

dollars. If they start a rumpus it was give us the excuse we're looking for. I've been studying that 'go-devil' through fieldglasses for two days now, and I'll guarantee to put it out of commission before Gordon's men know what I'm about. Just forget the reward, if you like, and give me a chance."

"What's your plan?" Slater inquired eagerly, but Appleton shook his head.

"No, you don't 'Tommy'!" he said. "I'm wise to you."

Murray hesitated briefly, then gave him permission. "I'd rather you'd let one of the roughnecks take the chance, but if you insist—"

"I do."

"Then get your sister's consent!" Slater swore mournfully, as if from a heart filled with black despair.

"Ain't that my luck? One cud of gum cost me \$1,000. Bosh! It would take a millionaire to afford a habit like that!" He expelled the gum violently and went grumbling off up the track.

"She won't object," said Dan lightly. "She'd offer to do the trick herself, for she's getting the spirit of the work."

When O'Neil had managed to regain the camp he began preparations for an attack that very night, using the telephone busily. News of the coming affray quickly spread, and both the day and night shifts discussed it excitedly at supper time.

After supper the camp settled itself to wait for darkness. Night was slow in coming, and long before Appleton signified his readiness speculation was rife. With the approach of twilight the torches along Gordon's grade began to glow brightly. Then Dan set his watch with Happy Tom's, kissed Eliza and made off across the tundra.

He left the S. R. and N. at right angles and continued in that direction for a mile or more before swinging about in a wide circle which brought him well to the rear of Gordon's encampment.

Curtis Gordon was not in charge of his field forces, having left the command to his favorite jackal, Denny. Beneath his apparent contempt for the law there lurked a certain caution. He knew his rival's necessity. He appreciated his cunning, but, wishing to guard against the possibility of a personal humiliation, he retired to Kyak, where he was prepared to admit or deny as much responsibility as suited him. Denny had not forgotten O'Neil's exposure of his dishonesty, and his seal could be relied upon. He personally knew all the men under him. He had coached them carefully, and he assured Gordon of his ability to hold his ground.

Dan Appleton from his cover measured the preparations for resistance with some uneasiness, reflecting that if Denny had the nerve to use firearms he would undoubtedly rout O'Neil's men, who had not been permitted to carry guns. By the bright torchlight he could see figures coming and going along the grade like sentinels, and from within the barricades of ties he heard others talking. The camp itself, which lay farther to the left, was lighted, and black silhouettes were painted against the canvas walls and roofs. Some one was playing an accordion, and its wailing notes came to him intermittently. He saw that steam was up in the boiler which operated the "go-devil," although the contrivance itself was stationary. It was upon this that he centered his attention, consulting his watch nervously.

At last 10 o'clock came, bringing with it a sound which startled the nearby camp into activity. It was a shrill blast from an S. R. and N. locomotive and the grinding of car wheels. The accordion ceased its complaint, men poured out of the lighted tents, Appleton moved cautiously out from cover.

He stumbled forward through the knee deep mud and moss, bearing slightly to his right, counting upon the confusion to mask his approach. He timed it to that of the gravel train, which came slowly creaking nearer, rocking over the uneven tracks, then down upon the half submerged rails which terminated near the opposing grade. It stopped finally, with headlight glaring into the faces of Denny and his troops, and from the high bespoked flat cars tumbled an army of pick and shovel men. During this hubbalo Appleton slipped out of the marsh and climbed the gravel bed in time to see the steel cable of the ship tighten, carrying the drag swiftly along the track. The endless cable propelling the contrivance ran through a metal block which was secured to a deadhead sunk between the ties, and up this post Dan hastened. He carried a cold chisel and hammer, but he found no use for them, for the pulley was roped to the deadhead. Drawing his knife, he sawed at the manila strands.

Men were all around him, but in their excitement they took no notice of him. Not until he had nearly completed his task was he discovered; then some one raised a shout. The next instant they charged upon him, but his work had been done. With a snap the ropes parted, the cable went writhing and twisting up the track, the unwieldy apparatus came to a stop.

CHAPTER XIII.  
Dan Shocks Natalie.

DAN found himself beset by a half dozen of the enemy, who, having singled him out of the general confusion as the cause of the disaster, came at him headlong. But by this time O'Neil's men were pouring out of the darkness and overrunning the grade so rapidly that there was little opportunity for concerted action. Appleton had intended, as soon as he had cut the cable, to beat a hasty retreat into the marsh, but now, with the firm gravel roadbed under his feet and the battle breaking before his eyes, he changed his mind. He carried a light heart, and the love of trouble romped through his veins. He lowered his head, therefore, and ran toward his assailants.

The engineer dearly loved a fair fight, even against odds, but this was entirely different. He was trampled, stamped upon, kicked. He felt himself being reduced to a pulp beneath the overpowering numbers of those savage heels.

They were groveling there in a tangle of legs and arms when Happy Tom came down the grade, leading a charge which swept the embankment clear.

The boss packer had equipped himself with black handles and a

set a brilliant example in the use of this, his favorite weapon. For once the apathetic Slater was fully roused. He was tremendous, irresistible. In his capable grasp the oaken cudgel became both armor and shield. In attack it was as effective as a fencing master's foil, in defense as deadly as the kick of a mule. Beneath his formless bulk were the muscles of a gladiator.

He was sobbing as much from anxiety as from the violence of his exertions when he tore Appleton from the grasp of a black man and set him on his feet!

"Are you hurt, son?" he gasped.

"Sure! I'm—hurt quite some!" Dan spat out a mouthful of blood and said, "Give me a club."

"Go back 'emder," Tom directed swiftly. "Nail Denny before he gets 'em to shooting. Kill him if you have to. I'll take care of those fellows."

The younger man saw that the engagement at this end of the line was no longer general, but had become a series of individual combats, so he made what haste he could toward the scene of the more serious encounter to the right of the crossing. He judged that the issue was still in doubt there, although he could make out little in the confusion on account of the glaring headlight, which dazzled him.

As he ran, however, he discovered that the S. R. and N. forces were in possession of the middle ground, having divided the enemy's ranks like a wedge, and this encouraged him. Out of the darkness to right and left came shouts, curses, the sounds of men wailing about in the knee deep tundra. They were Gordon's helpers who had been routed from their positions.

Now that Appleton had time to collect himself, he, too, grew sick with suspense, for he knew that arms had been stacked inside the barricades. Any instant might bring them into play. He began to wonder why Denny withheld the word to fire.

As a matter of fact, the explanation was simple, although it did not appear until later. Mr. Denny at that moment was in no condition to issue orders of any kind, the reason being as follows: When preparations for the advance were made Dr. Gray, who understood perhaps more fully than any one else except O'Neil the gravity of the issue and the slender pivot upon which the outcome balanced, had taken his place in the vanguard of the attacking party instead of in the back ground, as befitted his calling. The first rush had carried him well into the fray, but once there he had shown his good judgment by refusing to participate in it.

Instead he had selected Denny out of the opposing ranks and bored through the crowd in his direction, heedless of all efforts to stop him. His great strength had enabled him to gain ground. He had hurled his assailants aside, upsetting them, bursting through the press as a football player penetrates a line, and when the retreat had begun he was close at the heels of his victim. He had overtaken Denny be-

side one of the barricades just as Denny seized a rifle and raised it. With one wrench he possessed himself of the weapon, and the next instant he had bent the barrel over its owner's head.

Then as the fight surged onward he had gathered the limp figure in his arms and borne it into the light of a gasoline torch, where he could administer first aid. He was kneeling over the fellow when Appleton found him as he came stumbling along the grade.

But the decisive moment had come and gone now, and without a leader to command them Gordon's men seemed loath to adopt a more bloody reprisal. They gave way therefore in a half hearted hesitation that spelled ruin to their cause. They were forced back to their encampment.

Dan Appleton, very dirty, very tired but happy, found Natalie and Eliza awaiting him when he limped up to their tent in the early morning light. One of his eyes was black and nearly closed, his lips were cut and swollen but he grinned cheerfully as he exclaimed:

"Ray! It was a great night, wasn't it?"

Eliza cried out in alarm at his appearance.

"You poor kid! You're a sight!" She ran for hot water and soap, while Natalie said warmly:

"You were perfectly splendid. Dan I knew you'd do it."

"Did you?" He tried to smile his appreciation, but the effort resulted in a leer so repulsive that the girl looked dismayed. "You ought to have seen the shindy."

"Seen it? Maybe we didn't!"

"Honestly?"

"Did you think we could stay behind? We sneaked along with the cookhouse gang, and one of them helped us up on the gravel cars. He smelled of fishwater, but he's a hero. We screamed and cried and Eliza threw stones until Mr. O'Neil discover-

ed us and made us get down. He was awfully mean."

"He's a mean man."

"He isn't! He was jumping around on one leg like a crippled grasshopper. I made a thousand dollars," said Dan. "Witness what I'm going to do with it?"

"How can I guess?"

"I'm going to buy an engagement ring. Once more he heered reputably."

"How nice!" said Natalie coolly. "Congratulations!"

"Guess who it's for?"

"I couldn't, really."

"It's for you."

"Oh, no, it isn't!" Natalie's voice was freezing. "You have made a mistake, a very great mistake. Dan, I like you, but—see you've even mentioned such things, if you please."

Eliza's entrance saved her further embarrassment and she quickly made her escape. Dan groaned so deeply as his sister bathed his injuries that she was really concerned.

"Goodness, Danny," she said. "Are you as badly hurt as all that?"

"I'm worse," he confessed. "I've just been shot through the heart. Slow music and flowers for me! Arrange for the services and put a rose in my hand-slit."

"Nonsense! I'll put a beefsteak on your eye," she told him unfeelingly.

Under Dr. Gray's attention O'Neil's ankle began to mend, and by the time the track had been laid far enough beyond the crossing to insure against further interference from Gordon he declared himself ready to complete the journey to Kyak, with it he and the girls had begun three weeks before.

During the interval Eliza had occupied herself in laying out her magazine stories, and now she was eager to complete her investigations so as to begin the final writing. Her experience in the north thus far had given

(Continued next week)

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