

III

THE REVERIE OF A BACHELOR

IT was shortly after midnight when the "Overland Flyer" made its unscheduled stop behind a freight train which was blocking the track at the blind siding at Coyote. Always a light sleeper, Ballard was aroused by the jar and grind of the sudden brake-clipping; and after lying awake and listening for some time, he got up and dressed and went forward to see what had happened.

The accident was a box-car derailment, caused by a broken truck, and the men of both train crews were at work trying to get the disabled car back upon the steel and the track-blocking train out of the "Flyer's" way. Inasmuch as such problems were acutely in his line, Ballard thought of offering to help; but since there seemed to be no special need, he sat down on the edge of the ditch-cutting to look on.

The night was picture fine; starlit, and with the silent wideness of the great upland plain to give it immensity. The wind, which for the first hundred miles of the westward flight had whistled shrilly in