

The Mountain Divide

him to pay the charges. I shall ask him for them the next time I see him. And what is more he will have to pay, I don't care whose partner he is."

Dancing now regarded the operator with unconcealed impatience. "I suppose there are more where you came from," he muttered. "They will need a lot of them here, if they carry on like that. How old are you?" he demanded of Bucks abruptly.

"Seventeen."

"How long have you been in this country?"

Bucks looked at the clock. "About five hours, Bill."

"Reckon time close, don't you?"

"Have to, Bill, in the railroad business."

Dancing reflected a moment. "Five hours," he repeated. "If you don't get killed within the next five you may live to be a useful citizen of Medicine Bend. Where are you from, and how did you happen to come away out here on the plains?"

"I am from Pittsburgh. I had to quit school and go to work."

"Where did you go to school?"