

Deal in the Lands

ON THE
Fight for the Musselshell Millions.
BY LEON LEWIS.

CHAPTER I.

STARTLING NEWS FROM THE MUSSSELHELL. Hiram Skidder, for many years a prominent merchant of Chicago, sat in his private office one afternoon, debating seriously the question of making an assignment. He was not only pinched for money, but his credit had been utterly demolished, as the result of certain crooked transactions which had been widely whispered under cover of secrecy. It is needless to say that the frame of mind in which he found himself was unenviable. He had become rigid in his opinions, and was paler than usual. His manner had become irritable, forbidding, and at times even violent.

At the moment we look in upon him, he had just entered upon the examination of his after-noon mail—a task he had found at once irksome, monotonous, and annoying.

"Duns, threats, and reproaches—this is the burden of their whole song," he muttered, suspending operations a moment. "I'll see if I can't get together a few additional thousands and vanish."

Picking up another letter, the merchant opened it. The handwriting being unfamiliar and singular, he glanced at the signature.

"From Col. Harvey Whipsaw, of Rattlesnake Ranch, Musselshell, Montana," he read, smiling involuntarily.

What could such a man have to say to him? He began reading the missive, displaying an interest which rapidly increased to agitation and wonder. By the time he had reached the signature again the sheet fairly rustled in his grasp, and he looked startled and bewildered.

"How strange!" he ejaculated. "Evidently there is some good in those wild lands of the Musselshell, after all. What city sold them?"

He read the letter a second time with keen deliberation, his excitement increasing.

"Yes, the Colonel wants to buy an interest in those lands and become resident manager," he muttered. "What can be the object of his deep and sudden desire to purchase? Is it another case of 'striking it rich'? His language suggests it, and, on the face of things, nothing is more likely. The richness of Montana in all sorts of mineral is proverbial."

He scanned the letter of Col. Whipsaw carefully in an inner pocket.

"It's clear that some great discovery has been made," he added. "I mustn't lose a moment in recovering possession of those lands."

year or two in the midst of his present surroundings will prove his utter ruin." These plausible statements of Skidder's motive, however, did not deter Perry Wynans. He knew them to be untrue.

"I suppose you'll want something for the use of your money," pursued the merchant, with an insinuating smile.

"You gave four hundred dollars, I believe," said the merchant, with a smile of anticipated triumph. "Have cost you just a couple of hundred."

"Perry assented, and Skidder proceeded: "What shall we say, therefore, for your entire interest? Will fifteen hundred dollars be a fair figure?"

"The strange smile of Perry Wynans deepened.

"Hardly," he answered. "I have taken the trouble to give those lands a personal inspection, and—"

"You?" exclaimed the merchant, with a start of astonishment.

"When, may I ask?"

"A month or two ago," he answered. "I have taken the trouble to give those lands a personal inspection, and—"

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face. Before he could speak, however, the apartment widened, and a second person entered. The merchant's present companion was the niece who had just been so rudely repudiated.

"What a rare, witching girl she was! She had the wild free grace of a fawn; a slender, swaying figure; a sweet, pensive gaze, framed in flowing hair; and a pair of lovely brown eyes, innocent, truthful and unconsciously appealing eyes from which looked a woman's thoughtful soul that had learned too early the bitterness of life."

"She approached the merchant, extending her hand, as the clerk hastily retreated.

"Are you my uncle Hiram?" she asked. "I am Elsie Tower, your sister's only daughter."

"The tower?" repeated the merchant, with a stare of surprise. "The daughter of my only sister Mary?"

"The same, uncle."

"The merchant shook her hand feebly a slight start, and invited her by gesture to be seated.

"This is a great surprise," he said, resuming his seat. "What brings you to Chicago? Come on a little visit, eh? Better have staid in the country."

"I am coming to stay," Uncle Hiram, announced the girl quietly. "I am alone in the world—"

"A one? How's that?"

"My father died last year, as mother wrote you," explained Elsie. "Mamma has followed him," and her voice grew hoarse. "She has been sick week, Uncle Hiram, and when she was dying she told me to come to you. She sent you her dearest love, regretting keenly—"

"Humph!" said the merchant. "Of course I'm sorry she's dead, but it's better she should have been here and the loss don't come on me as keenly as you say. Mary was a good woman, a little sentimental, perhaps, and always taking about affection, honor, truthfulness, and that sort of thing, but she meant well. I don't doubt how many children did you have?"

"I was their only child, Uncle Hiram, save the one who died."

bond, and one of the meanest men I've ever encountered."

"Then you refuse to interest yourself in any way for me, Uncle Hiram?" inquired Elsie.

"I can't do otherwise," replied the merchant. "It was your father's place to provide for me, and it is your duty to comment upon his failure in business and neglecting to provide for his family; but that he could expect me to repair his neglect is incredible."

"The girl arose stiffly, sternly.

"We shall not agree, Uncle Hiram, in regard to my father's course," she said. "He left his name to me spotless and honorable—an inheritance a thousand times more precious than all the money in the world. I would not exchange his reputation for all your wealth, sir!"

"You are impertinent," returned Skidder, angrily, arising.

"I have obeyed my mother's command, sir, and asked you to work and protect me," she added, with deep agitation. "I am all alone in the world, Uncle Hiram—friendless, and, to a very great extent, helpless, as a girl of seventeen must necessarily be. If you turn me away I have nowhere to go. I have but ten dollars remaining."

"If a man and a woman has begun life on less than that," said Skidder. "I cannot help you. You ought to have too much pride to thrust yourself upon me as a pauper to be cared for—"

"Stop there, Uncle Hiram! I am no pauper," she said, with a gasp. "I have alms." And the young girl's eyes flashed fire, and her pale young face grew sternly reproachful. You send me away as if I were some importunate beggar. You revile my parents. You taunt me. You say enough. I'll relieve you of my presence!"

She moved to the door, where she turned and faced him, her great eyes eloquent with her sad and desolation.

"But before I go," she added, "let me say a word more. We shall meet again, Uncle Hiram, but not as now! Now I am a poor, weak girl, without money or friends, but I shall some day be rich and powerful! Some day, and perhaps at an early day, I believe as surely as God lives, we shall meet again upon a different plane! Until then, adieu!"

She bowed and withdrew, traversing the outer street and gaining the street, where she mingled with the throng.

Rejected by her kinsman, a stranger in a strange city, what was she to do, and where was she to go? She wandered on desolately, the world all before her, the making of her whole future in her own girlish hands.

A NEW YORK TRAGEDY

A FATAL DUEL AT CROTON LANDING.

A Family Feud Results in a Duel. In Which E. Newton Baker, Col. Ingersoll's Private Secretary, Is Mortally Wounded. O. M. Anderson His Slayer.

One of the most thrilling tragedies that have ever occurred in Westchester County, New York, took place at Croton Landing. It will probably result in the death of E. Newton Baker, private secretary of Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, who was fatally shot four times by Orville M. Anderson, late New York agent of the Louisville Gas Company.

Anderson and his family says a New York dispatch, live in the Moody home-stead, half a mile from the village. Anderson's part of his home to Baker and his wife. The two families have never agreed, and quarrels were frequent between the women in the house, Anderson and Baker took part in them. The disagreement went so far that each husband threatened to kill the other. The threats culminated in a duel.

"Many a man's household was a proty place, five years old," said Skidder. "I cannot help you. You ought to have too much pride to thrust yourself upon me as a pauper to be cared for—"

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She walked barely a block, hardly conscious of the direction she had taken, when a hand touched her gently on the arm.

Turning quickly and halting, she found herself face to face with a man whose life was destined to be associated with her own thenceforward and forever.

That man was, Perry Wynans.

AFFAIRS IN ILLINOIS.

ITEMS GATHERED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

What Our Neighbors Are Doing—Matters of General and Local Interest—Marriages, Deaths, Accidents and Crimes—Personal Pointers.

The Governor reappointed the old Board of Trustees of the State Historical Library, composed of the Rev. Arthur Edwards, editor of the North-western Christian Advocate; Judge Hiram W. Beckwith, of Danville; and Judge W. L. Gross, of Springfield.

At Springfield, in the United States Circuit Court, Judge Allen rendered an important decision in the case of George H. Moore, of Louisville, Ky., against John H. Meyer and others, of Quincy, which has been in the courts for two years past. The bill was filed by the defendants at the time of making their mortgage were hopelessly insolvent and that they, by these means, disposed of substantially all their property in fraud of the voluntary assignment laws of Illinois by preferring one class of creditors over another class. It was sought by the bill and proofs under it to treat the acts of the defendants in making their preferential transfers as the equivalent of an assignment under the State statute, and Judge Allen holds, however, that there can be no constructive assignment under this statute, but that an assignment creating a trust for the benefit of creditors must be executed by the falling in of the case involves a large amount of money and property.

At the second annual commencement of the Normal University at Alton, three young men graduated. The institution is now connected with the Congressional Association of Southern Illinois, and will be supplied with commodious buildings, a president of national reputation, and liberally endowed.

JACOB BROCHMEYER, an iron-worker at the new Masonic Temple, Chicago, while walking along a narrow stringer on the elevated floor, fell to the basement and died instantly.

FRANK KIBBALL had his shoulder dislocated, and an unknown companion was killed, while boarding a moving Burlington train at Hawthorn.

The drought in Fayette County is broken, which saves the corn crop. Wheat yields twenty-five to thirty bushels per acre, the largest in years.

THIEVES and rumps are fairly taking away the little town of Ramsey, Fayette County. Seven burglaries have been committed in the place within the past few days or two weeks. The other night Frank's jewelry store and Thiel's store were entered, and over \$500 worth of merchandise carried away. Thieves also broke into the railroad ticket office and express office and got several packages of goods. They seem to be playing a game of hide-and-seek with the burglar. Burglaries have been committed almost nightly at towns along the Clover Leaf route.

DIPHTHERIA is prevailing in the vicinity of Loggotee, near Vandalla. One death is reported, and others are sick.

CHARLES SCHAEFER, a business man of Mount Carmel, was seriously injured while repairing the sight of an air gun. As he went off and the bullet entered Mr. Schaefer's head, putting out an eye. He is in a dangerous condition.

The first annual reunion of the soldiers and sailors of Franklin County will be held at the Benton fair grounds Aug. 12 and 13.

The Bridgeport authorities are making war against the drug stores which have been selling liquor. W. H. Hutz and Ed Moore were each fined.

FARMERS in the vicinity of Hillsboro report that their cattle are afflicted with a strange and fatal disease. The mouth gets sore, the legs become swollen and stiff, and the sick animal dies of starvation.

An unknown tramp threw himself in front of a train at Peacook and was cut to pieces by a bag of silver coins was found in his body.

The Omnibus. "ALWAYS am a little higher than the mark," says a philosopher. What? Kiss a girl on the nose? Never.

CLERICUS—After all, honesty is the best policy. Cynicus—And, like the others, you can't collect on it until you are dead.

The original whale was quite a male-carrier, but Jonah probably first impressed upon him the need of a free delivery system.

"If marriage is a failure," said Blinks, "what on earth is an engagement?" "Only a temporary embarrassment," said Maude.

HE—Dobson is trying something that cures his craving for drink. SHE—What is it? Hypnotism? HE—No, Whisky.

BICKLES is back after a six months stay in France. "Did he learn the French language?" "No; all he did was to forget English."

"You can't earn fifty cents without working for it," says an exchange. True, but you may frequently work for fifty cents without getting it.

VISITOR (in dime museum, 1895)—I see nothing freaklike about you, Freak—I'm the only one who did not go crazy about souvenir spoons.

If men knew all that women think, and women knew all that men think, by O. D. Wakeman found a pocketbook containing \$400 in bank notes. That is quite a valuable dog.

A TEXAS cattleman says the outlook at present is that the supply of cattle from that State will fall short 1,000,000 head as compared with the number last year.

THREE prospectors in Death Valley were nearly dying of thirst when their mate started off on his own hook and soon led them to water. And yet the mule is generally regarded as a Kentuckian.

"The good luck," dates from the time of William the Conqueror. It was then a criminal offense to cut timber in the forests. Only such could be gathered as the wind had blown down; hence a heavy windstorm was hailed by the peasants as so much good luck. This is the basis of the modern application of the expression.

MR. OLIVER JEN (displaying his London suit)—Ew is this for a fit? Mr. Snippen Shews (critically)—Well, it is decidedly apologetic.—Puck.