

THE DRUMMER

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST TRIP.

THE grocer's clerk reached over and touched Mrs. Bark's produce basket and it fell from the counter to the floor with a crash. The farmer's wife was busy at the moment gossiping with a friend and the grocer himself was at the back of the store. No one but Mr. Gorman, Burroughs' man from Detroit, witnessed Ward Clark's deliberate action.

While the grocery drummer retired behind a heap of Salada tea packages to have a laugh, Ward rushed around the counter and confronted Mrs. Bark.

"And eggs too!" he cried. "How did you manage to knock it off?"

Her only reply was: "Three dozen!"

The proprietor of the store, Ned Thomas, came on the scene. The farmer's wife was staring down at the destruction she thought she had wrought, and the clerk was inspecting it at close range. Suddenly Ward jumped up and giving Mr. Thomas's coat-tail a jerk faced Mrs. Bark.

"A dozen are smashed to egg-nog," he said, "and the rest are past the chicken stage; but if you'll take it out in trade we'll buy them."

The woman's eyes dilated and a smile illuminated her ruddy face. Thomas was not so cheerful in