

THE GOLDEN FLOOD

By EDWIN LEFEVRE



Resume: Mr. Richard Dawson, president of the Metropolitan Bank, New York, is visited on a Thursday, by Mr. George Kitchell Grinnell, who wishes to deposit \$100,000, and presents an Assay Office check on the Sub-Treasury. One week from then he deposits \$151,000, a fortnight later \$250,000, and three weeks later \$500,000. He makes no revelation of his business, and on his desiring to make a deposit of \$1,000,000, the pompous president becomes excited. A deposit of \$2,500,000 follows, then \$5,000,000, and the following Thursday, \$10,000,000. Mr. Dawson employs Costello, a detective, who reports that Mr. Grinnell lives quietly, but has a load of bullion bars taken to the Assay Office every Monday. The flood continues until Mr. Grinnell has nearly thirty millions in the bank. The president in desperation seeks again to discover the source of the fortune. He is baffled once more, and Mr. Grinnell increases his deposits to \$35,000,000, and informs Mr. Dawson that Miss Grinnell, his sister, shares the secret of his wealth. The president then warns the plutocrat, Mellen, of the gold calamity. They tell Grinnell of the harm of too rapid increase in gold supply. The latter refuses to become either alarmed or confidential. Mr. Mellen and Mr. Dawson resolve to sell bonds and buy stocks.

"**H**OW do we stand, Richard?" asked Mr. Mellen, as he walked into the president's office.

"Almost there," answered Dawson, "I have sold most of your semi-speculative issues, and we are working off the last better than I expected. You got the memorandum of stocks bought to-day."

Mellen nodded. Then he walked to the busy ticker in the corner, and regarded the tape.

"The newspapers have warned the public against buying inflated stocks, or selling bonds at unreasonably low prices. A free press, Richard, is the best safeguard of the liberties of a nation. We should be grateful for this boon." There was a trace of nervousness about his manner; but it was a nervousness as of relief rather than uneasiness.

Mr. Dawson laughed admiringly, and approached his friend.

"Yes. I've sold them impartially all over New England, here, and in London and Berlin. But the governments—"

"Never mind those. The government will make good, somehow. We'll keep them to give us the right to arbitrate the matter later on. I am going to tell my brother George. I told him to come here to-day at— How do you do, George; I was just talking about you."

George B. Mellen, who had entered, was a strongly-built man, white-haired and clean-shaven. His eyes were of a clean, turquoise blue, that contrasted pleasantly with the white of his eyebrows. He was the vice-president of the International Distributing Syndicate, and at least the sixth richest man in the world. He nodded to his brother, and shook hands with Dawson, who managed to convey the impression that he had risen in order to greet affectionately the newcomer. That having been done, the president returned to his desk.

"George," said Mellen looking up from the ticker, "I've sold every bond I owned; or will have sold the last this afternoon." He resumed his scrutiny of the tape, very calmly.

"Wh-a-at?" said his brother.

"No obligations payable in gold will be worth anything in a short time. There's a man who has discovered the secret of making gold. And he's making it." He said it in an utterly unexcited voice.

"What are you talking about?" said George with an indecisive smile. His brother was bent over the glass dome of the ticker, and George, still smiling indecisively, looked at Dawson.

An office-boy entered with a note which he gave to the president. Dawson, as he saw the lad coming, instinctively picked up a dagger-like paper-cutter from his desk. But when he glanced at the handwriting, tore open

the envelope with his fingers hurriedly, and read the slip it contained. He rose and gave the paper to William Mellen, saying:

"That is the last of the bonds. They slaughtered prices, didn't they? But," with a jovially apologetic smile, "it was the best that could be done."

Mellen read the memorandum of the bond sales and the prices received.

"Why, Richard," he said it with a sort of polite regret that ended with a gentle sigh, "I should say they did slaughter them. It's a loss of about two millions on this lot, from last week's prices." He shook his head several times as in sorrow over a fellow-Christian gone wrong: The stock market had sinned. Then he studied the busy ticker once more.

"William, will you kindly explain this farce?" There was no sigh to George Mellen's voice as he asked this. His frown was deep.

"George, I'm not a fool, am I?" asked the richest man in the world, very earnestly. He must be patient. It was his duty; and duty should be everything to a man who, his friends thought, believed that the eyes of Providence were fixed unblinkingly on the centre of his soul.

"Just now, I should say—"

"Well, just now, I certainly am not one. I've sold out all my bonds and bought stocks. Yes, George. That," gently, "is what I have done."

"And I've done nothing all week but buy bonds and sell stocks!" George's eyes took on a curious expression—the blue in them seemed to grow strangely darker as he half-closed his eyelids. Often the brothers disagreed. William was the abler. But George was the older; and he could not forget the days when he lorded it over his slender brother by physical might.

"You probably bought my bonds, and I bought your stocks," said William, nodding as if solving a puzzle the solution of which called for no exultation. "I am sorry, George. But you must at once sell the bonds and buy stocks."

"Explain, hang you; explain!" shouted George Mellen angrily.

"George, keep cool. Richard, will you kindly tell brother George all about Grinnell?" He looked at the ticker with an exaggerated air of attention, to save further explanations.

George looked from his brother to the bank president, and back to his brother.

"William," he said at length, quietly. William did not look up from the ticker. It made George Mellen angry and he said imperiously: "William, listen to me! There may be a good reason why you have sold out all your bonds. But there is none why you should not have told me before. Why didn't you?"

"I never thought about it," answered William simply. There was a mild astonishment on his face, as if at his own forgetfulness of his brother's interest.

"You didn't, either, Dawson, did you?" said George coldly.

"My dear George, I certainly thought William was selling for both of you. He always does, you know," said Dawson.

"Oh, have it that way, George; have it that way if it will please you." Then to Dawson: "Sell George's bonds, lump results and strike an average," said William Mellen resignedly. Then, with sudden irritation: "It's a case of life and death, not of a few dollars." He began to walk up and down the office, lost in thought. Mechanically he took a small pad from the elaborately carved mahogany table in the centre of the room, walked to an arm-chair by the farthest window, sat down and presently began to jot down figures with a lead pencil, while Dawson told to George B. Mellen the story of Grinnell.

"But the thing is impossible," said George angrily.