

# The Wreckers

By FRANCIS LYNDE

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(Continued)

It was along about ten o'clock when the boss closed his desk with a bang and said we'd better see it off for the night. I walked up-town with him and as we were passing the Bullard he turned in to ask the night clerk if Collingwood was in his room. The answer was no; that the young New Yorker hadn't been seen since dinner. On the way out we saw Mr. Van Britt at the telegraph alcove. He was



Handing in a Thick Bunch of Telegrams for Transmission.

handing in a thick bunch of telegrams for transmission, and he rather pointedly turned the sheaf face down upon the marble slab when we came along, as much as to say "it's none of your business what I'm doing."

It struck me as sort of curious that he should have so much wire correspondence when he claimed to be taking a rest, and why he was so careful not to let us get a glimpse of what it was all about. But the whole thing was now so horribly muddled that a little mystery more or less on anybody's part couldn't make much difference; and that was the thought I took to bed with me a little later after we reached our rooms in the railroad club.

## CHAPTER XVII

### The Beginning of the End

However much the Hatch people may have wanted to avoid publicity regarding the change of ownership and policies in the Storage & Warehouse reorganization, the prompt announcement of a general strike of the employees was enough to make every newspaper in the state sit up and take notice.

We had the Mountaineer at the breakfast-table in the club grill-room on the morning of the day when the strike was advertised to go into effect. There was a news story, with big headlines in red ink, and also an editorial. Cantrell didn't say anything against the railroad company. His comments were those of an observer who wished to be straight-forward and fair to all concerned, but his editorial did not spare the silly local stockholders whose swapping and selling had made the coup possible.

Cantrell, himself, mild-eyed and looking as if he'd got out of bed about three hours too early, drifted into the grill-room and took a seat at our table before we were through.

"I wanted to be decent about it, Norcross," he said, forestalling anything that the boss might be going to say about the editorial in the Mountaineer. "I'm trying to believe that the men higher up in your railroad councils haven't fathered this Hatch scheme of consolidation—which is more than some of the other pencil-pushers will do, for you, I'm afraid. Thanks to your publicity measures, everybody believes that you still hold the whip-hand over the combination with your ground leases. I'm not asking what you propose to do; I am merely taking it for granted that you are going to stick to your policy, and hoping that you will come and tell me about it when you are ready to talk."

"I shall do just that," the boss promised; and I guess he would have been glad to let the matter drop at this, only Cantrell wouldn't.

"I lost three good hours' sleep this morning on the chance of catching you here at table," the editor went on. "A little whisper leaked in over the wires last night, or, rather, early this morning, that set me to thinking. You haven't been having any trouble with your own employees lately, have you, Norcross?"

"Not a bit in the world. Why?"  
"There is some little excitement, with the public taking a hand in it. There were indignation meetings held last night in a number of the towns along your lines, and resolutions were passed protesting against the action of the new combination in cutting wages, and asserting that public sentiment would be with the C. S. & W. employees if they are forced to carry out their threat of striking at noon today. The whisper that I spoke of intimated that the protest might extend to the railroad employees."

"There's nothing in it," said the boss decisively. "I suppose you mean in the way of a sympathetic strike, and that is entirely improbable. I imagine very few of the C. S. & W. employees belong to any of the labor unions."

"A strike on the railroad would hit you pretty hard just now, wouldn't it?" Cantrell asked.

Mr. Norcross dodged the question. "We're not going to have a strike," he averred; and since we had finished our breakfast, he made a business excuse and we slid out.

When we reached the office we found Mr. Van Britt on hand, reading the morning paper.

"You don't get around as early as you might," was the little millionaire's comment when the boss walked in and opened up his desk. "I've been waiting nearly a half-hour for you to show up. Seen the papers?"

The boss nodded.

"I don't mean the strike business; I mean the market quotations."

"No; I didn't look at them."

"They are interesting. P. S. L. Common went up another three points yesterday. It closed at 38 and a fraction. You know what that means, Graham. It means that Uncle Breckenridge and his crowd are already joyfully discounting your coming resignation. Somebody has given them a wire tip that you are as good as down and out, and unless a miracle of some sort can be pulled off, I guess the tip is a straight one. Strong as he is, Chadwick can't carry you alone."

"Drop it," snapped the boss irritably. And then: "Have you come to tell me that you have reconsidered that fool letter you wrote me last night?"

"Not in a million years," returned the escaped captive airily. "I am here this morning as a paying patron of the Pioneer Short Line. I want to hire a special train to go—well, anywhere I please on your jerkwater railroad. The Eight-Fifteen will do, with Buck Chandler to run it."

"Pshaw! take your own car and any crew you please. We are not selling transportation to you."

"Yes, you are; I'm going to pay for that train, and what's more, I want your written receipt for the money. I need it in my business. Then, if Chandler should happen to get gay and dump me into the ditch somewhere, I can sue you for damages."

"All right; if you will persist in joking with me it's going to cost you something. How far do you want your train to run?"

"Oh, I don't know; anywhere the notion prods me—say to the west end and back, with as many stops as I see fit to make, and perhaps a run over the branches."

I saw the boss make a few figures on a pad under his hand.

"It would cost anybody else, roughly, something like five hundred dollars. On account of your little joke it's going to cost you a cold thousand."

Mr. Van Britt took out his check-book and a fountain pen and solemnly made out the check.

"Here you are," he said, slipping the check over to the boss's desk. "Now shell out that receipt, so that I'll have it to show if anybody wants to know how much you've gouged me. Since you're making the accommodation cost me a dollar a minute, how long have I got to wait?"

Mr. Norcross said something that sounded like "d-n," scribbled a memorandum of the thousand-dollar payment on a sheet of the scratch-pad and handed it over, saying: "The order for the car includes my cook and porter, and something to eat; we'll throw these in with the transportation, and if the car is ditched and you sue for damages, we'll file a cross-bill for hotel accommodations. Now go away and work off your little attack of lunacy. I'm busy."

The C. S. & W. strike—as our wires told us—went into effect promptly on

the stroke of noon, and a train from the west, arriving late in the afternoon, brought Ripley.

"The conditions all along the line are almost revolutionary," was Ripley's summing-up of the situation. "Generally speaking, the public is not holding us responsible as yet, though of course there are croakers who are saying that it is entirely a railroad move, and predicting that we won't do anything to interfere with the new graft."

"Cantrell says the public sentiment is altogether on the side of the C. S. & W. strikers," the boss put in.

"It is; angrily so. There is hot talk of a boycott to be extended to everything sold or handled by the Hatch syndicate. I hope there won't be any effort made to introduce strike-breakers. In the present state of affairs that would mean arson and rioting and bloody murder."

"I wired you because I wanted to consult you once more about those ground leases, Ripley. Do you still think you can make them hold?"

"If Hatch breaks the conditions, we'll give him the fight of his life," was the confident rejoinder.

"But that will mean a long contest in the courts. The Supreme court is a full year behind its docket, and the delay will inevitably multiply your

few 'croakers' by many thousands. But that isn't the worst of it. Hatch has a better hold on us than the law's delay." And to this third member of his staff Mr. Norcross told the story of the political trap into which Collingwood and the New York stock-jobbers had betrayed the railroad management.

Ripley comment was a little like Hornack's; less profane, perhaps, but also less hopeful.

"Good Lord!" he ejaculated. "So that is what Hatch has had up his sleeve? I don't know how you feel about it, but I should say that it is all over but the shouting. If the Dunton crowd had been deliberately trying to wreck the property, they couldn't have gone about it in any surer way."

"That is the way it looked to me, Ripley, at first; but I've had a chance to sleep on it—as you haven't. The gun that can't be spiked in some way has never yet been built. I have the names of the eleven men who were bribed. Hatch was daring enough to give them to me. Holding the affidavits which they were foolish enough to give him, Hatch can make them swear to anything he pleases. But if I could get those affidavits I'd go to these men separately and make each one tell me how much he had been paid by Bullock for his vote."

"Well, what then?"

"Then I should make every mother's son of them come across with the full amount of the bribe, on pain of an exposure which the dirtiest politician in this state couldn't afford to face. That would settle it. Hatch couldn't work the same game a second time."

We were closing our desks to go to dinner when Fred May came in to say that a delegation of the pay-roll men was outside and wanting to have a word with the "Big Boss." Mr. Norcross stopped with his desk curtain half drawn down.

"What is it, Fred?" he asked.

"I don't know," said the Pittsburgher. "I should call it a grievance committee. If it wasn't so big. And they don't seem to be mad about anything. Bart Hoskins is doing the talking for them."

"Send them in," was the curt command, and a minute later the inner office was about three-fourths filled up with a shuffling crowd of P. S. L. men.

The chief looked the crowd over. There was a bunch of train and engine men, a squad from the shops, and a

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around the speaker's neck and choked him so suddenly that Hoskins' sentence ended in a gasping chuckle. When the garroting arm was withdrawn the conductor looked around sort of foolishly and said: "I'm thinking that's about all we wanted to say, ain't it, boys?" and the deputation filed out as solemnly as it had come in.

I guess Mr. Norcross wasn't left wholly in the dark when the tramping footfalls of the committee died away in the corridor. That unintentional mention of Mr. Van Britt's name looked as if it might open up some more possibilities, though what they were I couldn't imagine, and I don't believe the general manager could, either.

After that, things rocked along pretty easy until after dinner. Instead of going right back to the office from the club, Mr. Norcross drifted into the smoking-room and filled a pipe. In the course of a few minutes, Major Kendrick dropped in and pulled up a chair. I don't know what they talked about, but after a little while, when the boss got up to go, I heard him say something that gave the key to the most of what had gone before, I guess.

"Have you seen or heard anything of Collingwood since yesterday?"

The good old major shook his head.

"They're tellin' me that he's over in his rooms at the Bullard, drinkin' himself to death. If he wasn't altogether past redemption, suh, he would have had the decency to get out of town befo' he turned loose all holts that way; he would, for a fact, Graham."

At that, Mr. Norcross explained in just a few words why Collingwood hadn't gone—why he couldn't go. Whereupon the old Kentuckian looked graver than ever.

"That that spells trouble, Graham. Hatch is simply invitin' the un-de-taker. Howle isn't what you'd call a dangerous man, but he is totally irresponsible, even when he's sober."

"We ought to get him away from here," was the boss' decision. "He is an added menace while he stays."

I didn't hear what the major said to that, because little Rags, Mr. Perkins' office boy, had just come in with a note which he was asking me to give to Mr. Norcross. I did it; and after the note had been glanced at, the chief said, kind of bitterly, to the major:

"You can never fall so far that you can't fall a little farther; have you ever remarked that, major? And then he went on to explain: "Perkins, our Desert Division superintendent, says that the 'locals' of the various railroad labor unions have just notified him of the unanimous passage of a strike vote—the strike to go into effect at midnight."

"A strike?—on the railroad? Why, Graham, son, you don't mean it!"

The men seem to mean it—which is much more to the purpose. They are striking in sympathy with the C. S. & W. employees. I fancy that settles our little experiment in good railroading definitely, major. Dunton doesn't want a receivership, but he'll have to take one now. The bottom will drop out of the stock and break the market when this strike news gets on the wire, and that will end it. I wish to God there were some way in which I could save Mr. Chadwick; he has trusted me, major, and I—I've failed him!"

## CHAPTER XVIII

### The Murder Madman

I knew what we were up against when we headed down to the railroad lay-out, the chief and I, leaving the good old major thoughtfully puffing his cigar in the club smoking-room. With a strike due to be pulled off in a little more than three hours there were about a million things that would have to be jerked around into shape and propped up so that they could stand by themselves while the Shore Line was taking a vacation. And there was only a little handful of us in the headquarters to do the jerking and propping.

It was precisely in a crisis like this that the boss could shine. From the minute we hit the tremendous job he was all there, carrying the whole map of the Short Line in his head, thinking straight from the shoulder, and never missing a lick; and I don't believe anybody would ever have suspected that he was a beaten man, pushed to the ropes in the final round with the grafters, his reputation as a successful railroad manager as good as gone, and his warm little love-dream knocked sky-winding forever and a day.

Luckily, we found Fred May still at his desk, and he was promptly clamped to the telephone and told to get busy spreading the hurry call. In half an hour every relief operator we had in Port City was in the wire-room, and the back-breaking job of preparing a thousand miles of railroad for a sudden tie-up was in full swing. Mr. Perkins, as division superintendent, was in touch with the local leaders. Persuading and insisting by turns, Mr. Norcross fought out the necessary compromises with the unions. All ordinary traffic would be suspended at midnight, but passenger trains en route were to be run through to our connecting line terminals east and west, live stock trains were to be laid out only where there were feeding corrals, and perishable freight was to be taken to its destination wherever that might be.

The strikers agreed to allow the mail trains to run without interruption, with our promise that they would not carry passengers. Hoskins and his committee bucked a little at this, but got down when they were shown that they could not afford to risk a

clash with the Government. This exception admitted, another followed, as a matter of course. If the mail trains were to be run, some of the telegraph operators would have to remain on duty, at least to the extent of handling train orders.

With these generalities out of the way, we got down to details. "Fire-alarm" wires were sent to the various cities and towns on the lines asking for immediate information regarding food and fuel supplies, and the strike leaders were notified that, for sheer humanity's sake, they would have to permit the handling of provision trains in cases where they were absolutely needed.

By eleven o'clock the tangle was getting itself pretty well straightened out. Some of the trains had already been abandoned, and the others were moving along to the agreed-upon destinations. Kirgan had taken hold in the Port City yard, and by putting on extra crews was getting the needful shifting and car sorting into shape, and the Port City employees, acting upon their own initiative, were picketing the yard and company buildings to protect them from looters or fire-setters. Mr. Van Britt's special, so the wires told us, was at Lesterburg, and it was likely to stay there; and Mr. Van Britt, himself, couldn't be reached.

It was at half-past eleven that we got the first real yelp from somebody who was getting plucked. It came in the shape of a wire from the Strathcona night operator. A party of men—"mine owners" the operator called them—had just heard of the impending railroad tie-up. They had been meaning to come in on the regular night train, but that had been abandoned. So now they were offering all kinds of money for a special to bring them to Port City. It was represented that there were millions at stake. Couldn't we do something?

Mr. Norcross had kept Hoskins and a few of the other local strike leaders where he could get hold of them, and he put the request up to them as a matter that was now out of his hands. Would they allow him to run a one-car special from the gold camp to Port City after midnight? It was for them to say.

Hoskins and his accomplices went off to talk it over with some of the other men. When the big freight conductor came back he was alone and was grinning good-naturedly.

"We ain't aimin' to make the company lose any good money that comes a-rollin' down the hill at it, Mister Norcross," he said. "Cinch these here Strathcona hurry-boys fr all you can get out o' them, and if you'll lend us the loan of the wires, we'll pass the word to let the special come on through."

It was sure the funniest strike I ever saw or heard of, and I guess the boss thought so, too—with all this good-natured bargaining back and forth; but there was nothing more said, and I carried the word to Mr. Perkins, directing him to have arrangements made for the running of a one-car special from Strathcona for the hurry folks.

Past that, things rocked along until the hands of the big standard-time clock in the dispatcher's room pointed to midnight. Norris, who was holding down the commercial wire, came over to the counter calling just then with a New York message. I saw the boss' eyes flash and the little bunchy muscle-swells of anger come and go on the edge of his jaw as he read it, and then he handed it to me.

"You may indorse that 'No Answer' and file it when you go back to the office," he said shortly, and then he went on talking to Donohue, telling him how to handle the trains which were still out and moving to their destinations.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## NOT THE ONLY ONE

There Are Other East Jordan People Similarly Situated.

Can there be any stronger proof offered than the evidence of East Jordan residents? After you have read the following, quietly answer the question.

Eric Farmer, railroad engineer, East Jordan, says: "Seven years ago I had an awful lame back, and I had a sore feeling right across the small of my back that stayed with me for days. I had stitches in my back when I wasn't able to move at all and my back was always lame. When I stooped over I could hardly get up again. I surely was in a poor shape. Mornings I felt so tired I hardly had enough strength to get up. Black specks came before me and were so thick at times I couldn't see. Through the night I often had to get up and the secretions were not only painful but always filled with dark sediment. I heard of Doan's Kidney Pills and got a few boxes at Gidley & Mac's Drug Store and they fixed me up in good shape."

60c. at all dealers. Foster-Milburn Co., Mfrs., Buffalo, N. Y.

### Cacophonous.

The laugh at one's own expense can hardly be called a musical laugh.—Boston Transcript.

### A GOOD SUMMER MEDICINE

A broken summer cough causes broken sleep and lowers your vitality. Hay fever and asthma are other seasonal afflictions. Foley's Honey and Tar Compound soothes and heals raw, inflamed membranes, stops tickling in throat and clears stuffy, wheezy breathing. Contains no opiates. —Hite's Drug Store.

## AUSTRIAN MUSIC SUFFERS BY WAR

Large Royalties From United States Held Up.

### CUSTODIAN NOW HOLDS FEES

Leo Fall and Franz Lehár Are Trying to Get Possession of Their Money—Are Millionaires on Paper, but if Royalties Are Paid in Crowns at the Pre-war Rate It Will Mean Heavy Losses—Works of Enemy Authors Now Unprotected.

Austria is an export country for dramatic literature, chiefly comic plays and musical comedies and for music in general. Before the war the success of certain types of plays of Viennese origin, especially operettas, depended entirely on the reception in the United States and England. Royalties of many thousands of dollars used to flow regularly to Vienna from overseas. When the United States entered the war this was stopped and all royalties were treated as property of alien enemies and put under the supervision of the public trustee. Since the conclusion of peace several well-known Austrian authors—among them Leo Fall and Franz Lehár—have repeatedly tried to get into the possession of their money, which increased in value from day to day with the rising exchange rate of the dollar. Hitherto all these efforts appear to have failed.

It has been reported here that America intends to release the sequestered property of private persons of formerly hostile countries. But it has become doubtful whether they would derive much benefit from the realization of this promise, as it is intended, according to the latest news, to pay the money not to the different owners direct, but to the Austrian government, which is supposed to receive the sums in dollars and to hand them over to the interested parties in crowns at the pre-war rate of exchange.

### Millionaires in Paper Crowns.

Although a profitable transaction for the state, this would be but a poor consolation for the ultimate receivers of the money, considering that the crown has today less than one one-hundredth part of its normal value. The patience of writers and composers, who were once accustomed to incomes in dollars, is therefore put to a hard proof. Theoretically they are multi-millionaires in crowns, but practically it is quite uncertain whether they will ever see these millions.

Still, they would