

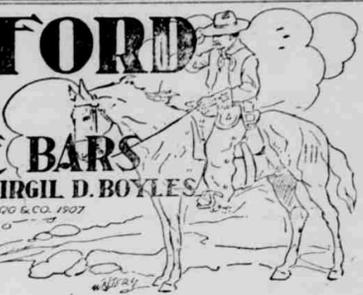
LANGFORD

OF THE

THREE BARS

BY KATE AND VIRGIL D. BOYLES

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Instantly Langford sprang forward, but Black had made good his moment of grace. He had turned his way to the right and left, he had seen his way to the window, when Langford again seized him, but he had the advantage this time and he tore himself loose, throwing Langford violently against the window-casing. With his bare, clinched fist he shattered the glass and leaped out—into the arms of Jim Munson.

The officers made gallant pluses through the samped crowd in their efforts to get clear of the room to follow the fugitive. But certain men managed to keep themselves clumsily, but with marvelous adroitness, nevertheless, between the deputies and the doors and windows, so that several moments elapsed before the outside was finally gained.

Meanwhile Jim struggled heroically with the outlaw. Black was far superior to him in weight and strength of limb, but Jim was quick and tough and daring. Expelled from the court-room, he had been watching through the window. He had seen Mary's quick action and his boss's splendid attack. He had also seen the little "gun play," and his eyes glowed in admiration of "Williston's little girl," though his generous heart ached for love of the woman who was not for him. He saw Black coming. He was ready for him. He grappled with him at once. If the boss or the officers would only come now!

When they did come they found Jim stretched at length on the frozen ground. He sat up slowly. "You're too late, boys," he said; "the boss thief was too much for me. He's gone."

It was true. The little street stretched before them still—deserted. Early twilight was coming on. The biting cold struck them broadside. The deputies scattered in vain pursuit.

CHAPTER XX.

The Moving Shadow.

"I'd rather not talk about it to-night. I'm not equal to it. It's too—too—it's devilish, Paul. I don't seem to be able to grasp it. I can't think about it with any coherence. I was sure—sure."

Gordon was staring moodily out of the window, one arm hanging idly over the back of his chair. He had taken up office room in an empty shop building across the street from the hotel.

"It's so devilish, it's weird," agreed the ranchman. "But your part was great. You vanquished Jesse Black. That is more than we hoped for a week ago. Is it your fault or mine that those fool deputies acted like flies in tangle-foot and went spraddle-fingered when something was expected of them? We have nothing to do with a little thing like a broken window-pane."

There was an ugly cut on his forehead caused by his violent contact with the sharp edge of the window-casing. He was pale, but he had lost none of the old faith in himself or in his power to dominate affairs in the cattle country. Defeat was intolerable to him. He refused to bow his head to it. To-day's check only made him more determined, if that were possible, to free the land of its shame.

"I'll pull myself together again. Never fear," said Gordon. "Just give me to-night. You see that's not all. I've something else to think about, too, now that I have time. It takes a fellow's nerve away to have everything that is worth while drop out at once. But I've rallied before. I know I'm beastly selfish not to talk to you to-night, but—"

"Dick," interrupted Langford, bluntly, "did she turn you down?"

"I never asked her. She is going back—home—next week."

"If you let her."

"You don't quite understand, Paul," said Gordon, a little wearily. "She said she could never live in this country—never. She would die here. Could I ask her after that? Could I ask any way, and be a man? I know. She would just pine away."

"Girls don't pine—only in imagination. They are tougher than you give them credit for."

"But somehow, Mary seems different," said Gordon, thoughtfully. "He surprised a flush in his friend's cheek. "You deserve her, old man, you'll be very happy. She is the right kind. I congratulate you with all my heart."

An odd lump came into Langford's throat. Despite Gordon's vigorous and healthful manhood, there seemed always a certain pathos of life surrounding him.

"I haven't asked her, either," confessed Paul. "But you have made it possible for me to do so—to-night—to-morrow—whenever I can find a chance. Take my advice, old man, don't let your girl go. You'll find she is the kind after all. You don't know her yet."

Paul left the room, and Gordon paced the narrow confines of his shabby office—back and forth—many times. Then he threw himself once more into his chair. The hours were

long. He had all night to think about things. When morning came, all his weakness would be over. No one should ever again see him so unmanned as Paul had seen him to-night. And when Louise should go—his arms fell nervelessly to the table. He remained thus a moment, his eyes fixed and unseeing, and then his head dropped heavily upon his arms.

Alone in the night Louise awoke. She found it impossible to fall asleep again. She was nervous. It must be something in the atmosphere. She tossed and tossed and floundered and floundered. She counted up to thousands. She made her mind a blank so often that she flew to thinking to escape the emptiness of it. Still her eyes were wide and her mind fairly a-quiver with activity. She slipped out of bed. She would tire herself into sleep. She even dressed. She would show herself. If she must be a midnight prowler, she would wear the garments people affect when they have their thoughts and energies on matters mundane. Drawing the oil stove close to the window fronting the street, she sank into a chair, drew a heavy shawl over her shoulders, and prepared to fatigue herself into oblivion.

A light shone from the window across the way. He was still at work, then. He ought not to sit up so late. No wonder he was looking so worn out lately. He ought to have some one to look after him. He never had thought of himself. He never had time. She would talk to him about keeping such late hours—if she were not going back to God's country next week. Only next week! It was too good to be true—and yet she sighed. But there was no other way. She ought never to have come. She was not big enough. He, too, had told her she was not the kind. Doubtless, he knew. And she didn't belong to anybody here. She was glad she was going back to where she belonged to somebody. She would never go away again.

Was that Gordon passing back and forth in front of the window? Something must be troubling him. Was it because Jesse Black had escaped? But what a glorious vindication of his belief in the man's guilt had that afternoon been given! Nothing lacked there. Why should he be sorry? Sometimes, she thought he might care—that day crossing the river for instance; but he was reserved—he never said—and it was much, much better that he did not care, now that she was going away and would never come back. There was nothing in all the world that could make her come back to this big, bleak, lonesome land where she belonged to nobody. But she was sorry for him. He looked sad and lonely. He didn't belong to anybody here, either, yet he wasn't going to run away as she was. Well, but he was a man, and men were different.

And now she noticed that his head had sunk down onto his arms. How still he sat! The minutes passed away. Still he sat motionless, his face buried.

It was dark. The yellow gleam streaming out of the window only served to make the surrounding darkness denser. The lamp on the table cast a pale circle immediately in front of the office. There was no other flicker of light on the street. Into this circle there moved a shadow. It retreated—advanced again—glided back in to obscurity. Was it something alive, or did the moving of the lamp cause the shadows to thus skip about? But the lamp had not been moved. It burned steadily in the same position. The relaxed form of the unconscious man was still bent over the table. Nothing had changed within. Probably some dog locked out for the night had trotted within the radius of light. Maybe a cotton-tail had hopped into the light for a second. Louise did not know whether rabbits ever came into the town, but it was likely they did. It might have been one of the strayed cattle wandering about in search of food. That was the most probable sup-



The Man Lifted His Arm.

position of all. Of course it might have been only her imagination. The little pinch of fright engendered of the moving shadow and the eerie hour passed away. Her eyes grew pensive again. How still it was! Had Gordon fallen asleep? He lay so quietly. Had he grieved himself into slumber as a girl would do? No—men were not like that.

Ah! There was the moving shadow again! She caught her breath quickly. Then her eyes grew wide and fixed with terror. This time the shadow did not slink away again. It came near the window, crouching. Suddenly, it stood up straight. Merciful Father! Why is it that a human being, a creature of reason and judgment, prowling about at unnatural hours, inspires ten-fold more terror to his kind than does a brute in like circumstances of time and place? Louise tried to scream aloud. Her throat was parched. A sudden paralysis held her speechless. It was like a nightmare. She writhed and fought desperately to shake herself free of this dumb horror. The cold damp came out on her forehead. Afterward she remembered that she knew the man and that it was this knowledge that had caused her nightmare of horror to be so unspeakably dreadful. Now she was conscious only of the awfulness of not being able to cry out. If she could only awaken Mary! The man lifted his arm. He had something in his hand. Its terrible import broke the spell of her speechlessness.

"Mary! Mary!" She thought she shrieked. In reality she gasped out a broken whisper; but it thrilled so with terror and pleading that Mary was awakened on the instant. She sprang out of bed. As her bare feet touched the floor a pistol shot rang out close by. She had been trained to quick action, and superb health left no room for cobwebs to linger in the brain when she was suddenly aroused. She had no need for explanations. The shot was enough. If more was needed there was the lighted window across the way and here was Louise crouched before their own. Swiftly and silently she seized her revolver from the bureau, glided to the window and fired three times in rapid succession, the reports mingling with the sound of shattered glass.

"I think I hit him the second time, Louise," she said, with a dull calm. "I can't be sure."

She lighted a lamp and began to dress mechanically. Louise stayed not to answer. In the hall she encountered Paul Langford, just as another shot rang out.

"Go back, Miss Dale," he cried, hurriedly but peremptorily. "You mustn't come. I am afraid there has been foul play."

She looked at him. It hurt, that look.

"He is dead," she whispered. "I am going to him," and glided away from his detaining hand. He hurried after her. Others had been aroused by the nearness of the pistol shots. Doors were thrown open. Voices demanded the meaning of the disturbance. Putting his arm around the trembling girl Langford hastened across the street with her. At the door of Gordon's office he paused.

"I will go in first, Louise. You stay here."

He spoke authoritatively; but she slipped in ahead of him. Her arms fell softly over the bowed shoulders. Her cheek dropped to the dark, gray-streaked hair. There was little change, seemingly. The form was only a little more relaxed, the attitude only a little more helpless. It seemed as if he might have been sleeping. There was a sound, a faint drip, drip, drip, in the room. It was steady, monotonous, like drops falling from rain pipes after the storm is over. Langford opened the door.

"Doc! Doc Lockhart! Some one send Doc over here quick? Gordon's office. Be quick about it!" he cried, in a loud, firm voice. Then he closed the door and locked it. In response to his call footsteps were heard running. The door was tried. Then came loud knocking and voice demanding admittance.

"No one can come in but Doc," cried Langford through the keyhole. "Send him quick, somebody, for God's sake! Where's Jim Munson? He'll get him here. Quick, I tell you!"

He hastened back to the side of his friend and passed his hand gently over the right side to find the place whence came that heartbreaking drip. Disappointed in their desire to get in men crowded before the window. Louise stepped softly forward and drew the blind between him and the mass of curious faces without. She was very pale, but quiet and self-possessed. She had rallied when Langford had whispered to her that Gordon's heart was still beating. The doctor rapped loudly, calling to Langford to open. Paul admitted him and then stepped out in full sight of all, his hand still on the knob. The late moon was just rising. A faint light spread out before him.

"Boys," he cried, a great grief in his stern voice, "it's murder. Dick Gordon's murdered. Now get—you know what for—and be quick about it!"

They laid him gently on the floor, took off his coat and cut away the blood-soaked shirts. Louise assisted with deft, tender hands. Presently the heavy lids lifted, the gray eyes stared vacantly for a moment—then smiled. Paul bent over him.

"What happened, old man?" the wounded man whispered gropingly. It required much effort to say this little, and a shadow of pain fell over his face.

"Hush, Dick, dear boy," said Langford, with a catch in his voice. "You're all right now, but you mustn't talk. You're too weak. We are going to

move you across to the hotel."

"But what happened?" he insisted. "You were shot, you know, Dick. Keep quiet now! I'm going for a stretcher."

"Am I done for?" the weak voice kept on. But there was no fear in it. "You will be if you keep on talking like that."

Obedying a sign from the doctor he slipped away and out. Gordon closed his eyes and was still for a long time. His face was white and drawn with suffering.

"Has he fainted?" whispered Louise. The eyes opened quickly. They fell upon Louise, who had not time to draw away. The shadow of the old sweet smile came and hovered around his lips.

"Louise," he whispered. "Yes, it is I," she said, laying her hand lightly on his forehead. "You must be good until Paul gets back."

"I'm done for, so the rest of the criminal calendar will have to go over. You can go back to—God's country—sooner than you thought."

"I am not going back to—God's country," said Louise, unexpectedly. She had not meant to say it, but she meant it when she said it.

"Come here, close to me, Louise," said Gordon, in a low voice. He had forgotten the doctor. "You had better—I'll get up if you don't. Closer still, I want you to—kiss me before Paul gets back."

Louise grew white. She glanced furtively at the doctor, timidly at the new lover in the old man. Then she bent over him where he lay stretched on the floor and kissed him on the lips. A great light came into his eyes before he closed them contentedly and slipped into unconsciousness again.

Langford rounded up Jim Munson and sent him across with a stretcher, and then ran upstairs for an extra blanket off his own bed. It was bitterly cold, and Dick must be well wrapped. On the upper landing he encountered Mary alone. Something in her desolate attitude stopped him.

"What's the matter, Mary?" he demanded, seizing her hands.

"Nothing," she answered, dully. "How is he?"

"All right, I trust and pray, but hurt terribly, wickedly."

He did not quite understand. Did she love Gordon? Was that why she looked so heart-broken? Taking her face in his two hands, he compelled her to look at him straight.

"Now tell me," he said.

"Did I kill him?" she asked.

"Kill whom?"

"Why, him—Jesse Black."

Then he understood.

"Mary, my girl, was it you? Were those last shots yours?" All the riotous love in him trembled on his tongue.

"Did I?" she persisted.

"God grant you did," he said, solemnly. "There is blood outside the window, but he is gone."

"I don't like to kill people," she said, brokenly. "Why do I always have to do it?"

He drew her to him strongly and held her close against his breast.

"You are the bravest and best girl on earth," he said. "My girl—you are my girl, you know—hereafter I will do all necessary killing for—my wife."

He kissed the sweet, quivering lips as he said it.

"Why, Jim!" cried Langford in surprise. "I thought you had gone with the stretcher."

"I did go," said Jim, swallowing hard. He shifted nervously from one spurred foot to the other. "But I came back."

He looked at Langford beseechingly.

"Boss, I want to see you a minute, ef—Mary don't mind."

"I will come with you, Jim, now," said Langford with quick apprehension.

"Mary"—Jim turned away and stared unseeing down the staircase—"go back to your room for a little while. I will call for you soon. Keep up your courage."

"Wait," said Mary, quietly. There were unsounded depths of despair in her voice, thought it was so clear and low. "There was another shot. I remember now, Jim, tell me!"

Jim turned. The rough cowboy's eyes were wet—for the first time in many a year.

"They—hope he won't die, Mary, girl. Your father's shot bad, but he ain't dead. We think Black did it after he run from Gordon's office. We found him on the corner."

Langford squared his broad shoulders—then put strong, protecting arms around Mary. Now was he her all.

"Come, my darling, we will go to him together."

She pushed him from her violently.

"I will go alone. Why should you come? He is mine. He is all I have—there is no one else. Why don't you go? You are big and strong—can't you make that man suffer for my father's murder? Jim, take me to him."

She seized the cowboy's arm, and they went out together and on down the stairs.

Langford stood still a moment, following them with his eyes. His face was white. He bent his head. Jim looking back, saw him thus, the dull light from the hall-lamp falling upon the bent head and the yellow hair.

When Langford raised his head, his face, though yet white, bore an expression of concentrated determination.

He, too, strode quickly down the stairs.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Outlaw's Last Stand.

In the morning the sheriff went to the island. He reported the place deserted. He made many other trips. Some times he took a deputy with him; more often he rode unaccompanied. Richard Gordon lay helpless in

GOOD BUSINESS

Business Men of St. Louis Start a Campaign to Boost Them Along.

THERE IS NOTHING IN THE WAY

Says the National Prosperity Association of St. Louis.

Full Dinner-pail, Active Paycar, Busy Factory, Good Wages, the Objects of the Organization.

St. Louis, May 2.—A business organization to be known as the National Prosperity Association of St. Louis, has been formed as the result of a conference held by business men here during the past three days and a formal address has been issued to the business interests of the country. It is proposed to extend the ramifications of the association throughout the country for the betterment of all classes of business. It is stated that the association has for its object the encouragement in the return of prosperity and uplifting of business interests generally.

Purpose, Briefly Told.

The officers of the association comprise the executive committee, and they are Chairman E. C. Simmons, ex-president of the Simmons Hardware Company, and Vice Chairman W. K. Bixby, ex-president of the American Car and Foundry Company. In the formal address it is set forth that the purposes of the National Prosperity Association of St. Louis are: "To keep the dinner-pail full; to keep the paycar going; to keep the factory busy; to keep the workmen employed; to keep the present wages up."

Platform Has Only Two Planks.

The address continues: "The National Prosperity Association of St. Louis has nothing to do with the past. It looks forward. It is not political. It has a platform. The two planks are a square deal and a square meal for every man. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with the business situation. The financial clouds have rolled by. The crop prospects—that basis of all things for all of us—are exceptionally good. We believe we can get back to normal conditions quickly if we will. We do not see why we should wait for the closing months of 1908 or for the spring of 1909. We have passed the low level. The commercial sun is shining."

TIME HAS JUST GOT RIPE

Would Make 1909 the Best Business Year Ever Known.

The address then concludes as follows: "This is the business May Day. The time for this movement is ripe right now. It was not ripe before. The St. Louis movement may spread to other communities. We hope it will. The prosperity we promote is national. The plans and methods of the National Prosperity Association of St. Louis are available to any business organization or any individual anywhere. Our association will welcome any helpful suggestion to increase its efficiency. We are confident that if the business men of the United States join in the St. Louis movement prosperity will be at full tide before the end of the year; that 1909 will be the best business year our country has known."

Chairman Simmons, in a statement, said: "We have formed a business organization to be called the National Prosperity Association of St. Louis, having for its object the encouragement of a return of prosperity sooner than might otherwise occur without help, or without some active effort, on the part of the business men. We believe that present conditions are exceedingly favorable to this."

"On all sides we find expressions of favorable sentiments to the effect that further legislation against railroad and large corporations shall cease; that the business interests of the country shall be given a rest, and that the departments of justice may be allowed to proceed with their work in a quiet manner—which, of course, is greatly to be desired. It is absolutely essential to the welfare of this country that the railroads should again prosper, because more than one and a half million men are in the employ of the railroads today, and as many more dependent upon their revenues from railroad investments; hence, it is deemed almost impossible that we should return to a full measure of prosperity excepting the railroads participate in the same."

"Fundamentally, everything is all right—the basis of our prosperity comes from the soil, and the products of the soil have never had greater value than at present. We ask the cooperation of everybody in the United States in this movement, which we think has great merit, and which has great possibilities."

Public Debt Statement.

Washington, May 2.—The monthly statement of the public debt shows that at the close of business April 30, 1908, the debt less cash in the treasury amounted to \$925,167,236, which is an increase as compared with March 30, 1908, of \$25,445,890.

Only Snowed on the Hills. Madison, Ind., May 2.—An inch of rain and four inches of snow on the hills fell here. The fruit is unharmed.

PLATTMOUTH PIONEER PASSES AWAY

George J. Jones Obeys Message Early This Morning at His Home.

Just as the Sabbath was departing and the beginning of a new week was making its appearance, the Death Messenger came to the late home of George J. Jones, in this city, and summoned him to his everlasting home. The deceased had been affected for some time with something like pneumonia.

George J. Jones was born on Prince Edward Island March 9, 1829, where he lived until he had arrived at age; and thence to Wisconsin, where he resided for a number of years and from where he went to the Union army as a member of the 49th regiment of Wisconsin, a member of company A. After having returned from the army he lived here for some time, and in the early seventies came to Plattsmouth, where he worked in the Burlington shops some 33 years, but during the past two years has not been so he could follow his accustomed occupation. Mr. Jones was united in marriage three times and leaves six children—the eldest, W. H. Jones, living near Cozad, this state; Malissa Hudson, of Spooner, Wisconsin, Mrs. Mary Rishel, who when last heard from was at Burt, Iowa, but who has not been heard from for some time, A. L. Jones of Scotland, S. D.; G. J. Jones, of Yuma, Colorado, and Mr. Cora Younkers, which with his wife, survive this gentleman. This makes Mr. Jones a little over 79 years old, and a resident of this place for over thirty-five years. The funeral will be conducted by the Grand Army of the Republic, and the time will be announced at a later time.

Depredations of Wolves.

Last Saturday I. S. Hall of Rock Bluffs was a visitor in the city bringing a wolf hide with him which was removed from a wolf which he shot a short time since. On this he had expected to have obtained a bounty, but as there are no bounties paid he did not get it. He tells of a great deal of depredations which are committed at and near Rock Bluffs by the plentiful supply of the wolves in that vicinity. Forty head of hogs are missing, four young calves and chickens without number. Mr. Hall tells us this on account of the paying of a bounty in Iowa, which causes the people to hunt the varmints very closely, chasing them across the river to this side, where they are safe as they are not hunted so closely on account of the lack of the payment of bounty here.

At St. Luke's Church Last Evening.

The song service at St. Luke's church last evening was simply grand throughout the entire program, and those who attended commended the inauguration of such services very highly. While this was the first service of this character, Mr. Austin expects to continue such a program on the first Sunday in each month, with a change of program at each service. There was a large audience in attendance, and the manner in which Mr. Austin conducted the affair and manner in which program was carried out reflects great credit, not only upon Mr. Austin, but also upon everyone who took part. The vocal selections were excellent, and when it is known that Miss Kittie Cummins presided at the organ it is a guarantee that the instrumental part of the program was well taken care of.

Smallpox at Nehawka

The small pox patients at George Hansen's are reported to be getting along splendidly. Mrs. Hansen has it now and was pretty bad for a short time. It was reported to Dr. Gilmore, the health officer in charge of the district, that quarantine rules were not being followed, and he came down to investigate. We are assured that no greater infraction than going along the road to and from the field has been made, but in case of so serious and so contagious disease as that the utmost care should be exercised. Nebraska City seems to have furnished a number of smallpox cases—it being reported that a number of cases in Peru are directly traceable to that city, and we know that this case was imported from there.—Nehawka Register.

THE CELEBRATED STALLION PRINCE!

(FORMERLY OWNED BY L. G. TODD)

Will make three days of the week—Thursday, Friday and Saturday, in Nehawka.

TERMS:—\$10 to insure colt to stand and suck.

DAVID MURRAY.