

that was not a reflection of the light within. A second after he noticed the man halted, looking at it, speculating as to its meaning. Then of a sudden he realised; and in two steps he was across the room and simultaneously the obscuring shade shot up with a crash. Instantly following, startlingly unexpected, the red glow without sprang through the glass and filled the room.

"Fire!" announced the observer involuntarily to the sleepers above. "The other ranch house is afire!" Then, as they were slow in awakening, the cry was repeated more loudly: "Fire! Fire!"

A conflagration is the universal contagion, the one excitement that never palls. Forth into the night, forgetful of his companion, forgetful of all save the interest of the moment, rushed O'Reilly. Half dressed, hatless, working with buttons as they went, Parker, the new owner, and Mead, the lawyer, descended the rickety stairs like an avalanche and without pausing to more than look followed running in his wake. The unused ranch house was dry as cardboard and was burning fiercely. Though there was still no moon and the overseer had several minutes the start, against the light they could see his running figure distinctly. Standing in the living-room as they rushed through, white faced, hesitant, was Clayton Craig; but though he had spoken to them—they both recalled that fact afterward—neither had paused to listen or to answer. That he would not follow nee-