

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

"LAY him here," said the Railroad Magnate. At that the conductor protested.

"He ain't due to make your bed any cleaner."

"The sheets will wash. Now heave—very gently—so."

The fireman was swung upon the bed, all grime and blood, against snowy linen. Throwing up the blind from a window the President let the glory of the sunrise into the compartment, and by that light studied the patient's face. The two train servants stood back, breathing hard, one wiping the sweat from his face.

"That youngster hefts a good two hundred," he gasped.

The lad lay dreaming in that golden sunrise, of a world where there seemed to be no pain. As the train swung onward, lapsing into half sleep, or dreaming awake, his brain took note of the rumble of a culvert, the swing of a curve. "The five-mile tangent," he thought, "we're nearing Revolversburg. We'll turn her over to Jim at the round-house, then to the railroad hotel for a sleep."

The President sat on the edge of his bed and looked up at the conductor.

"Your pilot train was despatched," he said sharply "one hour ahead of mine from Blunt?"