

let them down, their business will begin to look a bit sick. . . . But best of all there's the excitement of doing business. As money grubbers I suppose the Yanks don't compare with the French, the Germans, the Chinese, the Jews. They just love business for the interest of the thing, and, on my soul, if you've got a continent this size to play with, not a hundredth part developed, you can understand their keenness. I'm a richer man than when I came out, but I don't see myself a millionaire and I don't want to be one. . . ."

This letter was written one month, and reached Hatherly one week, before an event which made Aylmer Lancing a millionaire more quickly and unexpectedly than had ever happened even in a continent of easy millions. His principals had sent him to Charleston, Illinois, to report on the advisability of the Illinois-Iowa-Colorado railroad running a loop line to pick up the stores of grain which were assembled in Charleston from the wheat fields of the west and despatched by water to the railhead at Banbury. His day's work done, Lancing was walking up and down the mile-long main street of the town, smoking a last cigar before going to bed, when he observed a red glare in the sky at the eastern end; as he walked, the glare spread, and a sound of shouting beat upon his ears. Within five minutes the flames, leaping from block to block, were roaring over a quarter of the street; the crazy, green and white wooden houses belched forth a stream of panic-stricken men and women, and still the gently fanning breeze urged the tongues of fire over the side streets to lick the blistering wood-work on the other side.

For several minutes Lancing stood motionless, drunk with the wild beauty and awed by the rushing roar of the flames. Then he decided that the fire must be stopped. Three more blocks had been swallowed with a hungry roar before he thought out the means, but thereafter he acted quickly and unswervingly. Doubling back, he shouted for volunteers to help demolish a block in the path of the racing fire. Scared men hurried up at sound of a voice that would