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MUNFORD

MUNFORD came to the work before the gangs were deep enough into the hills to lose daily, or rather nightly, touch with Big Cloud. And the way of his coming was this: The town, springing up in a night, had its beginning in the wooden shanty the engineers built as headquarters for the Hill Division that was to be. Then, with mushroom growth, came shacks innumerable; and these shacks, for the most part, were gambling hells and dives and saloons, and the population was Indian, Chinese and bad American. To these places of lurid entertainment flocked the toilers at night, loading down the construction empties as they backed their way to the spurs and sidings that soon spread out like a cobweb around headquarters.

Naturally, rows were of pretty frequent occurrence between the company's men and the leeches who bleed them with crooked games and stacked decks over the roulette, faro and stud-poker tables. But of them all in the delectable pursuit of separating the men and their pay-checks, Pete McGonigle's "Golden Luck" saloon was in the van, both as to size and crookedness. And that high station of eminence it maintained until the night a stranger wrecked it by no more delicate a