

# The Big-Town Round Up



by William MacLeod Raine

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

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## CHAPTER XVII Continued.

if he could. That information gained, the man no longer interested him. Sullenly Jerry left. There was no profit in jeering at Lindsay. He was too entirely master of every situation that confronted him.

Within the hour Clay was wakened from sleep by another guard with word that he was wanted at the office of the warden. He found waiting him there Beatrice and her father. The girl bloomed in that dingy room like a cactus in the desert.

She came toward him with hands extended, in her eyes gifts of friendship and faith.

"Oh, Clay!" she cried. "Much obliged, little pardner." Her voice went to his heart like water to the thirsty roots of prickly pears. A warm glow beat through his veins. The doubts that had weighed on him during the night were gone. Beatrice believed in him. All was well with the world.



The Gang Politician's Insolent Eyes Went Up and Down Him. "I Didn't Come to See You."

He shook hands with Whitford. "Blamed good of you to come, sir." "Why wouldn't we come?" demanded the mining man bluntly. "We're here to do what we can for you." Little wells of tears brimmed over Beatrice's lids. "I've been so worried." "Don't you. It'll be all right." Strangely enough he felt now that it would. Her coming had brought rippling sunshine into a drab world.

"I won't now. I'm going to get evidence for you. Tell us all about it." "Why, there isn't much to tell that you haven't read in the papers probably. He came a-shootin' and was hit by a chair."

"Was it you that hit him?" "Wouldn't I be justified?" he asked gently. "But did you?" For a moment he hesitated, then made up his mind, swiftly. "Yes," he told her gravely.

She winced. "You couldn't help it. How did you come to be there?" "I just dropped in." "Alone?" "Yes."

He had burned the bridges behind him and was lying glibly. Why bring Bromfield into it? She was going to marry him in a few days. If her fiancé was man enough to come forward and tell the truth he would do so anyhow. It was up to him. Clay was not going to betray him to Beatrice.

"The paper says there was some one with you." "Sho! Reporters sure enough have lively imaginations."

"Johnnie told me you had an engagement with Mr. Bromfield." "Did you ever know Johnnie got anything right?"

"And Clarendon says he was with you at Maddock's."

Clay had not been prepared for this cumulative evidence. He gave a low laugh of relief. "I'm an awful poor liar. So Bromfield says he was with me, does he?"

"Yes."

"Did I?"

"Can you deny it? Clarendon heard the shots as he was running downstairs."

"He told you that, did he?" "Yes."

"That ought to help a lot. If I can prove Collins was shootin' at me I can plead self-defense."

"That's what it was, of course."

"Yes. But Durand doesn't mean to let it go at that. He was here to see me this mornin'." Clay turned to the mining man, his voice low but incisive. His brain was working clear and fast.

"Mr. Whitford, I have a hunch he's going to destroy the evidence that's in my favor. There must be two bullet holes in the partition of the rear room where Collins was killed. See if you can't find those bullet holes and the bullets in the wall behind."

"I'll do that, Lindsay."

"And hire me a good lawyer. Send him to me. I won't use a smart one whose business is to help crooks escape. If he doesn't believe in me, I don't want him. I'll have him get the names of all those pulled in the raid and visit them to see if he can't find some one who heard the shots or saw shooting. Then there's the gun. Some one's got that gun. It's up to us to learn who."

"That's right."

"Tim Muldoon will do anything he can for me. There's a girl lives with his mother. Her name's Annie Millikan. She has ways of finding out things. Better talk it over with her too. We've got to get busy in a hurry."

"Yes," agreed Whitford. "We'll do that, boy."

"Oh, Clay, I'm sure it's going to be all right!" cried Beatrice, in a glow of enthusiasm. "We'll give all our time. We'll get evidence to show the truth. And we'll let you know every day what we are doing."

"How about my going bail for you?" asked her father.

Clay shook his head. "No chance just yet. Let's make our showing at the coroner's inquest. I'll do fine and dandy here till then."

He shook hands with them both and was taken back to his cell. But hope was in his heart now. He knew his friends would do their best to get the evidence to free him. It would be a battle royal between the truth and a lie.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Bromfield Makes an Offer. A youth with a face like a fox sidled up to Durand in the hotel lobby and whispered in his ear. Jerry nodded curtly, and the man slipped away as furtively as he had come.

Presently the ex-prize-fighter got up, sauntered to the street and hailed a taxi. Twenty minutes later he paid

the driver, turned a corner and passed into an apartment house for bachelors. He took the elevator to the third floor and rang an electric bell at a door which carried the name "Mr. Clarendon Bromfield."

From the man who came to the door Mr. Bromfield's visitor learned that he was not well and could receive no callers.

"Just mention the Omnium club and say I'm here on very important business," said Jerry with a sour grin. The reference served as a password.

Jerry was admitted to meet a host quite unable to control his alarm. At sight of his visitor Bromfield jumped up angrily. As soon as his man had gone he broke out in a subdued scream.

"You rotten traitor! Get out of my room, or I'll call the police!"

"What good will that do you? I'm offering you cold cash just to let the truth get out—that Collins was trying to kill him when he got hit."

"Not that way. G—d, no! Durand, I'll give you any sum in reason to let him go without bringing me into it. You can arrange it."

Jerry slammed down a flat heavily on the table. "I can, but I won't. Not if you was to go fifty-fifty with me to your last cent. I'm goin' to get this fellow. See? I'm goin' to get him good. He'll be crawlin' on his hands and knees to me before I'm through with him."

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lected a cigar. He grinned with evil mirth.

"You will, eh? Like h—I you will, You're hidin' from the cops this blessed minute. I've just found out myself where you live."

"You took my money and threw me down. You hired a gunman to kill me."

"Now, what would I do that for? I hadn't a thing in the world against you, an' I haven't now."

"That d—d ruffian shot at me. He was still shooting when I struck him with the chair," cried Bromfield, his voice shaking.

"He didn't know it was you—mistook you for Lindsay in the darkness."

"My G—d, I didn't mean to kill him. I had to do something."

"You did it all right."

"I told you there wasn't to be any violence. It was explicitly stated. You promised. And all the time you were planning murder. I'll tell all I know. By G—d, I will."

"Go easy, Mr. Bromfield," snarled Jerry. "If you do, where do ye think you'll get off at?"

"I'll go to the police and tell them your hired gunman was shooting at us."

"Will you now? An' I'll have plenty of good witnesses to swear he wasn't." Durand bared his teeth in a threat.

"That's not all, either. I'll tie you up with the rube from the West and send you up to Sing Sing as accessory. How'd you like that?"

"If I tell the truth—"

"You'll be convicted of murder in place of him and he'll go up as accessory. I don't care two straws how it is. But you'd be a d—d fool. I'll say that for you."

"I'm not going to let an innocent man suffer in my place. It wouldn't be playing the game."

Durand leaned forward and tapped the table with his finger-tips. His voice rasped like a file. "You can't save him. He's goin' to get it right. But you can hurt yourself a h—l of a lot. Get out of the country and stay out till it's all over with. That's the best thing you can do. Go to the Hawaiian Islands, man. That's a good healthy climate an' the hotel cooking's a lot better than it is at Sing Sing."

"I can't do it," moaned the clubman. "My G—d, man, if it ever came out—that I'd paid money to—to ruin his reputation, and that I'd run away when I could have saved an innocent man—I'd be done for. I'd be kicked out of every club I'm in."

"It won't ever come out if you're not here. But if you force my hand—well, that's different." Again Jerry's grin silt his colorless face. He had this poor devil where he wanted him, and he was enjoying himself.

"What do you want me to do, then?" cried Bromfield, tiny beads of perspiration on his forehead.

"You'll do as I say—beat it outa the country till the thing's over with."

"But Lindsay will talk."

"The boob's padlocked his mouth. For some fool reason he's protectin' you. Get out, an' you're safe."

Bromfield sweated blood as he walked up and down the room looking for a way out of his dilemma. He had come to the parting of the road again. If he did this thing he would be a yellow cur. It was one thing to destroy Lindsay's influence with Beatrice by giving her a false impression. From his point of view their friendship was perilous anyhow and ought to be wiped out. At most the cattleman would have gone back unhurt to the Arizona desert he was always talking about. Nobody there would care about what had happened to him in New York. But to leave him, an innocent man, to go to his death because he was too chivalrous to betray his partner in an adventure—this was something that even Bromfield's atrophied conscience revolted at. Clay was standing by him, according to Durand's story. The news of it lifted a weight from his soul. But it left him, too, under a stronger moral obligation to step out and face the music.

The clubman made the only decision he could, and that was to procrastinate, to put off making any choice for the present.

"I'll think it over. Give me a day to make up my mind," he begged.

Jerry shrugged his heavy shoulders. He knew that every hour counted in his favor, would make it more difficult for the tortured man to come forward and tell the truth. "Sure. Look it over upside and down. Don't hurry. But, man, what's there to think about? I thought you hated this guy—wanted to get rid of him."

"Not that way. G—d, no! Durand, I'll give you any sum in reason to let him go without bringing me into it. You can arrange it."

Jerry slammed down a flat heavily on the table. "I can, but I won't. Not if you was to go fifty-fifty with me to your last cent. I'm goin' to get this fellow. See? I'm goin' to get him good. He'll be crawlin' on his hands and knees to me before I'm through with him."

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stuff."

"We've got to tell the truth," said Beatrice crisply, pulling on her gloves. "And we'll do it, too. A pack of lies can't stand against four of us all looking for the truth."

Muldoon, who was on night duty this month and therefore had his days free, guided Whitford and his daughter to Maddock's. As they reached the house an express wagon was being driven away. Automatically the license number registered itself in Tim's memory.

The policeman took a key from his pocket and unlocked the door. The three went up the stairs to the deserted gambling hall and through it to the rear room.

"From what Lindsay says, the bullet holes ought to be about as high as his armpits," said Whitford.

"Slim must 'a' been standin' about here," guessed Muldoon, illustrating his theory by taking the position he meant. "The bullets would hit the partition close to the center, wouldn't they?"

Beatrice had gone straight to the plank wall. "They're not here," she told them.

"Must be. According to Lindsay's story the fellow was aiming straight at it."

"Well, they're not here. See for yourself."

She was right. There was no evidence whatever that any bullets had passed through the partition. They covered every inch of the cross wall in their search.

"Lindsay must have been mistaken," decided Whitford, hiding his keen disappointment. "This man Collins couldn't have been firing in this direction. Of course everything was confusion. No doubt they shifted round in the dark and—"

He stopped, struck by an odd expression on the face of his daughter. She had stooped and picked up a small fragment of shaving from the floor. Her eyes went from it to a plank in the partition and then back to the thin crisp of wood.

"What is it, honey?" asked Whitford.

The girl turned to Muldoon, alert in every quivering muscle. "That express wagon—the one leaving the house as we drove up—did you notice it?"

"Number 714," answered Tim, promptly.

"Can you have it stopped and the man arrested? Don't you see? They've rebuilt this partition. They were talking away in that wagon the planks with the bullet holes."

Muldoon was out of the room and going down the stairs before she had finished speaking. It was a quarter of an hour later when he returned. Beatrice and her father were not to be seen.

From back of the partition came an eager, vibrant voice. "Is that you, Mr. Muldoon? Come here quick. We've found one of the bullets in the wall."

The policeman passed out of the door through which Bromfield had made his escape and found another small door opening from the passage. It took him into the cubby-hole of a room in which were the wires and instruments used to receive news of the races.

"What about the express wagon?" asked Whitford.

"We'll get it. Word is out for those on duty to keep an eye open for it. Where's the bullet?"

Beatrice pointed it out to him. There it was, safely embedded in the plaster, about five feet from the ground.

"Durand wasn't thorough enough. He quit too soon," said the officer with a grin. "Crooks most always do slip up somewhere and leave evidence be-

hind them. Yuh'd think Jerry would have remembered the bullet as well as the bullet hole."

They found the mark of the second bullet, too. It had struck a telephone receiver and taken a chip out of it.

They measured with a tape-line the distance from the floor and the side walls to the place where each bullet struck. Tim dug out the bullet they had found.

They were back in the front room again when a huge figure appeared in the doorway and stood there blocking it.

"Whatta youse doin' here?" demanded a husky voice.

Muldoon nodded a greeting. "Lo, Dave. Just lookin' around to see the scene of the scrap. How about yuh?"

"Beat it," ordered Gorilla Dave, his head thrust forward in a threat. "Youse got no business here!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Two and Two Make Four.

From Maddock's the Whitfords drove straight to the apartment house of Clarendon Bromfield. For the third time that morning the clubman's valet found himself overborne by the insistence of visitors.

"We're coming in, you know," the owner of the Bird Cage told him in answer to his explanation of why his master could not be seen. "This is important business and we've got to see Bromfield."

"Yes, sir, but he said—"

"He'll change his mind when he knows why we're here." Whitford pushed in and Beatrice followed him. From the adjoining room came the sound of voices.

"I thought you told us Mr. Bromfield had gone to sleep and the doctor said he wasn't to be awakened," said Beatrice with a broad, boyish smile at the man's discomfiture.

TO BE CONTINUED

William E. Shuman, Attorney

NOTICE OF HEARING

In the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

In the Matter of the Estate of Frederick Werneke, Deceased.

To the Heirs and All Persons Interested in said Estate.

You are hereby notified that on August 23, 1922, Frieda Scherz as executrix of said estate, filed in said Court her final account and application for the assignment of the title to the real estate belonging to said estate, consisting of the Southwest Quarter (SW 1/4) of Section Ten (10) in Township Thirteen (13) North of Range Thirty-one (31) West (W) 6 p. m. Lincoln County, Nebraska, and for the distribution of the personal property belonging to said estate, and that said final account and application will be heard before this Court in the County Courtroom in the Courthouse in the city of North Platte, County of Lincoln, State of Nebraska on the 18th day of September, 1922 at 10 o'clock a. m. and you are hereby notified to appear at said time and place and show cause, if any there be why said final account should not be allowed, the title to said real estate assigned and the personal property of said estate distributed as provided by law and by the terms of the Last Will and Testament of the said Frederick Wernecke, deceased.

T. S. BLANKENBURG, Acting County Judge

William E. Shuman, Attorney

NOTICE OF HEARING

In the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

In the Matter of the Estate of Rose M. Knox, Deceased.

To the Heirs and all persons interested in said Estate:

Notice is hereby given that a petition for the appointment of Vivien M. Bonham as administratrix of the estate of Rose M. Knox, deceased, has been filed in this Court and that the said petition will be heard before the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska in the Courthouse in the City of North Platte in said County on September 11 at 10 o'clock a. m. at which time any person interested, may appear and show cause, if any there be, why the prayer of said petition should not be granted.

Dated at North Platte, Nebraska, August 16, 1922.

WM. H. C. WOODHURST, County Judge

Geo. N. Gibbs, Attorney

NOTICE OF PETITION

Estate of Bridget Jones, deceased, in the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska: to all persons interested in said estate take notice that Owen Jones did on the 19th day of August, 1922 file a petition in said action setting forth that Nicholas McCabe, executor of said estate did on the 8th day of August, 1922 die, and said petition prays for the appointment of Owen Jones, and that letters of administration with will annexed be granted to him, which has been set for hearing herein on the 22nd day of September, 1922 at 10 o'clock a. m.

Dated this 25th day of August, 1922.

T. S. BLANKENBURG, Acting County Judge.

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