

WEB OF STEEL

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This Is a Thrilling Story of American Life as Strong, Courageous Men Live It

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CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

"He wouldn't be a common workman, would he?" asked the girl, more disappointed than she could express. "Certainly not. He'd be keeping track of material, or running a transit, or acting as a gang foreman. Most of the workmen are foreigners, although the bridge erectors are Americans."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Brute Force or Finesse.
"What do you want me to say, Mr. Rodney?" asked Shurtliff, coming through the door, having caught Rodney's use of his name.

"Oh, Shurtliff—" began Rodney, somewhat embarrassed at having been overheard.

"What do you want me to speak about?" continued the old man suspiciously, not giving the younger man time to finish. "And what friend can you then approach, sir?"

"I'll tell you what I want," said Rodney. He quickly came to a decision. Standing up and facing the old man, he staked everything on one bold throw. Grasping the situation, Helen

dressed just as he had been when he rode away from the ranch—"out West we've got ways for persuading men to speak, and this is one of them."

Winters was a bigger man than Rodney. His life had been wild and rough, and his manner when he wanted was according. He would fain add physical compulsion under threat of death to Rodney's mental insistence.

"And do you think, sir, that I'm afraid of any lethal weapon you can produce or even use, any more than I am of Mr. Rodney's words?" The old man's eyes flashed, and his knees shook, but he had all the spirit of a soldier as he looked into Winters' stern face, full of threat and menace.

"Gentlemen; gentlemen," said Helen Illingworth, rising and swiftly interposing between the secretary and the two angry men. She realized that the affair had gone far enough and that she must intervene. They had certainly failed lamentably, almost ludicrously.

"Oh, I apologize. I suppose it was wrong to threaten him," said Rodney disgustedly.

"Hang it," said Winters, now utterly forgetful of conventions, "it wasn't the thing to do to draw a gun on a little old man, and I'm sorry I did it."

"Mr. Winters, Mr. Rodney," said the girl insistently.

his say, he did not wish to discuss it further.

"Do you know," he began, changing the subject abruptly, "I think things have turned out pretty well in spite of our foolishness a while ago. I believe if there's a spark of human gratitude in Shurtliff's heart, the girl's interposition when you and I were threatening him, and her refusal to allow him to be questioned later, will fan it into flame. And I have an idea that when he thinks it over he'll be about ready to tell."

"Are you sure he has anything to tell?"

"Well, I guess you're right. It sort of consoles me for having drawn my gun, without using it, too. And if he tells in the morning and we find Meade, everything will be lovely."

"For everybody but me," said Rodney.

"I'll tell you what, old man, when this thing's over, you're coming out to spend the rest of the winter with me on the ranch. It's the greatest place on earth for a man to bunk up. There's no woman within fifty miles."

Rodney laughed a little grimly.

"I'll go you," he said.

CHAPTER XIX.
The Battle From Above.
The rain had stopped by morning. To the great relief of Colonel Illingworth, Severance and Curtiss, and the satisfaction of Helen, there was little sun to dry the big, red sandstone mesa, its sides seamed into fantastic shapes, which rose grandly between the valley of the Picket Wire and the ravine of the Kicking Horse, and which the young woman intended to cross in her walk toward the dam with Rodney and Winters.

The siding near the steel-arch bridge was close to the rock wall of the ravine, which here had been so scoured out of the rocky side of the mesa by torrents of other days that it could fairly be called a gorge. Consequently the bank of clouds above the horizon to the northwest was hid behind the big butte from the occupants of the two private cars. Although the day did not promise to be fair, they had no idea of the further threat of storm presaged by the black masses to the northwest.

In sandy, porous soils, such as here prevailed, the rain is absorbed quickly. They could traverse the trails carpeted with the needles of centuries that ran through the dripping pines, without getting muddy, and with nothing more to fear than a wetting. Colonel Illingworth, Severance and Curtiss announced their intention of going back to the town to continue their consultations and observations concerning the progress of work on the bridge. Shurtliff, who went about his business gravely reserved, frigidly cold and self-contained, had work to do at his desk. The woman and the two young men were for the dam.

After an early breakfast, therefore, the second car was uncoupled, and the engine backed it down around the mesa toward the viaduct twenty miles below. Rodney and Winters prepared to go with Miss Illingworth across the wooded island, with its cresting of stone, to speak, that lay between the ravine and the valley. The conductor of the train, a local employee of the railroad, told them that the shortest way was directly over the mesa. The sandstone of which this huge mound was mainly composed had been broken and disintegrated on all sides by centuries of erosion and weathering, and there were practicable ascents and descents at both ends. The nearest ascent was at the side of the big tableland directly opposite which the car was placed.

The trails through the pines which covered the hill up to the very foot of the big butte were unfrequented and in bad repair, but practicable if the traveler was prepared for a wetting. The shortest and on the whole the easiest way to the dam would be to make their way to the foot of the mesa, climb it through the big ravine and cross it to the lower end, less than two miles away, where there was an easy descent to the dam.

"And if you get caught in the rain," said the conductor, "which ain't likely, for it's already rained more in the last twenty-four hours than in the last there's a but, half stone and half timber, up on the mesa that campers sometimes make use of when they want to see the sun rise, which is a mighty fine sight from there. It was in pretty

fair shape when I visited it last year, and you can find shelter there. It's at the highest point on the mesa. You can see a long way up the gulch there, and a longer way down and up the Picket Wire valley. Above the dam it used to show a level, fertile stretch between the hills, but it's all a lake now."

Shurtliff, of course, declined Miss Illingworth's invitation to accompany the party on plea of urgent duties and important papers to prepare. He had spoken no words to Rodney or Winters, and those gentlemen made no effort to engage him in conversation. They were, in truth, a little ashamed of their actions of the night before. They were exceedingly anxious as to whether their theories as to the possible effect of Miss Illingworth's action would be justified, so they carefully avoided the secretary, letting the heaven work if it would. To their disappointment, it gave no sign of life or action.

Of the four most interested in Meade, Winters was the only one who had slept soundly that night. Rodney was too much in love with the woman ever to sleep soundly again, he thought—certainly not until her future had been settled and her relations to Meade finally determined. Shurtliff's feelings were painful in the extreme. Torn between the old habit of affection for the dead, his new habit of affection for the woman, his oft-recurring compunction of conscience, his immediate resentment of the treatment of the two men, his acknowledgment of the splendid action of the woman, his suspicions, his uncertainty, as to how the younger Meade would take it if he told the truth, he slept not at all.

Into Helen Illingworth's mind also had come, although, to her credit be it said, not until she had retired and had thought over her action in the light of the hints given, that perhaps her generous interposition in behalf of Shurtliff might move his gratitude and that he might at last vouchsafe her the help which she felt more certain than ever he alone could give. She was glad when the thought came to her that she could look herself squarely in the face and declare to her conscience that it had not been back of her action, which had been purely spontaneous.

The possibility, although a faint one, that Meade might be working on the dam and that she might see him on the morrow would have sufficed to give her a wakeful night. Rodney was a more careful observer than Winters, but even the cattleman noticed that she looked worn and strained as he helped her out of the car for their tramp across the mesa to the dam.

"You know," he said, with rough-and-ready sympathy, "we haven't the least assurance that Meade is there. It's only a chance, and probably a long one."

"I shall never rest until it is decided absolutely one way or the other," said the woman.

"Well, I'm not much of a walker," said the cattleman. "I generally prefer to get over the ground astride of a broncho, but I guess I can keep up with the party for two miles, if that's the distance."

It was dark and damp and wet under the pines. Although the two men cleared the way for her, holding branches back and shaking the water off the drooping boughs, it was well Helen was protected from the wet. She had tramped hills and mountains many a time, camp and forest were familiar to her. She wore a short-skirted dress, stout boots and leggings, and a yellow western slicker.

The exertion of the upward climb, stumbling over broken branches and uprooted logs and floundering through boggy places on the trail, brought a touch of color to her face, and though damp, the air sweet and fragrant, clean and pure, refreshed and pleased her greatly; the men, too. It was a hard pull, and she was out of breath when she reached the broken coulee, or ravine, which led to the top of the big red sandstone plateau.

FOUR WEEKS IN HOSPITAL

No Relief—Mrs. Brown Finally Cured by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Cleveland, Ohio.—"For years I suffered so sometimes it seemed as though I could not stand it any longer. It was all in my lower organs. At times I could hardly walk, for if I stepped on a little stone I would almost faint. One day I did faint and my husband was sent for and the doctor came. I was taken to the hospital and stayed four weeks but when I came home I would faint just the same and had the same pains."

A friend who is a nurse asked me to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. I began taking it that very day for I was suffering a great deal. It has already done me more good than the hospital. To anyone who is suffering as I was my advice is to stop in the first drug-store and get a bottle of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound before you go home.—Mrs. W. C. BROWN, 2844 W. 12th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

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Europe is buying more motion picture film from America than ever before. This is an excellent branch of our export trade. It does not take much raw material. It gives employment to many grades of labor from the rough to the highest grade. It distributes money through all the stages of its progress from the crude product to the finished.

LIFT YOUR CORNS OFF WITH FINGERS How to loosen a tender corn or callus so it lifts out without pain.

Let folks step on your feet hereafter; wear shoes a size smaller if you like, for corns will never again send electric sparks of pain through you, according to this Cincinnati authority.

He Deserved It. Teacher—And what is your given name, Master Jones? Young Jones (hesitatingly)—Fatty.

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Staring Down at the Dam Helen Illingworth Took the Glass From Rodney.

sustained the attack of that wind and rain, nor could they have seen at all even with that glass.

SOUL'S ENTRANCE INTO BODY Matter Over Which Theologians Have Differed Since the First Time a Theory Was Advanced.

Dr. Austin O'Malley of New York has just revived the ancient discussion concerning the moment the human soul enters the body. In an article in America he contrasts the two opposite theories: (1) That of Aristotle, that the soul is infused about the fortieth day, to which St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anselm, St. Alphonsus Liguori and most of the medieval moralists and theologians adhered. (2) That the entrance of the soul is simultaneous with the fusion of the single nuclei in the two parental germ cells, to which most modern embryologists, physicians and moralists give their adhesion.

Cardinal Mercier and some other great theologians cling to the Aristotelian theory today, basing their belief on the idea that not until the body takes actual human form is the "breath of life" breathed into it and it becomes "a living soul."

But Doctor O'Malley and the embryologists hold that the earliest embryo is a human being, therefore a body with a human soul.

What the Rabbit Costs Australia. The state of South Australia has, since 1891, erected 29,148 miles of "vermin fences," enough to encircle the globe and with the remnant built a double line of fence along the southern border of the United States. When contracts now running are completed the mileage will be much increased. New South Wales has expended over \$27,000,000 for rabbit extermination and has within its borders 98,000 miles of fence. One of West Australia's fences extends entirely across the continent.

Fresh Air for Colds. Do not make the mistake of withholding fresh air from one who has a cold. Well-ventilated rooms are necessary. Oxygen is essential.

When the cold is accompanied by a slight cough it is best to keep the child in bed, where the temperature is even and warm, with fresh air.

Snapping It Back. "This town would be all right if there were not so many fools in it!" snarled the Kansas City drummer whose orders had not been as plentiful as he felt that he deserved.



"He Wouldn't Be a Common Workman, Would He?" Asked the Girl.

Illingworth held her breath. Winters moved to take his own part in the game at the proper time.

"What is it, sir?" asked the secretary.

"Shut the door and come in," was the answer.

Rodney spoke sharply, and it was a sort of indication, characteristic of the difference in station between an independent young man and a subservient old man.

"Here I am, sir," answered Shurtliff, closing the door and standing before it. He shot a quick glance at the young woman. He observed her tense position. He saw the emotions that filled her soul in her face and bearing.

"The time has come for you to tell us the truth," began Rodney emphatically. "You know that the whole blame and responsibility for the failure of the International bridge is loaded on the wrong man. You know that you permitted, and even made possible, the sacrifice of the reputation of the son for the sake of the fame of the father. You know that this girl here is breaking her heart, that Meade's life is ruined, and you're to blame. Now the time has come for you to speak. We know as well as you that young Meade is innocent. Here's our evidence."

He drew a handful of papers from his inside breast pocket and shook them in the face of the old man, who had shrunk back against the side of the car and stood staring, white-faced, thin-lipped, close-mouthed, inexorably resolved still.

"Read them," continued Rodney. "I'll admit to you that the whole thing would not be worth the paper it's written on in a court of law, or even in a newspaper report, but it's convincing to us, and you can make it convincing to everybody. You've got to speak."

"Do you think, sir, that there's any power in your stretched-out arm, or in your rude voice or in your threatening gesture to make me speak?"



"Out West We've Got Ways for Persuading Men to Speak."

the easiest way to the dam would be to make their way to the foot of the mesa, climb it through the big ravine and cross it to the lower end, less than two miles away, where there was an easy descent to the dam.