

The City of Numbered Days

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SYNOPSIS.

Brouillard, chief engineer of the Niangua irrigation dam, meets J. Wesley Cortwright and his daughter, Genevieve, and explains the reclamation work to them. Cortwright sees in the project a big chance to make money. The financier tells Genevieve that the engineer "will come down and hook himself if the bait is well covered." Cortwright organizes a company and obtains government contracts to furnish power and material for the dam construction. A busy city springs up about the site. Steve Massingale threatens to start a gold rush if Brouillard does not influence President Ford to build a railroad branch to the place, thus opening an easy market for the ore from the "Little Susan" mine. On a visit to Amy Massingale at her father's mine Brouillard finds she understands him better than he had thought. He tells her of his need for money to pay off his dead father's debts and that to be free he would sacrifice anything save his love for one woman. Though his influence is vital to the building of the railroad extension she tells him to be true to himself. He decides for it. Mirapolis, the city of numbered days, booms. Cortwright persuades Brouillard to become consulting engineer of the consolidated electric power company in return for \$100,000 stock.

What do you think of a high-salaried government employee who would "sell out" his public trust for private gain—even if he did so in order to win happiness for the girl he loved? Isn't this country suffering right now from too much of just that sort of thing?

**CHAPTER IX
The Speedway**

It was in the days after he had found on his desk a long envelope inclosing a certificate for a thousand shares of stock in the Niangua Electric Power, Lighting and Traction company that Brouillard began to lose his nickname of "Hell's Fire" among his workmen, with the promise of attaining, in due time, to the more affectionate title of "the Little Big Boss."

At the envelope-opening moment, however, he was threatened with an attack of heart failure. It was scarcely believable. But a hastily sought interview with the company's president cleared the air of all the incredibilities.

"Why, my dear Brouillard! what in Sam Hill do you take us for?" was the genial retort when the young engineer had made his deprecatory protest. "Did you think we were going to cut the melon and hand you out a piece of the rind? Not so, my dear boy; we are not built on any such narrow-gauge lines. That's what we are willing to pay for a good, reliable government brake. It's going to be your business to see to it that the reclamation service gets exactly what its contract calls for, kilowatt for kilowatt."

"I'd do that, anyhow, as chief of construction on the dam."

"You mean you would try to do it. As an officer of the power company, you can do it; as an official kicker on the outside, you couldn't feaze us a particle. What? You'd put us out of business? Not much, you wouldn't; we'd play politics with you and get a man for your job who wouldn't kick."

"Well," said the inheritor of sudden wealth, still matching the promoter's mood, "you won't get me fired now, that's one comfort. When will you want my expert opinion on your auxiliary dam?"

"On our dam, you mean. Oh, any time soon; say tomorrow or Friday—or Saturday, if that hurries you too much. We shan't want to go to work on it before Monday."

Being himself an exponent of the modern theory that the way to do things is to do them now, Brouillard accepted the hurry order without comment. Celerity, swiftness of accomplishment that was almost magical, had become the Mirapolitan order of the day. Plans conceived overnight leaped to their expositions in things done as if the determination to do them had been all that was necessary to their realization.

"You shall have the report tomorrow," said the newly created consulting engineer, "but you can't go to work Monday. The labor market is empty, and I'm taking it for granted that you're not going to stampede my shovelers and concrete men."

"Oh, no," concluded the city builder, "we shan't do that. You'll admit—in your capacity of government watchdog—that we have played fair in that game. We have imported every workman we've needed, and we shall import more. That's one thing none of us can afford to do—bull the labor market. And it won't be necessary; we have a trainload of Italians and Bulgarians on the way to Quesado today, and they ought to be here by Monday."

"You are a wonder, Mr. Cortwright," was Brouillard's tribute to the worker of modern miracles, and he went his way to ride to the upper end of the valley for the exploring purpose.

On the Monday, as President Cortwright had so confidently predicted, the train load of laborers had marched in over the War Arrow trail and the work on the auxiliary power dam was begun. On the Tuesday a small army of Hispanians arrived to set the poles

and to string the wires for the lighting of the town. On the Wednesday there were fresh accessions to the army of builders, and the freighters on the Quesado trail reported a steady stream of artisans pouring in to rush the city-making.

On the Thursday the grading and paving of Chigringo avenue was begun, and, true to his promise, Mr. Cortwright was leaving a right of way in the street for the future trolley tracks. And it was during this eventful week that the distant thunder of the dynamite brought the welcome tidings of the pushing of the railroad grade over the mountain barrier. Also—but this was an item of minor importance—it was on the Saturday of this week that the second tier of forms was erected on the great dam and the stripped first section of the massive gray foot-wall of concrete raised itself in mute but eloquent protest against the feverish activities of the miracle-workers. If the protest were a threat, it was far removed. Many things might happen before the gray wall should rise high enough to cast its shadow, and the shadow of the coming end, over the miraculous city of the plain.

It was Brouillard himself who put this thought into words on the Sunday when he and Grislow were looking over the work of form raising and finding it good.

"Catching you, too, is it, Victor?" queried the hydrographer, dropping easily into his attitude of affable cynicism. "I thought it would. But tell me, what are some of the things that may happen?"

"It's easy to predict two of them: Some people will make a pot of money and some will lose out."

Grislow nodded. "Of course you don't take any stock in the rumor that the government will call a halt?"

Brouillard was shaking his head slowly.

"I don't pretend to have opinions any more, Grizy. I'm living from day to day. If the tail should get big enough to wag the dog—"

They were in the middle of the high staging upon which the puddlers worked while filling the forms and Grislow stopped short.

"What's come over you, lately, Victor? I won't say you're half-hearted, but you're certainly not the same driver you were a few weeks ago, before the men quit calling you 'Hell's Fire.'"

Brouillard smiled grimly. "It's going to be a long job, Grizy. Perhaps I saw that I couldn't hope to keep keyed up to concert pitch all the way through. Call it that, anyway. I've promised to motor Miss Cortwright to the upper dam this afternoon, and it's time to go and do it."

It was not until they were climbing down from the staging at the Jack's Mountain approach that Grislow acquired the ultimate courage of his convictions.

"Going motoring, you said—with Miss Genevieve. That's another change. I'm beginning to believe in your seven-year hypothesis. You are no longer a woman-hater."

"Oh, bally! There are times when you make me feel as if I had eaten too much dinner, Grizy! This is one of them. Put it in words; get it out of your system."

"It needs only three words: You are hypnotized. A month ago this city-building fake looked as crazy to you as it still does to those of us who haven't been invited to sit down and take a hand in Mr. Cortwright's little game. Now you seem to have gone over to the other side. You hobnob with Cortwright and do office work for him. You know his fake is a fake; and yet I overheard you boasting it the other night in Poodles' dining room to a tableful of money maniacs as if Cortwright were giving you a rake-off."

Brouillard stiffened himself with a jerk as he paced beside his accuser, but he kept his temper.

"You're an old friend, Grizy, and a mighty good one—as I have had occasion to prove. It is your privilege to ease your mind. Is that all?"

"No. You are letting Genevieve Cortwright make a fool of you. If you were only half sane you'd see that she is a confirmed trophy hunter. Why, she even gets down to young Griffith—and uses him to dig out information about you. She—"

"Hold on, Murray; there's a limit, and you'll bear with me if I say that you are working up to it now," Brouillard's jaw was set and the lines between his eyes were deepening. "I don't know what you are driving at, but you'd better call it off. I can take care of myself."

"If I thought you could—if I only thought you could," said Grislow musingly. "But the indications all lean the other way. It would be all right if you wanted to marry her and she doesn't. And, besides, there's Amy; you owe her something, don't you—or don't you? You needn't grit your teeth that way. You are only getting a part of what is coming to you. Faithful are the wounds of a friend," you know."

"Yes. And when the psalmist had admitted that, he immediately asked the Lord not to let their precious balms break his head. You're all right, Grizy, but I'll pull through." Then, with a determined wrenching aside of the subject: "Are you going up on Chigringo this afternoon?"

"I thought I would—yes. What shall I tell Miss Massingale when she asks about you?"

"You will probably tell her the first idiotic thing that comes into the back part of your head. And if you tell her anything piffous about me I'll lay for you some dark night with a pick handle."

Grislow laughed reminiscently. "She won't ask," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because the last time she did it I told her your scalp was dangling at Miss Genevieve's belt."

They had reached the door of the log-built quarters and Brouillard spun the jester around with a shoulder grip that was only half playful.

"If I believed you said any such thing as that I'd murder you!" he exploded. "Perhaps you'll go and tell her that—you red-headed blastoderm!"

"Sure," said the blastoderm, and they went apart, each to his dunnage kit.

**CHAPTER X
Table Stakes**

There were a dozen business blocks under construction in Mirapolis, with a proportional number of dwellings and suburban villas at various stages in the race toward completion, when it began to dawn upon the collective consciousness of a daily increasing citizenry that something was missing. Garner, the real estate plunger from Kansas City, first gave the missing quantity its name. The distant thunder of the blasts heralding the approach of the railroad had ceased between two days.

Up to the period of the silenced dynamite thunderings new industries were projected daily, and investors, tolled in over the high mountain trails or across the Buckskin in dust-encrusted automobiles by methods best known to a gray-mustached adept in the art of promotion, thronged the lobby of the Hotel Metropole and bought and sold Mirapolis "corners" or "insides" on a steadily-ascending scale of prices.

A strange mania for holding on, for permanence, seemed to have become epidemic. Many of the working men were securing homes on the installment plan. A good few of the villas



"It Looks Bad—Devilish Bad."

could boast parquetry floors and tiled bathrooms. One coterie of Chicagoans decided to build a six-story office building, with a ground floor corner for the Niangua National bank with modern conveniences and that the chosen building material should be of nothing less permanent than monolithic concrete.

In harmony with the same spirit the newly incorporated Buckskin Gold Mining and Milling company plowed deep furrows to bed-rock across and back until the face of Jack's mountain was zigzagged and scarred like a veteran of many battles.

In keeping was the energy with which Mr. Cortwright and his municipal colleagues laid water mains, strung electric wires, drove the paving contractors, and pushed the trolley line to the stage at which it lacked only the rails and the cars awaiting shipment by the railroad.

This was the situation on the day when Garner, sharp-eared listener at the keyhole of opportunity, missing the dynamite rumblings, sent a cipher wire of inquiry to the East, got a "rush" reply, and began warily to unload his Mirapolitan holdings. Being a man of business, he ducked to cover first and talked afterward; but by the

time his hint had grown to rumor size Mr. Cortwright had sent for Brouillard.

"Pull up a chair and have a cigar," said the great man when Brouillard had penetrated to the nerve-center of the Mirapolitan activities in the Metropole suite and the two stenographers had been curtly dismissed. "Have you heard the talk of the street? There is a rumor that the railroad grading has been stopped."

Brouillard, busy with the work of setting the third series of forms on his great wall, had heard nothing.

"I've noticed that they haven't been blasting for two or three days. But that may mean nothing more than a delayed shipment of dynamite," was his rejoinder.

"It looks bad—devilish bad." The promoter was planted heavily in his pivot chair, and the sandy-gray eyes dwindled to pin points. "We are up against it, that's all. Read that," and the promoter handed a telegram across the desk.

The wire was from Chicago, was signed "Ackerman," and was still damp from the receiving operator's copying press. It read:

"Work on P. S.W.'s Buckskin extension has been suspended for the present. Reason assigned, shrinkage in securities and uncertainty of business outlook in Niangua."

Mr. Cortwright's frown figured as a fleshly mask of irritability. "Let it once get out that the railroad people don't believe in the future of Mirapolis and we're done."

Brouillard's retort was the expression of an upflash of sanity.

"Mirapolis has no future; it has only an exceedingly precarious present."

For a moment the sandy-gray eyes became inscrutable. Then the mask of irritation slid aside, revealing the face which Mr. J. Wesley Cortwright ordinarily presented to his world—the face of imperturbable good nature.

"You're right, Brouillard; Mirapolis is only a good joke, after all. Sometimes I get bamboozled into the idea that it isn't—that it's the real thing. That's bad for the nerves. But about this railroad fizzle; I don't relish the notion of having our little joke sprung on us before we're ready to laugh, do you? What do you think?"

"It is not my turn to think, Mr. Cortwright."

"Oh, yes, it is; very pointedly. You're one of us, to a certain extent; and if you were not you would still be interested. A smash just now would hamper the reclamation service like the mischief; the entire works shut down; no cement, no lumber, no power; everything tied up in the courts until the last creditor quits taking appeals. Oh, no, Brouillard; you don't want to see the end of the world come before it's due."

It was the consulting engineer of the power company rather than the reclamation service chief who rose and went to the window to look down upon the morning briskness of Chigringo avenue. And it was the man who saw one hundred thousand dollars, the price of freedom, slipping away from him who turned after a minute or two of the absent street gazing and said: "What do you want me to do, Mr. Cortwright? I did put my shoulder to the wheel when Ford was here. I told him if I were in his place I'd take the long chance and build the extension."

"Did you—and before you had a stake in the game? That was a white man's boost, right? Think you could manage to get Ford on the wire and encourage him a little more?"

"It isn't Ford; it is the New York bankers. You can read that between the lines in your man Ackerman's telegram."

The stock gentleman in the pivot chair thrust out his jaw and tilted his freshly-lighted cigar to the aggressive angle.

"Say, Brouillard, we've got to throw a fresh piece of bait into the cage, something that will make the railroad crowd sit up and take notice. By George, if those gold hunters up on Jack's mountain would only stumble across something big enough to advertise—"

Brouillard started as if the wishful magic had been a blow. Like a hot wave from a furnace mouth it swept over him—the sudden realization that the means, the one all-powerful, earth-moving lever the promoter was so anxiously seeking, lay in his hands.

"The Buckskin people, yes," he said, making talk as the rifleman digs a pit to hold his own on the firing line. "If they should happen to uncover a gold reef just now it would simplify matters immensely for Mirapolis, wouldn't it? The railroad would come on, then, without a shadow of doubt. All the bankers in New York couldn't hold it back."

Now came Mr. Cortwright's turn to get up and walk to one of the windows.

"Come here," he called curtly, with a quick finger crook for the engineer, and when Brouillard joined him: "Can you size up that little caucus over yonder?"

The "caucus" was a knot of excited men blocking the sidewalk in front of Garner's real estate office on the opposite side of the street. The purpose of the excited ones was not difficult to divine. They were all trying to crowd into the Kansas City man's place of business at once.

What steps will Brouillard and Cortwright take to stop the threatened panic and save themselves—or do you think they will be able to get out of the mess without losing their investments?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL"



CLEVELAND LEADER.

TO PUNISH 116 GUARDS

LOTS OF TROUBLE AHEAD FOR THE BALKY TEXANS.

Secretary Baker Announces Men Who Refused to Serve Will Be Tried at Once.

Washington, May 25.—Reversing his previous decision, Secretary Baker announced that the 116 members of the Texas National Guard who failed to present themselves for muster into the Federal service will be brought to court-martial immediately under the present law.

Mr. Baker had intended to await the signing of the new militia law now before the president and proceed under its provisions.

Secretary Baker explained his action by pointing out the Dick law requires an obligation to defend the constitution and obey orders of the governor of the state, but not the order of the president. The Hay-Chamberlain act requires an oath to obey orders of both the governor and the president.

Upon recommendation of Judge Advocate General Crowder the secretary has decided that the alleged offense of the guardsmen refusing to "present" themselves for muster, was committed under the Dick law and trial should be under that law.

General Crowder in a supplementary opinion held that the Hay-Chamberlain act would not abolish the offense with which the Texans are charged, as has been suggested. On this showing it will not be necessary to issue a new call for the border militia after the Hay-Chamberlain bill is signed.

RETREAT ADMITTED BY ROME

Bulgarians Join Austrian Troops in Drive Against Italians—Advance Checked.

Rome (via Paris), May 25.—Along the Isonzo front the Italians have made prisoners of Bulgarians, showing that Bulgars have joined the Austrians in their present offensive.

The official statement issued here on Tuesday in part is as follows:

"In the Sugana valley between the Astico and the Brenta our troops fell back gradually on their main lines after repulsing Austrian attacks throughout the day of May 23. The retreat was orderly and spontaneous."

O. K. APPROPRIATION BILL

Measure Carrying \$145,000,000 Has Provision to Carry Out Army Reorganization.

Washington, May 27.—The army appropriation bill, carrying \$145,000,000 and including provision for carrying out the Hay-Chamberlain reorganization bill, was agreed to by the house military committee on Thursday. The bill includes provision for a council of executive information for co-ordination of industries and resources in war time.

Mexican Shot by Rancher. El Paso, Tex., May 29.—Residents of Dona Ana county, New Mexico, along the border, are taking extra precautions against trouble following the shooting of a Mexican by C. D. Caswad, a rancher.

Greek Cabinet Resigns. Athens, May 29.—The Greek cabinet has resigned. The resignation of the ministry was brought about by growing political unrest over conditions imposed upon Greece by the war.

RETAKE FRENCH FORT

TEUTONS ALSO CAPTURE VILLAGE OF CUMIERES.

Ten Thousand Fall in Bloodiest Engagement of the Three Months' Battle of Verdun.

Paris, May 26.—The Germans have reoccupied Fort Douaumont, while the French hold the immediate approach to that position. This announcement is made in the official communication issued on Wednesday by the French war office, which says that two new divisions of Bavarians effected the recapture after a series of furious attacks.

This success of the Germans followed capture by the Teutonic troops of a portion of the village of Cumieres, east of Dead Man hill. The fighting at this point developed into a hand-to-hand struggle. The French were faced by more than three divisions here.

Ten thousand men have gone down to slaughter in what is rapidly becoming the bloodiest engagement of the three months' battle of Verdun.

From Dead Man's Hill eastward to the ruins of Fort Douaumont the most savage struggle in any theater of war in the past two months is being waged.

PORTO RICAN BILL PASSED

House Kills Amendment Giving Women Vote—Greater Self-Government to Island Possessions.

Washington, May 25.—The house on Tuesday struck from the Porto Rican bill, by a vote of 80 to 59, an amendment designed to grant woman suffrage to the island. The bill then passed without roll call, virtually as introduced. The vote on the amendment showed a complete disregard of party lines, although more Democrats than Republicans voted against it. The amendment was inserted in the bill by Mr. Mann, minority leader. The bill, as passed, gives the Porto Rican government all of its internal revenue, regardless of whether the goods on which it is paid are used in Porto Rico or this country.

The measure now goes to the senate.

NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR

Washington, May 25.—The senate on Tuesday by a vote of 38 to 35 refused to reconsider its vote of last week of 37 to 41 rejecting the nomination of George Rublee of New Hampshire to the federal trade commission.

Chicago, May 27.—Mrs. Anna Dollie Ledgerwood Matters and her codefendants, Charles S. Mellon and Harry Edwards, were found not guilty on Thursday of attempting to foist a false hair upon the probate court. The jury was out two hours and forty minutes.

Tuskegee Head Installed. Tuskegee, Ala., May 27.—Maj. Robert T. Moton, a negro of unmixed blood, was installed here as principal of Tuskegee Institute, founded by Booker T. Washington for the uplift of the colored race.

General Gallieni Near Death. Paris, May 27.—The condition of General Gallieni, former minister of war, has suddenly grown worse and grave anxiety is felt as to his chances of recovery. General Gallieni resigned on account of ill health.