

The City of Numbered Days

Brouillard's smile tilted his curling mustaches to the sardonic angle.

"The combination was what called the turn, Grizzly. To-day happens to be my twenty-eighth birthday—the end of the fourth cycle of seven."

"By Georgel" ejaculated the hydrographer in mock perturbation, sitting up so suddenly that he dropped his pipe into the ashes of the fire. "In that case, according to what seems to be the well-established custom, something is due to fall in right now!"

"I have been looking for it all day," returned Brouillard calmly, "which is considerably more ridiculous than anything else I have owned to, you will say. Let it go at that. We'll talk about something real if you'd rather—that auxiliary reservoir supply from the Apache Basin, for example. Were the field-notes in when you left Washington?" And from the abrupt break, the technicalities came to their own again; were still holding the centre of the stage after the groups around the mess fires had melted away into the bunk shelters and tents, and the fires themselves had died down into chastened pools of incandescence edged each with its beach line of silvered ashes.