

# The City of Numbered Days

By FRANCIS LYNDE

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### SYNOPSIS.

Brouillard, chief engineer of the Niagara irrigation dam, meets J. Wesley Cortwright and his daughter, Genevieve, and explains the reclamation work to them. Cortwright sees in the project a big chance to make money. Cortwright organizes a company and obtains government contracts to furnish power and material for the dam construction. A busy city springs up about the site. Steve Massingale threatens to start a gold rush if Brouillard does not influence President Ford to build a railroad branch to the place, thus opening an easy market for the ore from the "Little Susan" mine. On a visit to Amy Massingale at her father's mine Brouillard tells her of his need for money to pay off his dead father's debts and that to be free he would sacrifice anything save his love for one woman. Though his influence is vital to the building of the railroad extension she tells him to be true to himself. He decides for it. Mirapolis, the city of numbered days, booms. Cortwright persuades Brouillard to become consulting engineer of the consolidated electric power company in return for \$100,000 stock. Rumors that the government will call a halt on the dam cause Grislow to tell Brouillard that he is leaving to the Cortwright side to make the city permanent. Brouillard denies it. Permanent building in Mirapolis and a real estate boom are in full swing when the stoppage of work on the railroad threatens a panic. Brouillard spreads the Massingale story of placer gold in the river bed and starts a gold rush.

Look here, young man, would you commit a shady deed in order to save your sweatheart a lot of financial worry—if you knew you wouldn't get into trouble, but if you knew also that the deed would cause other men to lose money?

### CHAPTER X—Continued.

"It looks like a run on a bank," said Brouillard.

"It is," was the crisp reply. "Garner has beaten everybody else to the home plate, but he couldn't keep his mouth shut. He's been talking, and every man in that mob is a potential panic breeder. That thing has got to be nipped in the bud, right now!"

"Yes," Brouillard agreed. He was still wrestling with his own besetment—the prompting which involved a deliberate plunge where up to the present crisis he had been merely wading in the shallows. A little thing stung him alive to the imperative call of the moment—the sight of Amy Massingale walking down the street with Tig Smith, the Triangle-Circle foreman. It was the death of her hopes that he was thinking when he said coolly: "You have sized it up precisely, Mr. Cortwright; that is a panic in the making, and the bubble won't stand for very much pricking. Give me a free hand with your check book for a few minutes and I'll try to stop it."

It spoke volumes for the millionaire promoter's quick discernment and decision that he asked no questions. "Do it," he snapped. "I'll cover you for whatever it takes. Don't wait; that crowd is getting bigger every minute."

Brouillard ran downstairs and across the street. It was no part of his intention to stop and speak to Amy Massingale and the ranchman, but he did it, and even walked a little way with them before he turned back to elbow his way through the sidewalk throng and into Garner's dingy little office.

"You are selling Mirapolis holdings short today, Garner?" he asked when he had pushed through the crowd to the speculator's desk. And when Garner laughed and said there were no takers he placed his order promptly. "You may bid in for me, at yesterday's prices, anything within the city limits—not options, you understand, but the real thing. Bring your papers over to my office after banking hours and we'll close for whatever you've been able to pick up."

He said it quietly, but there could be no privacy at such a time and in such a place.

"What's that, Mr. Brouillard?" demanded one in the counter jam. "You're giving Garner a blank card to buy for your account? Say, that's plenty good enough for me. Garner, cancel my order to sell, will you? When the chief engineer of the government water works believes in Mirapolis futures and bets his money on 'em, I'm not selling."

The excitement was already dying down and the crowd was melting away from Garner's sidewalk when Brouillard rejoined Mr. Cortwright in the second-floor room across the street.

"Well, it's done," he announced shortly, adding: "It's only a stop-gap. To make the bluff good, you've got to have the railroad."

"That's the talk," said the promoter relighting the cigar which the few minutes of crucial suspense had extinguished. And then, without warning: "You're carrying something up your sleeve, Brouillard. What is it?"

"It is the one thing you need, Mr. Cortwright. If I could get my own consent to use it I could bring the railroad here in spite of those New Yorkers who seem to have an attack of cold feet."

Mr. J. Wesley Cortwright's hesitation was so brief as to be almost imperceptible. "I suppose that is your way of saying that your share in the table stakes isn't big enough. All right; the game can't stop in the middle of a bet. How much is it going to cost us to stay in?"

"The cost isn't precisely in the kind of figures that you understand best, Mr. Cortwright," Brouillard said half musingly. Then, with sudden vehemence: "It is altogether a question of motive with me, Mr. Cortwright; of a motive which you couldn't understand in a thousand years. If that motive prevails, you get four railroad and a little longer lease of life. If it doesn't, Mirapolis will go to the devil some few weeks or months ahead of its schedule—and I'll take my punishment with the remainder of the fools—and the losses."

He was on his feet and moving to-

ward the door of exit when the promoter got his breath.

"Here, hold on, Brouillard—for heaven's sake, don't go off and leave it up in the air that way!" he protested.

But the corridor door had opened and closed and Brouillard was gone.

Two hours later Mirapolis the phreatic had a new thrill, a shock so electrifying that the rumor of the railroad's halting decision sank into insignificance and was forgotten. The suddenly-evoked excitement focused in a crowd besieging the window of the principal jewelry shop—focused more definitely upon a square of white paper in the window in the center of which was displayed a little heap of virgin gold in small nuggets and coarse grains.

While the crowds in the street were still struggling and fighting to get near enough to read the labeling placard, the Daily Spotlight came out with an extra which was all headlines, the telegraph wires to the East were buzzing, and the town had gone mad. The gold specimen—so said the placard and the news extra—had been washed from one of the bars in the Niagara.

By three o'clock the madness had culminated in the complete stoppage of all work among the town builders and on the great dam as well, and gold-crazed mobs were frantically digging and panning on every bar in the river from the valley outlet to the power dam five miles away.

### CHAPTER XI Bedlam

It was between two and three o'clock in the afternoon of the day in which Mirapolis went placid mad when word came to the reclamation service headquarters that the power was cut off and that there were no longer men enough at the mixers and on the forms to keep the work going if the power should come on again.

Handley, the new fourth assistant, brought the news, dropping heavily into a chair and showing his hat to the back of his head to mop his seamed and sun-browned face.

"Why the devil didn't you fellows turn out?" he demanded savagely of Leshington, Anson and Grislow, who were lounging in the office and very pointedly waiting for the lightning to strike. "Gassman and I have done everything but commit cold-blooded murder to hold the men on the job. Where's the boss?"

Nobody knew, and Grislow, at least, was visibly disturbed at the question.



Frantically Panning on Every Bar in the River.

It was Anson who seemed to have the latest information about Brouillard. "He came in about eleven o'clock, rummaged for a minute or two in that drawer you've got your foot on, Grizy, and then went out again. Anybody seen him since?"

There was a silence to answer the query, and the hydrographer righted his chair abruptly and closed the opened drawer he had been utilizing for a foot-rest. He had a long memory for trifles, and at the mention of the drawer a disquieting picture had flashed itself upon the mental screen. There were two figures in the picture, Brouillard and himself, and Brouillard was tossing the little buckskin sack of gold nuggets into the drawer, where it had lain undisturbed ever since—until now.

Morover, Grislow's news of Brouillard, if he had seen fit to publish it, was later than Anson's. At one o'clock, or thereabout, the chief had come into the mapping room for a glance at the letters on his desk. One of the letters—a note in a square envelope—had thrust into his pocket before going out.

"It looks as if the chief had gone with the crowd," said Leshington when the silence had grown almost portentous, "though that wouldn't be like him. Has anybody found out yet who touched off the gold-mounted sky-rocket?"

Grislow came out of his brown study with a start. "Levy won't tell who gave him those nuggets to put in his window. I tried him. All he will say is that the man who left the sample is perfectly reliable and that he dictated the exact wording of the placard that did the business."

"I saw Harlan, of the Spotlight, half an hour ago," cut in Anson. "He's plumb raving crazy, like everybody

else, but there is something faintly resembling method in his madness. He figures it that we government people are out of a job permanently; that with the discovery of these placers—or, rather, with the practically certain rediscovery of them by the mob—Mirapolis will jump to the front rank as a gold camp, and the reclamation service will have to call a halt on the Buckskin project."

Leshington's long, plain-song face grew wooden. "You say 'practically certain.' The question is: Will they be rediscovered? Bet any of you a box of Poodles' Flor de near Havanas that it's some new kind of a flip-flap invented by J. Wesley and his boomers. What do you say?"

"Good Lord!" growled Handley. "They didn't need any new stunts. They had the world by the ear, as it was."

"That's all right," returned Leshington; "maybe they didn't. I heard a thing or two over at Bongras' last night that set me guessing. There was a piece of gossip coming up the pike about the railroad pulling out of the game, or, rather, that it had already pulled out."

Once more silence fell upon the group in the mapping room, and this time it was Grislow who broke it.

"I suppose Harlan is getting ready to exploit the new sensation right?" he suggested, and Anson nodded.

"You can trust Harlan for that. He's got the valley wire subsidized, and he is waiting for the first man to come in with the news of the sure thing and the location of it. When he gets the facts he'll touch off the fireworks, and the world will be invited to take a running jump for the new Tonopah." Then, with sudden anxiety: "I wish to goodness Brouillard would turn up and get busy on his job. It's something hideous to be stranded this way in the thick of a storm!"

"It's time somebody was getting busy," snarled Handley. "There are a hundred tons of fresh concrete lying in the forms, just as they were dumped—with no puddlers—to say nothing of half as much freezing to solid rock right now in the mixers and on the telfers."

Grislow got up and reached for his coat and hat.

"I'm going out to hunt for the boss," he said, "and you fellows had better do the same. If this is one of Cortwright's flip-flaps, and Brouillard happened to be in the way, I wouldn't put it beyond J. Wesley to work some kind of a disappearing racket on the human obstacle."

The suggestion was carried out immediately by the three to whom it was made, but for a reason of his own the hydrographer contrived to be the last to leave the mapping room. When he found himself alone he returned hastily to the desk and pulled out the drawer of portents, rummaging in it until he was fully convinced that the little buckskin bag of nuggets was gone. Then, instead of following the others, he took a fieldglass from its case on the wall and went to the south window to focus it upon the Massingale cabin, standing out clear-cut and



He Got Up and Took Her in His Arms.

distinct in the afternoon sunlight on its high, shelflike bench.

The powerful glass brought out two figures on the cabin porch, a woman and a man. The woman was standing and the man was sitting on the step. Grislow lowered the glass and slid the telescoping sun tubes home with a snap.

"Good God!" he mused, "It's unbelievable! He deliberately turns this thing loose on us down here and then takes an afternoon off to go and make love to a girl! He's crazy; it's the seven-year devil he talks about. And nobody can help him; nobody—unless Amy can. Lord, Lord!"

### CHAPTER XII Epoch

At the other extremity of the trajectory of Grislow's telltale fieldglass Brouillard was sunning himself luxuriously on the porch step at the Massingale house and making up for lost time—counting all time lost when it spelled absence from the woman he loved. But Miss Massingale was in a charmingly frivolous frame of mind.

"That is the fourth different excuse you have invented for cutting me out of your visiting list, not counting the

repetitions," she gibed, when he had finally fallen back upon the time demands of his work to account for his late neglect of her. "If I wanted to be hateful I might insist that you haven't given the true reason yet."

"Perhaps I will give it before I go," he parried. "But just now I'd much rather talk about something else. Tell me about yourself. What have you been doing all these days when I haven't been able to keep tab on you?"

"Flirting—flirting desperately with Tig, with Mr. Anson and Mr. Grislow, and that nice boy of yours, Herbert Griffith, and with—no, not with Mr. Leshington; he scares me—makes a face like a wooden image and says: 'Little girl, you need a mother—or a husband; I haven't made up my mind which.' When he does make up his mind I'm going to shriek and run away."

"And you flirt!" he protested reproachfully. "Now tell me about the 'Little Susan.' Is the Bluegrass farm looming up comfortably on the eastern edge of things?"

In a twinkling her frivolous mood vanished.

"Oh, we are prosperous, desperately prosperous. We have all the improvements you can see and a lot that you can't see. And our pay roll—it fairly frightens me when I make it up on the Saturdays."

"I see," he nodded. "All going out and nothing coming in. But the money is all here, safely stacked up in the ore bins. You'll get it all out when the railroad comes."

"That is another thing—a thing I haven't dared tell father and Stevie. When I was in Mirapolis this morning I heard that the railroad wasn't coming, after all; or, rather, Tig had heard it and he told me. We were digging for facts when you met us on Chigrico avenue—trying to find out if the rumor were true."

"It means a great deal to you, doesn't it?" he said evasively.

"It means everything—a thousand times more now than it did before."

His quick glance up into the suddenly sobered eyes of the girl standing on the step above him was a voiceless query and she answered it.

"We had no working capital, as I think you must have known. Once a month father or Stevie would make up a few pack-saddle loads of the richest ore and freight them over the mountains to Red Butte. That was how we got along. But when you sent me word by Tig that the railroad company had decided to build the extension, there was—there was—a chance."

"Yes," he encouraged.

"A chance that the day of little things was past and the day of big things was come. Mr. Cortwright and some of his associates had been trying to buy an interest in the 'Little Susan.' Father let them in on some sort of a stock arrangement that I don't understand and then made himself personally responsible for a dreadful lot of borrowed money."

"Borrowed of Mr. Cortwright?" queried Brouillard.

"No; of the bank. Neither Stevie nor I knew about it until after it was done, and even then father wouldn't explain. He has been like a man out of his mind since Mr. Cortwright got hold of him—everything is rose-colored. But you see how it all depends upon the railroad."

"Not so much upon the railroad now as upon some other things," said Brouillard enigmatically. "You say your father has borrowed of the bank—is Mr. Cortwright mixed up in the loan in any way?"

"Yes; he arranged it in some way for father—I don't know just how. All I know is that father is responsible, and that if the railroad doesn't come he will lose everything."

Brouillard gave a low whistle. "I don't wonder that the quitting rumor made you nervous. But I think I can lift one of your burdens. What you heard in town this morning is a fact: the railroad people have stopped work on the Buckskin extension. Don't faint—they are going to begin again right away."

"Oh!" she gasped. "Are you sure? How can you be sure?"

"I've given the order," he said gravely, "an order they can't disregard. Let's go back a bit and I'll explain. Do you remember my telling you that your brother had tried to bribe me to use my influence with Mr. Ford?"

"As if I should ever be able to forget it!" she protested.

"Well, that wasn't all that he did—he threatened to turn the valley into a placer camp, to disorganize our working force, even stop or definitely postpone the building of the dam."

She was listening eagerly, but there was a nameless fear in the steadfast eyes—a shadow which he either missed or disregarded.

"And you—you believed this?" she asked faintly.

"I was compelled to believe it. He let me pan out the proof for myself."

"It is dreadful—dreadful!" she murmured. "You believed him, and for that reason you used your influence with Mr. Ford?"

He got up and took her in his arms, and she suffered him.

"A few days ago, little girl, I couldn't have told you. But now I can. I am a free man—or I can be whenever I choose to say the word. I did it for love's sake."

She was pushing him away, and the great horror in her eyes was unmistakable now.

"Oh!" she panted, "is love a thing to be cheapened like that? And your freedom—how have you made a hundred thousand dollars in these few weeks? Oh, Victor, is it clean money?"

After what he has done in his efforts to please her, how will Brouillard square himself with Amy for what she considers his dishonorable act?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Shipping Industry Worried.

Lake Superior shipping interests declare that they will never be able to move the 55,000,000 tons of iron ore at which the demands of next year's steel contracts have been estimated. The big Minnesota mines are at the height of their prosperity along with the rest of the steel industry.

### SCENE IN A NATIONAL GUARD CAMP



### REGIMENT OF NATIONAL GUARD IN CAMP



### REGIMENT OF NATIONAL GUARD ON THE MARCH



### REVIEW OF CAVALRY REGIMENT



### SIGNAL CORPS TELEGRAPHER



Bird Expert Pickpocket.

W. J. Trench, agent for the Santa Fe, a year ago left his overalls hanging on a peg when he went for a visit. In one pocket was a valuable key with a string attached to it. The string dangled out of the pocket. When Mr. Trench returned he found his overalls, but no key. He has just found the string and the key when he kicked a wren's nest while stepping over a bunch of cactus.—Montone (Cal.) Dispatch, San Francisco Chronicle.

### LEARNING HOW TO DIG A TRENCH



### POSTSCRIPTS

About 95 per cent of the population of China lives in one-third of the area of the country, with an average density of 200 persons to the square mile.

An Italian scientist contends that the signals which the nerves carry to the brain and from the brain to the muscles are chemical in nature.

Copper and zinc dissolved in ammonia with a small proportion of benzol forms a new European wood preservative against moisture and heat.

### WORTH KNOWING

Uruguay has organized a government institute of geology with a director and assistants from the United States.

The government of Uruguay conducts an experiment farm, one of the chief objects of which is the production of seed of the best quality.

The government of New Zealand supports and regulates the beekeeping industry and maintains an experimental apiary, where students are trained.