

THE GOOD FRIEND
By Jessie Ethel Sherwin

Willis Strong, specious swindling land agent, thought he had turned a particularly clever trick when he induced Mrs. Salina Burgess, two years a widow, to invest nearly all she had, some \$2,000, in 40 acres of land.

A great company had been formed to develop the Pearl river district. Numerous land speculators rushed in to buy up what tracts they could, counting on the prestige of the really reputable men behind the company to sell anything and everything lining the river at any preposterous price they might charge.

Salina, fair, 30, venturesome, had bought the 40 acres without seeing it. When she did see it she realized she had been swindled and sat down on a rock and cried. It was enough to make angels weep! The 40 acres was located on a barren stretch of rock where the river turned. There were patches of soil here and there, but in the main it was bare as a Himalayan plateau.

"And I sold the small but cozy home at Riverton for this!" she sobbed, desolately. "And I've got to live here, for I have no other possession on earth!"

"Then, too, Mr. Royd," she added. "Why have I thrown my chance away?"

A memory of Bernard Royd was a tender spot with Salina. She had been forced by a scheming mother, now dead, to marry Robert Burgess, when her heart longed for Bernard Royd. After she had become a widow the old friendly acquaintance was resumed. Salina made no denial to close friends that she loved her old-time suitor. She had sold the home because Pearl River investments were reported doubling up and she liked to anticipate a goodly dower she could bring to Royd, in case he proposed.

There was nothing to do but to build a small house on the 40 acres and she and an old man servant of the family try to wrest a living from the unfruitful soil.

Royd did not see Salina before she moved. He was a civil engineer and, she learned, was employed by the development company. She took heart of hope. He could not have entirely forgotten her and in his business duties would be likely to be at times in the neighborhood and come to see her.

Salina heard from him indirectly.



"You Are a Smart, Capable Woman."

An old neighbor visited her, who had met Royal down the valley.

"He asked about you, Mrs. Burgess," the informant told her. "He was surprised when I informed him of your grand move. He looked serious. 'Robbed her, eh?' and she is quite poor. I'm going to call on her when I work down the valley on my surveyor's trip! I say, Mrs. Burgess, that would have been a sure match for you if you had stayed at Riverton, wouldn't it?"