



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)

"WHORE you be talking? I didn't see any conductor take your ticket on that train. Ain't you been acceptin' the hospitality of this company and ain't you workin' for me?—Ain't you one of us 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 robbin in plain daylight," returned Clem doggedly.

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

Clem stiffened. "No, no." "Only 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, but we don'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." Pouchice 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 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, rapping 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 hair, 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 Jupes put to Hulda and then returned to Reverend Sadnow.



Boys, 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 hurting me again like coals rolling up and down my back, never gettin' quite off, like these colored cansulas with shot in them that they sell on the streets, rolling them up and down a board. Sometimes I'd think the live coals was going 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, a r-r-ran, but I laid it to my mind being 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 sturgeon 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 Jupes ad 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 Jupes 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 hobbled off toward his buggy when he was suffering from his back in his democrat wagon. Drawing up alongside Officer Jupes, he slid over in his seat and the official swung in without the rig 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

hushed crowd, so one raises a voice above a hoarse whisper. The men slipped through the barb-wire fence, each man setting over-ed-vice, none offering to hold up the wire for the person behind. Jupes was slightly in advance, Rick Oody at his heels and Judge Woodbridge close behind, followed by the others. On the muddied bank, loam spread over the sand like chocolate over ice cream, lay the torn coat and crumpled hat. Near was a heavy stick, one end plowed into the white clay and black layers. The river, heavy with rich soil, in some places black, in other channels stirred with yellow clay, lay lazily over the bank as if maliciously hiding its mystery. A woodpecker pounded on a hollow limb, thrust its yellow head around the tree, turned it to one side as if expostulating with the invaders, then stood motionless again. A green and black knot on a log slid into the water and a snake wriggled down the wet bank in a series of "s's" and slipped into the water without cutting a ripple.

"I ain't touched a thing," whis-

pered Rick. "I was comin' back from taking Widow Wood's horse down the river when I seen this. 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 picked up his right sleeve and wiped his eyes again. "—and tickle me in the ribs," Marshal Jupes picked up the torn and soiled coat and cap and finally the stick.

"His hair," he said brokenly. "Placing the hat and coat back in their former position, Jupes 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 understandingly. The men walked back to the fence, Judge Woodbridge first through and holding up the wire until all had bent over.

"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, at the rich sleeves, 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 picked it up. Next it studied the hat and finally turned to the heavy stick with the heavy hair.

It was Rencie—Rencie Ford.

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 watch-charm—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 losed into the yellow bank. Down to shaking out the net at each haul and letting the turtles run spraddling back into the water.

When the bloodhounds came they were led to the spot and their noses

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.

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