

"There's something I've been meaning to tell Anne," Rickart said, "ever since she came into the property. There's oil on your land. Jevens did n't look in the right place for it. It's on the other side of the Ridge, and it runs pretty well down into the valley. Years ago I had the whole place experted . . . what Jevens struck must have been a seepage basin. I guess it pretty well broke him. He had that young fool Hartley Daws snooping round the place and I fixed Daws so he would n't trust his own judgment, or so, if he did, Jevens would n't trust him. I don't know which way it worked, but I know Jevens did n't find it.

"Well, I'm counting on you to keep this confidential. We don't know how much oil there is, nor how good it is. With the Petrolia fields running so strong and the price crude oil is, there's no good going after it now. But you tell Anne that when there's a chance of a railroad, or when she gets good and ready, I'll go with her . . ."

Kenneth listened in silence to this extraordinary statement with its mixture of friendly good sense and the entire absence of what is ordinarily called conscience. He thought of his mother and the strange chances of his youth, all so long buried past resentment. It came over him again that the key to the Old Man's success was, after all, knowledge, knowledge of land and minerals, knowledge of law, and, more than everything else, knowledge of men, knowledge of everything except that strange, ineradicable quality of men called righteousness; the thing which he could n't always calculate in others or get the better of in himself. It was a moment of revealing poignancy through which he sat, and though it took something of warmth from the handshake with which he