

## CHAPTER I

FOUR miles from Ithaca, New York, Oscar Bennett's farm spread its acres along the face of West Hill between the Lehigh Valley tracks and the highway leading to Trumansburg. Oscar Bennett was what the country people and even the Ithaca folks called a fine farmer. His farmhouse faced a lane that led to the west shore of Lake Cayuga, and from the front porch he could see, much to his dislike, the few straggling squatter shacks that brought to an end northward the Silent City. Like all other substantial citizens, Oscar detested the squatters. In his estimation they were a set of thieving loafers and sneaks, and many times he had wished that he owned the ground they squatted on instead of Marcus MacKenzie.

Of course it was no secret that MacKenzie never let an opportunity slip to pop a fisherman into jail, but in Bennett's opinion that treatment was not severe enough, and besides, it did not accomplish anything. MacKenzie's idea was to jail the men whenever the chance came and for a period as long as the law would allow. But