, whenever you see a Dub kidding a Lout, you can be assured that the dub is trying to lift himself above a similar rating.

"Well, this Loron lout finally got me," said Davy, resuming the thread of his life story. "I was on my way back to the orphanage for a book and as I passed the alley he swept me down. They were good sidewalks out there, else he would have broken them in bits as he pounded my head on 'em. He kicked when he

could and struck as often as he cared. His exultant cries must have attracted attention, for I was past even an outcry. Finally a lady rushed out of the nearby house and came to the rescue. The lout ran, of course. I stayed put. I couldn't do anything else. The lady gathered me up, carried me into the house, laid me on a couch as I passed out entirely.

"When I came to, a doctor had been there to patch me up and pass judgment on my chances. He had washed off a lot of blood, plastered my cheek, clipped my hair to plaster some more places, eased some body welts, and announced that no bones had been broken. I was in a bed, most of my clothing had been removed, and the lady was offering me a drink of water. I took it.

"Mrs. Gillis," here Davy gave his voice its lowest pitch, "Mrs. Gillis, that woman was Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Lannarck, and I know you won't condemn me or be jealous when I say that she was the kindest, most considerate woman that ever drew the breath of life. There have been a lot of noble women on this troubled earth, doing what they could to ease pain, to keep down strife, and to make the world a better place in which to live. They are all worthy of our praise, but to me, Mrs. Lannarck is sainted, and apart from the rest. Well, the rest of the story is in happier settings and more readable chapters," said Davy, as he noted that Mrs. Gillis was somewhat affected by the recital. "I really suspect that you would know more about these conditions than I. Personally, I think all women want to manage a home, want to boss the inmates. If there are no children, then they manage the men-folk, or the household pets. And I was Mrs. Lannarck's pet. She used me as a substitute for the children that never came into her life. I was little; I was injured; I was a fit object of her suppressed affections.

"She telephoned Mrs. Philpott, matron at the orphanage, and when she called to see me, Mrs. Lannarck arranged to care for me until I was well. She explained the whole affair to Mr. Lannarck, when he came home to luncheon and that big, grave, silent man accepted her statements without comment. Sick as I was, I heard all this and I too, made some resolutions. I was not going to miss this chance of having a home, and a mother. The very next morning I offered to get up and help her do the dishes. She laughed like a girl, and vetoed my offer. In a day or two I limbered up enough to get into my clothes and I puttered around, offering to do things. My help was declined, but I could see that it had the right effect.

"I didn't go to school for a few days. My face and head were still in bandages. The story of the attack was in the newspaper and the civil authorities committed the moron to an institution for the feeble-minded. Some of the orphan kids

visited me and I got them to bring my little set of drawing tools. I was tinkering with these when Mister Lannarck came in. He looked at some of my sketches and asked if I could draft a plan in true proportions. I told him I thought I could, if I had the correct measurements. He put on his coat and left.

"Now Mr. Lannarck was a carpenter-contractor. Not a big one, with an office and a draftsman, bookkeeper and such; just a carpenter with a desk in the front room where he kept his papers. He had little education but his figures were correct. He had built good buildings, but he specialized in repairs—in the upkeep of property—and he had many clients. He was honest and fair; he made money and saved it. He could read blueprints but he couldn't make 'em. His fingers were all thumbs when it came to outlining.

"Presently he came back with some figures, and about the worst outline I had ever seen. He explained it was a church. It was to have an addition. There was a memorial window to be taken out and placed at the right place in the new part. He had the correct figures and he wanted a rough draft to show 'em. He gave me some big sheets to work on.

"That night, Mrs. Lannarck had to order me to bed, I was that interested. The next morning I was up early. That evening I showed him my outline. He didn't say much. He took the drawings and his own figures to a meeting that night. When he came home he said he had closed the deal, that my outline was what had helped, said it would make money. My, oh, my, but there was a proud boy in a big bed at the Lannarck home that night. That was the first dollar I have ever earned. Of course, I didn't get the dollar, but I got much more.

"It sounds sorta mushy, doesn't it, Mrs. Gillis," said Davy, interrupting the recital. "Kind of a Pollyanna tale with a Horatio Alger finish. But in none of his stories did Alger ever portray a tougher background or give it a bigger skyrocket finish. Just think of it, Mrs. Gillis! Here was a kid with the black thought that he was never to be a man; was never to do a man's work, never to win in any manly contest. Worse yet, he had never seen his father or felt a mother's caress. He never had had a place called home. Do you blame him for horning in?

"Well, it worked out better than I hoped. The next day Mrs. Lannarck began moving the furniture in one of the bedrooms. She emptied dresser drawers, cleared out the closet and brought in other things. Then she invited me up there; told me that she had arranged every thing and this was to be my room, where I could put my things.

"Things? Why, I had come into that home with a busted head and not a penny

in my pocket. The very clothes that I wore belonged to the county. Except for the little drawing tools I had, you could have put all of my things in a thimble. Yet I was the richest man in Springfield.

"I lived in that room four happy blessed years. They were years of few incidents and no friction. Mrs. Lannarck bought me a complete outfit of clothing, and she was as particular about the details as if it were a bride's trousseau. She even provided me with a weekly allowance, small, to be sure, but there was nothing I needed. I kept right on at school and helped around the house wherever I could. I kept Mr. Lannarck's books, made out his estimates, and drafted his plans. I checked up his payrolls, met his workmen, and his banker. I even met the judge of the court when they adopted me and changed my name.

"I went to church with Mrs. Lannarck, went to Sunday School, and took part in the entertainments. They insisted I was a drawing card and they featured the appearance of a midget on the program. It was all right by me if it met the approval of the Lannarcks.

"During the war, the committee featured me in the Bond Drives. There was a big fellow I teamed up with, named George Ruark. He was nearly a seven-footer and weighed three hundred. I could stand in his two hands as he held them in front of him and urged everybody to back up the war as strongly as I was backed. It made a hit; it got results.

"And then inevitable but unwanted death stalked in, to ruin everything. Mister Lannarck died. He was older than I had thought. He was always careful and honest. He was putting a new roof on the Auditorium when he fell. Maybe it was a stroke. They took him to the hospital. He died on the third day after the fall.

"This was the beginning of the end. A link was broken in the chain. It never mended. Mrs. Lannarck bore up bravely, but I could see that she had lost all earthly joys and simply awaited her summons. Mr. Lannarck's financial affairs were in good shape. He left quite an estate. The income was ample for our simple needs, but that was not enough. Mrs. Lannarck simply could not go on. She died in a little over a year following the death of her companion. For the second time in my life, I was an orphan.

"But this time I was to have a guardian. I had been legally adopted. I was the heir. I was rich. In the first fifteen years of my life, I had never seen money, never a penny of my own. Now it was the other way. After the funeral I went down to the bank to consult with Mister Gaynor. He handed me a sealed envelope. It was a message from the dear, kind, motherly Mrs. Lannarck. It was

a letter of kindly advice, personal and spiritual. She said that she never doubted but that I would walk in the right path, but she made this final appeal. If I never married, never had heirs or dependents, and if there was any of the Lannarck estate left at my death, would I make a will, leaving a portion of it to the Grace Avenue Presbyterian Church, in trust for its upkeep, and a portion to the county orphanage, for the occasional entertainment of its inmates.

"Mrs. Gillis." Davy was the one now affected by the recitals. His voice was lower and slower. "Mrs. Gillis, after reading that message, I hadn't the tears out of my eyes nor my voice cleared up, until I was making that will. Gaynor did the work, he knew how, that was his business, and he made it read just as Mrs. Lannarck had requested. The Trust Department of the bank was made the trustee. One-half of all income from my estate was to be paid to the church, the other half for orphanage entertainment. It stands just that way yet, although the value of the estate has doubled.

"The Lannarck estate was what the bank folks called Income Property. It included two suburban store rooms with apartments above. There were three very good residences, five shares of bank stock, bonds and notes and a considerable bank deposit. I made a resolution then and there, that I would never touch a penny of it, and that resolution has been kept. The income has piled up until it now nearly equals the principal. Poor old Gaynor, the next-best friend I ever had, keeps the income collected and invested, and if this depression would only let up and give him a chance, he could build those Presbyterians a new church and give the orphans a picture show every night.

"Of course I've earned quite a lot of money, meanwhile, but Gaynor keeps that as a separate checking account; says circuses and vaudeville are not a dependable source of income and that I may go broke. This Ralph Gaynor is a wonder in his line, but it's not my kind of a line. He talks of interest, margins of safety, of unearned increments, corporate earnings, and things like that. His is not the big bank, with its long rows of figures. His is just a little 'Dollar-Down' concern, and he owns it all. Just now, in this depression, the Big Fellows are running to him asking, 'What to do?' And he's telling 'em to trim sails and stay close to shore.

"Ralph Gaynor is the second helpful man to come into my life, but when I grew sick and tired of being gawked at, during all my waking hours and resolved to duck away from the mob, I didn't go back to Ralph Gaynor for advice. He just wouldn't understand. The word 'recreation' is not in his vocabulary. Colts, dogs, kid-saddles, horseback riding, Landy's wisecracks, and my present-day joys have

no listed values with Ralph Gaynor, and I passed him up. If it were Mrs. Lannarck, she would understand and give it sympathetic approval.

"Well, that's something of the life story of one midget, Mrs. Gillis. Add to this, twelve long summers with circuses and the winters spent in vaudeville (both with their mobs and gawking crowds) and it's almost a completed volume. There is yet one chapter to be added and I want to talk about it to the public. One man, Baron Singer, did more for midgets—little people—than any other person, in all time. He lifted them out of the mediocre; gave them standing and personality. I never met the Baron, but I want the public to know what great work he did for an underprivileged group. And I will tell 'em Saturday night."



9ToC

Gillis and Welborn did not return from their mission the next day as they had planned. Sunday passed by without word of their whereabouts. The stay-at-homes wondered if it was to be peace or war with maudling gangsters. Did Welborn's fifty-to-one chance fail? Davy had planned to ride over to the B-line, and go over his speech-plans with his manager and promoter. Now, it seemed necessary that he and Landy ride down to the filling station seeking news of the missing ones. Monday noon, the faithful old Gillis car labored up the hill and came to a stop. Jim and Sam got out to inquire if dinner was ready.

Little was said during the meal as to the outcome of their trip. Jim made a brief explanation that they had been as far as Rawlins, accompanying the sheriff in his disposition of his boarders. The sheriff explained that he wanted to take them past the penitentiary to show them what they missed, and where they would live if they ever came back to this section. He took them all to the railway station, loaded two on the east-bound train and two went west. The sheriff retained the count's car as security for advances made.

That evening, however, after Davy had returned from delivering Welborn his supper, the four gathered in the Gillis sitting room and Jim gave more details. "This man Welborn musta been in the army," he declared. "Musta been a tough old top sergeant, er the general in command, the way he took charge. He managed every detail and managed it right. Everything worked out as planned.

"We kept old Maddy out of the judge's sight, 'en it was well enough that we did, for Judge Withers was pretty hostile towards these crazy galoots that invaded the community and disturbed the peace. He would enforce the sentence, but he listened to the sheriff's complaint that four such prisoners were too many for his cramped quarters, too costly for the results obtained. The judge agreed to suspend sentence on condition that the sheriff would deport 'em and keep 'em deported.

"We didn't have any trouble establishing Maddy's claim to the two sacks of dust. Maddy easily identified 'em and I knew they were his, but what about these gangsters? Would the count surrender title to the damaged car to compensate for rail transportation? And would they agree to leave and never come back? The sheriff had had several interviews with 'em on these matters and had never gained assent to the plan, especially as to the count and his car. The sheriff was bothered, didn't believe it could be done.

"Again it was Welborn who made the plan and gave orders. 'Bring that count in here,' he said, 'and leave me alone with him for about ten minutes. I'll find out if he wants to live or die.' And the sheriff did as Welborn said, and before the ten minutes were up, the count had readily and eagerly accepted all the conditions. We took all of 'em over to court, the judge repeated the sentence, suspended it if they stayed out of the court's jurisdiction. We had 'em in Rawlins and on their way by Sunday noon.

"No, I don't know what Welborn said to the count," was Jim's reply to Davy's eager question. "It must have been potent and terrifying, the way that gangster wet his lips and swallowed."

"Did young Goff accept Maddy's gift of the gold dust?" Jim laughed. "That's another Welborn plan and order and it wasn't ignored. This young Goff is a fine fellow. He took good care of Maddy during the whole trip. When we got back to the filling station and Goff was to go on his way, Maddy offered him the dust and he refused it. Here Welborn stepped in. He shook a little out of one sack to make 'em equal; he handed one sack to Mrs. Carter and placed the other in Goff's car. 'You keep that,' he ordered. 'This old man will live longer, happier, more

contented in knowing he has a neighbor that he can freely call on for help who will respond to his call. He's got a right to this comfort and satisfaction. You take it.' And young Goff took it."

The next morning David Lannarck was up bright and early, intent on his plans to visit the B-line ranch, but Mrs. Gillis had beat him to the draw. Landy was directed to change the stock cattle over into the ravine pasture while Jim did the milking. Davy would take Welborn's breakfast to him and wait at the Point until Landy, and the dogs, had finished their job.

Like the rest of the men folk at the Gillis ranch, Davy accepted his orders. He saddled the colt, maneuvered him up to the kitchen door for the basket of breakfast, and rode to the Point alone. Early as it was, he found Welborn up the ravine examining the gravel in a sheltered nook.

"I can work this area this winter, when the rest of the valley is covered with snow," Welborn explained as they walked back to the cabin and the basket of breakfast.

"Yes, and if you had a dynamo and electric lights," retorted Davy, "you could work nights. What's all the rush? This stuff will keep."

Welborn laughed, but he grew serious to explain: "I would like to take nine thousand dollars out of this hole by early spring, and as near as I estimate values, I've got the job about half done. There's nearly two hundred ounces in those little sacks. If my partner will be lenient in demanding his share, I think I can get it done this winter."

"If I advance the nine thousand right now, say by the end of the week, will you let up on this drive-drive-drive stuff, and relax and be yourself?" Davy's question was a demand, earnestly stated.

Welborn gave an inquiring look to see if he was being scolded or kidded. He decided that it was neither of these. "Why would you want to do that, Laddie?" he asked in a subdued tone.

"Just to keep a good man from worrying himself to death," retorted the midget. "I want to prevent a funeral, make an asset out of a liability. I want to get a big, fine man back to his normal self. If you will agree to let up on this push-drive-urge stuff; stop long enough to read a book, to laugh at Jiggs or Popeye or Dagwood, or any of the other funnies, go with me over to Adot where the mine-run folks can see what a big, fine upstanding partner I've got, why I'll have that little, old nine thousand in here by Saturday."

"Oh, I know that money is scarce, hard to get just now," Davy explained in response to Welborn's shake of the head, "but this money is idle, and there's plenty of security up in that ravine. It's not the loan, it's the results, I'm wanting. Of course, there's something eating you, some past catastrophe or mistake, that's got you down. You're worried, killing yourself trying to get it corrected. I don't know what it is, and don't want to know, until you are ready. Of course it will work out all right. There'll be a climax, a denouement, as old director Mecklin used to call the final act, and I want you to be right here, in person, in good health and spirits, to join with the rest of us in the applause and cheers."

Welborn had walked over to the window, but not to look out. His head was down, he was taking punishment. Presently he lifted his shoulders and head. There was a smile on his face even if his voice was husky. "In all my varied years, Sonny Boy, I never heard finer compliments mixed up with some real truths. What you've said is worth more to me than your kindly offer of funds. I wouldn't take your money under any condition, it would add complications, but I am going to take your advice. From now on, I'll try to do as you say, try to save myself for the glorious finish that you picture."

The arrival of Jim in the old car and Landy's clamorous calls broke up the conference. Davy hurried out to join his friend in their planned trip to the B-line ranch. He was very quiet in the hazards of Brushy Fork, but on arriving at the level stretch beyond he stopped Landy. "What am I going to name this colt, Landy? He's got to have a name, if he's to be taught to do things. Old Boss Fletcher had a name for every elephant in the herd, and they would step right out when their names were called. Horses, dogs, elephants, even the cats quickly learned their names and the short words like 'halt,' 'go,' 'kneel,' 'turn,' and the like. This colt is smart, wants to do things, if you're not too dumb in telling him what you want. But he's got to have a name."

"Alice and I were talkin' about that the other night," replied the ex cow-hand. "She had some flossy ones: Emperor, Commander, President, en sich, but I vetoed that trash, the colt couldn't carry 'em and live. I suggested Red, er Monty, er some sich. Thar we adjourned and left the colt without a moniker. What's yer notion of a name fer this little hoss?"

"I just can't think of the right one," said Davy resignedly. "It wouldn't do to name him after some of the folks around here, that would mix things up. The circus folks have worn out such names as Barnum, Ringling, Robinson, Bailey, Coles, Sells, Barnes, Wallace, and others and they don't fit a small hoss anyhow. I am in hopes that this fine, smart Adine girl at the B-line has some sort of a

suggestion. Maybe, she's got a name that will do."

At a favorable place on the narrow road where the travelers could gaze down on a bunch of the B-line cattle quietly grazing and where the morning sun splashed varied colors on the distant hills, Davy pushed his mount in front of old Gravy to halt the party. He flung his hand in a wide sweep to include everything in sight.

"That's Paradise, Landy. It's what I've dreamed about for the last ten years. It's the wide open spaces filled with all the variations in old Nature's book of scenery. And best of all, there's no mob of nit-wits to titter and smirk. It's my Heaven.

"Just now, two things blur the picture; I want to get this speech thing off my hands, and I want to find a resister, a sass-back, a contrary cuss, that will argue back at me. I want to keep him nearby to remind me of old times. Why back two years ago, I used to visit old Polo Garrett, who had the concession in the menagerie tent, just to get cussed out. Polo's vocabulary was limited to sassing back. 'What's eatin' ya?,' 'Git outa here,' 'Who's a-running this dump?' 'Whar do ya git that stuff?' were his mildest phrases. When I got fed up on a bunch of simpering women and their, 'ain't he cute?' stuff, all I had to do was to barge in on Polo and get cussed out and learn that the world wasn't all gush and guff.

"And particularly I need this 'argufyer' right out here now. I'm getting tired of having my own way. The people are too kind, too considerate, regard me as a child to be petted and pampered. There's too much mushy sentiment. A day or two ago, I told Mrs. Gillis my life history. It was mushy and without climax. She wanted to cry over it. This morning, before you came to the Point, I gave Welborn a big going over about his working all the time. And he never sassed back. He should have kicked me out. Instead of that, he agreed with me. Him, a big, strong man that had made a gangster eat his gun and ordered the judge and sheriff what to do! The idea! Him letting a midget order him around! What we need here is a good cusser-outer."

"You're too late," said Landy dryly. "You've missed yer appointment by about forty years. We had a party up state wunst, that filled all yer requirements. Hit was a woman. She'd fuss at the sun fer comin' up, an cuss hit fer goin' down. She buried three husbands en was deserted by several more. At her death, en in honor of the happy event, they named a little crick after her. They called hit Crazy Woman's Crick.... Hi, Potter," Landy called, as they approached the stables of the B-line ranch. "Git that gate opened and throw out yer welcome rug."

"Troubles never come single, they come in bunches," grumbled Potter as he complied. "Two hosses go lame this mornin', en Jim Finch, the grazing commissioner, comes from up on the Mad Trapper Fork a-callin' on us fer help to round up some of old Hull Barrow's misfits of horns, hoofs, and hides, en to add further miseries, here you arrive on the scene. Why, Peaches gave out strict orders, that if old Turkeyneck came prowlin' around, to say, that she wasn't at home at all en to tell the little gent to ride right into the house."

"Who said that?" demanded Davy, with alacrity.

"Why, Peaches, Miss Adine, she said if old Landy—"

"Ye, Ho!" yelled Davy excitedly. "This colt is named. That's it! Peaches! Why didn't we think of that before, Landy?" Davy patted the colt's neck affectionately. "That's your name, old boy, Peaches!"

Hearing the outcry, Adine Lough came out of the house, and down the graveled way. "Good morning," she called. "I was expecting you. My, but he's handsome," she exclaimed, examining the little horse that arched his neck in approval of the inspection. "You look like a gallant cavalier out of the old picture books."

"We've just named him," said Davy proudly. "We named him after you. His name is Peaches."

"Ah, pshaw," said the girl, laughing and blushing. "That's just a nickname that these men out here call me behind my back, of course, and the poor colt deserves a better fate. But come in, both of you, I have good news." The girl led the way into the hall. "You go in and visit with grandpa, Landy, while we talk shop in the library."

"I talked with the Nazarene preacher and he's very enthusiastic over the plan and prospects," Adine explained after they were settled in the workshop. "I told him of the ad, that I was to run in the paper and he's somewhat of an artist and is putting up signs all over town. It augurs a good crowd, the biggest ever to assemble in Adot. He plays an accordion and his wife sings and they have arranged for a quartette of girls to sing a couple of numbers and then you are to talk. The meeting is to be held in Joe Burns's big warehouse and it won't hold the people. Now this is not a church meeting, it's an entertainment. You can laugh and applaud at will. You can tell funny stories about circuses or what-have-you, it's informal, go as far as you like!"

"Well, here's how I had mapped out the talk. I'll tell 'em something about

midgets," said Davy, "for midgets seem to be a forgotten subject in literature. If you will comb your college library down at Boulder, you'll not find a single book on the subject, and I am not sure that I know enough about 'em to fill out a talk on the subject."

"That's the very subject you ought to talk on. Why I can hardly wait to hear it. Who better can tell it? If you are short of facts, just romance a little, that's allowable where facts are scarce. Tell 'em personal incidents and don't make 'em too solemn or pathetic. Make 'em laugh. Personally, I'm going to get a close-up seat, for in that big barn of a place I doubt if you can reach the outer fringes."

"Well, if the preacher gent can make himself heard, I can too," retorted Davy. "I practiced up on that stuff, there's where I specialized. You see, Miss Adine, when I joined up with the Singer Midgets at Saint Louis, I didn't have an act, a specialty, anything to give the public. I just joined up because Baron Singer was collecting midgets, showing 'em a good time, with no thought of making a profit. But it did make profit. The public wanted to see midgets."

"It was my first contact with my clan. I noticed that midgets didn't change their voices when they reached maturity, still spoke in childish tones. Not having much to do, I practiced voice culture, deepened and strengthened my speech. I made my voice reach to the back seats. It earned me a job. I became the announcer; made the in-front-of-the-curtain talks. In the summer, with the Big Top, I often simulated the ringmaster to make announcements from the center ring. It was a feature all right, seeing a little guy doing a big man's job."

"Oh I'll make 'em hear all right, but what they are to hear is the problem. To the midget stuff I thought I would add a few paragraphs about circus people, the different kinds and what they do. The general public never contacts the real circus people, just the ticket takers, ushers, and roustabouts. They never meet the managers and performers. And because grafters, shilabers, and skin-game artists follow circuses, the public thinks these are a part of it. It's only fair to circus people that this connection be denied."

"Why, I didn't know that," exclaimed Adine, "I just supposed the grafters were a part of it. Here I am, learning a lot of things and school not yet started. Anyhow, I'm going to buy a ticket for Mrs. Carmody and inveigle her to the entertainment. She said circus people ought not be allowed to participate in a church benefit."

"Now you are to come over here Saturday morning. Bring Landy with you, as we can all three ride to Adot in my roadster. There, we will lay the top back, and

with you between us, sitting up on the back cushion, we'll parade the town. The door opens at seven o'clock. Performance begins at seven-thirty. Then we come back here for the night and you can ride home Sunday morning. You can talk for an hour if you want to, but you should speak for thirty minutes at least."

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"Are you going to live here always?" asked Davy as he slid down off the dictionary and chair at the end of the conference. "What I mean is this, Adine," he added, noting the girl's questioning look. "Are you going to spend your life out here in the sticks, with cattle, horses, and a few yokels that you have to ride miles and miles, before you see two of 'em together?"

"Why, this is my home, I belong here, the same as other young people live with their folks," replied the girl, somewhat startled by the abruptness of the question. "I haven't planned to shift pastures, as granddaddy would say. Why are you asking such an abrupt, personal question?"

"Well, it is sorta personal and rather abrupt," agreed the midget in an appeasing tone. "I should have made the approach with more finesse. Abruptness is one of my defects. But now that I've blundered in, I'd just as well finish. You don't belong out here in the wide open spaces, in these sparse settlements. You belong in the congested areas, where big things are being done, where there's planning, execution, accomplishment. Why, you've taken over both ends of a little hoss trade, laid out all the plans, details and ground work for a community entertainment, and did it with the ease of a big executive lighting a cigarette. You need a big job, in a big place. With your personality and head-work, you can climb up the ladder to the top rung."

"Well, of all things!" said the girl, embarrassed at the unexpected drift, but laughing at the implications. "And this from a guy that has fled the mob and

wants me to take his place. Now just what big job have you laid out for me? Running a circus? Managing a theater? Or maybe operating a railroad?"

"You could make a success with any or all of 'em," retorted Davy. "But none of these were in my mind. Some women want a career. Some gain it by their own efforts and some climb to success on a ladder supported by others. Then there is the big majority—many of 'em brilliant and capable—that just settle down in the doldrums of marriage and let their talents rust out in negligence and inattention."

"Then I'm not to marry?"

"You ought to. A gal as attractive, vivacious, and clever as you are, would have to marry—in self-defense, if for no other reason. Marriage need not interfere. It might help. With that hazard and gamble out of the way, it would allow you to expand your talents in planning, executing, and managing in any line you choose."

"And about when do you plan that this defense marriage—this shotgun wedding—is to take place?" questioned Adine scornfully. "And who's the victim?"

"Now that's a candle-flame that I'll keep my fingers out of," said Davy hastily. "Judge Vane told me once a person who advises or mixes in on the marriage relations of others is liable in damages. And anyhow, sane people don't run matrimonial agencies. In that debacle, you're on your own. I'm promoting talent, not running a marriage bureau. And I don't want the side show to dim the performance in the big top. You've got talent, personality, ability to influence others, and whether you are solo in the orchestra or doubling in brass in the matrimonial band makes no difference. You ought to be directing the mob instead of listening to a lone midget."

Adine Lough laughed, not at the text, but the homely comparisons of the little man that, standing hat in hand, was earnestly and seriously throwing bouquets of compliments and darts of poignant facts right in her face. And both the flowers and darts were coming from an unexpected source. With the delicate matrimonial problem swept completely aside, she felt that this new-found friend, in his nation-wide travels and a million contacts, was really sincere in some of his estimates and was trying to be helpful in his blunt, abrupt appraisals. Anyhow, she was reconciled to that view.

"Well, I never had so many compliments in all my life! I didn't know that you were a student of sociology—could estimate capabilities and get everyone in

their right groove. I should have been conferring with you, for I have an unsolved problem, bigger than any you've mentioned." Adine had ceased her scorning tones; now she was asking for an answer. She motioned Davy to a footstool.

"Why, I didn't know that you had a care in the world. As Polo Garrett used to say, 'What's eatin' ya?'"

"My problem is my family. I'm the only one left that is able to do things. There is little I can do to aid the ones that are sick and I am making no progress in keeping these two big, clumsy ranches out of bankruptcy.

"Father, as you know, is in the hospital in Omaha and mother was called there three weeks ago. The trivial ulcers have developed into something worse. Daddy went to Omaha to be near the market that was tumbling, crashing, and bringing on bankruptcy to stock raisers. He hoped to find a solution, hoped to learn that the end of the disaster was in sight. He had been cutting production for four years; surely a period of scarcity was at hand, he wanted to be ready.

"Meanwhile he consulted a specialist on a matter of stomach ulcers, only to encounter a more serious condition. A dozen years ago, in one season, he had sold eighty thousand dollars worth of livestock from these two ranches. Just now, he has sold breeding stock until there's little left. Now these recent sales were made not to get money, but to reduce the supply, to meet conditions. Money needs were not serious until both banks failed two years ago, and then it became a calamity. And now, my young counselor, adviser, flatterer, and friend, do you think I should seek a job in the congested areas?"

"Well, it does appear that you are involved in a lot of responsibility, and surely have a big problem on your hands. You speak of two ranches. Where's the other one?"

"Really, it's all one," the girl explained, "but Granddaddy keeps up the pretense of operating one of his own—wants to compete with Father in management—in livestock, in methods. It's the Old Pioneer versus the Progressive. Longhorn versus thoroughbred, and Daddy indulges and encourages him in the plan.

"You see, Grandfather had settled on Grant's Fork (that's about four miles west); he had built a cabin and stables, long before the surveyors came. 'They surveyed me in,' was his frequent statement. And there he lived and carried on until Father grew up, married, and built this home. Grandfather registered his cattle brand as the Bowline. It is a bent bow with a taut string. Father carried the same brand, but folks began calling it the B-line and both ranches go by that

name. And it's really one to the outsider. The difference in methods and in management is best illustrated by the fact that in the fall, Grandfather takes a week to drive his finished product to the pens at the railroad siding, while Father trucks a full carload over there in the early morning.

"But in all these years there never was any distinction in ownership of property or chattels. If Grandfather wanted a stack of hay or a roll of fencing he came and got it. He would call on Daddy's men for help as freely as he would call his own. They paid each other's bills without any accounting and there was never any friction, until now. Now, the problem of all these past years is dumped right in my lap. I don't know how to handle it. I am desperate for advice, so desperate that I now seek the counsel of the Oracle of the Footlights, the Mystic of the Sawdust Ring. Wilt thou help me, Sire?" concluded Adine, as she bowed in mock distress to the little man squirming on the footstool.

"Well, I don't see that you need help. You've done all that is needful and possible. You can't heal the sick, stop a financial depression, or retard old age, but you've left nothing undone. Your problem is already solved."

"We haven't reached the insoluble part," said Adine gravely. "I've just given you the details leading up to it. I have shown that there were two ranches, two plans of management, an intermingling of assets, and never the least bit of friction. Yet there is one thing in which they are as far apart as the two poles: Father always banks his money, and Granddaddy never did. It doesn't seem possible for a person to live as long as Grandfather has and not use a bank. Back in the early days, he wore a money belt with gold in it. In later years he had what he calls a keyster, a metal box with lock and key where he keeps paper money. He is not a miser; he pays bills promptly and gives generously. The keyster was never hidden. It might be left on the table or mantel or, because of its weight, it might be used as a door prop. So far as I know, no one ever cheated him, and surely no one had the nerve to try to take it by force.

"Grandmother died before I was born. After her death, and while Father was setting up business over here, the Craigs moved in with Granddaddy. They were young people, brother and sister, Joe and Myrah, and they have been there ever since. Now just who the Craigs are I do not know. There is an old rumor among the cow hands that Granddaddy was paying off some sort of an old romantic debt when he took them in. It must have been a far-flung romance, for the Craigs reputedly came from up in the Wind River district.

"At any rate there they are. Myrah is a good housekeeper and has been a good

caretaker of an aged man. Joe was never a cow man. He has a crippled hand. In his young days he roamed the country as a hunter and trapper. He cuts the wood, builds the fires, and runs the errands; just a lackey boy, and is still just that.

"When Father came to Omaha this last time, Granddaddy came over here occasionally. He would bring the keyster and pay the bills. Finally, as Father's stay was prolonged, I persuaded Grandfather to headquarter over here. I fixed up the front room for his convenience. He seems contented with the fireplace and Morris chair. I could have gotten along all right but the matter of finances bothered me. With the banks closed, we have little money available. Even if we had a considerable sum, I wouldn't know where to keep it. A cupboard or desk seemed an insecure place and my financial experience has been limited to a little money purse with small change and probably only one bill. Just now, Grandfather's keyster is the Rock of Gibraltar, the financial prop that is sustaining the whole structure. But what about this prop? How strong is it? Will it outlast the depression? I don't know. I doubt if Father would know, if he were here. He and Granddaddy might exchange quips or gibes over the matter of sales or production but they didn't broadcast as to funds on hand.

"Truly, I don't care to know how much money is in Granddaddy's keyster, that's his affair. But it's irksome and tragic not to know one's limitations. Tomorrow the whole structure may crumble and fall, for lack of another dollar.

"My relations with Granddaddy are peculiar. He was sorely disappointed that I wasn't a boy. He tolerates me and that's about all. To him, women are a liability, not an asset. He regards them as a necessary evil. If anything important is to be done, it must be done by a man. If he is irritated by some woman's accomplishments he growls out: 'Men fought for and won the territory and women followed in to take possession.' And for this reason it was an easy matter to induce him to come over here with his keyster and take charge. He just couldn't conceive that a girl could manage a business.

"But notwithstanding his disappointments and my timidity, we've gotten along very well. When I go away to school he always slips me a bill or two for spending money. I could feel that he resented my buying a car, yet he pays for my gasoline without complaint. His bias, prejudice, and vindictiveness doesn't apply to the members of his immediate family, but it does apply intensely and vigorously to others. It's this peculiarity that might wreck the works at this critical time.

"It's a family tradition that Granddaddy never went in debt for anything. If he

hadn't the cash to pay, he didn't buy. But just now, they are closing out the Bar-O ranch lands, cattle, chattels, and it's ill repute. If Granddaddy knew of this sale, he would spend every dime in that keyster of his, and go in debt as far as he could, in order to own this thing that has been a life's obsession. And if he were to spend this money, be it much or little, this B-line would be bankrupt. I have tried to keep the news of this sale away from Granddaddy just to avoid this catastrophe. If it comes, I am helpless."

During this recital, Adine was seated facing Davy on the footstool. There were lines in her face that Davy had never seen, a near quaver in her voice that he had never heard. The Sir Galahad of the Sawdust Ring had surely found a maiden in dire distress. He wriggled on his seat, mustering comforting words.

"Well, I don't want to offend by poo-pooing your troubles," said Davy as consolingly as he could. "Sickness is always bad, but everything is being done that's possible; your grandfather's acts couldn't work much harm. You don't owe anything to anybody; your needs are few; your expenses are at a minimum. There will be a moratorium on taxes and your few employees would readily accept a note in lieu of cash, and friends like Mrs. Gillis would gladly come to the rescue if quick funds are needed. Frankly, you are a long way from Trouble River and you should not worry about crossing it until you reach the brink.

"And that's that," said the little man, brushing his hands as if the matter were fully settled. "Now tell me about this Bar-O thing. Is this the same affair that Mister Potter spoke of? What's the grazing master got to do, in folding up a ranch? Why would your grandfather get all het up if he heard about it? Where is this Bar-O property? Maybe in this tragic drama, there is a comedy part that I could play."

"There's no comedy in this local drama," said Adine, resuming her challenging attitude. "And you brush the tragedies into the wastebasket like mere dross. A while ago, you were assigning me to big jobs in the congested areas while you were to idle around in the wide open spaces. Just now, I would put you back in some city as a public relations officer, a Mister Fixit, to diagnose and cure personal and community ills. You would fix 'em or discard 'em instantly.

"But, badinage aside, I know very little of the Bar-O entanglements and complications. It's an old story. Granddaddy knows all about it but he doesn't talk. There are few facts and many rumors. For three generations it's been a sort of a gnaw-bone, to be dug up and chewed on when there's nothing else. It's a musty

old tradition, a sort of a remnant of the old days, that present day newsmongers use as a yardstick for comparisons. If a modern domestic complication breaks out, the current gossip outmatches it by the entanglements in the Barrow family. If it's murder, robbery, or arson, some of the Barrows did worse and got away with it.

"Just now, some current chapters are being written. Mister Logan, the receiver of the bank of Adot, has foreclosed a mortgage on the real estate and seeks possession. Mister Finch, the grazing master, always lenient and forbearing, is seeking to recover past due payments. This may be the final chapter. Grim facts are taking the place of hearsay."

"Well, just where is this land of romantic tragedy and domestic infelicity?" questioned Davy. "How come that the movie people haven't taken it over to fit their verbiage: thrilling, stupendous, smashing, wondrous, and so forth?"

"Well, if the movie people have as much trouble getting on the property as the sheriff and Mister Finch are having, they wouldn't get a very clear picture and the story would be limited to their own misfortunes. Up to now, old Hulls Barrow has stood 'em off with a gun. They don't want to kill him and they can't get possession.

"Now this Bar-O ranch is just over the hogback, south of us. There is no road, just a trail over the ridge. The Barrows use the other road. I don't know how big it is. The surveys in these hills stay in the valleys; the lines run from point to promontory. The units are miles, not rods. Tranquil Meadows, a fine area of grassland, is just south of the Bar-O. Had the Silver Falls project been a success, the government would have done the same with the Meadows tract. A road blasted through the hills would have connected the two tracts.

"Old Matt Barrow was one of the early settlers. Grandfather's feud with him had early beginnings. I don't think it was personal, for they rarely met. Granddaddy was outstanding as a law enforcer and here was a petty offender right under his nose. Barrow had no cattle brand until they made him use one. He was uneducated, couldn't spell his own name, and his name, in the records, is spelled in several ways. He had no fences and would employ any misfit or doubtful that came along. He seemed to prey on one side of the ridge and sell on the other. But in all the years he escaped conviction of even a minor offense. In an early day, a lone prospector was missing. Everybody had ideas, but no evidence. Dan Hale's stacks were burned. No evidence. And so it ran through the years.

"Barrow raised two boys. This Hulls, who is standing off the law with a gun,

and Archie, who disappeared in about a year after Maizie came. The boys surely must have had a mother, but there is no record or rumor of a death or burial. The same is true of old Clemmy Pruitt, who went there to live. Old Matt Barrow must have maintained a private cemetery and conducted the funerals.

"The boys, Hulls and Archie, grew up to be old bachelors. They carried on in about the same fashion as the old man. Maybe they visited the settlements and got drunk oftener than he did, but the Bar-O continued as a mystery and a sore spot in a neighborhood that was struggling up from primitive ways." Adine paused to chuckle a bit at the midget's interest in the recital. The little man's eyes were glued on the speaker, he missed never a word.

"You are marveling how I know so much about a thing that is based on hearsay and rumors," continued the narrator as she pointed to a manuscript on the table. "There are my notes for my thesis, 'Social Work in Rural Communities.' It's full of notes and comments on the rumors and hearsay about the Barrow family. In every community the exception to the rule is played up as the feature story. In Pittsburgh it's steel; in Boston, the Back Bay district gets the headlines; in Charleston, it's the Colonial homes that are featured. The mine-run folks get no mention. Here in Henry County, it's the Barrow family. In my notes, I simply list 'em as rumors, letting the reader be the judge. And now, let's get along to the final chapter.

"Maizie came to the Barrows about ten years ago. Where from, nobody knew, but there were many unconfirmed rumors. It was given out that her last name was Menardi. Whether this was her family name or acquired by marriage, was not stated. Maizie took over—house, corral, and ranch. She made but few changes in the material things, but the two old bachelors and the occasional cow hands were certainly speeded up. Old Jeff Stoups, who had been a retainer since the days of old Matt, quit. 'A woman boss is bad enough, but a hellion is wu's,' was Jeff's statement.

"I have never seen Maizie in all these years. She is rarely away from the Bar-O. Her public appearances are limited to a few rare visits to the stores and a few days spent in court. Mr. Phillips, on her first visit to the drygoods store, described her as dazzling and imperious. Mrs. Phillips describes her as being near thirty years old, tall, rather graceful, regular features, a perpetual sneer, coal-black hair and a coppery skin never seen on another. Her dress was normal, with few adornments. She was bareheaded, wore mannish gloves, and sported large circlet earrings. She differed little in appearance from other women; her voice was low and deep; she could read. She bought books and magazines.

"Our Charley Case (the comedians around the stables call him Flinthead) furnished the caricature of the lady. He was coming back from Granddaddy's south pasture and rode the trail past the Bar-O to see what he could see. He pictured Maizie as wearing overalls, a man's shirt with the tail out, a big slouch hat, and buckskin gloves. She was directing Jeff Stoups about digging a post hole.

"And then came an added feature to the strange personnel. About a month after Maizie's arrival, a young man was occasionally seen around the Bar-O. He was neither cow hand nor laborer. His status was that of a constant visitor. He quartered with the family, if Hulls, Archie, and Maizie would be called a family, instead of living at the bunkhouse. Old Jeff referred to him as a dude, but the comment applied to mannerisms rather than clothes. He dressed as a townsman; he frequented the poolroom and Gatty's doggery. He announced his name as Steve Adams, said that he was Maizie's nephew. He played a fancy game of pool and drank in moderation.

"Questioned by the curious, he talked freely but always about places and conditions elsewhere. He knew nothing about local affairs. That summer he made frequent trips. On his return he would report having been to Chicago, Kansas City, Denver. A later checkup revealed that he was telling the truth. And these truthful stories were exasperating. They explained nothing. The Bar-O, with its mixed up domestic complications, was still an isolated enigma.

"That fall was the time of the great train robbery. The event occurred at the same time as the local raid on Gatty's Quart Shop. The world news was minimized by the local affair. We gave it little thought. In the week following, several cattle men headquartered here and at Granddaddy's. They inspected several herds to include the Bar-O outfit. And later still, they raided the Bar-O premises. They were railroad detectives, posing as cattle buyers. They were too late. They got nothing but some bits of evidence that the train robbers had used the Bar-O as a hangout. Maizie explained to the detectives and sheriff that the strangers represented themselves as mineral prospectors. They worked in the hills in the daytime. They left in the evening following the cattle inspection. She reported that her nephew, Steve Adams, was in Chicago, had been there for several weeks. A check up revealed that this was true.

"A further check up revealed that these strangers had stayed all night at the Unicorn Ranch near Northgate. Abel Sneed, the Unicorn boss, as a matter of precaution went through their 'war bags' while they slept. He found nothing unusual, surely no money.

"What became of this giant sum that was blasted out of the safe after wounding the messenger? Neither the detectives nor anyone else ever found a trace of it. But a further enigma was added to the mystery when a month later Archie Barrow, the younger brother, came to the Records office and made a deed of his undivided share in the Bar-O lands to his brother Hulls. Archie made the statement that he was through, was leaving for the Northwest, and that he would not return.

"Hulls Barrow surely didn't get the Express Company's money. A year or two later Maizie brought him to town to give the bank a mortgage to secure funds to defend Steve Adams, charged with murdering Allie Garrett. Maizie hired a firm of Denver lawyers and the case went through all the complications of venue, trial, and appeal.

"This trial was the community's biggest event, although it had origin in a barroom brawl. During its progress, business was suspended while the public swarmed in, hoping that the truth of the Barrow mysteries might be revealed. The public was disappointed. Steve Adams never took the witness stand, although many thought he had an even chance to convince a jury that he was not the aggressor. The prosecutor was materially aided in the case by Judge Griffith of Laramie. There was no record as to who paid Judge Griffith, but Granddaddy was highly gratified that the accused got a ten-year sentence. He was one man in the community that knew of Griffith's ability as a prosecutor.

"And now that old mortgage is being foreclosed. The Bar-O is on the market at a forced sale. If Granddaddy knew about it, he wouldn't sleep until he owned it. If he were ten years younger he would go over there and shoot it out with Hulls Barrow for the possession. And he needs more land about as badly as he needs ten thumbs on one hand. He already owns all that joins his, his holdings envelope the Bar-O on three sides. He might covet the grazing rights in the Tranquil Meadows district, but two of our winter grazing meadows will lay idle this winter and our fifty ricks of hay are about four times more than we can use.

"Really, Granddaddy doesn't want more land, wouldn't buy other adjoining land, but he would spend every available cent to get rid of the Barrows. I have two slender, lingering hopes. First, if he does find out about the sale and buys it, that there will still be money left in the keyster. And secondly, if he should buy it, I hope I can persuade him to sell it to some first class, reputable rancher. Someone with a family with whom we can be neighborly and the men folks can exchange work in the busy season."

"How much is this mortgage thing?" questioned Davy, as the lengthy story seemed near the end. "What's due the grazing master? How many cattle are they running? When is this sale? Who can I see about the details? Maybe I could find somebody to take over. And anyhow, don't you worry about expense money. Mrs. Gillis has enough cash-on-hand to take care of all of us, unless this panic grows into a financial cyclone."

"Mister Potter, out at the stables, knows most of the details. Mister Finch and a deputy sheriff were here this morning, talking it over with him. As I understand it, Mister Logan, the bank receiver, bought the land at the sale, but it seems that a bank receiver can't hold the land, he must sell it to make cash assets. Mister Logan has the bank's affairs in good shape, except for this item, and it's got him badly worried. Just now, he thinks it would have been better to have sold the note and mortgage to someone and let the buyer take the grief of getting possession. Anyhow, talk to Mister Potter, he has the answers to most of your questions. See him, by all means," urged Adine Lough as Davy prepared to join the impatient Landy standing at the door.

11ToC

"We've got a lot of work cut out for us," said Davy as he and Landy walked down the drive to the stables. "I want to talk to Potter, but I don't want to show too much interest. I want to get some information about this Barrow resistance that's got 'em all stirred up. How big is this Bar-O ranch anyhow? How much money does this receiver gent need to have to get in the clear? How much is owed on the grazing allotment? And how come that a sheriff's posse can't depose one old man?"

"Old Jim and I were jist talkin' about this same thing," said Landy as they paused at the yard gate.

"Does Mr. Lough know about it?" exclaimed the astonished midget. "Adine didn't want him to know! Who tipped it off to him?"

Landy chuckled as he fingered the gate latch. "Old Jim's been 'round a right smart time, en he don't confer with young women on business matters. He read the leetle fine print legal ad in the papers en he sent his handyman, Joe Craig, to Logan, the receiver gent, en got all the details."

"Does he want the ranch?" questioned Davy.

"Naw!" scorned Landy. "Old Jim says hit will be eight years before the ranchin' business can git back on hits feet, en by that time he'll be moulderin' dust en dry bones. Old Jim's still harpin' on that funeral business. Now he plans to hold a big barbecue en send out invitations. Jim's got the money all right, but he wants to spend hit on a big, spread-eagle funeral."

"Adine should know about this. It will save her a lot of worry," said Davy, and he hastened back to the house. Presently he rejoined his companion, who was watching a party of horsemen coming down the lane back of the stables.

"Looks like a retreat," was Landy's comment. "I don't see eny scalps a-hangin' on their spears."

"How big is this Bar-O affair, how many acres?" questioned the little man.

"They don't measure in acres," said Landy, still watching the approaching party. "Old Jim says hit's about eight sections, four wide and two deep."

"How big is this judgment? How much money would this receiver and grazing master have to have to get 'em in the clear? What's the friction that they can't get these resisting parties to see the inevitable?"

"Thar's Logan en Finch, with Flinthead en Hickory," exclaimed Landy, as the horsemen approached the far gate. "She's a water-haul. Old Hulls has stood 'em off ag'in. Now about yer questions. If ya would put 'em through the chute, one at a time, 'stead of pushin' 'em up in droves, I could answer better. On the money question, I git this from old Jim. He gits hit from Joe Craig, en he got hit from Logan, so I guess hit's right. The original note was three thousand dollars. They overdrew en added some. The int'rest en costs runs hit to forty-two hundred. The grass bill is less'n three hundred. The whole biz is near forty-five hundred."

"Why, a little performing elephant is worth that!" scorned the midget. "The script of a good vaudeville act would sell for twice as much. What's the matter with the local moneychangers? What's the whole thing worth anyhow? Why

doesn't some diplomat wheedle old Hulls off? And why—"

"How much is yer little elephant earnin' now, eatin' his head off in winter quarters?" interrupted Landy dryly. "Whar would ye show yer vaudeville act with the show places all closed? Hit's the same here en all over.

"Ef I was a young man, I'd take a fling at this thing," said Landy soberly. "She's wuth about ten times the amount asked. Alice has a leetle money, not that much maybe, en she's purty tight, yit hit might be done. Old Jim Lough is cautious and reliable, but he's set the date of the comeback too far off. Cattle is gittin' scarcer every day and people must eat. I'm too old to mess in, but a youngster could take over en double his money in five years. In ten years he'd be asking ten times the price he'd paid. But with the banks closed en investors in a financial stampede, five thousand dollars can't be picked outen the sage...."

"Why, Landy! I can have five thousand dollars here in five days," interrupted Davy. "If there was any way to move Hulls and Maizie out, I would deal with 'em before they dismounted." Davy waved his hand in the direction of the horsemen that had stopped at the farther corral to inspect the weaned calves.

"Hulls en Maizie woulda been out long ago if they'd quit snoopin' around and let Hulls peddle a few cows to git money to travel on. I've got a musty but reliable tip Hulls is itchin' to go. Hit's too long a tale to tell without stim'lants, but Archie has sent fer Hulls en Maizie, wants 'em to come en he'p him with a roomin' house down in Arizony, whar they're a-buildin' a big dam, en things are boomin'. Hulls is shore plannin' a git-away. He thinks he can drive through en take some plunder with him. He's traded off his ridin' hosses fer harness critters. He's contracted Ike Steele fer a light spring wagon. With a little money in his pocket, Hulls is ready. You buy this thing, Son! Slip Hulls a hundred en he's out en gone.

"Anyhow, let's listen to their talk. They've finished another failure en are worried. Sass 'em if ye want to, en kid 'em out of the hundred if ye can," was Landy's final caution as the party of horsemen dismounted and loitered to hear Potter and Landy's caustic comments before going to their car, parked outside the gate. Landy introduced Davy as a newcomer.

"Ye should have had my podner here with ye this mornin'," badgered Landy. "His size en power mighta skeered Hulls en made him quit."

Logan laughed as he pictured the midget in a contest with shaggy Hulls Barrow. "Maybe we could deal with Hulls," he said, "if we could get him away from the woman. If your young friend has a way with women, could lure Maizie

out of hearing for a few moments, we could sure use him."

"Well, I've never won any medals in contests for women's favors," said Davy, "but I've found that a bouquet of flattery sometimes helps. Have you tried the Rose-Chrysanthemum method?"

"That's what we were trying today," said Logan resignedly, "but instead of roses and posies it turned out to be brickbats and cabbages. You see, we left the sheriff at home and took along the men from here, hoping to get past the guard line and count up what cattle is left on the place. But it was no use. The yard fence was the deadline. Maizie was right at Hull's elbow, commanding her one-man army to fire at will. Not being armed, we fell back to consolidate losses instead of gains. Have you any suggestions or plans?" Logan's reply and question was directed at Landy. Like others, in their first contact with midgets, he was giving Davy the status of a child. He could not credit him with experience or expect counsel from that source. Landy's reply was not comforting.

"Wal, hit does look like a couple o' killin's en the expense of two funerals 'fore ye can git action. Old Matt, the daddy of 'em, is reported as havin' a private graveyard, scattered eround somewhar. Hit might come in handy in this emergency. In yer gaddin' around have ye ever seen anything like hit?" concluded Landy, turning to Davy.

"I never did!" said the midget emphatically. "It's got more entanglements than the time Solly Monheim took the bankrupt law to escape bankruptcy. That's the way Solly explained it after his show went on the rocks at Lincoln. And anyhow," he added to Logan, "why don't you peddle the thing to someone else and let them take the grief and do the slaughtering?"

"There's no slaughtering, as you call it, involved," said Logan with much dignity. "It's a lawful proceeding. If anyone is killed it will be done legally and in due process of enforcing the law."

"So you left the law out of it, left the sheriff at home, and went prowling on your own. If the old belligerent had cut down on one of these cow hands this morning, everything would have been legal and orderly?"

Davy's sarcasm struck home. Logan's face flushed. He realized that he was talking to an adult, not a child. He resented the criticism. But for the fact that the little man was a friend of Landy Spencer he would have made a harsh reply or ignored him entirely.

"Well, just what is your interest in the matter?" he questioned. "I don't see your name on the list of bank stockholders. Maybe you are kin to the Barrows, sort of looking after their interests?"

"No, I am not related to the Barrows. Never had the pleasure of ever seeing one of 'em. I don't know where they live, couldn't find the place without a guide. Wouldn't know how big it was after I'd seen it. I'm just an innocent bystander with big ears and a lot of curiosity. There is a rumor abroad that the ranch is in the hands of a receiver, that it's for sale, that the receiver is having some trouble about possession. If I could get just a few facts and find this receiver, I'd make him a proposition to buy it 'as is,' as the auctioneers sometimes say."

"You have never seen the ranch?" questioned the astonished Logan. "You would bid sight-unseen for a property that you don't know where it's located—would accept a deed without possession? Young man, you need a guardian."

"I had one once," retorted the midget, "and in the eight months of his management he turned over quite a lot of money to me, enough to gamble on, to buy a block of blue sky or a pig in a poke. Maybe there's enough to make a bid on a ranch, a property with a crazy man on it, armed with a gun and threatening to shoot intruders. If you are the receiver, I want to make a bid for the Bar-O ranch, as it is."

"No bids are solicited," said Logan severely. "The judgment is for forty-two hundred dollars. I bid it in for that, and must account for that amount. Then there are expenses and costs being added from time to time—"

"Now you've hit center," interrupted the midget. "You've pricked the sore spot. There are costs being added, and time being frittered, and nothing accomplished. It might run on this way for months, and you hoping to have the collection cleaned up and get the bank opened soon thereafter."

"Now I'm wanting to help, wanting to get on the payroll. Here's how. Between now and next Thursday I'll pay you four thousand dollars for a deed to the Bar-O ranch. You make the consideration the full forty-two hundred and show, in your report, an expense of two hundred in getting possession. Then it's up to me to get old Shells, or Hulls, or what's his name, to move out. It might cost me the two hundred, it might cost a lot more; that's my lookout. Maybe the old guy won't move at all. But in any event, I shall not resort to law, won't call the sheriff to get killed or get action. With winter coming on and a woman mixed up in the case, it would be too bad to set 'em out in the snow without shelter or money."

Adine Lough, more deeply interested in the outcome than any other person present, had come from the house to join the little party now congregated in front of Potter's little office building. She heard Davy's final proposition. She saw tough, seasoned old Landy Spencer furtively reach down and pat the little

man on the back.

"What about the cattle?" asked Finch, breaking the tension.

"Are any cattle left, and how many?" Davy countered promptly.

"I don't know," replied Finch sheepishly. "We didn't get to count 'em this morning. There's probably thirty or forty old cows with unweaned calves and a bull or two. Then there's a bunch of wild, unbranded yearlings, probably twenty or thirty, over on that pasture by the cliffs. He's got no feed, no hay put up, and has probably been selling off some of the better cows and calves."

"How much are you set back in this debacle?" asked the midget, dropping his bantering tone.

"The Bar-O ranch owes me, not the government; I have always advanced the money. Two hundred and eighty dollars. You see," Finch hastened to explain, "the government has an area in there that's rather inaccessible. They've been holding it for settlement. It's more than the Bar-O folks need, but there's no one else, unless I bring in sheep men and open up an old controversy. So, in the years past, I've haggled money out of the Barrows, just a little at a time, but we've kept friendly until now. Now, it looks like I'm up against the iron."

"You're not so bad off," chuckled Davy, "you've had a fine lot of experience. Here's my proposition on your case. If the receiver accepts my offer of a deed without possession, I'll give you a hundred dollars. If I get possession in the next two years, and you allot me the grazing rights to that area, I'll pay you the balance. If I don't get possession in that time, you can charge off the balance due. Do I hear any takers?" said the little man, simulating the call of an auctioneer.

"Well, I'm a taker," said Finch resignedly. "It's a rough road, but it seems the only way. What's your reaction, Logan? Are you a taker?"

"I'm a taker, when there's anything to take. How are you to get the money in here?" he asked of Davy. "Without a bank, we can't handle checks or drafts. How do you plan the payment?"

"Is there a telegraph station in Adot? No? Well, that's too bad. If there was a commercial pay station there, I could have the money here this afternoon. As it is, I suppose I would have to have the actual currency shipped by express to Laramie or Cheyenne. Where do you do banking?" he asked of Logan.

"I have an account with the Guaranty at Laramie and with the First National at Cheyenne. I hope to have our bank here opened by the holidays."

"The holidays would be too late. Hulls might kill somebody, or voluntarily move out and spoil the trade. Also, I'll have to have added money—have to open an account to get funds with which to appease Hulls or to live on, while I am working at it. I have never been in Laramie and I nearly got killed in Cheyenne, so I'll open an account at Cheyenne. If you say you'll trade, I'll get on the phone and have the cash or an acceptable draft in Cheyenne as soon as the mail can get it there."

"Well, I guess I'll trade," said Logan resignedly. "This Barrow thing is the last outstanding debt due the bank. I hope the judge will approve my report of the matter, so that I can get the bank opened by Christmas. We will have to go to town and draw up a contract. Can you go today?"

"Well, I will have to go somewhere to get on a long distance telephone about sending the money. Where to and how much. With the winter weather approaching, I may have to wallow through snowdrifts to get to Cheyenne, but that's a risk incident to the business."

"We'll get you over to Cheyenne," interrupted Potter, who had shown deep interest in the conversation, "we'll get you over if we have to use a snow plow. Maybe you've got the magic to get this row settled. At any rate, it's worth a trial."

"I have a telephone in my office at Adot," said Logan. "I am using the back room of the bank as an office. I've kept the phone."

"Is there an extension on it?" asked Davy eagerly. "Yes? Fine. When I get this banker on the phone, I want you to listen in. It's an education to any man to hear Ralph Gaynor talk. He's the boss of the Dollar Savings Bank in Springfield. It isn't a big bank, just a stout one. And now all the others are looking to him for advice. Of course he'll razz me about making a venture in these hazardous times, but it will be worth your time to hear him do it."

"How are we to get back from Adot?" asked the midget abruptly of Landy.

"I'll take you over and bring you back," interposed Adine Lough. "I want to hear that man sass you over the phone, if he can get in a word edgewise, and you on the other end of the line."

Davy laughed with the others. "Well, the parade starts promptly at eleven, the doors to the Big Show open at one, let's git goin'," said the little man, simulating a circus announcer.

Adine went to the house for her hat. Potter maneuvered her roadster out to the

driveway, after checking the gas and oil. Then a flushed girl, a midget man, and an aging Nestor of other days drove away on a mission that pleased them all.



12ToC

The State Bank of Adot had been an important institution in an unimportant community. It employed three people and enlarged its chartered rights to perform many services in the little community. In the prosperous days following the World War it added to its surplus and paid fair dividends to scattered owners of limited shares. Its service was appreciated by home folks; its prosperity attracted the attention of Aaron Logan.

Logan, with limited capital and an alert mind, operated a petty loan business. He traded for what-have-you. In the early twenties, he exchanged his chips and whetstones for single shares of bank stock. Arriving at a favorable status, he persuaded the bank directors to enlarge the capital to absorb his petty loan business. In 1924, he quit the "street" to accept a cushioned chair in the rear room of the bank. His experience would add caution and prudence.

For, just now, the cattle business was slipping; prices were falling below the cost of production. Home folks were not buying; the rescued European nations forgot, as usual, their benefactor and dickered for meager supplies of meats and grains at other marts. America's foreign trade sank to a new low. Her thousands of merchant craft rocked listlessly and rusted quickly in stagnant waters while the false prophets of Mammon urged idle capital to pyramid a luring stock market to a glorious peak and final crash.

The banks of America were the first to feel the pinch. Some waited too long—waited to dole out to a frenzied public all available cash and close the doors too late for solvency. But not so with the Bank of Adot. Aaron Logan got his order for receivership before his public went frantic and while cash was yet available.

Under court order he was proceeding to thaw out the frozen items of assets, and planned to open the institution to those who would limit their withdrawals to stated amounts. He made progress in these endeavors until he bumped into the stone wall of the Barrow loan. Really, it wasn't a giant sum, as such sums are rated in banking circles, but in the present instance it represented the difference between opening a bank or keeping it closed.

Aaron Logan had given the matter of this Bar-O affair much thought. He had canvassed every available prospect. In all the community there wasn't a person that would give a thin dime for a property with a defiant oldster thereon, who would certainly kill or be killed if possession was to be gained. And a killing was bad advertisement, a poor prelude to opening a bank.

But in the very hour he planned to execute this last resort, a rank outsider, an unknown and uncanvassed source, a little runt of a man with more confidence and assurance than his size would warrant, was offering to take over the ranch and assume the problem. Aaron Logan regarded it as a slender chance—could not believe that one so small could have earned so much—but he would take the chance. He headed his car up Willow Street to stop at the bank's rear door. He waved Adine to a favorable parking space.

"I will call Mr. Limeledge, my lawyer, to draw up a contract," he said as the party of five were seated in the back room.

"Well, that's hardly necessary," said Davy. "If you jot down a memo that you will make a deed to David Lannarck to the Bar-O ranch upon payment, on or before October 18th, 1932, of four thousand dollars in cash and a probable expenditure of two hundred dollars in getting possession, and sign it, I will also sign it and it will be an agreement. But before we do anything, I want to get on the phone to see if I can contact Ralph Gaynor. None of you folks really know me. I want you to listen in so that we can get acquainted. Here's the money for the long distance call," he added. "Tell the operator that it's OK."

Aaron Logan didn't like being told what to do, especially by a little cocksure midget. But there was the matter of getting rid of a bad problem. He complied with Davy's request.

"This is David Lannarck at phone fifty. I want to talk to Ralph Gaynor, at phone BA two hundred in the Dollar Savings Bank in Springfield. Yes, that's the state. I should have said so, for it's a grand old commonwealth. I'll be right here for an hour."

In the lull of waiting, Aaron Logan wondered—wondered how one so small

hoped to depose one so fierce and stubborn. He would find out. "Do you think you can get Hulls and Maizie out of there by Thanksgiving?" he inquired politely.

"It doesn't really matter," said David languidly. "But I must try to get acquainted with 'em; make friends with 'em if I can."

"Why do you hope to persuade 'em to get off?" exclaimed the astonished receiver. "I've seen 'em. They're impossible."

"Maybe you didn't see 'em at their best," replied the midget quietly. "I've never seen either of them, but I've had several descriptions from others and this Maizie shows possibilities."

"Possibilities for what?" snorted Logan. "That woman is a she-devil that would commit murder to gain her ends. She wouldn't listen to a governor granting her a reprieve. And anyhow, what are her possibilities?"

"I understand, from descriptions, that she is of the gypsy type—dark, languid, glamorous. If she's all that, I can place her." Davy's reply was slow and indifferent. Now he brightened up to add: "Say, when I get on the phone, shall I tell him to send me a draft on a Denver bank or shall I tell him to ship the cold cash by express, or wire it to Cheyenne by Western Union?"

"Cold cash is never out of place in paying a bill, but if you have a draft sent to the First National in Cheyenne, we can go there and make the transfer. I need to go to Cheyenne anyhow."

"And I need some added cash," said Davy Lannarck. "I'll have 'em make the draft for five thousand. The First National can split it as we direct."

Davy made much of jotting down notes; Landy Spencer sat quietly, his face immobile; Adine Lough went to the window ostensibly to dab on make-up, but really to suppress smiles and stifle laughter. A man of importance—a bank receiver, an arm of the court—was being kidded and he didn't know it.

In the drive across country from the B-line ranch, the three in the roadster planned and outlined their conduct at this proposed conference at the bank. Landy related fully the incident as to why he knew that Hulls Barrow and Maizie planned a quick getaway. Landy had contacted Ike Steele only a day or two ago and Ike's story of the wagon trade unfolded the plot. Stripped of inconsequential details, Ike's story follows:

Ugly Collins, a former resident, was back on important business. Ugly had left

the country a decade ago, following his acquittal for petty thieving. In his driftings about, he landed in Las Vegas. There he contacted another former resident in the person of Archie Barrow. Archie was in the money. He was sole proprietor of a big rooming house in a community that was being congested with trainloads of steel, cement, derricks, and cluttered with humanity who had come to build, and were building, a great dam in the nearby Colorado River. Archie needed help to carry on a business that had increased a hundredfold. He recalled his brother Hulls, who might be useful, but he particularly recalled the executive capacities of Maizie. She was badly needed to prod the Mexican women in their labors of making beds and sweeping rooms that were occupied twice daily.

But Archie knew it would be useless to write to a brother that never went to the post office and was remote from rural deliveries. He was happy to contact Ugly Collins. And just now, Ugly had two objectives: one, to get away from a place where work was paramount; the other, to get back to Adot and look after a possible inheritance. He understood that his mother had died, leaving the little homestead that surely should have sold for more than mere funeral expenses.

A deal was quickly made. Archie would pay train fare and Ugly would contact Hulls and Maizie; would move the bankrupts out of trouble and poverty to an Eldorado of prosperity. For once in his varied and useless career Ugly performed a successful mission. Hulls and Maizie readily agreed to the plan. They would drive through—taking with them needed and useful plunder. Having seen Maizie, Ugly decided he would travel back with them. All details for the trip were now completed, except that a little more expense money was badly needed.

Landy cautioned Ike Steele not to disclose the proposed move to anyone else. Vaguely, Landy entertained the hope that someone—just who, he had not planned—would buy the Bar-O. Acting on a hunch, he "touched" his sister Alice for a hundred. On the drive-in, Adine stopped the car while Davy invoiced his available cash at sixty-five dollars. These conspirators now planned that immediately after a contract was signed, Landy would search out Ike Steele, give him the hundred dollars, to be given to Ugly Collins when the party was loaded and on their way. Ike would be paid a personal ten, if he got it done.

And these conspirators made other plans. Knowing that in the interval of getting phone connections they would be beset with furtive questions from a curious executive. What was he going to do with the ranch? how did he plan to get the resisters off? and other pertinent questions, they planned for evasive answers.

"Leave that to me," said Mr. Lannarck. "I think I can parry every thrust, can lead him through a mystic maze of information that will pile up a lot of useless knowledge." And the little man was getting along very well with his assignment, as Adine polished her nose at the window and Landy Spencer sat quietly, seeming uninterested in mere worldly affairs.

"You were speaking of employment awhile ago," said the persistent Logan. "You spoke of 'placing' Maizie. Do you conduct that kind of an agency?"

"No," said Davy, still busy with his notes. "In Maizie's case, I would have to buy out the business, plan the details of her dress and appearance, and 'plant' her as a 'front'—a 'come-on'—for the suckers' money."

The bewildered receiver had let the craft of conversation drift into strange waters. Was he dealing with a moron or a maniac? Except that this was the only bid he had ever had—the only prospect in sight—for a deal that would open a bank, he would take the phone, cancel the call and dismiss the conference. In desperation he would make another try.

"Well, I don't know what you are talking about, but I do know this Maizie woman. If these places you speak of call for a stubborn hellion, then you've got the right party. But I would like to know just where she could be made into a useful thing?"

"I wasn't thinking of her temperament," said Davy as he folded up his memorandum. "She's described as the gypsy type. Such a type is valuable when properly placed. Were you ever at Coney Island?" he asked abruptly. "No? Well, it's a resort, a playground, down New York way. Henry Hudson landed here, and many another Dutchman has been 'landed' and made regrettable discoveries right on this same spot. It has a bathing beach where the gals show what they've got and fat men flounder and cavort far beyond their capacities. Up from the beach is the midway proper—a carnival or street fair, with bandstands and dance platforms, peep shows, free shows, and legits. At the proper season these places are alive with spenders. They bring in carloads of money and take away nothing more tangible than experience. Why, Mister Logan, a man of your talents could spend profitable days at Coney Island in the study of financial circulation, could write a book, entitled 'The Slippery Dollar; Its Origin, Its Travels, Its Destination'! Some of these dollars have origin in work and sweat and some stem from blood and tears, but all—"

"And just where in this mess would this Maizie woman belong?" interrupted Logan desperately. "Your recital is interesting, but it doesn't get to the point.

Where and why would you place her?"

"Why, I'd place her as a 'front' down at the fortune-teller's booth," replied Davy quickly. "I'd either buy out—or buy in—with Tony Garci, who has a concession, and plant Maizie right at the tent-flap as a 'come-on.' Her name would have to be Madame Tousan, or Princess Caraza, or some such, and she would have to dress the part. Black and red, maybe, with plastered hair and a coppery skin. A quart of rings and bracelets on each hand and arm, horseshoe earrings, and a big ostrich fan. Never a word of English, mind you! She'd just wave the fan to the entrance and inner glories where Tulu Garrat, Tony's wife, would read palms, or the crystal ball, and take the money."

Davy, too, was getting a bit anxious. He was running out of details. He glanced at the phone, hoping for relief. None came. He rambled on.

"If I ran this fortune-telling dump, I'd lift it out of the ten-twenty-third class, to an even smacker—maybe two. I'd give 'em a written reading with 'a hunch' in it. They all play hunches down there. Hoss racing, stock market, numbers rackets, and such. They'd play my hunches. If they win, I'd have wide advertisement; if they lose, nothing said.

"Off hand, I'd say the racket was good for a 'grand' a week. Maizie would get fifty, Tony and his wife a hundred smackers, another fifty for the concession. In ten weeks, I could pay for the Bar-O and have—" The telephone rang. "If that's for me," said the little man to Aaron Logan, "get on that extension and listen to the story of a misspent life, for I'll try to get him to tell it."

As the conversation was both spoken and heard, both are here given.

"Hello, hello. Yes, this is David Lannarck. Hello, Ralph. This is your midget friend Davy. I'm in Adot—yes, that's what I said—what they all say.... A dot on what? It's out of Cheyenne—a good ways out. But I want to do business as of Cheyenne. I want you to send a Denver draft to The First National Bank at Cheyenne for five thousand dollars, to arrive there before the eighteenth of October."

The phone was working splendidly; even those without an earpiece could hear the over-production.

"This is a fine time to separate a bank from assets. What are you buying? Blue sky or a phony gold mine?"

"Neither one," said Davy promptly. "It's a ranch—with an old man on it—with a gun, defying all comers."

"Why, I thought the old cattle wars were all over," came the reply. "I suppose, on account of your size, you hope to slip through the guard line."

"Naw," replied Davy, "it really doesn't matter whether the old man gets off or stays on. It's ten sections. If things brighten up a bit, it looks worth the money."

"Ten sections?" came the astonished inquiry. "How will you ever see it all—you with short legs?"

"Why, I've got a hoss," said Davy proudly, "I've got the finest hoss west of the Big River. He can do tricks too. By spring I can have him doing stunts that will make Bill Reviere's act look like a practice stunt."

"Well, God help poor sailors on a night like this, and midgets too. But at that, I think you are in the right groove. Things will loosen up; they've got to. Have your title examined carefully. See that your grantor is responsible."

"I'm buying it from a bank receiver. It's a part of the frozen assets," interrupted Davy. "The bank is to reopen when this is settled."

"Now let me get this right. You want a Denver draft, sent to you, care of the First National Bank in Cheyenne, Wyoming, for five thousand dollars." The words were slowly said as if a memorandum was being made. "All right. The item will go out this evening. Good luck and a prosperous investment."

"Hold on, Ralph, just a minute. I'm in that bank that's to reopen. The phone here has an extension. The fellow with whom I am dealing is on that extension. No one out here knows me—I need an introduction. Will you briefly tell 'em who I am?"

"Well, that's bad," came a laughing reply. "It might ruin everything. But here goes. Mister Receiver, David Lannarck, with whom I am talking, is a midget—nearly forty inches tall and about thirty years of age. He was born here, inherited a comfortable estate that we manage—collect his rents, pay his taxes and repair bills. We also pay his generous church contributions and charity donations. He has never drawn a cent from the accumulations. For the last decade I have seen little of him. He travels extensively—in vaudeville, with circuses. He comes back about once a year to deposit his earnings. These we keep separately because that's the way he wants it. He writes no checks. Simply tells us what to do, and we do it. Only once before this has he called on us. That was a train wreck and an injury that interrupted his routine. He phoned for us to pay bills and we paid 'em, as we are paying this one."

"He's affable, charitable to those he likes, talks the jargon of the circus people,

and is, with all, a truthful, likeable chap. Is there anything else, Mister Receiver?"

"Thank you, Ralph, and good-by," said Davy as he hung up.

Hastily Aaron Logan prepared a memo stating the terms of the sale. Adine Lough made a copy. Both were signed by both interested parties, then Davy paid Finch fifty dollars on his contract and the meeting adjourned. Davy and Adine went to Jode's restaurant for a bite to eat. Landy went in search of Ike Steele to post a deposit for a quick getaway and, strange as it may seem, Aaron Logan sought the same person and with a similar purpose.

13 ToC

Adine Lough had high rating in the community affairs of Adot. Her zeal for higher education, her church work, and her general deportment gave her contact with the better element that was trying to modernize—trying to lift a community up and out of the rawness of frontier days. But if the critics, the estimators of social standing, had seen her and her associates on this fine October afternoon, they would have moved her down several rungs on the social ladder.

She was in close conference with a midget, an ex-circus man, out of work and advertised widely to give a talk at the warehouse Saturday night! (They would hear this talk before making a final estimate.) And Adine's other conferee was old Landy Spencer, a notorious resister of progress, who spoke in the language of other days, whose appearance—from battered hat to narrow bootheels—simply pictured the undesirable past; his associates, when he came to town, were of the rabble—the lower stratum. Very true, in other days, the bank had given him a rating as not needing endorsers if he sought a loan. Very true, Judge Sample had stated publicly that he would accept Landy Spencer's word without the formalities of being sworn, but as a social factor in the community, Landy

didn't know where the social ladder was located, let alone about reaching the lower rung. And all afternoon Adine Lough was in close conference with such as these!

Landy returned to Jode's place sooner than he was expected. There was a sheepish grin on his weathered face. "They beat me to hit," he said in a low voice as Jode went back to the stove for his steak and potatoes. (His companions were munching wafers and drinking chocolate milk.) "Ike had already been en done hit."

Being served, and with Jode in the kitchen, the aged courier disclosed the results of his mission. "Ye don't tell Ike what's on yer mind; jist give him rope, git him started, en he'll come from under cover. I went to his shop en he wasn't workin'. Seemed to be waitin'. I prodded in, en he unfolded that he was waitin' for Logan. Our Logan, ye understand. Hit whetted my int'rest; I prodded ag'in, en with results. Ike said that Logan came to his shop Tuesday. He'd seen Ugly Collins a-hangin' 'round Ike's place, en he wanted a quick move by Ugly. He slipped Ike two new twenty-dollar bills en told him to loan 'em to Ugly if he made a quick git-away. Ike did as d'rected. Ugly come en got the wagon this afternoon. Promised that he'd load tonight en be on the road by midnight.

"Well! That settled the coffee! I didn't keer to hang around eny more. But I did want a whit more information. Did Logan know that old Hulls en Maizie were included? 'Naw,' scorned Ike, 'Logan didn't even know that Ugly knew 'em—didn't know that Ugly had ever been at the Bar-O. Logan didn't know about the wagon. Thought the forty was about right for train fare. He jist wanted Ugly out of the country en I got hit done,' says Ike.

"I didn't keer to meet Logan—then. I remembered that I had some boots at Billy's fer half solin', en I slipped Ike a five spot with the caution that he was to say nothin' in his report to Logan about who was in Ugly's party. Ike wanted me to stay en listen to his ideas as to why Logan wanted a quick move by Ugly, but I already had my notions about that. I slipped away fast. But in comin' here I remembered that I hadn't left eny boots with Billy."

Landy finished his steak and story about the same time.

"Well, do you think they will get away tonight?" asked Davy eagerly. "Is there any way that we can hang around and find out? Why would Logan want this Ugly party to get out of the country? Why can't we—"

"Thar ye go! Crowdin' the question-chute. Son, ye orta number 'em, en I could answer by number. Anyhow, let's git goin'! Hit's a long ways home—with a

change of cars at the B-line, en the last lap ain't fit fer night ridin'. We can talk while we ride. Out thar, Jode won't be hangin' around, shufflin' the dishes en tryin' to get an earful. Let's go."

On the way home, Adine Lough was the happy one of the trio. The revealing incidents of the day had cleared away the threatening dark financial cloud. Now if her father could only be brought home with the assurance of his getting well, her cup of happiness would be overflowing. Just now, she was planning an added chapter to her thesis, "Welfare Work in Rural Communities." She would touch on the subject of "Aid from Unexpected Sources," for she had experienced just that! In the events of the day, it was revealed that a little, unknown midget of a man, with a doubtful background, was indeed a man, mentally, morally, and financially. Back of his cynicism—often expressed in the jargon of the underworld—was an alert mind that could lead an inquisitor into a maze of unaccomplishments.

Too, in said thesis, she would make some radical changes in the paragraphs touching on "influences of pioneer habits and traits in community upbuilding, etc." The recent conduct and tactful accomplishments of Landy Spencer were the reasons for such a change. Heretofore, she had welcomed old Landy as a visitor to the B-line for the reason that Granddaddy liked him, wanted to confab and badger about the old days. She had casually learned that Landy had had to work as a boy, as a youth, and as a young man, that he had accumulated enough so that he could now enjoy the play-days once denied him. Yes, she would change her notes to say: "uncouth verbiage and slatternly dress are often assets in gaining information and are no hindrance in granting loyalty and devotion."

The journey home, despite the uncertainties pending, was a joy-ride for the two. Landy, as was his wont, clutched the armrest of the car and said nothing. Time was, when safe in a saddle, he had thrown reins to the wind "en allowed that critter a spell of fancy worm-fence buckin', but a-ridin' a auto wuz dangerous business."

Arriving at the B-line stables, the party paused for a final conference. Tomorrow would be Friday. In the early hours Davy and Landy would make a furtive visit to the Bar-O ranch to see if Ugly Collins had carried out his plans to evacuate the resisters. "Maybe they set fire to the house or poisoned the cattle," suggested Davy. Landy poo-pooed the idea.

"They're on a slow train," he explained. "In that outfit they can't do over six miles an hour. A fire would announce their malice, en a sheriff would overtake

'em before they reached North Gate. They don't know about cattle-pizen—thar's no loco weed around here."

Saturday was the date of the entertainment in Adot. Davy and Landy would ride over to the B-line and go to town in Adine's roadster. In Adot, Davy would again contact Logan and fix the date to meet him in Cheyenne on Monday. "That check—the draft thing—will be there by that time," was Davy's opinion. "I hope I can pry Welborn loose from his digging and delving long enough to take me over that road again."

"You don't have to do that," interposed Adine. "I'll drive you to Cheyenne. I'm as anxious as anyone to get this thing settled. This Bar-O thing has been a neighborhood problem, an obsession, a thorn in the flesh, ever since Granddaddy was a young man. I want to be a party in removing the thorn. I'll have Joe and Myrah to look after Granddaddy, and I'll have Mister Potter to look after Joe and Myrah and everything will be all right.

"But you'll have to meet me at Carter's filling station," she cautioned. "I'll have to drive through Adot and around that way. I can't drive across the valleys and ridges as you horsemen ride them. So we'll meet at the filling station at seven-thirty. We will be in Cheyenne long before noon."

"Hi ya, Potter," called Landy as they were saddling the horses. "I want you to order a set of shoes for this colt."

"I've got a set. I tried 'em; they fit. But he won't need shoes this winter; he's better off without 'em. If a bunglin' mechanic over thar will leave his feet alone he'll be all right till spring."

Landy regarded the gibe as irrelevant. The saddle invited. Once aboard and before they reached the Ranty he was detailing answers to some of Davy's questions.

"This Logan party ain't exactly crooked but thar's some noticeable bends in his career. When they baptized him they ought to have given him another dip. 'Course, he gits his money by pinchin' en scrougin' en this Ugly Collins affair goes a leetle beyond the limit.

"This Ugly was borned here. His right name is Clarence, but early someone branded him Ugly, en because he resented hit, the name stuck. He wasn't so ugly—jist ornery. His daddy died; his mother lived on a little place in town, up-crick from the bridge. Ugly wasn't a roarin' success as a producer—jist idled and fuddled until he got to be a man. Then he got indicted with others fer robbin' a

little tannery that was operatin' down the crick. This tannery was mostly out of doors. They was charged with stealin' leather, but in the testimony it showed that Ugly didn't steal leather—jist knives en other plunder. He was flung loose. He left the country. That was twelve years ago. In all these years, no one in Adot was compelled to look on Ugly Collins. Not till last week did the public know he was alive. Even then thar was no ginerall rejoicin'—nobody killed a fatted calf.

"Now Ugly's mother died three years ago. A dear, uncomplainin' old soul, the funeral was conducted by Romine, the undertaker, and was attended by many. Of course Romine would have to be paid. He got Logan to administer the estate. He had had Logan to do this in other cases. They understood each other very well.

"They found but little personal property. Although Ann Griggs, a neighbor, said the old lady Collins had been savin' funeral money fer years—had it hidden in a fruit jar, no sich fund was found. The real estate would have to be sold to pay the claim.

"Except fer Ugly, they was no heirs, en Ugly didn't answer roll-call. By order of the court, Ugly was pronounced dead. Simmy Gordon, the village cut-up, said hit was a cheap funeral fer Ugly en good riddance. But Simmy was wrong, as usual. The home was sold—by fine print—hit was bid in by Romine fer about the price of his bill and the costs. Later Romine deeded hit to another, who in turn deeded hit to Logan, who now owns hit, en the yearly income would pay a funeral bill—with flowers.

"Ugly's return at this critical time rather upset Logan's plans. Hit would interfere with his gittin' a bank opened and himself back on the payroll. If Ugly had been flush with funds, had employed lawyer Gregory to git Ugly's death-order rescinded, en pried into the details of the old lady's estate, hit would have blowed the lid off. Hit would have shore been bricks and cabbages fer Logan, right when he's plannin' a posie shower.

"Forty dollars was none too big to fend off the disaster. But where Logan missed the gap in the fence was that he didn't inquire as to details. He knew Ugly come in by train. He thought the forty would be expended in the same way."

The two reached the Gillis home as the lady was lighting the lamp and setting out the evening meal. "Why, you and that girl must be preparing a lengthy address," she said to Davy jestingly.

"That gal and I have surely had a busy day. We've certainly upset some precedents, broken some rules, and maybe some laws. Your brother here was a full participant, a co-conspirator, and was awarded the Medal of Intrigue by

Mister Potter, when the meeting closed. But excuse me," said the now jovial midget as he walked away. "I just can't look at those baking-powder biscuits without grabbing one; I'm that wolfish."

During the meal, Davy invited Landy to tell of the day's happenings. "Yer new boarder here bought the Bar-O ranch—trouble en all," said Landy quietly. "En he's plannin' to promote the circus business by raisin' a lot more lions, tigers, hyenas, en sich. He's got a good start now, en he plans a glorious finish."

The news electrified the Gillises. It provoked much discussion and required many explanations. It allowed Davy time to eat a hearty meal. Finishing, he pushed back his chair to state some final conditions.

"And I'll not complete the final contract, not pay down a cent and throw up the whole thing, unless Mister Landy Spencer, here seated, pledges that he will join in with me in working the thing out to a final victory. No, I don't mean that he's to pay out anything, I'll pay all, but he's to say that he will stay with me, that he'll manage the thing, plan production, hire the help, and get things going. And we'll divide the profits. This depression can't last. Already the wise ones are hearing the death rattle and last gasp. But it will take some time to recover and we must be ready when the bulge comes. Maybe there are some old cows over there that Landy says are dear at ten dollars a head. There are some unweaned calves, and a few unbranded yearlings that will just about pay the cost of their roundup. But that's the foundation on which we are to build. What do you say, podner? Are you with me?"

"In yer listin' of assets, ye haven't invoiced Maizie," said Landy. "Early this afternoon, I heard ye pricin' her to Logan at a thousand dollars a week. En ye haven't catalogued Hulls en the bulls, mebbe they're wuth more than all the rest. Shore I'll he'p ye. Hit'll be a pleasure to hear ye try to mesmerize Maizie like ye did Logan, tellin' her of this Coony Island place en the fortune tellers. We'll go over thar in the mornin' early en I'll watch ye hypnotize her en Hulls, like ye did Logan. 'Course, if they're gone, that's our loss. We'll invoice the remnants en leavin's, en take a fresh start."

Davy was early to bed but his rest was broken in trying to picture the probable conduct of two persons he had never seen. In his dreams, old Hulls and his threatening gun was a commonplace figure. But back of him, and in command, was the garish image of a black-haired, copper-complexioned virago, whose imperious death-dealing edicts recalled his early readings of Sir Walter and his vivid picturings of Helen, wife of Rob Roy, in her judgments of the fate of a

common enemy. He was glad that daylight came to dispel the mental mirage.

"I never saw Landy so interested," said Mrs. Gillis, as she placed Davy's high chair at the table. "He was out feeding the horses long before Jim did the milking, and that's unusual. Landy likes you—likes to do the things you plan. Of course Landy has earned a rest, but there's too many that rust out when they rest up. Landy is that kind. He needs to be interested in something. He's had a lot of experience in the cattle business, and with your energy and planning and his experience, you ought to make a lot of money when this depression is over."

"Well, I'm not so interested in the money-making as I am in making a success out of this liability. Of course I want it to pay its own way, pay for improved livestock, buildings, fencing, and the like. But I'm not much interested in piling up useless money in a resisting bank. Of course, when Ralph Gaynor comes out to visit us—he's the gent that introduced me over the phone—when Ralph comes out, he'd like to see a fat bank account and talk woozy stuff of safety margins, earned increments and that crazy rot, but I yearn to show him a going concern, a likeable thing, prideful of its upbuilding.

"Landy and I will get along all right. He's the only one of you that sasses back, offers objections, overrules plans. He won't like it at all if I'm out with the colt and a couple of beagle hounds chasing jack rabbits when there's hay to put up, but that's the way we'll get along.

"Landy will fuss if we can introduce electricity on the ranch, but he will weaken a little when he finds that it grinds the feed, refrigerates a whole beef, and cooks a meal without splitting kindling. And if a little surplus money accumulates, he would totally veto the plan of laying out a Spanish patio enclosing fine white buildings with red tile roofs and fancy grilles—"

"Why, that would be fine!" exclaimed the listener. "Would you do that?"

"Naw," said the midget, "but if the occasion arises, I will introduce the subject just to see my old mentor paw around and fling dirt. It will keep him from rusting out, as you call it."

"Do you plan moving over there—if you get possession?"

"No, I will live, or rather headquarter, with Welborn as long as he lets me. Landy says that a rough, hazardous trail just back of our house leads directly to the near corner of the property. It's the route of the old proposed road to the Tranquil Meadows. We're to try that trail this morning, and I will have to stop and tell Welborn what I am doing. He will be surprised, but not interested.

Welborn is self-centered on getting some 'quick' money. When he gets that done he's going to be busy using it, either to straighten out his own financial affairs or to down or suppress some financier that has busted in on his plans. In either event, we will lose him. Welborn doesn't belong out here. He belongs in the jam, the crush, the mob, where they strive only for personal gain—either in bulking up a lot of money or acquiring personal rank or status. He's young, industrious and impetuous; he might get it done. It's a great game, I'm told; it engenders some joy and a lot of grief. Personally, I'd rather put in the time handling a pup or growing a clutch of chickens."

Landy's appearance with the saddled horses interrupted the discussion.

14ToC

The path over which Landy guided his little partner may have been an animal trail before the days of the intrusion of the white men. It had its beginnings in a little unnoticeable niche at the Welborn cabin. It wound a narrow way along the face of the cliff and led down and around to cross a quick-flowing brook that farther down was to take the name "Mad Trapper's Fork." Halfway down, Landy pointed out that some blasting here and a bridge there would make a serviceable thoroughfare. Davy was fairly busy in retaining his saddle-seat as Peaches followed old Frosty around the dangerous turns. At the halt, and during Landy's remarks, he gazed at the towering peaks on the one side and the yawning ravine on the other, and suggested that he, Landy, could no doubt construct the proposed improvement some afternoon when he was resting from his strenuous work in the hay field.

The sarcasm was ignored. Landy searched out a convenient crossing of the little stream. Once out of the stream bed the party was to encounter a vast tableland of grazing ground that seemed bounded by hills and peaks on all sides—the Tranquil Meadows.

It was Davy's time to halt the procession. As was his custom, he rode Peaches in front of Frosty and stopped for an extended inspection.

"A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me, singing in the Wilderness—Oh,
Wilderness were Paradise enow!"

chanted the little man as he gazed from peak to pinnacle. "Say, Landy! I once dreamed of this place, and I didn't leave out a detail. I was waiting for a delayed train at Peru for a jump to Buffalo to join up a Keith circuit. At the station there was a pestering drunk with his 'how-come' stuff and two simpering women with their 'ain't-he-cute' rot. I was tired. I'd had a tough season. That summer, there was a big crop of gawks and I had encountered all of 'em. I wanted to quit the game—wanted to hide out. On the sleeper, I dreamed of this place. I was on a horse—a big, fat ring-horse, with a pad. I rode right through a bunch of cattle. I held on with more zeal than did old Fisheye Gleason when he fell on the back of the hippopotamus at the start of the Grand Entry.... Say," the midget interrupted his reverie, "just about how far away from this Paradise Bowl is this Bar-O hangout?"

"The Bar-O is the lid to yer Gravy Bowl," replied the Nestor. "Hit's that line of hills to the no'th, en winds up in this crumpled mess of hills here at the east end. This last section is called The Cliffs. If thar's any loose yearlin's left, they'll be thar. We'll edge around that away en then swing over to where old Matt laid out a path to the southern settlements."

On the way to the Cliffs, Landy recounted much local history. "They wuz wild cattle in these ravines long before the surveyors surrounded old Matt with their lines. No one knew whar they come from nor to who they belonged. Old Matt simply absorbed 'em, as he did anything else that was loose. They were his foundation stock. That's why there are so many yaller-hammers en pennariles among 'em. Once er twice old Matt forgot to put up hay en his livestock wintered in them ravines en pawed in the snow fer what grass they got. Hit wasn't so bad. A cow-brute won't thrive in close quarters; they're better off with jist a wind-break en rain-shelter. But look out when hit's calvin' time! A cow will pick out the night of the big snow en drop her calf right in hit. I've often wondered if the colleges that teach farmin' en sich, ever tackled en solved that heavy problem: 'Is hit better to fret en worry a cow by pennin' her up in a clean box-stall, er allowin' her in cheerful contentment to go off by herse'f en have her calf in the fringe of a mudhole at the far away corner?'"

Davy was looking about as he listened. Here was the tremendous spectacle of which he had dreamed. It was a spoken drama in technicolor.

Frosty pricked up his ears. Landy veered the course to the right. A bunch of yellowish red calves were startled out of a willow clump and turned to watch the intruders. As the horsemen rode around to the east and north they resumed their grazing. Near the mouth of another ravine a few more were encountered.

"There're thirty-seven of 'em," said Landy, as the party completed the circle, "en that's about twice as many as I expected. They're in good flesh. With plenty of hay this winter en a mite of grain, they would do for quick feeders next fall."

"Well, you couldn't feed 'em away off out here, could you?" demanded Davy.

"Shore!" said the expert. "There's more shelter out here than in them propped-up stables at the Bar-O. The B-line's got about five times as much hay as they need. We ought to be able to wheedle that gal out of a few stacks. But haulin' hay in breast-deep snow is some job. Hit ought to be under way right now. If old Hulls has quit out, en we git action, I'll talk to Potter en them loafers at the B-line en try to git a few ricks tucked away in here before snow comes. A few blocks of salt, scattered around, will keep 'em from diggin' dirt er huntin' a lick."

And now the inspectors turned west to follow cattle paths over an undulating terrain for at least two miles. Here a double trail was encountered. Landy rode for a distance in both directions looking intently for signs.

"Ugly Collins has either lost his time-card er has traded his wagon fer a airyplane," said the mentor. "Mebbe Maizie has delayed the take-off to finish her war with Logan. At any rate, they haven't left a wagon track. Let's go by the house. I'll introduce ye as a circus man from Springfield that's visitin' en lookin'. If ya can interest Maizie so I kin talk to Hulls private, hit will he'p a lot."

"Not me!" interposed the little man hastily, "just leave me out of this local war. I've got a date with some church folks tomorrow night. But I don't want to be carried in feet foremost and hear the preacher talk about 'the many mansions and green pastures.' Isn't there some way that we can by-pass this Maizie and her orders 'to kill on sight'?"

"Why, I thought ya wanted to meet Maizie," chuckled Landy, "thought ye wanted to contract her fer fortune tellin' down at that island place? Anyhow," continued the raconteur in a serious vein, "there's no chance fer a row. I know Hulls, I knew his daddy, old Matt. He knows I'm no sheriff a lookin' fer trouble. He'll talk to me like a friend. I'm jist out here a-showin' my circus friend the scenery. He'll talk to me all friendly like, en Maizie will be tickled at yer size en talk about circuses en sich. Speak up to her. Tell her that she belongs in this fortune-tellin' business. Cut up a few of yer dance capers—git her interested—en

I'll find out why they ain't on the road to a getaway."

Landy turned into the double track that led north followed by a reluctant midget. He watched the paths for signs of recent travel but continued his recitations of local history.

"These Barrow folks ain't bad—jist ornery. Hit's due to breedin' en custom, fer they are part Injun. Old Matt told me so, one time when I was over here a-lookin' fer lost horses. Matt said his mother was a Ute—full-blooded en tribe-raised. Now, Injuns don't have much regard fer personal property. Except fer their arms en blanket all else is jist common plunder fer anyone. The deer in the thicket, the fish in the streams, and the birds in the air belong to the feller that gits 'em. 'Course, Matt absorbed the wild cattle, en any other cattle he found on the loose. He didn't want any cattle brand—jist play the game his fashion, 'finders are takers,' same as fish er wild ducks.

"Sich a plan didn't set well with the white settlers that was tryin' to put down cattle thefts. Old Matt got a bad reputation en he didn't try to correct hit. He matched Injun cunnin' agin the 'white laws' en got ostracized. He raised his boys by the same standards. This Hulls is jist dumb en ornery but Archie was smart. He l'arned to read, en when Maizie came, he l'arned to write en cipher after he was a grown man. If Archie got the express company's money—en hit sorta looks like he did—he was smart enough to 'duck out' with hit. Maizie knows that Archie is smart. She wants—

"Look thar!" he interrupted to point at wagon tracks in the dust. "Hit looks like a getaway had been vetoed. Changed their minds," he added as he pointed to a sharp turn in the tracks and a return to the beaten way farther along to the north. "Now hit's anybody's guess as to what's happened." Landy was about to dismount for a closer examination when he again interrupted. "They went back to git a fresh start," he exclaimed as he pointed to a two-horse wagon approaching from between the low hills.

"Now jist keep yer shirt on," he cautioned Davy. "Yer a circuser, out here on a visit. I'm a-showin' ye the neighborhood. Let's keep ridin' en be surprised like." The two rode the double trail to turn out when the wagon stopped. "Howdy, folks," was Landy's greeting.

Ugly Collins was driving. Hulls Barrow was in the seat beside him with a rifle across his knees. Maizie was on a low chair in the rear, surrounded by bedding, boxes, tables, chairs, and all manner of household wares that piled high, were held in place by stakes and stout ropes.

"Why, hit's old Landy Spencer," said Hulls as he returned the gun to its place on his knees. "What's got ye outen the bed so early?"

"I was harassed outa bed by this pesterin' friend of mine who left the circus at Cheyenne to come out fer a visit en to view the scenery. I want ye to meet him, en he'p me answer his questions. Folks, meet Mister Davy Lannarck, a circuser, that's curious to see how en whar we live. Davy, that's my old friend Mister Hulls Barrow, en that's Mister Collins, en you are Miss Maizie, I take hit," Landy added as Maizie stood up to see what was going on. "My young friend here was cut down to a boy's size in heft en stature but he shore makes up the difference in askin' questions en in gaddin' about. When he roused me out this mornin' to go gaddin', I planned to swing around this way en let you all he'p me. But from the looks of things, you folks musta got word that we were comin' en are makin' a hasty move to avoid sich a visit."

The men may have smiled at Landy's quip but Maizie laughed aloud. "It's the other way," she said. "You put off your visit until you saw that we were moving; then you come, expecting to be entertained. Had you come two weeks ago we could have helped."

"I wasn't here two weeks ago," interposed Davy. "Then we were in the Northwest, looking for a town with enough money to pay the feed bills and freight on a lot of circus animals. In fact, we had put in the summer looking for such a place and never did find it."

"Well, we're going to where there's money—plenty of it," said Maizie.

"Take me along," pleaded the midget. "I haven't seen 'loose money' since we opened the ticket wagon at Grand Park in April."

"What's this, Hulls!" demanded Landy. "Are ye shiftin' pastures?"

"I shore am!" replied Hulls emphatically. "I'm gittin' outa the thistles en sage to whar thar's decent folks. I'm a-leavin' these hellions to rot in their tracks while I have a few days of peace en quiet. But don't say anything, Landy, until we git goin' en outa the country."

"Shore I won't!" pledged Landy. "That's your business—not theirs. Have ye laid out a considerable trip?"

"Yes, we're goin' to Nevady, down whar they're buildin' a big water-dam. Archie's down thar; makin' money a-plenty. There's a big stir on down thar. Everybody's a-workin' en Archie wants our he'p."

"Well, I'm sorry yer a-leavin' but I'm glad fer this chance. I've wanted to see Archie ever since he he'ped me git them cattle across the Ranty that time. I owe him and now I've got a chance to pay." Here Landy searched a bill out of his billfold and handed it to Hulls.

"Tell Archie that that ought to take keer of debt en int'rest. Ye see, I didn't have any money with me that day, en anyhow, Archie poo-pooed the idee of pay at the time, but I always want to pay for he'p thataway. But I never saw Archie again en I'm glad of this chance to ease my mind."

Hulls folded the bill and put it in his pocket. He looked at the sun. "I expect that we'd better git goin'; we've put in the whole night a-loadin' up, en we got down here a piece en found out that we forgot the dog en we had to go back. En say, Landy," he called as the wagon started, "I forgot to turn them bulls out to worter. If ye go out that way, will ye open the gate en let 'em out?"

The rattle of the wagon repressed the eager reply.

Landy resumed the way to the north; Davy waited to watch the wagon and its little cloud of dust disappear over a distant swell. When he rejoined his friend he rode in front of Frosty to halt for a conference.

"You've made the right estimate, Landy, they're not bad people. As hurried as they were, they had time to go back a mile or two for the dog. People that do that sort of things are not bad. I feel sorry for 'em."

"Well, yer sorrow is sorta misplaced; they're havin' the time of their young lives. Hulls is a-gettin' out of a mess that had no other outlet; Maizie is to see a lot of new scenery en will git to he'p Archie spend the money; Ugly is a-gittin' to hang around Maizie while he eats at least two steady meals a day. I was jist figgerin', Hulls has got more money in his pocket than he ever had in all his born days. He's evidently sold off about ten cows en calves to Mooney Whitset of the Diamond outfit; he's got the forty—if Ugly give hit to him, en the five I jist handed him—that Archie will never see—so, all told, they are in clover. Hit will take 'em about two weeks to make the trip, en with all that plunder aboard Archie will give 'em a royal welcome.

"Ye see, son, old Matt—ner the boys—ever made a dime out of this place—never wanted to. Jist fiddled around, huntin', fishin' en loafin'. The whole thing wasn't any bigger an asset than a job as a section hand on the U P. Their sales of scrawny cattle jist about paid the taxes en bought their salt en terbacker.

"Now, son, ye are on the Bar-O. The line runs from them peaks in the Cliffs to

a bend in the crick at that fringe of trees. Then add two sections of rough land around the Cliffs, en that's hit. The Barrows never did much fencin'. Jist a bresh fence around the truck patch en a fairly good corral at the stables is about all. The cows are down thar by the spring. We'll turn the bulls out en go down en count 'em."

While Landy was engaged in the requested task Davy took hasty survey of the surroundings. The stables and house were of the same architecture: rambling log structures that seemed to have been erected after many an afterthought. The front door of the house was open. Landy closed it, and circled the house to see that all other openings were closed. He then mounted and motioned Davy to follow the bulls to water. Here, Landy circled the cows and calves. "Thar's twenty-six of 'em," he commented, "en ye owe Finch the full amount of his claim.

"Now," commented the aged Nestor, "we'll not go over by the B-line. What they don't know won't hurt 'em. We'll jist slip back home the way we come. Tomorry will be plenty of time to go over the hay-he'p matter, en on Monday we must cinch the deal."



15ToC

The great Burns warehouse in Adot was built back in the impulsive days following the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad. Notwithstanding the fact that the young nation was engaged in a civil war that challenged its existence, there was faith that right would prevail, hope in the future of national expansion, and charity assumed her wonted place. In 1862 Congress incorporated the road, borrowed the funds to build, and bonused the enterprise with grants of land—greater in area than the State of Pennsylvania.

And there was need for national expansion and the development of the vast empire west of the Mississippi. At the close of the Civil War, more than a million

soldiers were discharged to seek new homes in an uncongested area. A million immigrants came from impoverished Europe in the four succeeding years, begging for freedom and a place to live. These millions too were given bonuses of grants of land, and soon the uninhabited West was dotted with primitive homesteads and scattered ranches that must be served. Food, in all its varieties, is a primal necessity. Warehouses, clumsy predecessors of modern stores, must be constructed at advantageous points to shelter foods and make distribution to remote sections. Some called them trading posts.

And so, back in the colorful days of the building of the fast-growing West, young Isaac Burns constructed his warehouse. It was high and wide, if not handsome. It had a driveway through it—handy for the four or six teams that came to unload flour, sugar, salt, spices, bolts of fabrics, farm implements, or what-have you. Handy, too, for the rancher or miner that came to buy at retail (but in wholesale quantities) a full year's supply of merchandise and food.

But in the changing economies of a fast-growing republic, the warehouse plan was to take its place with the ox yoke, the spinning wheel, the mustache cup, and the Prince Albert coat. Hard roads and bridges took the place of ill-defined trails, and gasoline brought the rancher to trading marts daily, instead of once a year.

Young Jethro Burns added a corral to the now useless warehouse and traded in livestock. Joe Burns, of the next generation, closed off one side of the driveway to make a storage room. But notwithstanding its favorable location in the center of town, the room remained idle. Except as a repository for a few odds and ends and its occasional uses on election days, the old warehouse rested in its past glories. It was an easy conquest for the persuasive, zealous Paul Curtis, the newly arrived Nazarene minister, to gain permission for its use for church purposes. Seemingly easy it was to commandeer many of the community's extra chairs, benches, settees, and kegs to accommodate the limited but growing congregation. A small platform was built at one end, lights were added. And now, exhortations and songs of praise filled the air that was once vibrant with the bawling of restless calves and the bleating of timid lambs.

In the week preceding the event, a great muslin banner hung across the warehouse front proclaiming:

UNIQUE ENTERTAINMENT!
Saturday Eve, 7:30

**CIRCUS-SHOW MIDGET
WILL RELATE EXPERIENCES**

**Songs and Music
Admission—Free Will Offering.**

C O M E!

David Lannarck was up bright and early Saturday morning. After feeding and brushing Peaches, he dressed himself in his best clothes. Landy, too, sensing the importance of coming events, improved his appearance by buttoning up his shirt-front. The ride to the B-line was unimportant. Adine Lough was ready with the roadster. By ten or eleven o'clock the party was in Adot.

At the bridge they stopped to lay back the top. Adine drove slowly up Main Street; Davy stood in the middle with his hand on Landy's shoulder. There were but few persons on the street as the car passed but on its return, everybody in the stores was out on the sidewalk.

"Take off that old barn-door hat, Landy, so we can see what ye got," called someone from the walk. Landy complied with the request. Davy waved his greetings to the curious. The party halted at Jode's hotel and restaurant. A woman came out.

Presently a young fellow, coatless and hatless, came running from the old warehouse. "We should have had a band to head the parade," he exclaimed apologetically, "but you are surely welcome. I have been adding more camp chairs to our seating capacity. We'll need them all." It was the young preacher. Adine made the introductions.

"Do you want another parade this afternoon?" asked Davy. "Getting out the Standing Room Only sign is always an asset for future entertainments."

"And will you be with us again?" asked the young minister quickly.

"No, this is my last public appearance," said Davy firmly. "In this matter, I am fulfilling an agreement. I want to give all I've got; because I got just what I wanted. But if Adine is willing, we'll parade this afternoon."

And parade they did, at three o'clock. Davy insisted that Landy participate. The aged Nestor—a perfect representative of other days—held grimly to his seat

as the car, driven by a very handsome and smiling young lady, moved slowly up and down the thoroughfare, packed with people who had come to see—a midget!

Adine, Davy, and Landy were joined in the evening meal by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Gillis and Welborn, who had come in Jim's car, via the Carter filling station. The Silver Falls project was well represented. On the way over, Welborn figured he could have taken fully an ounce of dust from the company holdings, but he was loyal to his friend—and promise.

The audience that assembled for the entertainment at the Burns warehouse exceeded the young minister's estimates. The standing audience was greater than the number that found seats. A few venturesome lads who had never seen a midget climbed up to the braces that held sill to pillar to get a better view. But withal it was a quiet, orderly gathering of the men, women, and children of the little city and its far-reaching suburbs.

While the crowd was assembling young Paul Curtis, the preacher, acted as usher. He seated Adine Lough and her party of five on the platform. Occasionally he consulted with Brother Peyton, the doorkeeper. And finally, as capacity was reached, he came to the rostrum.

"Friends and neighbors," he said, "it's too bad that our program must be preceded by an apology. As a stranger in your midst, I did not properly estimate your interest and enthusiasm. I accept the blame for not providing a larger auditorium and I want, at this time, to give credit to Miss Adine Lough, of the B-line ranch, for her zeal in providing the feature of the entertainment and giving it the wide publicity it deserves. Make yourselves as comfortable as you can and we will proceed with our offerings."

The young minister was a real artist with an accordion. He played several popular numbers, interspersed with old-time classics such as "The Flower Song," "The Blue Danube," and others. It was good music, well played, and received generous applause. These were followed by a solo and encore by the minister's wife and then a quartette of young girls sang a couple of popular selections.

Paul Curtis had preceded each number by a brief statement as to what it was to be. Now he came to the rostrum. "We are now at the feature number of our program," he announced. "I understand it had its beginnings in a horse trade. Back in other days, a horse trade was often tinged with fraud and chicanery. This one has ended in a great good; really, it's the most fortuitous happening in my brief career as a minister of the Gospel. It has given me a quick and hearty

contact with all the people where I am to work. It goes to show that a great good can spring from lowly origins. The Saviour of men, you know, was from lowly Nazareth and born in a manger.

"But we will let the next speaker tell of the hoss trade, although he is scheduled to talk about midgets and tell us something about life with a circus-show. Both of these topics interest me deeply, as I know nothing about either, and am anxious to learn about them.

"Folks, neighbors, and friends of Adot and community, allow me to introduce my new-found young friend and our near-neighbor, Mister David Lannarck, lately a feature with the Great International Circus, and now a resident of the Silver Falls neighborhood. Mister Lannarck."

Davy slid down from an uncomfortable chair and climbed up on the little platform that had been placed at the side of the pulpit proper.

"Howdy, folks, and thank you, Brother Curtis, for the kindly introduction. Calling me your young friend is a compliment I hardly deserve. Yet it's a form of praise encountered by midgets. I recall that a white-haired, gray-whiskered employee of the hotel in Philadelphia, where we were quartered, persistently called Admiral Blair, our leading midget, 'Sonny Boy.' When comparisons were made, the Admiral was ten years the older. I am not very adept in guessing the ages of either grown persons or midgets, but I suspect, Brother Curtis, that I was in the fourth grade in school about the time you were born; and that when you arrived at the fourth grade, I was doing a man's job on the Keith vaudeville circuit. Such things occur to midgets.

"But let's get the Side-Show out of the way before we start the performance in the Big Top—let's clear up the hoss trade first. In that transaction I was simply the innocent bystander. The principals in that event are with us tonight. Acting as Master of Ceremonies of this Floor Show, let me introduce them." Turning to his guests of the evening, the speaker cautioned: "Stand up, folks, and take your bow as your name is called.

"First, I want to present the party who contributed the Hoss, who made all the plans, and who through the untiring labors of this young minister is largely, if not wholly responsible for this splendid gathering, Miss Adine Lough."

The applause was generous and lasting. Blushing, smiling, and embarrassed, Adine took her bow and resumed her seat.

"And the next principal in the transaction—the man who discovered the hoss

and led me to it—my friend, mentor, guide, and boon companion, Mister Landy Spencer." The applause was generous but more boisterous. It was evident that Mister Spencer had many boon companions in the audience. Landy's bow was a mixture of bends at the waist, neck, and knees.

"And the next two, while not direct parties to the hoss trade, are responsible for my upkeep, who shelter and feed me—and the hoss, Mister and Mistress James Gillis." Again the applause was generous and hearty.

"And last, but not least, is the man who came to me in my greatest hour of distress—of disgust with the mob and a fixed determination to get away from it all; the man who came to me when the circus was about to fold up, and I was yearning for quiet and peace but didn't know where to find it, and he found it for me. Right where I wanted to be, the place I had dreamed of, but never could find, the man who as my podner does the easy manual labor, while I do the hard thinking, the man who owned it all and staked me out a half interest, Mister Sam Welborn." Again the applause was generous.

"And that completes the hoss trade episode, my friends. I got the best little horse west of the Mississippi River, and Miss Lough got nothing but the satisfaction of having planned and promoted a worthy enterprise in which all of you are participants. Now, let's get on to the main event in the Big Top; let's talk about midgets and circuses."

Earlier, Davy had asked Paul Curtis to find if his voice was reaching the remote fringes of the audience. Being assured by a friendly nod that he was making himself heard, he placed his elbows on the pulpit and rested his chin in his cupped hands to gaze at the curious.

"I wish I knew something of my subject other than my own personal experiences," he said in a slow, lowered voice. "General literature is silent on the classification and accomplishments of midgets. Except for Dean Swift's recitals of the Lilliputians—which is pure fiction and the limited paragraphs in the encyclopedias on dwarfs—which is the wrong name for the subject—in literature the midget is the forgotten man.

"Even the Bible, in its wide comprehension of all classes of man, to include the race of giants, before the flood, the stalwart sons of Anak, and the giant adversary of little David, makes no mention of the little people except in the third book of Mosaic writings, the 'Crookback' or dwarfs are warned not to come nigh the altar-fires where sacrifices are offered. A severe banishment, truly, but as a good Presbyterian, I attribute the severity of such a decree to the

grudging envy of the jealous old 'kettle-tender' who maybe scorched the stew; and I get my solace in the comforting words of the Master who pledges that 'the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart and the peacemakers—large or small—shall be called the children of God.'

"Yes, there's confusion in literature—even in dictionaries—as to the proper classification of midgets. Their status is better established by elimination—by stating what they are not. Midgets are neither dwarfs, runts, pygmies, nor Lilliputians. Dwarfs may have normal bodies but with either short legs or arms, or both; a runt is a small specimen in a litter or drove; pygmies were a mythical creation of the Greeks, but the name was later given to a tribe in South Africa, whose stature was considerably less than their neighbors; and Lilliputians were the creation of a mind that was later to go haywire—but not over midgets, mind you—it was that other enigma in human life: the beckoning lure of two women, and the great creator of 'Gulliver and His Travels' went nuts in trying to decide which way to go."

A wave of stillness blanketed the audience that had come to see—and maybe laugh at—the antics of a midget. Up to now, the address was not in the expected pitch. It was far afield from the anticipated humor of frivolous incidents. Dissertations on literature, science, and philosophy came as an unexpected jolt. Davy Lannarck, who had spent his adult life in facing the public, now knew that he had 'em mesmerized.

"Who, then, composes this exclusive class in the human family? Who are midgets?" Davy gave the question its full emphasis to include the dramatic pause. "Well, I've lived the life of one for more than a quarter of a century. If literature, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and Holy Writ fail to sort us into the proper herd, why, I'll heat my own runnin' iron and brand the ones I think are eligible.

"Midgets are people. Out of a million or more of babies born one, at least, is destined not to reach adult stature. Normal in every way and perfectly proportioned, this millionth babe stops growing, while yet a babe, and thereafter not an inch is added to his stature and very little to his Weight. 'Arrested development' the scientist terms it; 'a malfunctioning of the pituitary gland' is the doctor's diagnosis of the disaster.

"So, one out of a million or more babies born is destined to go through life bumping his head against other people's knees. If it's a boy, he can never bust one over the fence for a home run, never look squarely into the face of the

receiving teller at the bank or of the room clerk at the hotel. He is never to referee a prize fight or run for president. If he wants a drink at the public fountain, he must ask someone to get it for him. If he goes to school, church, or a public meeting he must either get a front seat or he'll get a back view. On trains, busses, and Pullmans he pays the same adult fare as the two-hundred-pounder across the aisle.

"In the meager information about midgets, one writer, in an excellent article, estimates one midget to every million of population. He must have lived in New York City, as the little people flock to that metropolis, seeking employment in theaters and museums. My personal estimate of the ratio is that not one babe in two million is destined to go through life looking through the wrong end of opera glasses. In my brief career I have never seen more than twenty-two midgets in one group, and that only after Baron Singer had combed the civilized world in an effort to get 'em all in one assemblage.

"I have said that literature is almost silent concerning midgets and their activities. Yet, if one would compile all the scattered paragraphs of the ages past, it might be a sizeable volume. Back in the days when chivalry ran parallel with human bondage, midgets were rated as personal property. Kings and emperors called them to court for amusement purposes; offered them as gifts to appease the powerful or seduce the weak. And at courtly banquets, when the liquor was potent enough to inspire adventuresome bravery, midgets were tossed like medicine balls, from guest to guest, to provide entertainment for the ladies and gallants there present. However, the meager paragraphs failed to reveal if the ball was dribbled or if free throws were allowed in the event of fouls being made on the brave participants.

"Midgets marry same as other people, and strange to relate, fully half of them wed full grown adults. Just why this is I do not know. While I have acted the part of Dan Cupid in several stage productions, I've had no actual experience with the attachments and jealousies of humans—big or little. Midgets do have love-longings and jealousies, and love-making is carried on with all the zeal of modern warfare. Also, it has some of the elements of modern international diplomacy in its double-talk and duplicity. I witnessed one of these incidents as an innocent bystander.

"André, a very competent juggler, had come to America with the Singer Midgets. He was a Frenchman and spoke not a word of English. In America, the Singer Company was rallying to its organization all the little people it could induce to join up in a tour of the big circuit. Among the new arrivals was Lorette

Sanford, a beautiful little trick of a girl. André was much impressed with her beauty and vivacity. Here was his soulmate! But he just couldn't tell her of his undying affection on account of the language handicap. Lorette knew not a word of French.

"But love laughs at locksmiths and Cupid has many assistants. André sought out Jimmy Quick, who had toured France and could make himself understood. Jimmy was commissioned to anglicize a proper proposal and André spent hours in repeating the verbiage as taught. At the proper moment, he met the object of his adoration back of the scenes and fired his volley of transposed endearments. It had a tremendous effect all right, but it was in reverse gear. Lorette screamed and ran, but quickly returned to slap André's face, kick his shins, and push him sprawling into a mess of paint cans and brushes. Surely a disastrous ending for a well meant intention.

"Of course it turned out that Jimmy Quick, who secretly had notions of his own as to the beauty and desirability of the object of André's affections, had composed a proposal of all the vile and abusive words in the English language. Jimmy was too big for André to chastise, but as the rumor of the incident spread and the comedians began to quote freely some of the indecent phrases of the hoax, André fled the scene of torment. He left the company at Buffalo and went to Quebec where English was in limited use, and the story unknown.

"But André's juggling act was invaluable among so many amateurs. The manager went to Canada to urge his return. But by the time he succeeded, Jimmy Quick had eloped with the fair Lorette and had joined up with Cairstair's Congress of Living Wonders. And to give the matter a modern and adult finish, it turned out that André already had a wife and child in France.

"Yes, midgets—small in size and few in number—marry and raise families in about the same proportions as 'the big ones.' It is a matter of record that Mrs. Judith Skinner, herself a midget, gave birth to fourteen children. They were all of normal size. In fact, the mystery of midget existence is further complicated by the added truth that no midget ever gave birth to a midget.

"Midgets never grow bald and are usually vain in the matter of dress, probably due to the fact that in the past they were attachés of royalty. A midget is usually suave in manners and not easily embarrassed in public. Several instances are related that midgets, back in the conspiring and deceitful days of royalty, gave their patrons much information of enemy intrigues and adverse plottings against the crown.

"This story is told of a midget's participation in imperial intrigue. Richebourg, only twenty-three inches tall, was an attaché of the royal family of Orleans, deeply involved in the French Revolution. Swaddled in baby garments, he was allowed to be carried through enemy lines by an ignorant maid, bearing vital messages to friends of imprisoned royalty.

"But notwithstanding their limitations in size and number, midgets have made material contributions in science, art, and invention. Many of the present day comforts and much of our current beauty in art came from these Lilliputians. And set this down to the credit of the midget populace: few midgets, or maybe none at all, are ever convicted of the major crimes of murder, mayhem, arson, or theft. If the 'big ones' were as law-abiding as the 'little ones' there would be little need for criminal courts and jails.

"It was the establishment of democracies that gave midgets a status as a citizen. In the dark ages of the past, he had been a creature of derision, a thing to be bandied about in trade or gift. And it was in our own blessed United States of America that he began taking his proper place as a communal asset. Our own Tom Thumb and his genial wife, Lavinna Warren, traveled extensively over the world to prove that midgets were intelligent and companionable people. Later came Admiral Dot, Commodore Nutt, and others of the fraternity, to travel widely over the country, and by contact prove the worth of midgets.

"But it was Baron Leopold von Singer, an Austrian citizen and a man of great wealth, who lifted midgets out of the mental mire of being regarded as children and gave them their rightful place. The story is told that the baron became interested in little people through the pleadings of an invalid daughter. He invited several midgets to his home. Finding them agreeable and companionable, he founded a midget city with all the conveniences and accessories of a municipality to include a theater where much talent was revealed.

"In the midst of these activities Austria became a center of strife in the World War. The baron hastily moved his theatrical activities to London, and later to the United States where he toured all the larger cities to exhibit his little troupers and their talents.

"Really, the baron never planned this tour of the Singer Midgets as a money making venture. He had learned to love the little people and took keen pleasure and joy in the development of their genius to entertain the public. He paid good salaries with no thought of commercialism. But the enterprise did make money. It was a major means of revealing to the public that midgets have talents. And

best of all, it furnished a wide field of employment to little people. The public wants to see midgets and fully fifty percent of these are now engaged in some form of show business.

"My personal contact with show business was made through the Singer Midgets. As a youngster I had planned to study architecture, as I had developed some talent at the drawing board. But the death of my parents interrupted my home life. I sought diversion. I visited the Singer Show at St. Louis. I had no specialty—no act—that would amuse the public, but the manager signed me up, hoping to develop something useful. And I did develop. On account of my voice being in the right pitch, I expanded into a spieler, a front man, the person who makes the announcements in front of the curtain, that does the ballyhoo for the side show or bawls out, from the center ring, the features of the concert 'that will immediately fallaawftah this pawfo'mance.'

"And for twelve years, winter and summer, night and day, I have traveled about to see our dear America at its best and its worst. In that time, I have looked into the faces of half the people of the nation and, as a corollary, I was the object of their scrutiny and comment. I got tired of the job. I wanted to get out where I could meet them, one at a time, to tell jokes, hear the news, complain about the depression, cuss Congress, and sympathize with those in distress.

"But please do not think that my aversion of the public extends to a meeting such as we have here tonight. Here, I feel happy in being permitted to meet my neighbors and grateful for the opportunity to give such publicity as I can to the accomplishments of the little people who for centuries were held in a bondage of ridicule and derision, but who now, by industry and mental accomplishments, stand side by side with all who seek to make this a better world.

"And now let's go to the circus where—"

Davy's further remarks were interrupted by applause. Led by the young minister, the seated audience rose to cheer his simple, earnest story of midget life and accomplishments.

"Now, I am doubly paid," said the little speaker, showing his first signs of embarrassment. "Maybe the double pay is for overtime; maybe you are glad that I am nearing the end of the story. At any rate, let's go out to the circus lot, even if we do not get inside the Big Top. That will shorten the program.

"I love the circus. Inside the ring of its glamorous pageantry is a circle of closely knit friendships and sociability not found in any other organization. From management to roustabout there are common ties of interest. And because a

destination must be reached on the hour, and a pageant presented, there is teamwork such as I have never seen elsewhere. Personally, I think circuses, in their precision of movement and volume of property handled, have been used as models for our great United States' Armies in their muster of men and equipment and in the accuracy of transportation.

"Think of it! A big circus, in property and personnel, is the equal of a small city. On Monday, this city sets up shop in a Des Moines suburb to give two exhibitions. Tuesday it shows in Omaha; Wednesday, in Kansas City. It sets up and tears down, the same day. It changes location while you sleep. All details, from elephants to tent stakes, from kid-show banners to the great arena that shelters and seats ten thousand patrons, all must be torn down, transported, and set up between sunset and sunrise. I know of no other private enterprise that so truly represents the skill, aptitude, and energy of American genius.

"But pshaw! All of you have been to circuses! Yet there are erroneous impressions abroad that should be corrected. Circuses are, for the most part, privately owned and have grown up from small beginnings. The owners are business men such as you meet in other industries. They employ the best talent available in each department. They try to get young bank employees to handle bookkeeping and finances. Surely the man on the ticket wagon must be a wizard to handle the volume of business done within the limited time; and the boss canvasman, to lay out and erect a circus city in two hours, must know his men and property in every detail.

"But the important part of the circus business is transacted in the winter months and in remote and strange places. What are we to exhibit in the coming season? The entire world is scouted to find new and sensational features and spectacles. Not only are the jungles combed for the little known and strange creatures of earth, but the highly civilized quarters of the world should yield new accomplishments in the acrobatic field and in the latest achievements of science and art. And in these later years, all history is carefully explored for the dramatic incident that can be portrayed in glamorous pageantry for the amusement and education of those who come to the circus.

"And then comes the gravest problem of all. Where will we exhibit this planned program? Routing a circus is a technical matter. Every feature of the locale must be studied. Stock markets and boards of trade must be consulted as to the financial outlook. Crop estimates, factory production, and foreign markets are big factors in the planning. Droughts, floods, crop failures, labor troubles, and great fires are some of the many things to be avoided in the routings. All this

must be planned before a pitch is made.

"Aside from the management the personnel of a circus naturally divides itself into three groups: the ring performers, the animal trainers, and the roustabouts. The first named, consisting of acrobats, tumblers, jugglers, aerial artists, and equestrians, are an exclusive class that eat at the same table and use the same Pullmans. They are not 'snooty,' just reserved. There are many foreigners among them. In some acts the entire family takes part. They are a sober lot. Hard liquor has no place on the refreshment list of a class whose life is dependent on a clear brain and a sure hand and foot. Many of them are good church folk. We could always tell when Sunday morning came by the bustle and stir to attend early Mass.

"Roustabouts, the labor battalion of the circus army, join up out of curiosity and quit when satiated. A wise boss never fixes a specific payday or else, on the day following, not enough of 'em would be left to light the cook's fire. They are the first to be roused out in the morning and never go to bed. They are supposed to catch naps during the afternoon performance and of evenings before the menagerie is torn down for another move. However, these naps are canceled if they can contact the public for a 'touch' or gain an audience for their weird, fantastic tales of personal heroism in their life with the circus.

"And because Mister John Q. Public contacts these ne'er-do-wells and romancers, he forms wrong estimates of the business. Mister Public is further deceived in believing that the 'con man' who has a pitch nearby is connected with the enterprise. Circuses are widely advertised to appear at a certain place on a fixed date. The skin-game artists and shilabers, cheaters, flimflammers, and medicine men flock to these gatherings as flies to a picnic. They are as barnacles on a fast-moving ship, flies in the ointment of circus management. Happily much of this odium has been erased. By close cooperation with local authorities, the con man and shilaber is moved out before he starts. Unhappily the stigma of past incidents still persists.

"And now, you are happy that I am approaching the end of the chapter, and I am happy to say a final word in behalf of my favorites among the circus folks, the animal trainers. To me, these patient, hard workers are the cream of the crop. Whenever I had time to spare I was a visitor in their schools. We marvel that we can communicate by telephone and radio, but animal trainers not only make themselves understood, but they must first teach their subjects the language in which they speak. At these training schools I've seen horses, dogs, elephants, seals, and birds told in pantomime what certain words mean; they are then told

to execute the exact meaning of the word. Those who teach young humans have an easy task as compared with these patient teachers of dumb, but brainy brutes.

"Animal trainers are born with the 'gift.' None, so far as I know, would shine in educational circles and none are dilettanti in the arts and sciences, yet they have that mysterious 'it' of influence and command. I've seen a great herd of elephants move in unison at a whispered word, and a dog will venture to death's door if a little, old ragged master bids him to do so. A queer relationship this! It has always fascinated me.

"But, I want you to understand, my admiration for the game does not extend to the cat family. I always turn my back and walk away when I see Beatty walk into a cage of tigers, leopards, lions, or cougars. I admire his pluck but condemn his judgment. I cannot join the general public in admiring the sinuous majesty of the cats. I was always glad to hear the final slam of the gate and to wonder if the latch caught as Clyde backed out.

"But with the rest of the trainees I am in good standing. I love to ramble around in the menagerie and hear the big talk of the gang in charge. Elephants like children and midgets. Old Mom always had a friendly greeting for me and knew in which pocket I had parked the peanuts. Seals know a lot more than they let on. However, they are a jealous set. They sulk and pout, worse than humans, if one act wins more applause than another.

"As a sort of a summary of my happy hours spent with animal trainers, I offer the opinion that dogs, because of their centuries of contact with man, are the most faithful creatures of the animal kingdom; that horses are the most useful, for this great western empire would still be a desert or a roaring wilderness had it not been for the horse. Elephants are smarter than many of the other creatures. They can reason from cause to effect. This I know, for one dark, rainy night when we were stuck in the mud trying to get off the lot at Columbus, old Canhead Fortney was using two of the smaller Asiatics to shove the big cages out of the mire. Jerry Quiggle had six horses on a chain and was surging away to get the wagons out to the pavement. Canhead moved the little elephants around back of the big rhinoceros cage and fixed the head-pads for the big shove. But they didn't shove. Canhead bawled and fussed around in the dark and thought he had a mutiny on his hands. Presently he heard Jerry, up in front, hooking on the chain and clucking to the horses. Then the little Asiatics, without further orders, bent to their task and the big cage rolled out to the hard surface. Canhead apologized for his error. He stopped at a hydrant and washed the mud off the elephants' legs and gave 'em an extra feed.

"But of all the animals under training, I think seals are the smartest. They are uncanny in their reasoning. They do unexpected things. When seals are associated with human beings as long as dogs they will speak our language and do it correctly. I think seals like to tour the country in the hope that some day they can go back to the ocean, to the rocks and cliffs and slides, to tell the other seals just how dumb we humans are.

"And that's about all, my friends. I realize that my rambling remarks are poor pay for the splendid little horse I got. Really, if my time and talk is the value of exchange, I would be here for a week, telling of the tragedies and comedies I've seen in this vast, fast-moving business. I could tell of the big blow-down we had in Texas; of the train wreck in the Carolinas; of the near elephant stampede we had when the woman raised her parasol as the parade was forming in Frankfort. And to show how closely tragedy and comedy are interwoven, I'll ring down the final curtain by telling this incident.

"At Toledo, the Grand Entry was forming for the night performance. In the menagerie tent the animals, chariots, Roman soldiers, and attendants were being lined up for the Grand March. In the lineup were two hippopotamuses. It was a new feature, having these big brutes free and unrestrained in a parade. Just as the march started, old Fisheye Gleason, a seasoned old retainer who cleaned out cages, fed the animals, and who claimed he was with Noah when he landed his animal collection on Mount Ararat; old Fisheye was climbing down from the top of a cage when he stumbled and fell right on the back of a hippo. Now a hippo isn't classed with the smart animals. He makes up in bulk what he lacks in brains. He is billed as being the 'Blood-Sweating Behemoth of Holy Writ.'

"But it was Fisheye that did the sweating. He didn't want to fall off to be run over by the chariots and it was hard to stick on the round, fat hippo. And the poor, scared hippo ran through the band, scattering musicians and horns, ran round the arena with Fisheye aboard, and finally scrambled up about four tiers in the reserved seats to an entangling stop. So far as I know, this was the only parade that Fisheye ever headed, and Toledo was the only city to witness such a Grand Entry.

"Thank you, one and all, for your kindly indulgence."

Again the young minister headed the prolonged applause, but he motioned for the audience to remain seated for a final word.

"This is one of the happy events of my life," he said enthusiastically. "I have been well entertained, and have gained much valuable information on two

subjects that I knew little about. And now that I am to add a further paragraph as to our material gains, I hope our guest and entertainer will understand our deep appreciation of his presence with us and his thoughtful remarks.

"Brother Peyton informs me that the receipts of the evening amount to four hundred and seventy-one dollars. This is a giant sum to be collected voluntarily, in a small community, in a time of depression and for an entertainment that was wholly home talent and given at little expense.

"Our parent church provides for loans to be made, to match sums donated for building purposes. I am making application for such a loan. I have contracted for the purchase of the old Hartman home at the corner of Laramie Street. It needs a new roof and new paint. If a partition is torn out it will be ample for our church needs just now. Tomorrow I will canvass the community for volunteers to do this work. I have already made some inquiry on this matter and feel sure that we can get donations of three hundred manpower hours for this task.

"So what you two have accomplished this night," said the youthful preacher in closing, "will be shown in our church records. It will be recorded that a handsome, enthusiastic young girl and a former circus performer made the initial contributions that established a church in a community where it was said that such a thing was impossible. I thank you all for your presence here, for your labors, and your contributions."



16ToC

Sunday was a quiet day at the Gillis home. It was freighted with both doubt and hope. Landy and Davy were out of bed at four o'clock Monday morning. At five they were in the saddle; at six-thirty they were at the Carter filling station. Adine had just arrived and had introduced herself to old Maddy, seated on the porch. She heard a brief recital as to the cause of his injuries and as Landy and

Davy rode up she invited the invalid to accompany the party.

"It will do you good," she explained, "for after the snows come you must stay in the house for a long time. We three ride the front seat but there is a long, narrow seat at the rear where you can prop up your injured feet and view the scenery."

Maddy laughed. "I've seen too much scenery already. I feel more like resting than I do gadding. I am, however, deeply interested in your project. If you take over that Barrow ranch and get Hulls out of the country, I want to recommend a tenant—a companionable fellow and a hard worker that will make a good neighbor and bring decency out of that disgrace. It's young Goff, who saved my life. He lives over the state line; raises sheep and cattle; has no family, and needs expansion. He would make that Tranquil Meadow area bloom like a rose."

"Well, I'm not the buyer," cautioned Adine, "but I will certainly use my influence. Your benefactor has already proven his worth as a citizen, and we need that kind of folks to live down the past. I will do my best."

Landy and Davy had parked their horses in the Carter corral to take their place in the awaiting car. At near the noon hour they parked in front of the National Bank in Cheyenne.

"What's your birthday?" inquired the gentlemanly cashier, as Davy made inquiry as to the receipt of the draft.

"May thirtieth," responded Davy promptly.

The cashier laughed as he produced the expected document. "Your sending party seems to know you very well, and know how to solve our problem of identification. Do you want to open an account?"

"Well, I suppose that's the way it should be handled. I want to pay the most of it to Mr. Logan, if he's prepared to accept it. I want to pay Mr. Spencer here one hundred dollars and he wants to add that to the account of Mrs. Gillis and I should add fully fifty dollars to that account to keep sweet with the best cook I ever encountered. Then, too, I should pay Mr. Finch fifty dollars. After that, if there is any left, I hope you can keep it for me until I can add it up to a profitable figure."

"Ah! here's Mr. Logan," interrupted the cashier. "You gentlemen just come into the customers' room and we will work out the details."

"You are prompt. I thought I would beat you here," said Logan to Davy and

his party. "Saturday I had a deed prepared to the Barrow ranch and had the judge approve the sale with the conditions of possession as stated agreed. I have it here and ready for delivery."

It was Mr. Gore, the courteous cashier, who took charge of the business. He secured the endorsement of Davy's draft, took his verified signature, drew the required checks, saw them signed and exchanged. The entire transaction was completed in a few minutes.

"You will see Mr. Finch before I do," said Davy to Logan. "Will you please hand him this check for fifty which completes my obligations to him and tell him that I am having the cattle remaining on the ranch appraised. If the appraisal warrants, I will pay the balance of his bill and send the remainder to Hulls Barrow."

"Appraised! Bosh!" snorted the bank receiver. "You'll not get close to see any part of the ranch, let alone counting the scrub cattle. I've been up against old Hulls and his gun, and I know what I'm talking about."

"The cattle have already been counted," said Davy quietly, "and I had my first view of the Bar-O Friday. The cattle seem in good flesh but the general property needs a lot of repair. I was very sorry to see Mr. Barrow leave; I could have used a man of his firm determination...."

"Leave?" demanded Logan. "Is Hulls gone?"

"Left Friday morning early, taking with him his gun, dog, chickens, household plunder, and worst of all, Maizie. And that woman was the exact type I needed."

"Where did they go?" questioned the astonished receiver.

"Except for the coop of chickens and the household goods, it looked like a picnic. However, their guide, mentor, and boss had a faraway look in his eye—seemed impatient to get going. Who was he? Well, I don't know the folks hereabouts." Turning to Landy, Davy drawled, "Who was that fellow that was driving?"

"Hit was Collins, Ugly Collins, en from the way he was bossin' en pushin' along, he was tryin' to make hit to Denver by nightfall."

"Well, he certainly upset my plans," said Davy resignedly. "But that's what one encounters in making trades, Mr. Logan. You plan out what you are going to do, only to find out that others also make plans."

"Well, folks," said Davy, picking up the new account book and pad of checks,

"where is that famous restaurant that you've been talking about? Landy's breakfasts have no stretch in 'em, don't last. I'm wolfish. Well, good-by, Mister Logan, and good-by, Mister Gore. I hope we have pleasant relations. Good-by all." And Davy ushered his party to the street.

Seated in the Little Gem, awaiting service, it was Adine Lough that opened the conversation. "I hardly know how I am to get home," she said. "I don't like driving alone, but I certainly don't want to be found in the company of two heartless comedians who seek to inject their comedy into staid business transactions. I thought Mr. Logan's lower jaw would drop off when you fastened the blame of the entire move on his friend Ugly Collins. I could hardly repress my tears in your great loss of Maizie's services. I think Mr. Logan was affected too. Shame on both of you for being so heartless."

"Yes, Logan kinda got his fingers bruised in his own b'ar trap," said Landy thoughtfully. "I hope his bankin' efforts won't git tangled up in some of his deep plannin'. Logan will git his bank started all right; but when this depression lifts en things git goin' Adot will still need a bank; this one will turn out to be 'Logan's Tradin' Post' er 'Logan's Deadfall.' Ye can revive a bank by man-made laws, but hit takes more than a slicker to keep hit goin'. Have you two settled the hay trade?"

"Yes," said Adine, "you are to have all the stacks and ricks in the south field. I think Mr. Potter estimated it at near one hundred tons. You can have the use of one of our trucks for hauling, but you will probably have to hire help to move it. Our folks have never exchanged work with the Bar-O. Our help will probably want to wait to see if the new management is any improvement on the former control." The raillery of the youngest and happiest of the trio was seemingly lost on the two, now immersed in heavy responsibilities.

Davy returned to the car; Adine Lough would telephone a school friend and window shop while Landy went to the hardware store to buy some needed kitchen accessories as directed in a brief note that he had crumpled in a deep pocket. Before two o'clock the party was well on the way to Carter's.

Less than a month ago David Lannarck had traveled this same road. Then he was amazed at the shifting changes, the glory of its loneliness, and the utter absence of the curious and gawking. In his decade of travel he never encountered the land of his dreams, the wide open spaces that reached from here to the horizon and free of human beings. His business led him to the congested spots on the earth. If and when he traveled with a circus he spent his spare hours in the

animal tent. Here he was not taunted with verbal gibes. Maybe this was his reason for liking animals. Always, he dreamed of the day when he could own dogs, horses, or any living thing that didn't smirk or titter.

And now, on this fine October afternoon, all past hopes and dreams had come true; his foot was in the doorway to an earthly heaven. He was the owner of a ranch (maybe Ralph Gaynor would condemn the investment) and it had length and breadth and the desirable loneliness. He was the owner of a grand little horse (maybe Jess and the gang of the circus would scorn his size and color). He was the sole owner of a herd of cattle (surely the experts and maybe the general public would classify them as scrubs and yellow-hammers) and best of all, he had acquired a few understanding friends, true and loyal. During the time of the long trip back to their horses he was in deep thought. His meditations did not concern finances, nor that other pressing question: when will this depression end? Truly he was trying to muster arguments and reasons whereby he could persuade his mentor to move the scrub yearlings, now quartered at the Cliffs, up to the stables and corrals with the rest of the cattle.

For this midget, David Lannarck, was very human. Possessed of an alert and active mind, he had, throughout adulthood, ever been classified as a child. He would use his recent accomplishments and present status to frustrate that persistent impression. Secretly but in all details he planned the coup.

First, he would persuade Landy to round up those yearlings in a group with the rest of the cattle; second, on the basis that a general picture of the enterprise was sorely needed to bolster his financial standing, he would have a photographer present, taking views of all phases of the adventure; thirdly, and most important, he, Davy, would be astride Peaches, mingling with the several cow hands against a background of milling cattle, either in the wide open spaces or in the corrals at the stables. Copies of these pictures he would send to all his old associates in vaudeville or in the circus business. Particularly, he would send several copies to Ralph Gaynor, president of the Dollar Savings, hoping that one of them might be displayed where the general public could see that a midget, a former resident, was active with other adults in the most fascinating business in America. He was not seeking to establish financial credit; that he had, in substantial deposits and other well known securities, but he wanted to get away from the persistent notion of classifying midgets as children.

Meanwhile Adine and Landy, having exhausted merry quips and scornful comparisons of the past and future management of the Bar-O, now gave serious exchanges of opinions as to who would make a suitable tenant for the property

that was to be built up to a going concern. Landy mentioned the names of a dozen old-time cattle men, now unemployed and surely available. None of these suited the notions of the young lady whose persistent idea was building up the neighborhood. She, too, mentioned the names of many, few of them known to the old timer. Finally the girl mentioned the name of Maddy's benefactor, young Goff, now residing across the state line. "He's in cramped quarters over there, I understand," said the girl casually.

"He's the best man in the deestrick," said Landy thoughtfully. "But he's got the same problems we have. He's got critters to feed, en he can't run two places when the snow is here. I hope, however, that Davy here can make him a permanent offer that will move him at once.

"But we've got to git them yearlin's outa the Cliffs en up to the stables," Landy announced emphatically. "We can't haul hay, wean calves, en be traipsin' all over ten sections to feed a few critters. We've got to bunch 'em en show 'em that we mean business."

"That's right, Landy," was Davy's prompt approval. "Can we get that young Goff tomorrow? Is there a good photographer in Adot? When can we haul the hay?"

"Thar ye go crowdin' the question chute," complained Landy as the party arrived at the filling station. "Tomorry we've got to be in Adot. We've got a deed to record; got to buy some ground feed, if them calves are to be weaned; got to hire a lot of exter hay hands en enough he'p to corral them yearlin's. En besides all that," he cautioned, "we've got to go to the register's office en git a substitute brand, fer old Hulls has shorely carried off the old irons outa pure cussedness. Kin ye he'p us tomorry?" His question was directed to Adine Lough as the two got out of the car.

"Yes, I've enlisted for the duration. I am anxious to learn if the new management is an improvement over the old. Recent happenings have created doubts. Come over in the morning; I want to see the finish."



A veteran cow hand or a frequenter of the modern rodeo would have walked out on the roundup of the scattered kine of the Bar-O ranch on this gray October day. There was scarcely a thrill in the entire performance.

At Welborn's insistence, Davy invited young Byron Goff to help out in the work to be done. "I may not be here always," explained Welborn, "and Landy won't be here forever. Young Goff is your bet. He's a square shooter, a good worker, and his sheep and your cattle are too few to awaken the old-time cattle and sheep wars. Tie in with Goff."

And Goff came to look the place over and make a tentative contract. A day or two before the general roundup Landy and Flinthead had turned out the gentle cattle that stayed around the barns and sheds to mingle with nervous yearlings that headquartered at the Cliffs. On the morning of the roundup young Goff and Flinthead made a wide detour to appear at the easternmost side. The startled kine moved west, and kept moving west as they found scattered riders on either side. At the gate, where trouble was expected, a few "yip-yips" and a hurried push sent the entire herd through the gates to a safe enclosure.

To David Lannarck, this was the climax of his varied career. He had a photographer present to take many successful shots, although the day was raw and gray. His circus friends may not have been impressed as they viewed the pictures but Davy spent happy hours in looking them over, especially the one where he, mounted on Peaches, was heading off an obstinate calf.

The hay hauling from the B-line was interrupted by a snow storm that persisted for several days. Davy had to stay at home to train Peaches in many fancy tricks and to keep a path open to the Gillis home. Welborn, however, took no part in these activities. He continued his work at the ravine and expressed joy that a heavy snow would prevent a deep freeze of the gravel. In fact, much of his time was consumed in insulating the pumps, the waterpipes and the area where he was to work. He was often delayed by the severity of the weather but as the dreary weeks passed the heap of little sacks that contained his gleanings grew to a considerable pile.

And in these monotonous months of near-solitude Davy Lannarck found the satisfaction and contentment of his former dreams. In five months he saw less than a half score of people. In his waking hours his time was spent in training

Peaches and playing with the Gillis dogs. Most of the time he kept the way open to the Gillis demesne, but on two occasions at least, he was denied that privilege; the heavy, swirling snows that swept over this mountain region were too much for a midget man and a midget horse. It was Landy Spencer and the larger horses that conquered the big drifts and made a passable thoroughfare between the Point and the Gillis home. But spring came as is its wont; the great snowdrifts yielded to the demands of the sun and southern winds and the returning flights of birds heralded the change of seasons.

But the big change in conduct and occupation was in Sam Welborn. In the short, dark, snowy days he labored in the recesses of the canyon from early dawn to nightfall, but as the days lengthened and brightened, he puttered about the house sorting and packing some of his personal effects, pressing his limited supply of clothing, constructing a strong box to contain his gleanings, and losing no chance to learn of the conditions of the roads to Cheyenne and points beyond. It was apparent to his few acquaintances that he was now prepared to overcome some past adversities that had hindered his progress in other fields.

One evening after supper at the Gillis home Welborn made a limited disclosure of his future plans. "As soon as the roads are fit, I want to go to the assay office in Denver and cash up on past efforts," was his opening statement. "I hope Jim can take time out to drive me there and bring the car back, for I want to make a trip back East to be gone for a week or two. After I have finished up my business in that area I want to come back here and loaf around a spell and get acquainted with my neighbors and benefactors. As Davy has often said, 'The gold up in the ravine will keep.' The claims are registered in our names, and we can, from time to time, work 'em to keep 'em alive.

"At the assay office," Welborn continued, "I will cash in the little dab that I had accumulated before Davy advanced the money to buy the pump and accessories; the rest is partnership funds to be divided and depos—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Davy. "You've sheltered me, fed me—"

"—with grub bought with your money," interposed Welborn. "You can't avoid past contributions by present-day denials, Laddie. Without your help it would have taken me ten years to do what I've now done in six months. And speed was and is the important requirement. In addition to all you've done in the past months I've still got another problem for you to work on."

Welborn paused, seemingly embarrassed as to how to proceed. His little audience waited breathlessly. "Folks, I am not a criminal!" he said after a

prolonged pause. "But I did get involved with gangsters. Although I made a temporary clean-up on some of them, domestic affairs and financial disasters made it impossible to stay on. It seemed cowardly to quit but there was no other way. I had no plans, no trade, no profession. I simply stumbled in on this method of financial recovery, and thanks to your kindly indulgence I am prepared to go back and make good some financial matters that were not of my making.

"But in going back," Welborn continued, "I would like to know something about conditions there before they know who I am. There seems to be two ways to do this. One would be to camp nearby and send someone to investigate and report back as to conditions; the other would be for me to disguise myself and loaf around as a laborer, unemployed and looking for work.

"You know something about make-up and disguises, Laddie; could I be made up as a laborer or a village loafer so I could sit around and listen in?"

"You would have to let them shoulders down and pad a hump in your back," replied the little man. "Appearances can be radically changed but size is a handicap. There is a woman in Denver by the name of Wallace that can make you up to look like either an angel or a tramp. She used to be in vaudeville with costumes and makeup, now she's settled down in the legit—furnishes costumes for plays, charades, and the like. She's on one of those little side streets near the business district. She'll clip your head, deck you out in scraggy iron-gray hair and whiskers until a bank clerk would turn you down, even if you were identified. She'll tell you about your clothing; that's her specialty. Your ragged coat ought to have a hump in the back to offset erectness and if you carry a cane, you should use it—not twirl it like a baton.

"But there's one of your assets, or weaknesses, that she will not be able to disguise," said Davy earnestly. "I take a chance in wrecking a fine friendship, to tell you about it."

"Go right on, Sonny Boy," said Welborn, "you couldn't wreck our friendship if you were to spit in my face."

"Well, we folks here know nothing about your past. We don't want to know until you release it, but I'll bet my interest in the Bar-O against a thin dime that you've served in the army and were a tough old 'top-kick' at that. You want things done your way. You resist being told. You want to correct the other fellow if he's wrong; even if disguised, you would interrupt and correct and maybe jam the whole works. Of course we want you to win but you've got to be careful—even if it hurts."

Welborn's face flushed but he laughed sheepishly as he pondered the charges made. "You've got me dead-to-rights, Laddie; I am impatient and domineering, but I think I still have control. Just now I need information. I want to know if I am classed as a criminal or a citizen back in my home town. Personally, I would like to go back there, loaf around and listen in.

"Well, it can be done," said Davy emphatically, "and I think I ought to be an assistant. You saved my life, now I want to be a party to saving your reputation. You are not a criminal; you couldn't be one if you tried. Just tell me the name of your home town and I will go there as the advance man for Lannarck's Congress of Living Wonders. I'll be seeking a site to assemble the company and plan the rehearsals. While there I will want the history of the town and the chamber of commerce will give it to me. In that history, your affair in all its details will be recited. Later on, you can stumble in as a laborer, seeking work. I will be quartered at the leading hotel, and you at a boarding house out by the junction. But we will meet at the picture show or at a local poolroom and I will hire you to take care of the baggage and the accessories as they come in. It won't take us long to get your status, pay your fine, or get the judge to suspend your sentence.

"Let's get going, podner," said Davy, as he clambered down from his chair. "We'll both go to Cheyenne; you go to Denver to cash up and fade out; I'll go to your town to pay out and horn in."

Welborn smiled as he listened to Davy's enthusiasm and slang. He drummed his fingers on the table as he considered his proposals. "I hadn't thought of involving any of our home-folks in my troubles," said he thoughtfully, "but maybe your assistance and plan will be the thing that's needed. I want information. People will stare at and talk to a midget and they will pay little attention to the badly dressed old gent with whom he associates. Anyhow, it won't hurt to try it out."

Davy insisted that the party should start for Cheyenne the very next morning. James Gillis, who was to do the driving, would wait until he learned of road conditions. Welborn occupied much of the time in fitting himself with old shoes, overalls, hickory shirts, and a slouch hat. On Monday, Jim learned that the nearby trails were fit for travel to the paved highway and on Tuesday morning the party of three loaded the little car with boxes of metal, bundles of clothing, and the like, and started for Cheyenne.

During the long drive, Welborn took up much of the time in instructing Davy as to his destination and duties. "Bransford, a near suburb of Chicago, is your destination," he explained, "and the man who insulted the better element of the community by his insistence that the prevailing lawlessness was wholly due to their negligence was named Shirley Wells. And this same Wells, when he found that gangsters had taken over the management of the old family bank and brought disrepute to an honored name, staged a battle with these invaders that sent two of 'em to the hospital and maybe resulted in the death of one or both.

Was he indicted? Did a mob form? He did not wait to see. With the family estate squandered, this Wells boarded a night freight train to avoid present responsibilities and to seek a new start in life. His linen and underwear was marked S.W. He changed his name to Samuel Welborn. You know the rest of the story, Davy, but there is a lost chapter in the tale. What's the present-day status of Shirley Wells in his home town?

"In Bransford, you will headquarter at the Grand Union Hotel. Following your 'broadcast' about establishing a training ground for the Kid Show, you must quietly go to the office of Fred Townsend for information. He's a lawyer. If he's alive, I've got a chance; if he's dead, Shirley Wells is still Sam Welborn and the Silver Falls district must continue as his hideout.

"In your contact with Townsend, tell him that I sent you—that you are my A.Z.—and he will understand. What you tell him is casual; your objective is to find out all about the standing of Shirley Wells. Shirley is surely a bankrupt, but is he a murderer? Are indictments pending? Can he be cleared of these charges? And what about the Wells National Bank? And where is Carson Wells? These are the things we must know if I am to live as a citizen or a criminal.

"I will be in Denver for a few days. We surely have more than sixty thousand dollars' worth of metal in those containers. Some of it may be in bad shape. Some of it may have to be rectified, as they term it, and that will cause delay. Then, too, I am not certain if your lady friend in Denver can do her job effectively. I wouldn't want to be caught in a disguise. At any rate, I will be in Chicago or Bransford some day next week."

At the railway station Jim Gillis maneuvered the ancient model to unload the metal and clothing at the Denver platform. Davy purchased a ticket for Chicago. Welborn's read "to Denver and return."



PART TWO

18ToC

Because of duties in maintaining peace along the uncertain boundary lines that divided a defeated people from those who had triumphed, Captain Shirley Wells was detained in the border lands of France and Germany long after his badly reduced regiment had returned to their homeland. Wells had been the first sergeant of a company that became noted for its discipline within and its activities afield. His promotion to a commission had been earned.

Shirley had entered the service as an enthusiastic youth. In a few brief years he had grown to a serious-minded man. A six-footer, deep-chested, broad of shoulders, he had the physical ability to enforce the decrees and orders of his superiors while the general terms of boundaries were being formulated. Patiently and firmly he worked with the peasantry of any district where he was assigned to gain their confidence and earn the praise of his superiors. On July 2nd, 1921, his nation and the others interested having completed the general terms of boundaries and occupation, the service by regulatory groups was ended. Shirley Wells had been gratified in earning a commission, now he was happy indeed to know that he was to return to civilian pursuits, for he might have to work out some peace terms in his home town.

More than eighteen months ago, while his regiment was resting after an effective foray against the enemy in the vicinity of Lyons, he received a letter informing him of the death of his father and indicating that a telegram had been sent. He never received the telegram, and judging by a lack of replies to his letters, he doubted that one had been sent.

Now he was an orphan. In letters from friends he learned that his elder brother, Carson, was in charge of the family bank at Bransford, a suburb of Chicago, and that he was connected with active interests in that city. He learned, too, that Carson now lived in the ancient but beautiful home formerly occupied by his parents. What about the boys and girls with whom he was associated in school days? Was Loretta Young married? Was the strong little bank, the pride of two generations, still rendering the service that had made it famous? And what of the other family assets? This returning soldier was deeply involved in the complications that come to all veterans who are hastily transferred back to civilian duties and are to encounter the radical changes that have been made to maintain a vast fighting force in distant lands.

However, Shirley Wells noted little difference in conditions in the cities of Washington and Chicago as he hastened homeward. Buildings and streets appeared about as usual but the general populace appeared indifferent and unconcerned. Unemployment prevailed, but he seemed to contact more women in business places than he did in former days.

At Chicago he transferred to the morning local for Bransford. He was disappointed that he found no old-time acquaintances among those who were bound for the suburbs. The first person to recognize him was the station agent at Bransford and his greeting was casual as he trundled the truck of empty milk cans to the far end of the platform. "Maybe these London tweeds are taboo in this central zone," he grumbled as he made his way up the shaded street to the business district.

At the bank, he planned to walk right up to the receiver's window and ask old Powell if this was Tellson's bank and was Mr. Tellson in? As a schoolboy he had often kidded the aged cashier as to the close resemblance of these quarters to the little, gloomy, narrow affair described by author Dickens as being located at Temple Bar in the city of London. But the aged cashier's place was occupied by an alert young man who asked to be of service and Shirley could only inquire if Carson was in.

The aged woman working at a filing cabinet turned quickly when she heard the voice of the inquirer. She walked to the counter to get a better view. "Why, it's Shirley!" she cried as she ran out in the corridor. "It's Shirley!—twice as big!" She made ineffective attempts to hug and caress the big man, who laughingly lifted her up to plant a kiss on either cheek. "That's the first—and best—welcome I've had since I landed in America, Aunt Carrie," said he. "Now I feel that I am home."

Carson Wells came from the little private room at the rear. The greetings of the brothers were not so effusive. Shirley was invited to the private room by his brother.

"I want to loaf around for a week or two," the veteran explained. "I want to hunt up a few old friends and hear 'em detail the awful experiences they suffered during the war. If you can find me a temporary hangout where I can store some keepsakes while I get myself oriented, it will be quite all right."

"The housing situation is a little tight just now," said Carson, "but we should be able to find quarters somewhere. The Grand Union is badly congested of weekends and rooming houses are full up. I live in the three west rooms of our old home and Mr. Breen and his family occupy the rest. However, there's plenty of room at the farmhouse, and Davis, the tenant, certainly needs a lot of personal supervision, the way things have been going lately. At times I have felt that I should share the big house at the farm but my wife protests—"

"Are you married?" interrupted Shirley. "And who is the fortunate lady?"

"Why, sure I'm married. Didn't you get our announcement? I married Loretta Young a year ago last April."

Shirley Wells occupied quarters at the family farmhouse for nearly four years. In the first few weeks he drove an ancient model back and forth to the little city to renew acquaintances. The American Legion, quartered in a small room over a meat market, was one of his hangouts. Here, two or three of the unimportant members were in constant attendance quibbling and complaining that the general public did not plan and build for their uses the ornate structure they had in mind. For a week or two he frequented the local movies, but compared with past experiences he failed to find the production up to the announcements that the portrayals were stupendous and thrilling. Social affairs in the community seemed confined to "groups." Luncheon clubs, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions seemed to dominate commercial activities while the Dramatic Club and P.T.A. organizations took care of other community gatherings.

But to Shirley Wells, the one big change from old-time conditions was in the liquor business. The saloons that flourished in the days before his enlistment were not now operating. Of the seven places where liquor was sold only one maintained a resemblance to former conditions. Dinty O'Neal's place, across the tracks, appeared about as disreputable as it was in former days. Some of the young sports laughingly insisted that Dinty's home-brew was in a fair way of making the city famous.

Two of the uptown places continued to operate a few pool tables and sell soft drinks. One room, formerly occupied by a saloon, was now the office of a trucking company with headquarters in Chicago. Shirley was later to learn that young Anzio, the new bank employee, was a nephew of the manager of the trucking company.

Shirley gave little attention to the affairs at the bank. Carson seemed unwilling to share the responsibilities of a business that was severely affected by the growing depression. As a youngster Shirley knew much of the details of the business but he realized that he had no present-day knowledge of credits and loans. He made no effort to intrude.

Knowing that he must rely on his own efforts to earn a living, Shirley secured desk-room in the elaborate offices of Fred Townsend, a personal friend and a leading lawyer in the community. Here he acted as a receiver in several complicated cases and was often busy in securing evidence. This employment occupied much of his time and gave opportunity to note the trend in community affairs.

Meanwhile, Carson found a customer for the family farm. "The Model Trucking Company wants the place for storage," he explained, "and they are the only concern on our books that has a growing account." Shirley moved into town to an apartment over the Banner office.

Indeed, the trucking company was an active concern. Trucks grew in number. Night shipping was a principal activity. Local "night hawks" were to learn that coal and corn composed most of the incoming loads, and the finished product went to Chicago. Local distributors were supplied only from that central city.

As is usually the case, revulsion follows negligence. Now sober-minded but financially distressed citizens would correct the prevailing evil. The eighteenth amendment must be repealed. The people of the nation were voting to undo what had been done.

Locally, Reverend James Branch of the Fourth Avenue Church called a meeting of ministers and church officials to discuss the probable loss of the amendment that was to have been the cure for liquor evils. The call to the meeting was announced in the local newspapers.

Shirley Wells had not been specifically invited to the conference. He was curious to learn, however, if there was a cure for this festering ailment that afflicted the nation other than the repeal of the amendment. He quietly took a back seat at the small but select gathering in the church parlors to listen to the

protests and complaints. And there was little else in the several talks—protests against the lack of law enforcement; complaints that Chicago gangsters were broadening their sphere of activity to include adjacent cities and suburbs in the distribution and sale of raw alcohol and needled beer. In these discussions no speaker offered a solution to the problem.

The Reverend Branch presided. Following the several talks he recognized Shirley Wells and in an elaborate introduction, reciting his war service, he asked Shirley if he had a solution for the problem now under discussion.

"I came here seeking information," said Shirley quietly. "I surely must be the most ignorant one present. I wasn't in the States when the amendment was passed and have had limited opportunity to note the effects. It is apparent, however, that there is something wrong, radically wrong, with the whole population—both the criminal and the law-abiding."

"Why! what's wrong with the better element?" demanded the chairman quickly. "It was the law-abiding citizen that planned and urged and voted for the eighteenth amendment to the Constitution. Our planning and work was effective. And now, they would nullify our past labors."

"And then, what did you do?" demanded Shirley as he rose to his feet to emphasize what was to follow. "You, figuratively, folded fat hands across pudgy stomachs and left the enforcement of your edict to the officers who were friends of the bootleggers. Your failure to act causes this repeal."

"Is it your idea that the better element of a community must quit their business to take up the matter of law enforcement?" the chairman asked in scornful tones.

"It's my idea," retorted Shirley as he advanced from the rear to the center of the gathered group, "it's my idea that anyone who launches a new, untried craft in unexplored waters had better stay at the helm instead of leaving the management of the boat to those who deride the plan. It wouldn't have taken much of your time, Doctor Branch, to have organized an enforcement committee to assist the policeman who was a friendly acquaintance of the former liquor man, who has now turned bootlegger. Policemen are selected because of their acquaintance with the underworld and they are very human. Void of any contacts with the better element of the community, they allow their friends to run wild in lawlessness until the affair gets beyond control. That's what happened in Bransford; that's what happened everywhere. Lawless greed flourishes in the atmosphere of negligence.

"But I didn't come here to quarrel with the better element of my home town,"

concluded Shirley as he reached for his hat. "I had hoped that you had a solution, a plan, to meet the oncoming conditions. Just now the States are voting to repeal the amendment. It seems certain that it will be repealed and within the next year or two, the old saloon will be functioning as in former days. It will pay a tax to the government on the product sold, it will pay a tax to the city, it will furnish a bond to operate legally and at stated hours, and its return will be welcomed by many. But remember that the greedy and grasping back of it all will overdo, as always, and the amendment will be re-enacted. This time, if it has the support of a well-organized enforcement committee, it will function despite the efforts of the greedy."

19ToC

The Bransford Morning Herald contained no account of the meeting at the Fourth Avenue Church. News of the rebuff as administered to the better element by a rank outsider was slow in gaining circulation. But the incident was not wholly suppressed. Judge Parker, who had been present, chuckled the incident to a few friends; Holstroff, the merchant, recited the details to a few customers as they discussed the probable outcome of the state elections now being held; and Joe Dansford, the church janitor, told the incident of how the meeting ended in a general row, without the formality of a motion to adjourn. Lacking a correct account, the general public of the little city elaborated the story to include fisticuffs and swear words.

Carson Wells, of the Wells National, heard the story and was much concerned. It affected his leading customer. Just now, banks were closing in increasing numbers, local factories were shut down, retailing limited to bare necessities, and only one concern in the community earned money. Carson, as well as the managers of the Model Trucking Company, realized that in the event of the repeal of the amendment, ruin was inevitable. It was Carson's problem to stop

such publicity. Shirley must be silenced. He was found at the public library and was invited to come to the bank after three o'clock.

"That vindictive speech you made at the church meeting is proving very costly," said Carson as the brothers seated themselves in the little consultation room in the rear of the bank. "It affects your own personal affairs, and seeks to wreck the only concern in the city that is functioning and making money. Your interest in this bank demands a retraction of what you said at that meeting."

"Why, I didn't know I had an interest in this bank," said Shirley in even tones. "In the years past, I have been shunted around from pillar to post, living on the few small fees received from receiverships and bankruptcy petitions. And I didn't think that I had banking interests. I certainly am an object of personal negligence, but hereafter the matter will have my attention."

Carson was nonplused at both the answer and attitude. He had planned his remarks, however, and he proceeded along prepared lines.

"Your remarks at that meeting were uncalled for. Your insistence created enemies. No one at the meeting was in favor of repealing the amendment and restoring the unwanted saloon. Yours was the attitude of the drinking ne'er-do-wells of the underworld. Two of those present at that meeting have withdrawn their account, others will do the same. You were simply undermining your own foundations."

"And just what sort of a structure stands on my foundations?" drawled Shirley. "I am a sort of a misfit in the community structure. I do not live in my family home, am not employed in my family bank, was moved away from my family's farm, have never been consulted on business or social affairs since my parents died. Really, I have no foundations that could be undermined."

Carson's face reddened as he listened to the truth. He walked to the water-cooler, took a drink, and returned to his seat. "In some things you are right," he confessed. "When you came home from France, I hoped you would seek a professional career—would turn to politics and make a name for yourself and the family. It seemed my business to work hard and aid in building that career, but you didn't go the way I hoped."

"Just what aid did you render in building such a career? It takes money to acquire a profession. How much did you contribute?"

Again Carson was unable to make a specific answer to the cutting, personal questions. He cleared his throat. "I didn't make any contributions. I wasn't asked."

I was...."

"Do you have to ask for your own property, in this day and age?" demanded Shirley. "When Father died, I was an heir to one half of what he possessed: home, farm, bank, bonds, and money on hand. Very properly, in the absence of the other heir, you took charge of the property and managed the business. But on the return of the other heir you made no accounting. In fact, you resented his interest in anything connected with the business."

"When you returned from the war," said Carson, "we were approaching a depression that grew to disastrous proportions. Banks are the first to feel such a calamity. My whole time has been devoted to curtailment—to restricting loans and seeking deposits. Truly, we haven't earned a cent since the war ended."

"So that's the reason you bought the fancy, high-priced limousine and gave several parties at the country club! That's the reason why you maintain those luxurious quarters in Chicago! You were wanting to show the public that...."

"Never mind what I was doing," interrupted Carson angrily. "It's what you have done that is the matter under discussion, and we are getting nowhere. We might as well adjourn."

"Not yet," demanded Shirley hastily. "Keep your seat. The show has now reached the second act. Let's sit it out." It was Shirley who stood up as Carson resumed his seat.

"Our family was always reticent. We avoided publicity; didn't want Mister John Q. to know about our affairs. You surely remember how reluctant our father was when it was found that his private bank must be nationalized. One little share was issued to Aunt Carrie, one to John Powell, his old, trusted employee, and he held the rest. He didn't want the public to know about his private affairs.

"I think I inherited most of his secretive qualities," Shirley continued. "I listened to a lot of rumors and then I began to investigate. My findings lead to but one conclusion: you allied yourself with gangsters in the hope of participating in their enormous gains only to find that you are the biggest sucker on their list."

"I didn't favor anybody," said Carson hotly. "Our relations were simply that of banker and customer."

"And to maintain cordial relations you deeded to them a fine but isolated farm where, uninterrupted, they could produce 'rotgut' to supply the entire Chicago area. Have you been out there lately? Father used to call it Forest Home. The

Hereford cattle that he reared topped the market. It's different now. The gates are locked. A thug stands out in the roadway to divert traffic. In the night, truckloads of corn and coal arrive to produce the 'hell-fire' that is bottled, labeled, and distributed over the district."

In the midst of this recital Carson dropped his head down on his arms, folded on the table.

"I don't know a thing about the conditions here at the bank," Shirley continued in softer tones, "but there are public records that tell an incriminating story. The records at the courthouse show a mortgage to the Reliable Insurance Company on our home here in the city. My signature on such a mortgage was forged. I didn't know about this until I was forced into this investigation. You, and your bank, must have needed money very badly and you committed forgery to get it. Based on this fact alone, one has a right to believe that you are fooling the busy bank examiners with forged securities. It's just a question as to what hour you will be uncovered and convicted."

Carson still reclined his head on folded arms. Shirley was preparing to leave. "We are broke, Carson. I haven't a dime and you have less. But I am not going to stay in Bransford and be a party to your downfall. My word alone would prove your guilt. I don't know where I am going, but I intend hiding out until this thing blows over. But before I go, Carson, I want an interview with your criminal friends to tell 'em what a set of dirty, crooks they are."

Late in the afternoon, as Shirley was busy in clearing his desk of unneeded papers, his friend Townsend dropped in to confer on some pending matters.

"I am sorry, Fred, to tell you I am leaving," said Shirley as he closed the desk. "I don't know where I am going and I don't want the public to know where I am located. If you have the time, I would like to tell you the cause of it all and put you wise to some incidents that seem sure to happen."

"I think you are going to confirm some suspicions I had formed in connection with the Larwell estate. The account at the Wells Bank didn't conform to the little credit slips as issued."

"You are on the right road, oldtimer," said Shirley, and he proceeded to relate what was said in his recent conference with Carson. He cited the incident of the forged deed and detailed conditions at the farm. "The Wells National is not only broke," he added, "but Carson is involved in several criminal activities. I don't want to be present when the crash comes; I don't want my evidence to convict him. I am going to hide out where a summons-server cannot find me."

"Maybe you are right," said Townsend thoughtfully, "but there are some things you should do before you leave. The crash will come, no doubt; Carson's share of the estate will be charged with his criminal actions; yours is not involved. Before you go, you should give to someone a full power of attorney to take care of your interests. In the midst of juggled accounts and forgeries, there may be something left, and anyhow, the receivership cannot be closed without your consent."

"You are right, as always, Fred, and you are the very person to have that power. Let's get it done right away. I have another thing on hand that must be taken care of after supper."

"When are you leaving, and have you enough money to get you out of town?" asked Townsend as the two returned from across the hall where the instrument had been notarized.

"I think I will leave tonight. The bubble may not burst for a while. I want the public to become accustomed to my absence. As for money, when I pay for my supper, I may have as much as forty cents left."

"You are braver than I thought and as stubborn as I suspected," said Townsend as he searched his pocketbook. "Here's a twenty. That may get you across the river and on your way. You will make your way all right, but if your case becomes desperate draw on me under the name A.Z., and I will understand. Your financial affairs are in desperate condition but the case is not hopeless. You are young and healthy but you lack a definite plan of life. If someone will throw you a line while you are floundering in this slough you will come out all right. Now what's this thing you are to do after the evening meal?"

"I've made a phone date to tell Anzio and his set of crooks what a rotten set of gangsters they are. It won't take me long to tell 'em and then I am ready to leave."

"You might not be able to make a get-away from those mobsters. Taking an enemy for a final 'ride' is one of their favorite pastimes. And anyhow, you can't tell 'em anything that they don't already know. You have no right to do such an uncalled for thing."

"Oh, yes I have," said Shirley as he took his hat preparing to leave. "My visit might precipitate an incident. Anyhow, I'm on my way."

Shirley left the office. Townsend went to the telephone in the front room.

Shirley had delayed his evening meal to fit his appointment at the Model Trucking Company. Near eight o'clock he crossed the street to go up the alley to Cherry Street. At the crossing of the dark alley he encountered a policeman and was greeted casually by that officer. In front of the lighted office he accosted another officer, standing in a darkened area near a car parked in front. "Maybe this is a warning," he thought, as he stepped into the well-lighted office.

He was greeted cordially by Anzio and was introduced to the two others present. "This is Don Carlin, our custodian here, and this is Jan Damino, our most trusted employee." Carlin was a slight young man, but his companion differed much in size and considerably in age. Damino, aging to baldness, was a commanding figure. Thick-chested, with arms and legs of considerable size, his seamed face revealed a ragged scar from temple to chin. Both nodded acknowledgment of the introduction and Carlin brought a chair for the visitor.

"I'm glad you've come," said Anzio in pleasing tones. "Your brother reports that you have been badly informed as to what this company is doing. We want to correct any such wrong ideas."

"No one has given me any information about you," said Shirley scornfully. "I was out to the old farm and saw with my own eyes just what's going on."

"Ah! You paid us a visit and we didn't know it. Somebody has been negligent."

"That's right! Your carefully guarded distillery had a visitor. I used to live out there. Knowing about your locked gates and posted guard, I went on the farm from the rear. I edged up to see your still in operation in the old shed. I saw your bottling plant in the big barn. It recalls the old adage: 'You can't fool all the people all the time.'"

Anzio's face clouded as he planned a reply. "You didn't go in close enough to

see what was being bottled and labeled? You are willing to spread a false report without having the facts?

"What you glimpsed in your casual snooping was the details of the one business in this community that is prospering. Out in your family's old farm, Doctor David Allen, formerly of St. Louis, is preparing, mixing, bottling, and labeling 'Allen's Stomach Bitters' that has been famous in the South and Southwest for many years. He is now pushing sales in the North and East. Because of its vegetable content, just a small amount of alcohol is a part of the mixture.

"You saw only the sidelines in your snooping and you are putting out a lot of misinformation," concluded Anzio, "and to set you right, I have arranged for our trusted employee, Damino, to take you out there and show you the whole works. The night shift is on and I want 'em to show you every detail of the business."

"Will Damino furnish a round trip ticket?" asked Shirley, as he arose from his chair.

"I don't quite know what you mean," countered Anzio.

"Oh, yes you do," said Shirley emphatically. "Damino here is a 'one-way' man. It's his business to destroy opposition. I wouldn't ride with him down State Street, let alone a country road. With him at the wheel, we couldn't get past that thicket down by the bridge."

"Get him out of here," roared Anzio as he waved to Damino to obey his commands.

Damino approached his quarry cautiously. With his right hand he fingered an inside pocket of his coat; withdrew the hand to place it on Shirley's shoulder. "Let's git goin'," he said as he shoved Shirley toward the door.

Shirley had seen a move that he thought important. He grabbed the extended right arm to give it a jujitsu move up and to the back of the body. It made the assailant grunt and his left knee buckled in its uncertain stance. Quickly Shirley reached in the inside pocket to withdraw a lengthy Colt revolver. Shifting the weapon to his right hand, he brought it down in a mighty blow on the temple of his assailant. Damino fell to the floor. Carlin fled the room by the back door. Shirley turned to find Anzio frantically searching the contents of a drawer in the nearby cabinet. Placing the gun in his pocket, Shirley seized a tall, steel-legged stool to bring it down on Anzio's unprotected head. Anzio joined Damino on the floor. Shirley walked out the front door.

On the sidewalk Shirley encountered the policeman. "What's going on in there?" he demanded.

"Not much, just now," was the reply, "but I was certainly busy for a short time. Why are you here?"

"Your friend, Fred Townsend, is responsible. Fred is seemingly not in touch with our present city administration, but he sure has a strong pull with our chief. Fred phoned him to send two or three of the force down here to see that you were not killed or taken for a ride. We don't know what it's all about, but we're here. Ah, here's company," the officer added as another policeman came out of the alley, shoving Carlin in front of him.

"Is this the finish?" inquired the alley officer. "This fellow," pointing to Carlin, "came out of the back door rather hurriedly and began searching in a pile of junk. I thought that was a part of that play. What's it all about anyway?"

"This is the finish, my friends, and I am very much obliged for your presence," said Shirley as he prepared to leave. "But there's a couple in there that may need first aid. Go right in; give what assistance you can, and call me if I'm needed."

Shirley watched the perplexed officers as they went into the front office. Then he walked leisurely up the alley to Oak Street. Nearing the railroad, he heard a freight train slowing down at the water-tank. Now he hurried to pass down the train to a boxcar with an open door. He crawled in. As the train pulled out, he went to a front corner, sat down to pull off his shoe and place a neatly folded twenty-dollar bill on the inner sole.

Whatever his future was to be, Shirley Wells was on his way.



PART THREE

21 [ToC](#)

David Lannarck arrived in Chicago in the late afternoon. Wanting to see Bransford in the daylight hours, he stayed the night with a friend at the Miami Patio to take a morning train to his destination. He had never been in Bransford and he preferred to take an open cab to the Grand Union so that he might look around. At the hotel he was assigned the parlor suite with telephone and bath, probably because the clerk had never before registered a three-footer with the face and voice of an adult.

Davy was not yet ready to announce his plans for rehearsals. He wanted to know more of local conditions. He phoned the Fred Townsend office. "Mr. Townsend is in court this morning," the secretary reported, "but he will be available this afternoon."

"Save me the first hour," said Davy. "It's important to both of us."

After luncheon Davy tipped the bellhop to accompany him. "I could probably find the place," he explained, "but I go better if I am haltered and led to the spot." As the caller hoped, Townsend was in. The secretary ushered Davy into the private office.

"I was sent here by a Mister Sam Welborn," Davy explained. "He wants to learn of the legal status and community standing of a former resident by the name of Shirley Wells."

"Shirley Wells! Do you know Shirley Wells?" Townsend sprang to his feet and

walked around the desk. "Is Shirley Wells alive? Available? Can I get in touch with him right away?"

"Say, Mister Townsend, out in my blessed locality, where men are men, and the women are glad of it, they accuse me of asking eight or ten questions before the first one is answered. I want to take you out there to show 'em I am an amateur. For a year or more I have been associated with an upstanding gent who gave out his name as Sam Welborn. In all my public career I've never met a person more honest in business or more fearless with thugs and undesirables. Ten devils couldn't stop him if he thought he was right and even a midget could, and did, shame him out of some of his atrocious efforts. When he reached a certain goal in his persistent activities he disclosed to us four at the home where he headquartered that he was going back to his old home town to find out just where he stood—criminal or citizen. He planned to go back there in disguise; to listen in, to read old newspaper files, and to learn the truth.

"And then I horned in. This man Welborn had saved my life; he got me planted where I wanted to be; I owed him everything. I didn't ask—I just told him—that I would go to his town and, under the pretext of rehearsing a midget show, I would get the needed dope. He fell right in with my proposal. He disclosed that his name was Shirley Wells, that his home town was Bransford, and here I am."

Townsend went to the door of the office. "I will be busy for the next hour," he said to the secretary as he closed the door.

"Just where, and how soon, can I contact this Shirley Wells?" Townsend asked as he seated himself alongside of Davy. "This is really the only time I've needed him since he left. Where is he? I'll send him all the funds needed to get him home."

"He's in Denver, just temporarily. I do not have his address, but he will be in this Chicago vicinity by the end of this week. Maybe he will be disguised, but I hope not. He will phone me at the Grand Union to know how he stands in his home town. That's what I've come here to find out. Is he under indictment? Will he have to serve time? How much money is needed to clean his slate? Will a mob form if he shows up on your city streets? What was it he did, anyhow?"

Fred Townsend laughed quietly. "We are both so anxious to get information that our cross-questioning is confusing. However, when you described your man as honest, persistent, and fearless in dealing with crooks and thugs, I would have known that you were talking about Shirley Wells, even if you had omitted the

name. He's just that!

"Shirley Wells is not under indictment, and when he returns the general public will give him a hearty welcome. In fact, had he stayed here for a day or two after the incident he would have been a hero. Would have been carried at the head of the mob of women that paraded the streets of our city in protest of conditions. He would have been a part of the orderly crowd of men that went out to the old farm to destroy the offending distillery. Shirley Wells started the clean-up here, and it spread to all affected localities. This is the story."

Then Fred Townsend told the story, to include the history of the Wells bank, of Shirley's army service, of Carson's banking relations with the Chicago mobsters. "For nearly a decade this Shirley Wells was a silent do-nothing. He seemingly hesitated to claim his property rights and yet had nerve to invade the stronghold of these gangsters and tell 'em the truth. He nearly killed two of 'em and the other disappeared."

And then Townsend detailed what followed as the morning paper gave big headlines of the desperate adventure. It not only recited that the two were hospitalized in a critical condition but it gave inside information as to the illegal business being conducted at the farm. "That evening, nearly a thousand women paraded our streets to the mayor's office, with banners flying, to insist that there be a clean-up of the entire illegal business.

"The next day, fully fifty automobiles assembled at Fifth and Cedar Streets to drive out to the farm and burn down the old shed where the still was located. I was in that party and I easily persuaded them to allow the house and big barn to remain unharmed, but all bottles, labels, cans of liquids, crates, and containers were thrown in the fire. The house-furnishings revealed that it was the headquarters for the many employees, but none were present, either to welcome or protest.

"On returning to town it was learned that Carson Wells had committed suicide. His worthy wife was not at home, was not present at the funeral. She is reported as living in Chicago, a housemother at a sorority of one of the universities.

"The Wells National Bank was of course closed. I was appointed the receiver. Things were in a terrible mess; negligence and forgeries caused a lot of added work, but the bank had a valuable asset in that the stock was held in one family—wasn't scattered to cause contentions and delays. I recovered the farm, held on to the bank building, and charged the forgeries and shortages to Carson's

account. Shirley is possessed of the remainder, but it's not enough to do what's required.

"This city needs a bank. The nation is recovering from the depression and very soon business will be back to normal. The Wells National must be restored to service and Shirley Wells, the man who started the clean-up, must be connected with it. His service in cleaning out those crooks was, and is, the big asset.

"Here in my office I have prepared a list of names of those who can, and should, take stock in a bank. With Shirley here, we can canvass this list for the needed subscriptions. Surely we can...."

"Just how much money will it take to revive a bank?" asked Davy quietly.

"Forty or fifty thousand dollars will be required to complete the subscriptions and show a small surplus and I think we can——"

"Why, Shirley will have that much, and more, in his upper vest pocket when he arrives," and then Davy told his lengthy story to an eager listener.

"I have known him for nearly two years," said Davy in concluding his lengthy recital, "and in that time he worked hard—too hard. I upbraided him for it. Now, knowing why he was so continuously busy, working to restore his family name and credit in his home town, I should have kept my mouth shut."

"Do you think he will consent to taking charge of the restored family bank?" asked Townsend. "Will he apply the money to that end?"

"I'll see that he puts up the money. He says that half of it is mine, but he may balk on taking charge. And that's our present job. I have a friend in Springfield that's the greatest little banker the world ever produced. I'll get him here, or send Welborn—I mean Shirley—to him to learn the game."

"This has certainly been my lucky day," said Townsend as the party broke up. "This morning the judge approved my settlement of the long-standing Norris case, I received a letter containing a draft of an outstanding debt, and now the important Wells bank receivership settles itself. Let me know the minute Shirley arrives."

Davy's hours of impatience were interrupted on Saturday morning by a telephone call from Chicago. The booth at the Grand Union afforded the privacy needed.

"If you are in your own clothes...."

Davy's directive was interrupted by a hearty laugh, and a prompt inquiry: "Am I under indictment?"

"Naw! You're not under anything. You're at the top of the heap. Your scrap started things. Get out here on the first train—there's a lot to do and I've pledged you to carry out all the plans as proposed by your friend Townsend. There's lots to do. Get here at once."

And Shirley Wells of the East, Sam Welborn of the West, did as he was directed. He arrived in Bransford shortly after the noon hour. And the rest of the afternoon he was listening to Davy's story and Davy's plans. Sunday morning, at the Fourth Avenue Church, he was cordially greeted by many, some of whom he had ridiculed at a former session. Monday, the full day was spent in the office of his friend Townsend. Tuesday, Ralph Gaynor of Springfield arrived in Bransford in response to Davy's telegram, wherein it was suggested that "one carfare was cheaper than two."

Shirley Wells admired Ralph Gaynor but he marveled at his methods. Instead of taking him down to the bank building to review the former methods of conducting the business, Gaynor persisted in interviewing any and all with whom he came in contact: business and professional men, farmers and laborers, women clerks and housewives. His questions were casual, the extended answers were his reward. That evening, in Townsend's office, he delivered his estimates and opinion.

"Banking service is badly needed in your city. Your present plans are timely. A news story should go out tomorrow that the organization is formed and will be functioning next week—this to prevent others from invading this fine prospect. You have present opportunity to secure the services of young Nelson, down at the Wide-Awake, as a receiving teller. He is fast and accurate in money matters. The young lady that compiled Mr. Townsend's reports can, and should, take care of the growing bookkeeping. You will not make a great deal of money in this first year of operation. After that, you will have the best banking investment I know of."

"But what about our new cashier, Shirley Wells?" inquired Townsend. "What's his job? He and his little friend here own practically all the stock."

"The banking business," said Gaynor, "has its peculiarities. Back of the counter, it's simply a matter of accuracy. In front of the counter, however, it's a question of diplomacy and good judgment. Shirley Wells is an asset. His business is in front of the counter, greeting the trade and broadening the field for

service. A bank must have assets if it is to make loans."

The Wells National Bank, with its tidy and growing millions of assets, is functioning at 201 North Oak Street, Bransford, U.S.A.

Just where should these ramblings end? A tragedy ends at the death of any or all; a comedy ends with one of the revived jokes of former years; a biography should terminate at the grave, and a romance finishes as the groom carries his hard-won prize across the threshold of the cottage or palace. What's the finish here?

A start was made to tell the life story of a midget, but complications arose that could not be avoided. Instead of traveling the infrequent paths of the Lilliputians the journey has, in many instances, swept down the traffic-filled thoroughfare of the big adults. But midgets are few in number, they have few contacts with each other. In most every instance, their employment is to exhibit themselves to the thousands and thousands who come to see and comment.

Midgets do not go to war, cannot win a prize fight, or bust one over the right field fence for a home run. Their field for service is limited to public exhibitions; their contacts wholly with the questioning adult. The tragedies of a midget are of the lighter sort, comedies prevail only in a minor degree, romance is a limited factor, and in this particular instance, these ramblings cannot be classed as biography—the principal characters are still alive.

And because they are still alive and functioning, the reader is invited out to the Adot vicinity to see—and maybe participate—in the continuing story.



Typographical errors corrected in text:

Page 42: ditsance replaced with distance
Page 54: expained replaced with
explained
Page 68: insistant replaced with insistent
Page 71: hastry replaced with hasty
Page 94: 'wth' replaced with 'with'
Page 157: bookeeping replaced with
bookkeeping



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