

THE WIRE TAPPERS

and still cotton was going up, up, point by point; timid clerks and messenger boys and widows, even, were pouring their pennies and dollars into the narrowing trench which separated them from twenty cent cotton and fortune.

Yet only two men knew and understood just how this Napoleon of commerce was to abandon and leave to its own blind fate this great, uncomprehending, maddened army of followers. Speculators who had made their first money in following at his heels were putting not only their winnings, but all their original capital, and often that of others, on the "long" side of the great bull movement, waiting, always waiting, for that ever alluring Fata Morgana of twenty cent cotton. Even warier spirits, suburban toilers, sober-minded mechanics, humble store-traders, who had long regarded 'Change as a very Golgotha of extortion and disaster, had been tainted with the mysterious psychologic infection, which had raced from city to town and from town to hamlet. Men bowed before a new faith and a new creed, and that faith and creed lay compactly in three pregnant words: Twenty Cent Cotton.

Yet this magnetic and spectacular bull leader, Durkin felt, was infinitely wiser and craftier than any of those he led. Curry, at heart, knew and saw the utter hopelessness of his cause; he realized that he was only toying and trifling with a great