



TRUTH is a structure reared on the battlefield of contending forces.—Dr. Winchell.

## When to Lock the Stable

By HOMER CROY

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(Continued from last week)

"W HO'RE you to be talking? I didn't see any conductor take up your ticket on that train. Ain't you acceptin' the hospitality of this company and ain't you workin' for me? Ain't you one of us? Your shirt's just as dirty as anybody's. Are you going to ring in for me or not?"

"Not boys like that."

"I ain't any time to talk, but suppose I wanted to holler; the rest of the gang'd fall in with me and where'd you be? They'd frame you, that's what they'd do."

"I'm not going to see any boys like that robbed in plain daylight," returned Clem doggedly.

"Say, you ain't ever told us why you left Curryville. Do you want us to telegraph back you've been pinched?"

Clem stiffened. "No, no. 'Oly don't you see, he was young and I know just what losing five dollars—"

Brassy dropped his hand on Clem's arm familiarly. "Come on, old sidekick, the green's good. If we don't get it somebody else will. I wouldn't take any more from him, anyway. I just pull the wise ones—there ain't anybody'll give a sick fellow a five-spot quicker'n I will. Here, take these three fives and dritt in every new crowd and put down a plaster. You'd be the hot chocolate for capping if your collar didn't button behind." Pouching your feet and come on."

The table under his arm, Brassy pushed through the crowd. In a minute higher than the calls of the ticket sellers rose a nasal sing-song: "Everybody likes a little innocent fun and amusement. It quickens the pulse—"

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### ALL FLESH IS GRASS.

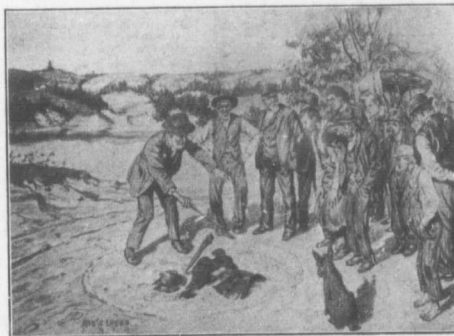
Mouth to mouth the word flew that Clem was gone. Mr. Kiggins ran over to Judge Woodbridge's office, the morning after the disappearance, and with one foot in the window and one eye on the White Front told the judge everything that he had heard, filling in the barren details with what he imagined so that by the time he got through the judge knew a desperate-looking character had been hanging around town that day and was last seen going down Mulberry Street—the very street Clem was coming up to get the medicine.

The city marshal was hurrying down the street as fast as his rheumatism would let him, pinning his badge on the outside of his coat. Mr. Kiggins rushed down the stairs, all but forgetting his lame foot, his wrenched shoulder and his bad heart, locked the White Front and set out

after the city officer. He found Reverend Sadnow pacing up and down the front yard, his hands pushed up his sleeves and his hair wildly tumbled.

"The work of the Lord," greeted the clerical raven. "In the midst of life we are in the midst of death. Flesh is but grass before the great Mower."

Mr. Kiggins listened to the questions Marshal Jukes put to Hulda and then returned to Reverend Sadnow.



Bos, Keep Out of This Till We Get Some Hounds.

"I feel it in my bones," he said, "that it was the tramp we been seeing loafing around here for the last couple days. Let's go down the street and see if we can't find where they met."

"All flesh is grass and the nations are as a drop in a bucket," letting the words fall in measured beats of sadness.

The two started down the street.

"I was awake last night—my shoulder hurtin' me again like coals rolling up and down my back, never gettin' quite off, like these colored candles with shot in 'em that they sell on the streets, rolling them up and down a board. Sometimes I'd think the live coals was goin' to tumble off but they'd turn around again and come thumpin' and bouncin' back."

"No one knoweth what a night will bring forth, and life is as a spark that flies upward!"

"While I was layin' there I heard something like a heavy thud, then a cren, but I laid it to my mind bein' delirious and didn't call the family. I never disturb anybody no difference

how bad off I am. Look, look!" exclaimed Mr. Kiggins, dropping on one knee, and pointing to a footprint and a torn bit of cloth. "Here's where the death struggle took place and all Curryville sleepin' peacefully—all except me, and me the only person to hear it, but sufferin' so I thought I was delicious."

"Life is a candle and death the draught that snuffs it out."

Mr. Kiggins rushed back to the house and found Marshal Jukes and laid before him his discovery, putting in a few embellishments in the way of what he had heard the night before when he was suffering from his shoulder and was half delirious. It had been a terrible hand-to-hand struggle, Clem fighting desperately, but the tramp was big and burly and had so completely stunned him with the first blow that Clem could not see for the blood.

Officer Jukes was heading over the footprints when up rushed Rick Oody. "I found Clem's hat and coat down by the river," he panted, "and a club with hair on it!"

Rick motioned toward Diedrich Bend, and with one accord all started in that direction. The crowd was augmented at every corner; Mr. Knab bobbed off toward his buggy, shed and in an incredibly short time was back in his democrat wagon. Drawing up alongside Officer Jukes, he slid over in his seat and the official swung in without the riot stopping. The rural carriers, with their one-horse rigs hitched in front of the post-office waiting for the last mail followed the crowd enviously, but finally turned back. It was a silent

perched Rick. "I was comin' back from takin' Wood's horse down the river when I seen this coat. He used to ride me on his knee—"

Turning over his clay-stained hand he found a clean knuckle and plowed it into his eyes. Reaching across with his left hand, he snatched up his right sleeve and wiped his eyes again. "—and tickle me in the ribs," Marshal Jukes picked up the torn and soiled coat and cap and finally let the stick.

"His hair," he said brokenly. Placing the hat and coat back in their former position, Jukes picked up a stick and drew a circle around them. "Boys," he said, "keep out of this till we get some hounds."

The men gathered around in a little knot, hardly raising their voices above a whisper. Slowly they all turned until they faced the black and yellow layered river. An arm was raised, pointing down the current where it rolled sluggishly against a dirty yellow bank, and a dozen heads nodded unadvisedly. The men walked back to the fence, Judge Woodbridge first through and holding up the wire until all had bent under.

"I'll run to Coop Goodson's and get his seine," volunteered Rick Oody. "I'll cut across and it won't take no time." Rick turned into the timber, bending his head, every few steps, to his right, sleeves up and reaching across with his left hand.

All was peace again except for one thing that moved; it was a figure slipping out of the underbrush. It passed behind a tree a moment, then walked quickly to the coat and kicked it up. Next it studied the hat and finally turned to the heavy stick with the heavy hair.

It was Rencie.

Before the men returned with the seine and began dragging the river for the body of Clem Pointer, Rencie had slipped away. However, his younger eyes had searched out something that the others had not seen. He stooped and picked it up; it was a watch-chain—a round ball of marble with North and South America and the Old World marked off in black.

Men in overalls and heavy shirts swam in the middle of the river, turn about, diving down and keeping the seine on the bottom, while on the shore walked the older men, dragging the net. On coming ashore the black mud squirted out of the holes of their shoes. Grimly they searched the river, going back time after time over the lee waters where the current roared into the yellow bank. Down to the mill they worked their way, shaking out the net at each haul and letting the turtles run spraddling back into the water.

When the bloodhounds came they rushed against the hat and coat. They swung their heads up and down wisely, shook their long ears and ran, a half-dozen times, around the spot in a circle. In their wrinkled faces was the wisdom of all the ages, but time after time they came back to the hat and coat and trotted off with their cold noses to the ground. In the middle of the crowd, a rook, a straight line, but stopped and again began making circles. Finally they came back to the hat and coat and stood wagging their tails and bobbing their heads.

"The scent's cold," explained the sheriff, and leashed the animals.

Parties were formed and for days the surrounding country was searched and every thicket plumbed, but the mystery was just as far from solution as ever. Mr. Kiggins supplied the powder from the White Front, and shots were fired over the river, but the river flowed on as slurrishly as before.

(To be continued)