

Spike and the Girls

A STORY OF MOUNTAIN RAILROAD LIFE

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

AUTHOR OF "WHISPERING SMITH," "THE MOUNTAIN DIVIDE," "STRATEGY OF GREAT RAILROADS," ETC.

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SEVENTH INSTALLMENT.

Synopsis.
Little Helen Holmes, daughter of General Holmes, railroad man, is rescued from imminent danger on a desert trail road by George Storm, a newsguy, it was to young womanhood, Helen saves Storm, now a fireman, her father and his brother, Amos Rhineland, transfer, and Robert Seagrue, promoter, from a three-day oil-lift. Seagrue's conspiracy to steal Seagrue's cut-off line for the Tidewater factory, and the general and special. Her father's estate heavily involved by his death Helen goes to work on the Tidewater. Seagrue uses Spike to get into a powder train badly by Storm's engine. Helen saves Storm from a horrible death. Helen recovers the survey maps from Seagrue, and though they are taken from her, finds an accidentally made proof of the survey blueprint. Storm, employed by Rhineland, who has been Seagrue's man for possession of a concession of railroad lines. Spike and his confederate safecrackers steal Seagrue's payroll money. Helen pursues him, with a policeman's aid, captures two of them and recovers the money.



1—"I'll Brain the One That Lays a Hand on Me!" 2—Lug Waved to the Driver to Come on. 3—Spike Picked Up the Handkerchief.

"SPIKE'S AWAKENING.
Resolved to get completely away from the constant interruptions in his work, Amos Rhineland replaced his burned camp with outfit cars and moved at once to the end of his construction work, now well advanced on the desert.

The new equipment was as complete as money and energy could suggest. And no sooner were the cars set out on a spur at Baird—near the end of the new line—than linemen were busy making telegraphic connections for them with the Tidewater system. The moment the wiring was done Storm suggested the first message over the new line ought to go to Helen, who had now been transferred from Signal to Las Vegas, a division station below Baird. Rhineland was well pleased with the suggestion and Storm wrote out a telegram. The operator sounded Helen's call, and after a moment announced she was on the wire talking Storm's message. It read:

Rhineland says contracts on No. 12. Bring them up Sunday. Storm will meet train here and drive you over to camp. Seagrue, during this time, had already made counter dispositions to meet Rhineland's arrangements and had established a secondary headquarters at Las Vegas, where he controlled an iron concession.

Spike had been lagging in following Seagrue up the line as directed, and the latter sent so many unpleasant messages as he could to Oceanside, where Spike was in retreat. But as Seagrue's continuing summons grew more and more peremptory Spike was obliged to take notice and get under way for the desert himself.

Leaving Oceanside the night after a carousal, he woke next morning as the train was pulling into a desert town square to his eyes. Storm, who had been anywhere, and being unable to recognize his surroundings, he asked a fellow passenger the name of the place; but he forgot it the moment he heard it. However, on scanning closely the appearance of the block of crude buildings facing the station, he reached the conclusion it would be a good place to supply at least one of his needs, and forthwith hastened from the coach to the nearest corner grocery. Once inside the place, his attention was held for a moment by a rambling discussion carried on by a group of early morning loafers. Spike, never happy outside a triangle, struck unhesitatingly into the talk, with the result concerning how loud Carnie could sing, and disputed practically every statement advanced by anybody. After prolonged loss of sleep in the city and with nerves now too amiable at best, now shattered by drink, he was in an exceptionally surly state, and before he knew it had a fist fight on his hands. The brawl was short. The three or four whom he had engaged set on him together and, making a job of it, threw him bodily out on the sidewalk. One of the party proved Samaritan enough to follow him out and hand him his cap and a letter he had stuck inside it before he was thrown out. He read at his leisure. After putting the note away he had forgotten all about it, and opening it now, found another savage summons from Seagrue bidding him come to 124 Sloan alley, Las Vegas, at once.

Spike tried to call together his disordered wits. He felt in his pockets for his money and his ticket. Every pocket was empty. He then walked back to the station to go to Vegas anyway. The train, after changing engines, was ready to pull out. A passenger brakeman, seeing Spike as he ambled up, asked his destination.

"I'm going west," declared Spike confidently.

"Tut, tut," suggested the brakeman unethically.

"Don't get fresh," growled Spike.

"Where's your ticket?" demanded the trainman roughly.

"Lost it," returned Spike, laconically.

The conductor, accompanied by a special agent, came along. Hearing the talk he asked the trouble. The special agent, maintaining one moment and asking up Spike's appearance, pulled him forward by the collar and declared if he were caught him on the right-of-way again he would stick him on a rock pile for thirty days. Spike was incontinently hustled off the platform and the company detective got aboard satisfied. A moment later the train drove out. But Spike, watching his chance and making a run, had boarded the end of a car and hidden under the vestibule trap, which was down. Availing further opportunity, he watched until the conductor passed through the corridor into the next coach. Then, opening the door, Spike climbed inside and seated himself without explanation or apology very comfortably in the observation coach. His carling move did not, however, escape the conductor's vigilance, and coming back presently to demand a ticket, the train guardian was disagreeably surprised to find that he again had the impudent tramp on his hands. He once more summoned the special agent and a wrangle ensued. Spike declared the brakeman must have robbed him during the night of his ticket and what money he had. This assertion naturally failed of a sympathetic reception, and as the train stopped on the desert for Helen's father, when the train stopped, was at

spike's struggles Helen was soon overpowered. With a quick word to Bill above, Lug scrambled into the car. He placed Helen, now unconscious, in a sitting position and ran to the hind end to look

arranged again and was helpless. But despite her being wrapped in the rug, Spike got from what he saw, the whole story they had Helen. A sudden raze stirred him, and throwing caution to the winds, he dashed across the open lot toward the alley.

The freight train bearing Storm was nearing Las Vegas, but nowhere had he been able to discover a trace of Helen. Seagrue and his men were carrying her upstairs. They left the driver as a guard at the lower door, and Spike, running hard, had neared the building. When the engine stopped, Storm, with a look of worry, got hurriedly down. The first man his eyes chanced to fall on was Spike. The sight of him to Storm was like red to bull. Gaining Spike's vicinity stealthily, Storm made at him. "What are you fellows up to now?" he cried angrily, throttling Spike with the words against the building.

"Where's Helen Holmes, you blamed crook!"

"Uptairs, I tell you. Listen! She's upstairs. Instead of choking me, get busy

to get her out of Seagrue's clutches—that's what I'm here for."

In the fewest possible words he told Storm of how Helen had shamed him with kindness and how he had sworn to her he would make good. Storm experienced an acute revulsion of feeling. "Then we're friends!" he exclaimed.

"I didn't say that," returned Spike, feeling his crumpled windpipe. "I'm Helen Holmes' friend."

Storm eyed him keenly. "If you mean it, I'll forgive you what's gone before. Spike, if you don't, I'll choke you next time for keeps."

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"I mean it," snapped Spike. "Stow the gab." He pointed to the door behind him. "Seagrue's kidnaped her. They carried her up those stairs not two minutes ago."

Storm's eyes burned black. Seagrue at that moment could have seen murder in them. Storm compressed his lips. "How many are there, Spike?" was all he muttered.

"Three."

Storm pointed. "Watch that door," he directed. "I'll go to the roof."

In the room to which they had carried her, on the second floor, Helen, partly recovered, resolutely faced Seagrue and her captors. Lug landed Seagrue, the stolen letters. He examined them impatiently and tossed one after another contemptuously aside. "Is this all you've got?" he demanded in disgust. The contracts were not there.

Seagrue glared at Helen. Alive to her serious danger, her quick perceptions took in every feature of her surroundings and almost the first thing her glance fell on was a stack of iron cylinders in a corner of the room labeled "High Explosives." From outside the room she heard, without knowing what they signified, sounds of fierce altercation. Spike, at the door below, with a gentle knock, had attracted the attention of the machine driver, stationed as watchman. The scout opened cautiously to see who knocked. But cautious though he was, he was no match in trickery for the adept Spike, whose arm shot like a flash through the opening as he threw himself against the door. In a fraction of a second—before the chauffeur actually knew what had happened—Spike had the astonished sentry by the neck, jerked him outside, flung him into the gutter and dashed up the stairs.

Seagrue, unmoved by the fighting outside, turned threateningly on Helen. "You've got those contracts. I want them. Will you hand them over without force?" Helen stood mute. "What! I take them from you?" Neither warnings nor threats moved her to a single word. "Won't talk, eh?" snapped Seagrue. "No matter—I'll do the talking. Stand her out here, boys, and I'll search her."

He started forward. She backed away with a cry. "Don't come near me," she exclaimed. "You shan't search me! I'll kill you first!"

A knock at the door interrupted Seagrue's threatening advance; his confederates looked alarmed. "That's only the watchman, boys," cried Seagrue. "Pay no attention. Catch her and hold her."

The words were not out of his mouth when the one door of the room was flung violently open behind them. "Hands off, there!" shouted a heavy voice. The three men whirled on the intruder. Seagrue, in his amazement, found himself confronted by Spike. The convict raised a threatening hand. "Don't touch that girl," he said hoarsely. "The man that will answer to me with his life."

Lug and Bill shrank back. They knew Helen's blood-stained hands too well to venture to rouse his wrath. But Seagrue was not for an instant to be swayed from his purpose. "Get that whelp!" he shouted, pointing at Spike. "I'll look out for the girl."

Albeit with the poor stomach, Lug and Bill attacked the powerful outlaw. Helen, looking distractedly for a weapon of defense, saw the explosive cylinders. A blow struck by Lug from behind had stunned Spike. He lay helpless and the three men turned to secure them. Seagrue, moving swiftly, she picked up a cylinder and

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Little Bobbie's Pa

As an Explorer, He Astounds a Scientist

By WILLIAM F. KIRK.

Ma's unkel was up to the house last night, he is a grate explorer & he has jest oadm back from Pattynony.

"Well, old sport, sed Pa, jest as if he had known Ma's unkel all his life, how did you leave everything down in old Pattynony?"

I beg pardon, sed Ma's unkel, his nalm is Professor Black.

I sed how did you leave all the gay dogs in Pattynony.

in Pattynony, sed Pa, is to my mind, the barking flea. They do not care for the natives, but have a sort of wifal affection. Pa sed, for a good look while man, I had several of them at one time & found it vary hard to git rid of them.

"They wasent so bad wen they kep quiet, but wen they was disturbed they made a noise like bloodhounds after Eliza. I didnt come in contact with them, sed the Professor. It is funny that while I was down there I didnt hear about your expidition."

It was a vary gumshoe affaire, sed Pa. I didnt cair to have my exack whereabouts known at that time even to my close friends. I figured that I was on the verge of a discovery that wud dumfound Science & I found it. I found the Tongue-Tid wimmen of the lost tribe of the Amazons. Not one of them cud say a word the divine creature. While a guest of that tribe, sed Pa I spend the only really peaceful moments I have known since I married this niece of yures.

After the Professor was gone Pa went ritte to bed & Ma didnt git a chance to skold him.



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