

The City of Numbered Days

too easy. It was as if somebody or something had suddenly opened a closed door in my brain and let the daylight into all the dark corners at once."

Grislow sat up and finished for him.

"Yes; and since that time you have staved your way through the university, and butted into the Reclamation Service, and played skittles with every other man's chances of promotion until you have come out at the top of the heap in the Construction Division, all of which you're much too modest to brag about. But, say; we've skipped one of the seven-year flag-stations. What happened when you were twenty-one—or were you too busy just then chasing the elusive engineering degree to take notice?"

Brouillard was staring out over the loom of the dozen camp-fires—out and across the valley at the massive bulk of Mount Chingringo rising like a huge barrier dark to the sky-line save for a single pinprick of yellow light fixing the position of a solitary miner's cabin half-way between the valley level and the summit. When he spoke again the hydrographer had been given time to shave another pipe charge of tobacco from his pocket plug and to fill and light the brier.

"When I was twenty-one my father died, and"—he stopped short and then went on in a tone which