

there was no better tool to stand back of a big deal that required the appearance of honesty. With the Governor under his thumb and the fact that Schaler had come to Grote and not he to Schaler, the Boss did not anticipate much opposition to what terms he might choose to dictate.

The scheme centred around the discovery of gold along Beaver Creek. Owing to the high rocky banks it was impossible to use hydraulic pressure to work the claims except right at the water's edge. Schaler had formed a company and approached Grote with the suggestion that they should build a huge dam at Simon's Mills, some fifty miles back up the river. By this means he would be able to run pipes parallel with the stream's course, over the high ground on both sides. Charging for the use of the water, the Company would make a handsome thing out of it. But he was not satisfied. He demanded more. His offer to build the dam looked like a straight business proposition and covered an innocent clause that the Company should own the water rights on the Creek itself for the space of fifty years. That practically gave them the right to collect toll from every claim in the State that got its water supply from the Creek, no matter whether the dam rendered any service or not.

Grote was to receive one-third of the stock in the new Company. The Boss had demanded one-half, and Schaler had refused. Determined to retain the controlling interest, he had already used so many shares in getting the Bill through the House, that to give Grote what he asked would be to concede to him the right to dictate the whole situation.

When Schaler came in half an hour later, the Boss made a strong show of determination not to have anything to do with the scheme.

"But it's all up to you, now," expostulated the grafter. "You led us to believe you would help us, and we've worked to get the Bill through the House. All it wants now is the Governor's signature."

"Schaler," said Grote, slowly, "I can't do this thing. If that Bill goes through and you get control of that Creek for the next fifty years, you can charge rates so high

as to render it unprofitable to work the claims. Then, when they're abandoned, it'll be the easiest thing in the world to have your agents pick them up for next to nothing. Why, man, you'll own the river, let alone the water rights on it!"

"Exactly!" assented the surprised Schaler; "that's just what I said. We'll both be rich out of it."

Grote was idly pulling the drawer of his desk open and shut when his glance happened to rest on Madden's letter, and an idea came to him.

"Here's a letter," he said, unfolding it, "that came to me this morning from a friend of mine who owns property down on Beaver Creek. He wants me to visit him. I've half a mind to go and look over the ground for myself."

Schaler knew the Boss was hedging for more stock and argued that it would only be wasting time.

"Pshaw!" cried Grote, "I can wire the Governor the moment I change my mind. If you want to write me about anything," he added significantly, "put it in care of Horace Madden."

The following evening Grote stepped from a Pullman at Beaversville. The station-master and one or two loiterers were the only people on the platform. On the roadway at the further end, a ruddy-complexioned man was sitting in a dog-cart. As the Boss watched the tail end of the train boring a hole in a cloud of grey dust past the semaphore, a sense of desolation, such as he had never felt in all his city life, swept over him. Then he felt a hand on his shoulder, and turned around. It was the red-faced man.

"We don't look quite like we used to, do we?" said he heartily.

Grote found it difficult to realize that this could be Horace Madden.

"No," he replied, grasping the other's outstretched hand and gripping it strongly; "the years have not left us exactly the same. You are rounder and fatter than you used to be, I think."

"And you"—Madden was studying Grote's iron face and determined jaw—"you seem to have developed some wrinkles that don't belong there yet. A few weeks of