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Terry as a "U. Pay." man (a semi-centennial story)**

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TREASURE MOUNTAIN; OR, THE YOUNG PROSPECTORS

SCARFACE RANCH; OR, THE YOUNG HOMESTEADERS

THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY
NEW YORK



Frontis.

THE WEDDING OF THE RAILS

OPENING THE IRON TRAIL

OR

TERRY AS A "U. PAY." MAN

(A SEMI-CENTENNIAL STORY)

BY

EDWIN L. SABIN

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY SETTLER," "THE GREAT PIKES
PEAK RUSH," "ON THE OVERLAND STAGE," ETC.

"Drill, my paddies, drill!
Drill, you tarriers, drill!
Oh, it's work all day,
No sugar in your tay—
Wor-kin' on th' U. Pay. Ra-a-railway!"
Song of the "U. Pay." Men

NEW YORK

THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY

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TO THE READER

It is fifty years ago, this year 1919, that the first of the iron trails across the United States, between the East and the West, was finally completed. At noon of May 10, 1869, the last four rails in the new Pacific Railway were laid, and upon Promontory Point, Utah, about fifty miles westward from Ogden, the locomotive of the Union Pacific and the locomotive of the Central Pacific touched noses. That was indeed a great event.

The Union Pacific, coming from Omaha at the Missouri River, had built over one thousand miles of track in three years; the Central Pacific, coming from Sacramento at the Pacific Ocean, had built over six hundred miles in the same space. Altogether, in seven years there had been built one thousand, seven hundred and seventy-five miles of main track, and the side-tracks, stations, water-tanks, and so forth.

In one year the Union Pacific had laid four hundred and twenty-five miles of track; in the same year the Central Pacific had laid three hundred and sixty-three miles. In one day the Union Pacific had laid seven and three-quarters miles; in one day the Central Pacific had laid a full ten miles. These records have never been beaten.

The whole thing was a feat equaled again only when America speeded up in the war against Germany; for when they once get started, Americans astonish the world.

Twenty-five thousand men, including boys, were working at one time, on the twain roads. This book tells of the experiences of Terry Richards and George Stanton, who were two out of the twenty-five thousand; and of their friends.

THE AUTHOR.

AT THE UNION PACIFIC END

TERRY RICHARDS		On the Job
GEORGE STANTON		Likewise on the Job
TERRY'S FATHER	}	The Crew of No. 119
STOKER BILL SWEENEY		
GEORGE'S FATHER		Out on Survey
MOTHER RICHARDS	}	Heroines of the U. P.
MOTHER STANTON		
VIRGIE STANTON		First Passenger Across
HARRY REVERE		Expert Lightning Shooter
JENNY THE YELLOW MULE		Dead in Line of Duty
SHEP THE BLACK DOG		"Killed in Action"
JIMMIE MULDOON		Who "Stays Wid the Irish"
MAJOR-GENERAL GREENVILLE M. DODGE		The Big Chief
COLONEL SILAS SEYMOUR		His New York Assistant
PADDY MILES		Boss of the Track "Tarriers"
GENERAL "JACK" CASEMENT		The Scrappy Hustler
MR. SAM REED		Construction Superintendent
MAJOR FRANK M. NORTH		White Chief of the Pawnees
LINEMAN WILLIAM THOMPSON		Who Rescues his own Scalp

GENERAL GRANT, General Sherman, U. P. Vice-President Thomas C. Durant, Director Sidney Dillon, and other distinguished visitors; Major Marshall Hurd, John Evans, Tom Bates, Francis Appleton, and other daring survey engineers; General John A. Rawlins, young Mr. Duff, Mr. John Corwith, tourists; Mr. David Van Lennep, geologist; Sol Judy and old Jim Bridger, scouts; Chief Petalesharo's Pawnees; United States soldiers; the Irish "tarriers" who built the road; Jack Slade's "roaring town" toughs; and bad Injuns.

AT THE CENTRAL PACIFIC END

GOVERNOR LELAND STANFORD	A President in Broadcloth
VICE-PRESIDENT COLLIS P. HUNTINGTON	Who Raises the Money
MR. CHARLES CROCKER	Commanding “Crocker’s Pets”
MR. SAM S. MONTAGUE	Chief Engineer
MR. J. H. STROWBRIDGE	Construction Superintendent
MR. HI MINKLER	Who Opens Paddy Miles’ Eyes

MIKE SHAY, Pat Joyce, Tom Dailey, Mike Kennedy, Fred McNamara, Ed Killeen, George Wyatt, Mike Sullivan, the ten-miles-a-day “cracks”; and the 10,000 Chinks who saved the Central.

TIME AND PLACE: 1867-1869, upon the great plains, through the deserts and over the mountains, during the famous railroad-building race to cross the continent.

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OPENING THE IRON TRAIL

CHAPTER I

TERRY RICHARDS ON THE JOB

“Drill, my paddies, drill!
Drill, you tarriers, drill!
O, it’s work all day,
No sugar in your tay—
Wor-rkin’ on th’ U. Pay. Ra-a-ailway!”

THE rousing chant rang gaily upon the thin air of Western spring. Sitting Jenny, the old yellow mule, for a moment’s breather while the load of rails was being swept from his flat-car truck, Terry Richards had to smile.

Nobody knew who invented that song. Some said Paddy Miles, the track-laying boss—and it did sound like Pat. At any rate, the lines had made a hit, until already their words were echoing from the Omaha yards, the beginning of track, past end o’ track and on through the grading-camps clear to the mountains where the surveying parties were spying out the trail, for this new Union Pacific Railroad across continent.

Time, early in May, 1867. Place, end o’ track, on the Great Plains just north of the Platte River, between North Platte Station of west central Nebraska and Julesburg, the old Overland Stage Station, of northeastern Colorado. Scene, track-laying—a bevy of sweaty, flannel-shirted, cowhide-booted men working like beavers, but with spades, picks, sledges, wrenches and hands, while far before were the graders, keeping ahead, and behind were the boarding-train and the construction-train, puffing back and forth.

Aye, this was a bustling scene, here where a few weeks ago there had been open country traveled by only the emigrant wagons, the stages and the Indians.

And yonder, farther than the graders and out of sight in the northwest, there were still more workers on the big job: the location surveyors, the path-finding surveyors, the—but Terry’s breather was cut short.

“All right!” yelled the command, from the front.

Terry's empty truck was tipped sideways from the single track. A second little flat-car, hauled by a galloping white horse ridden by small red-headed Jimmie Muldoon, passed full speed, bound to the fray with more rails. Terry's own car was tipped back upon the track again, one-legged Dennis, its "conductor," hopped aboard, to the brakes, and uttering a whoop Terry started, to get another load, himself.

Old Jenny headed down track, by the path that she had worn; the fifty feet of rope tautened; with the truck rumbling after and Shep, Terry's shaggy black dog, romping alongside, they tore for the fresh supplies. Sitting bareback, Terry rode like an Indian.

At the waiting pile of rails dumped from the construction-train he swerved Jenny out, and halted. The light flat-car rolled on until Dennis (who had been crippled in the war) stopped it with the brake. Instantly the rail-slingers there began to load it. And presently Terry was launched once more for end o' track, with his cargo of forty rails to be placed, lightning quick, upon the ties.

Jimmie's emptied truck was tipped aside, to give clearance. Then Jimmie pelted rearward, for iron ammunition, and Terry had another breather.

That was a great system by which at the rate of a mile and a half to two miles and a half and sometimes three miles a day the rails for the Iron Horse were being laid to the land of the setting sun.

Beyond end o' track the graded roadbed stretched straight into the west as far as eye could see, with a graders' camp of sodded dug-outs and dingy tents breaking the distance. At the tapering-off place the ploughs and scrapers were busy, building the roadbed. Next there came the shovel and pick squads, leveling the roadbed. Next, between end o' track and shovel squads, there were the tie-layers—seizing the ties from the piles, throwing them upon the roadbed, tamping them and straightening them and constantly asking for more, while six-horse and six-mule wagons toiled up and down, hauling all kinds of material to the "front."

Already the row of ties laid yesterday and this very morning extended like a rippling stream for three miles, inviting the rails.

At end o' track itself there were the track-builders—the rail-layers, the gaugers, the spikers, the bolters, the ballasters. And upon the new track

there were the boarding-train and the construction-train.

The boarding-train, for the track-gang, held the advance. It was a long train of box-cars fitted up with bunks and dining tables and kitchen—with hammocks slung underneath to the cross-rods and beds made up on top, for the over-flow; and with one car used as an office by General “Jack” Casement and his brother, Dan Casement, who were building the road for the U. P.

The construction-train of flat-cars and caboose plied back and forth between end o’ track and the last supply depot, twenty miles back. These supply depots, linked by construction-trains, were located every twenty miles, on the plains beside the track, back to North Platte, the supply base.

From its depot the train for end o’ track brought up rails, ties, spikes, fish-plate joints—everything. It backed in until its caboose almost touched the rear car of the boarding-train. Overboard went the loads from the flat-cars; with a shrill whistle, away for another outfit of track stuff puffed the construction-train; with answering whistle the boarding-train (Terry’s father at the throttle) followed, a short distance, to clear the path for the rail-trucks.

The rail-truck, Terry’s or Jimmie Muldoon’s, according to whose turn, loaded at the farthest pile. Then up track it scampered, to the very end, where two lines of track-layers, five on a side, were waiting. Each squad grabbed a rail, man after man, and hustled it forward at a run; dropped it so skillfully that the rear end fell into the last fish-plate. They forced the end down, and held the rail straight.

“Down!” signaled the squad bosses. The gaugers had measured the width between the pair of rails: four feet eight and one-half inches. The spikers and bolters sprang with spikes and bolts and sledges. “Whang! Whang! Whangity-whang!” pealed the sledges—a rhythmic chorus. By the time that the first spikes had been driven two more rails were in position. Now and again the little car was shoved forward a few yards, on the new track, to keep up with the work.

A pair of rails were laid—“Down! Down!”—every thirty seconds! Two hundred pairs of rails were reckoned to the mile; there were ten spikes to each rail, three sledge blows to each spike. A pair of rails were laid and

spiked fast every minute, which meant a mile of track in three hours and a third—or say three and a half. In fifteen minutes the fish-plate joints had been bolted and everything made taut.

It was a clock-work job, at top speed, with maybe 1,000 miles yet to go in this race to beat the Central Pacific.

The Central Pacific was the road being built eastward from Sacramento of California. The Government had ordered the Union Pacific to meet it and join end o' track with it, somewhere west of the Rocky Mountains. That would make a railroad clear across continent between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean!

The Union Pacific had much the longer trail: 1,000 miles across the plains and the Rockies and as much farther as it could get. The Central Pacific had started in to build only about 150 miles, and then as much farther as it could get, east from the California border.

The C. P. had commenced first. By the time the U. P. had built eleven miles of track, the C. P. had completed over fifty. But while the Central was completing 100 miles, the Union Pacific had completed 300.

Now the Central was still fighting the snowy Sierra Nevada Mountains of eastern California, and the U. P. had open going on the plains. The C. P. had plenty of timber for ties and culverts and bridges, and plenty of cheap Chinese labor; the U. P. had no timber, all its ties were cut up and down the Missouri River or as far east as Wisconsin, and hauled to end o' track from Omaha, and by the time that they were laid they cost two dollars apiece. Its workmen were mainly Irish, gathered from everywhere and pretty hard to manage.

The C. P. began at Sacramento on the Sacramento River, up from San Francisco, but its rails and locomotives had to be shipped clear around Cape Horn, from the Pennsylvania factories—or else across the Isthmus of Panama. The U. P. began at Omaha, on the Missouri River, but Omaha was 100 miles from any eastern railroad and all the iron and other supplies had to be shipped by steamboat up from St. Louis or by wagon from central Iowa.

It was nip and tuck. Just the same, General G. M. Dodge, the Union Pacific chief engineer (and a mighty fine man), was bound to reach Salt Lake of

Utah first, where big business from the Mormons only waited for a railroad. This year he had set out to build 288 more miles of track between April 1 and November 1. That would take the U. P. to the Black Hills of the Rocky Mountains. The C. P. had still forty miles to go, before it was out of its mountains and down into the Nevada desert; and this looked like a year's work, also.

Then the U. P. would be tackling the mountains, while the C. P. had the desert, with Salt Lake as the prize for both.

But 288 miles, this year, against the Central's forty! Phew! No matter. General Dodge was the man to do it, and the U. P. gangs believed that they could beat the C. P. gangs to a frazzle.

"B' gorry, 'tis the Paddies ag'in the Chinks, it is?" growled Pat Miles, the track-laying boss. "Ould Ireland foriver! Shall the like of us let a lot o' pig-tailed, rice-'atin' haythen wid shovels an' picks hoist the yaller above the grane? Niver! Not whilst we have a man who can spit on his hands. Away yonder on that desert over ferninst Californy won't there be a shindig, though, when the shillaly meets the chop-stick! For 'tis not at Salt Lake we'll stop; we'll kape right on into Nevady, glory be!"

So——

"Drill, my paddies, drill!
Drill, you tarriers, drill!
O, it's work all day,
No sugar in your tay—
Wor-rkin' on th' U. Pay. Ra-a-ailway!"

And—"Down! Down!" "Whang! Whang! Whangity-whang!"

The track-laying and the grading gangs were red-shirted, blue-shirted, gray-shirted; with trousers tucked into heavy boots—and many of the trousers were the army blue. For though the men were mainly Irish, they were Americans and two-thirds had fought in the Union armies during the Civil War. Some also had fought in the Confederate armies.

There were ex-sergeants, ex-corporals, and ex-privates by the scores, working shoulder to shoulder. In fact, the whole U. P. corps was like an army corps. Chief Engineer Dodge had been a major-general in the East and on the Plains; Chief Contractor "Jack" Casement had been brigadier

general; about all the way-up men had been generals, colonels, majors, what-not; while the workers under them were ready at a moment to drop picks and shovels and sledges and transits, and grabbing guns “fall in” as regular soldiers.

This meant a great deal, when the Indians were fighting the road. This past winter the engineers doing advance survey work had been told by Chief Red Cloud of the Sioux that they must get out and stay out of the country—but there they were there again. Nobody could bluff those surveyors: fellows like “Major” Marshall Hurd who had served as a private of engineers through the war, and Tom Bates, and young Percy Browne, and their parties.

All the survey parties—some of them 500 miles in the lead—moved and worked, carrying guns; the graders’ camps were little forts; the track-builders marched to their jobs, and stacked their rifles while they plied their tools. At night the guns were arranged in racks in the boarding-cars, to be handy. The construction-trains’ cabooses were padded with sand between double walls, and loop-holed, and even the passenger trains were supplied with rifles and revolvers, in cars and cabs. General Dodge called his private car, in which he shuttled up and down the line, his “traveling arsenal.”

This was the arrangement, from the end o’ track back to beginning, 360 miles, and on ahead to the last survey camp. The Central Pacific was not having such trouble.

“An’ lucky for it, too,” as said Paddy Miles. “For betwixt the yaller an’ the red, sure I’d bet on the red. Wan Injun could lick all the Chinymen on this side the Paycific. But there’s niver an Injun who can lick an Irishman, b’ gosh!”

However, today everything seemed peaceful. Usually a detachment of soldiers, or a company of the Pawnee Indian scouts under Major Frank M. North, their white-scout commander, were camped near by, guarding the track-laying. But the soldiers were elsewhere, on a short cross-country trip, and the Pawnees (Company A) were up at Fort Sedgwick, near old Julesburg, fifteen or twenty miles west.

The air was very clear. The graders working on the roadbed five miles away might be seen. The long trains of huge wagons, hauling supplies, wended

slowly out to refit them. On this section there were 100 teams and 2,000 men, scattered along; on the next section there were another thousand men, doing the first grading according to the stakes set by the engineers. And eastward there were the trains and the stations, all manned, and other gangs fixing the rough places in the track.

Of all this Terry felt himself to be rather a small part—just riding old Jenny back and forth, with the little rail-truck, while his father imitated with the engine of the boarding-train. Of course, his father had a bad knee (which the war had made worse), and driving an engine was important; but he himself envied his chum, George Stanton. George was out with his father on railroad survey under Mr. Tom Bates—probably fighting Injuns and shooting buffalo and bear, too. That also was man's work, while riding an old yellow mule over the track was boy's work.

Every truck-load of forty rails carried the track forward about 560 feet. To that steady "Down! Down!" and "Whangity-whang!" end o' track reached out farther and farther from the piles of iron thrown off by the construction-train, and from the boarding-train that waited for the construction-train to back in with another supply.

So while cleaning up the piles, Terry and little Jimmie Muldoon had to travel farther and farther with their loads. Then in due time the construction-train would come puffing up, the boarding-train, with Terry's father leaning from the cab, would move on as close to end o' track as it dared, the construction-train would follow and with a great noise dump its cargo of jangling iron, and retreat again; the boarding-train would back out, to clear the track for the trucks; and Terry and Jimmie would start in on short hauls, for a spell.

The supply of iron at the last dump was almost exhausted. The construction-train was hurrying in, with more. Engine Driver Ralph Richards and his stoker, Bill Sweeny, were climbing lazily into the cab of old No. 119, ready to pull on up as soon as Jimmie Muldoon's truck left with the final load. Terry had his eye upon the track, to see it emptied——

"Drill, my paddies, drill!
Drill, you tarriers, drill!
O, it's work all day,
No sug——"

Hark! A sudden spatter of shots sounded—a series of shouts and whoops—the whistle of the boarding-train was wide open—up the grade the graders were diving to cover like frightened prairie-dogs—and out from the sandhills not a quarter of a mile to the right there boiled a bevy of wild horsemen, charging full tilt to join with another bevy who tore down diagonally past the graders themselves.

Sioux? Or Cheyennes? The war had begun, for 1867!

CHAPTER II

A LITTLE INTERRUPTION

THE Indians had chosen exactly the right time, for *them*. They had awaited the moment when the main body of track-layers were farthest separated from the boarding-train and the stacks of arms; they had seen that there were no soldiers on guard; and here they came, with a rush, at least 500 of them.

“Fall in, men! Lay down! Down wid yez!”

Terry tumbled off his yellow mule in a jiffy. Dropping spade and sledge, ducking and lunging, the men were scurrying along the roadbed, seeking shelter. Only the squad of tampers and ballasters following end o’ track to settle the ties were near the first gun stacks; Terry joined their flat line. The Springfield carbines were passed rapidly, but there were not enough.

“Stiddy, boys!” bawled Pat. He had been a top sergeant in the regular army before the war. “Hug the ground. The word from headquarters is ‘Niver retrate.’ Sure, if we haven’t guns we can foight wid picks. Wait for orders, now.”

Down dashed the Indians, at reckless speed: one party straight from the north, one party obliquing from the west. The engines of both trains were shrieking furiously. All up the grade the wagons were bunching, at a gallop, with military precision; the laborers were rushing in squads to corral in them and in the low dug-outs beside the roadbed.

The party of Indians from the westward split; one half veered in, and racing back and forth there, pelted the road embankment with a storm of bullets and arrows. The graders replied, but it was hard to land on those weaving, scudding figures.

The other half of the party tore on, heading to unite with the second party and cut off the boarding-train. That was it! The Indians wanted the boarding-train and supplies.

Hurrah! The boarding-train was coming on, regardless. It was manned by only Engine Driver Richards and Fireman Sweeny, a brakeman and the cooks; but no matter. Like a great demon it was coming on, whistling long shrieks and belching pitchy smoke.

The Sioux (some Cheyennes, too) were close upon it. They began to race it, whooping and shooting. The windows of dining-car and caboose replied with jets of white, as the cook and the brakeman bravely defended. Stoker Bill shot from his side of the cab. The train gathered way slowly; the ponies easily kept up with it—their riders, swerving in, flung themselves free of the saddles, clung to the steps and ladders and vaulted the couplings; clung like ants and dragged and writhed, as if they could hold it back!

They charged the engine; even cast their ropes at the smoke-stack; swarmed to the tender and from there shot into the cab. Terry's heart welled into his mouth, with fear for his father. Suddenly there was a great gush of white steam—Engineer Richards had opened the cylinder cocks, and the cloud of scalding vapor surged back, sweeping the tender. Out popped sprawly brown figures, to land head over heels upon the right-of-way, and blindly scramble for safety.

Hurrah! Bully for Engineer Richards! And the construction-train was coming too. No! Look at it! From Terry's neighbors a groan of disgust issued.

"The dirty cowards! Bad cess to 'em! Turnin' tail, they are!"

For the construction-train was standing still, on the track, and the engine was making off, back across the wide plains, leaving a trail of smoke and a good-by shriek.

"Niver mind! We've a train of our own. Yis, an' hearts to match it."

"'Tis all right, boys. He's only goin' to the tiligraph," Pat shouted. "It's word to the troops at Sidgwick he has up his sleeve. The Pawnees'll be wid us in a jiffy—an' then watch them red rascals skedaddle. 'Asy, 'asy," continued Pat, "till the train's widin reach of us. Stiddy. We mustn't get scattered, like."

The boarding-train was jolting and swaying on the newly laid rails; but what ailed it, besides? Aha!

“Settin’ the brakes! Settin’ the brakes, they are!”

And sure enough. These Cheyennes and Sioux were wise. For a year and a half they had been watching the white man’s iron horses and big thunder wagons advancing onward into the buffalo country; and they had learned a number of new wrinkles. They were no longer afraid of the strange “medicine.” For here they were, boldly tackling the cars, laying hands upon them, climbing aboard—and setting the brakes!

Their almost naked figures, outlined against the sky, atop the cars, tugged and hauled at the brake wheels. The brake-shoes ground harshly; fummy smoke floated from underneath, as the locked car-wheels slid on the rails; the engine, with throttle open, roared vainly. Out from the cab darted Fireman Bill Sweeny, mounted the tender and, skipping to the first car, revolver in hand, hung to the ladder while he raked the tops beyond.

“Sharp-shooters give it to ’em!” Pat yelled. The carbines of the track-layer gang banged hopefully.

The Indians ducked and swung off to the farther side. The brakeman was out of the caboose. He lay flat upon one end of the train, the fireman lay flat upon the other end; and hitching along they began to kick the brakes free. The galloping Indians peppered at them, but failed to hit them.

“Be ready, lads,” Pat ordered. “Skirmishes wid the guns, first. The rist of us wid the picks. We’ll run for it, and meet the train. Jist a minute, now.” And —“Oh, the divils!” he added. “Charge!”

A squad of the Indians, dismounted, had thrown a tie across the track. A wild volley from the carbines had not stayed them. Engineer Richards, plunged in his own steam cloud, evidently did not see the tie; he came on, pushing Jimmie Muldoon’s loaded truck before him; the white horse tried to bolt and fell with a broken neck just as the rope parted; the smoke-stack was atilt, and spitting smoke and steam from a dozen bullet-holes; but twitched by the roaring engine, the train moved faster and faster.

Up sprang the men, with a yell. The line of skirmishers, carbines poised, charged—charged in splendid order, like soldiers, aiming, firing, running. With picks and sledges and even spades the other men also charged, behind the skirmishers; bending low and shouting, yes, laughing in their excitement.

“The tie! Look out for the tie on the track!” they hallooed.

Terry had nothing to carry, and he was fast on his feet. Never had he sprinted so, before. The first thing he knew, he was through the skirmishers and legging on by himself, while the bullets hummed by him and every instant the distance between tie and truck was lessening. All his eyes and thoughts were on that tie. If the engine—his father’s engine—rammed it with the rail-loaded truck—wow!

He lost his hat—he heard whoops and shouts and excited Shep’s wild barking—the Indians on his side were swerving off, before the carbine bullets—but the engine was thundering down upon him, he saw his father’s astonished grimy face peering from the cab and he glimpsed the cars behind spewing naked figures. Then he dived for the tie. He barely had time to lift one end when the truck struck the tie, hurled it to the left and him to the right; but they both fell clear, for as he picked himself up the box-cars were rumbling by, jerking to the sharply braked engine.

All was hurly-burly with the Indians scooting and screeching, the men scrambling and cheering, catching at the steps and braces, running alongside until the train stopped, and clutching the guns passed out from doors and windows.

The dining-car door slid back; the sweaty faces of the cook and cookee grinned down; the brakeman leaped off——

“Fall in, now! Fall in wid yez!” were Pat’s orders. “Take your distances ben’ath—two men to each pair o’ wheels. An’ them that hasn’t guns lay flat inside.”

Terry had no notion of lying flat inside. He plunged like a rabbit under the dining-car (bewildered Shep at his heels), for a place between the rails; found none, and dodged on, trying not to step on anybody or be in the way. He arrived at the tender, and had to come out.

“Get in here! Quick!” It was his father, sighting him. Terry hoisted himself into the engine, while several bullets rang upon the metal grasped by his hands. He lurched to the fireman’s seat and huddled there, to gain breath and grin. With a running leap Shep followed, to curl close in a corner, safe, he believed, from all that racket.

“Well, where were you going?” his father demanded.

“Just looking for a good place,” Terry panted.

“You’ve found it, and you’d better stick. ’Tisn’t healthy, outside. What were you doing on the track ahead of me? Didn’t I hit something?”

“A tie, dad. They’d laid a tie across the track.”

“Oho! Good for you. But you took a big chance. Did you reach it?”

“I got one end up.”

“If I’d hit it plumb, reckon some of those rails would have been driven into the boiler. I couldn’t see plain, on account the steam and the truck. The crooked stack bothered me, too. Anyhow, here’s one train they don’t capture.”

“They can’t take it, can they, dad?”

“Not on your life, Terry. Not while there’s a cartridge for a gun or an Irishman to swing a pick, or an ounce of steam in the boiler of old 119. If worst comes to worst we can run back and forth, ’twixt here and that construction-train.”

Terry jumped down and crawled to peek out between engine and tender.

“No, we can’t, dad. They’re piling ties on the track ’way behind!”

“I declare! They’re too smart. They even set the brakes on me, and tried to rope the engine stack, like they would a horse’s neck! So they think they have us corralled, do they?”

That was so. The pesky Indian had daringly charged to the farthest pile of ties—a spare pile—tied ropes, and at a gallop dragging the ties to safer distance were erecting a barricade upon the track.

Evidently they meant business, this time. It was to be a fight to a finish. All up the graded roadbed the U. P. men were fighting off the red bandits—fighting from the dug-outs and the embankment and the wagon corrals; they had no chance to sally to the boarding-train. And here at the boarding-train Paddy Miles’ track-layers were fighting.

Part of the Indians dashed around and around in a great circle, whooping gleefully and shooting at long distance. “Blamed if they haven’t got better guns than we have,” remarked Terry’s father, as now and then a bullet

pinged viciously against the boiler-iron of engine or tank. Others, dismounted, crept steadily forward, like snakes, firing from little hollows and clumps of brush.

The Paddy Miles sharp-shooters, snug beneath the cars, and protected by the rails and the car-wheels, stanchly replied. The heavy Springfield balls kicked up long spurts of sand and 'dobe dust; once in a while a pony rider darted in, for closer shot—sometimes he got away with it, and sometimes his horse lunged headlong, to lie floundering while the rider himself ran hunched, for shelter. Then the men cheered and volleyed at him; maybe bowled him over, but not always.

Terry's father had lighted his pipe; and there he sat, on his seat, with his gun poked out of the window, to get a shot when he might. He was as cool as a cucumber, and ready for any kind of business. This was not his first scrape, by any means. He had been a gold-seeker in the rush of Fifty-nine, to the Pike's Peak diggin's of Colorado; and he had served in the Union Army of the Civil War. Only his crippled knee had put him into the cab—but brave men were needed here, the same as elsewhere, these days.

"Where did the other engine go, dad?" Terry asked.

"To the nearest wire. There's a spur station and operator ten miles back, you know. Sedgwick has the word, by now; and so has North Platte. Pretty soon we'll see the Pawnees coming from the one direction and the general himself from the other; and that'll put an end to this fracas."

Terry exclaimed.

"They're shooting fire arrows!"

Cleverly worming along, several of the Indians had posted themselves near enough to use their bows. They launched arrow after arrow, with bunches of flaming dried grass and greasy rags—yes, as like as not old waste—tied to the heads; and these plumped into car top and car side.

"The confounded rascals!" growled Engineer Richards.

Fireman Bill Sweeny hurdled from the first car down to the tender. He was sweat-streaked and grim, and bleeding at the shoulder. He grabbed a bucket, soused it into the tank, and away he staggered.

“Train’s afire, Ralph,” he yelled back. “Don’t shove out——” and he was gone.

Forward hustled other men, with buckets; dipped into the tank and sped for the rear again. Matters were getting serious. The Springfields seemed unable to ferret out the bow-wielders. There was a cheer, and Pat Miles led a charge. Out from beneath the cars there rushed a line of skirmishers, while behind them the carbines barked, supporting them. Up from their coverts sprang the fire-arrow Indians, and bolted. Giving them a volley the skirmish dropped and dug in.

A line was thrown out on the other side of the train, also. This made the Indians furious; their horsemen raced madly up and down, showing only an arm and a leg, or suddenly firing from the saddle and hanging low again. At the best they were difficult marks. They had plenty of ammunition, and rifles that outranged the stubby carbines.

“Fire’s squelched except the last car; that’s a-burnin’,” gasped Stoker Bill, lurching in and sinking breathless upon his seat. “Don’t back up. Say, kid, help me tie this shoulder, will you?”

“Hurt bad, Bill?” Engineer Richards queried, keenly.

“Nope. Just perforated a trifle.”

“Anybody else hurt?”

“None particular. But I sure thought this kid was a goner, though. Did you see him?”

“Where?”

“When he reached for that tie?”

“Didn’t see him or the tie either, till too late. I knew I hit something.”

“Well, I happened to be squinting up this way, and I saw him just as he heaved an end clear of the track. Next thing, you sent him one way and the tie the other. He’s an all-right boy.”

“Guess he is,” laughed Terry’s father. “He’ll get promoted off that old yellow mule, first thing we know.”

“Wish General Dodge would let me go out on a survey,” Terry blurted. “Like George Stanton.”

“I’ll speak to the general about it,” said Fireman Bill, with a wink at his cab partner.

But Engineer Richards did not notice. He was peering behind, out of his window.

“Hi! Here comes the other engine,” he uttered. “Yes, and the headquarters car for a trailer! The old man (that was Major-General Dodge, of course) is inside it, I’ll bet a hat!”

They all looked. Far down the track an engine, twitching a single car, was approaching. By her trail of dense wood smoke and the way she bounced on the little curves and bumps, she was making good time, too.

“Chief boss is on the job, sure,” quoth Bill.

“Usually is,” added Terry’s father. “Always has been. Nothing happens from one end of line to t’other, but he’s there.”

The fighting track-layers had seen, and began to cheer afresh. Away galloped a portion of the enemy, to pester the reinforcements. But the engine came right on, until it halted at the end of the construction-train. Out from the headquarters car issued man after man—springing to the ground, guns in their hands, until they numbered some twenty.

The first was a straight, well-knit figure in broad-brimmed black slouch hat and ordinary civilian clothes. There appeared to be two or three men in regular city clothes with him; the rest were dressed more rough and ready, like trainmen and workmen.

The Indians were circling and yelling and shooting, at long distance. The slouch hat led forward at a run. From the construction-train the handful of train crew leaped out; they had been housed, waiting, on defense, but helpless to do much. All ran forward. The slouch hat man pointed and gave orders; the train crew jumped at the pile of ties, while the other men rapidly deployed, in accurate line—advancing as if in uniform, and yielding not an inch.

The ties were scattered in a twinkling; the engine pushed—the train moved slowly up track, with the slouch hat’s men clearing either side of the track,

at a trot, fire, and trot again. The train crew closed the rear. The engine whistled triumphantly; Terry's father yanked the whistle cord of No. 119, and by blast after blast welcomed the new-comers.

In spite of the frantic Indians the trains joined. But the fighting was not over. It had only been extended into a longer line. Terry could stay quiet no more. He simply had to be out into the midst of things. With General Dodge, the chief engineer and noted army man, on deck, there would be a change of program.

"I'm going, dad," he announced. Not waiting for answer, out he tumbled, so quickly that Shep did not know it. For Shep was sound asleep.

CHAPTER III

“TRACK’S CLEAR”

THE few carbine barrels jutting here and there from behind the car-wheels were silent, as hugging the side of the train Terry boldly stepped over them; the skirmish lines were doing the shooting. Half way down the train a knot of men were holding a council.

They were Chief Engineer Dodge (the figure in the black slouch hat) and three men in city clothes, and Pat Miles. But before Terry might steal nearer, fresh cheers arose.

“The Pawnees! Here they come! Hooray for the Pawnees!”

The men underneath the cars began to squirm out, and stand, to yell. Over a swale up the graded right-of-way there appeared a mounted force—looked like soldiers—cavalry—one company, two companies, deploying in broad front; and how they did come!

The graders yonder were waving hats, and cheering; the Cheyennes and Sioux hemming them in dug their heels into their ponies and bending low fled before the charge. The General Dodge council had moved out a few paces, to watch. The general swung his hat, also.

“Now for it!” he shouted. “Form your men, Pat. Blair, you wanted to see some fighting. Take one company and advance to the left. Simpson, you take another detachment and advance to the right. White, you and I and Pat will guard the train with the train crews and the reserve. We’ll put those rascals between two fires.”

“Fall in! Fall in wid yez!” Pat bawled, running. The words were repeated. “Yez’ve thray gin’rals, a major an’ meself to lead yez,” bawled Pat.

“Come on, men,” cried the general named Blair, to his detachment; he climbed through between the cars; his men followed him and away they went, in extended order, picking up the skirmishers as they proceeded.

In the other direction ran General Simpson's detachment, and out across the plain. But the Indians did not stand. With answering yells they scattered, and occasionally firing backward at the Pawnees they scoured away—the Pawnees, separating into their two companies, pursuing madly.

And a funny sight it was, too; for as the Pawnees rode, they kept throwing off their uniforms, until pretty soon they were riding in only their trousers.

"B' gorry!" Pat panted, as he and the general halted near Terry. "The only thing I have ag'in them Pawnees is, that when they come there's nothin' left for the Irish." He turned on the general, and saluted—coming to a carry arms, with his left arm stiffly across his red-shirted chest. "Track's clear, gin'ral."

"So it seems," laughed General Dodge. "Simpson and Blair might as well come in. Now let's see what the damage is." His sharp eyes fell on Terry, standing fascinated. "What's this boy doing out here? He ought to be under cover."

"Sure, he's bigger'n he looks," apologized Pat. "If ye could have seen him lift at a tie when the engine was jest onto it——! He earned a brevet—but I thought he was under the wheels entoirely."

"That's the kind of work that counts—but I'll have to hear about it later," answered the general. "Now let's check up the damage, and get the men out again. Where's General Casement?"

"He's on up at Julesburg, sorr; him and Mr. Reed, too. But I'm thinkin' they'll both be back in a jiffy."

General "Jack" Casement was the chief contractor—the head boss of the whole construction. Mr. S. B. Reed was the general superintendent of building. Yes, they doubtless would arrive on the jump.

The two companies of the construction gang were brought in, for the Pawnees had chased the Sioux and Cheyennes out of sight. Before they came in, themselves, General Dodge and Foreman Pat had made their inspection. Three men badly wounded, here; several slightly wounded; one car burned, other cars, and the engine, riddled and scarred.

But within half an hour all the unhurt men had stacked their guns, had resumed their tools, and were out on the grade, ready to start in, just as

though there had been no fight.

Jenny the yellow mule had a bullet hole through her ear; Jimmie Muldoon's white horse was dead; but speedily he and Terry were mounted again, waiting for the construction-train to finish unloading, and for the boarding-train to back out and clear.

That was the system of the U. P., building across the plains into the Far West.

"Hey, Jimmie! Where were you?" hailed Terry.

"I got behind the cook's stove," piped little Jimmie, blushing as red as his hair. "But I came out and handed ca'tridges. Weren't you afraid?"

"I dunno. I guess I was too excited."

"You done well, anyhow," praised Jimmie, with disregard of grammar.

General Dodge went on up the grade, inspecting. The three men in city clothes, with him, were General J. H. Simpson, of the United States Engineer Corps; General Frank P. Blair, who had been one of the youngest major-generals in the Civil War; and Congressman H. M. White, who was called "Major" and "Doctor." They formed a board of inspectors, or commissioners, sent out by the Government to examine every twenty or forty miles of the road, when finished, and accept it.

The United States was lending money for the building of the first railroad across continent, and naturally wished to see that the money was being well spent.

The commissioners traveled in a special coach, called the "Lincoln" coach because it had been made for President Abraham Lincoln, during the War. The railroad had bought it, for the use of officials.

Now it was back at North Platte, the terminus. When the commissioners heard of the fight, they had volunteered to come along with General Dodge and help out.

"Drill, my paddies, drill!
Drill, you tarriers, drill!
O, it's work all day,
No sugar in your tay,

Wor-rkin' on th' U. Pay. Ra-a-ailway!"

The construction-train had dumped its iron, the boarding-train had backed out, and Jimmie and Terry again plied back and forth, with the rails.

The Pawnees returned, in high feather like a lot of boys themselves. They certainly were fighters. Major Frank M. North, a white man, was their commander. He had lived among them, and spoke their language, and they'd follow him to the death. He had enlisted four companies—drilled them as regular cavalry, according to army regulations; they were sworn into the United States Army as scouts, and were deadly enemies to the Sioux and the Cheyennes. The Sioux and Cheyennes feared them so, that it was said a company of North's Pawnees was worth more than a regiment of regular soldiers. When these Pawnees sighted an enemy, they simply threw off their clothes and waded right in.

The two companies, A and B, made camp on the plains, a little distance off, near the Platte River. Major North and Chief Petalesharo—who was the war-chief and son of old Petalesharo, known as "bravest of the braves"—cantered forward to the track. The major wore buckskin and long hair, like a frontiersman. Petalesharo wore army pants with the seat cut out, and the legs sewed tight, same as leggings.

"Take any hair, major?" was the call.

"Yes; there are three or four fresh scalps in the camp yonder. But most of the beggars got away too fast."

"Say, Pete! Heap fight, what?"

Petalesharo smiled and grunted, with wave of hand.

"He says the Sioux ponies have long legs," called Major North. "Where's the general? He was here, wasn't he?"

"Yes; he's up ahead, with the graders."

The major—young and daring and very popular—rode on with Chief "Pete," as if to report to General Dodge.

They all came back together, after a time—and the newly laid track was advancing to meet them. Already the boarding-train had moved up a notch. The Pawnees from the camp were scattered along, watching the progress.

The way with which the white man's road grew, before their eyes, seemed to be a constant marvel to them.

"Faith, we'll build our two miles this day in spite o' the Injuns," cheered the sweaty Pat, everywhere at once and urging on the toiling men.

The three commissioners were as interested as the Pawnees; they hung around, while Chief Engineer Dodge, General Jack Casement and Supervising Engineer Reed (who had arrived horseback) conferred in the headquarters car.

General Simpson and Dr. White had seen the track-laying gang at work last year, but this was young General Blair's first trip out. Now while he was here, three-quarters of a mile of track was laid before the call for supper sounded; and as the men rushed to meet the train, Engineer Richards unhooked and gave the three commissioners a ride on the cow-catcher to the very end o' track, to show them how well the rails had been put down.

In honor of the commissioners, after supper there was a parade of the Pawnees, under Major North and the white captains Lute North and Mr. Morse, Lieutenants Beecher and Matthews, and Chief Petalesharo.

A great parade it was, too—"Might call it a dress p'rade, and ag'in ye might call it an undress p'rade," as Foreman Pat remarked. The Pawnees were in all kinds of costume: some wore cavalry blouses and left their legs naked; some wore cavalry trousers with the seats cut out, and left their bodies naked; some wore large black campaign hats of Civil War time, with brass bugles and crossed muskets and crossed cannon, on the front; some wore nothing but breech clouts, and brass spurs on their naked heels; but they kept excellent line and wheeled and trotted at word of command.

They broke up with a wild yell, and away they went, careening over the plain, whooping and prancing and shooting, and taking scalps—chasing the "Sioux."

"The gin'ral wants to see you," ordered Pat, of Terry. "Ye'll find him in his car yon. Now stand on your feet an' take off your hat an' do the polite, an' mebbe it's promoted you'll be."

So Terry, with Shep close following, trudged down the line of box-cars, to the Chief Engineer's "traveling arsenal." He was curious to see the inside of

it. This was the general's home, in which he toured up and down the line, from Omaha to the end o' track, caring not a whit for the Indians.

It was fitted up inside with bunks and a desk and racked guns, and a forward compartment which was dining-room and kitchen, ruled by a darky cook. When the general was not traveling in his car, he was out overseeing the surveys far beyond the railroad; he had explored through the plains and mountains to Salt Lake long before the railroad had started at Omaha.

The whole party were in the car; the three commissioners (General Simpson was a famous explorer, too), and General Casement, and Superintendent Reed, sitting with General Dodge. Terry removed his dusty hat, and stood in the doorway. Shep stuck his black nose past his legs, to gaze and sniff.

"Hello, my boy," General Dodge greeted.

"Pat Miles said you wanted to see me, sir."

"That's right. Come in, dog and all. Gentlemen, this is Terry Richards. They tell me he risked his life to save the boarding-train from being wrecked during the Indian attack. I move that we all shake hands with him."

Terry, considerably flustered, had his hand shaken, all 'round.

"Well, what's your job, Terry?" asked General Dodge. He was a handsome man, every inch a soldier, but with a very kind eye above a dark, trimmed beard. Nobody could feel afraid of General Dodge.

"I help bring up the rails, on a truck. I ride a yellow mule, sir."

"You're rather a big boy to be doing that."

"Yes, sir; but that's my job. Somebody has to do it. The men have got to have rails."

"Very necessary, in building a railroad," laughed General Blair.

"We did almost two miles today," informed Terry. "We'd have done two miles sure if the Injuns hadn't tried to stop us."

"That's the right spirit," approved General Simpson.

"General Casement is responsible for it," quickly spoke Chief Engineer Dodge. "His men are trained to the minute, either to work or to fight. But

the Union Pacific Company doesn't overlook individual acts of bravery. What would you like to do instead of riding that yellow mule, Terry?"

"I'd like to be out in front, exploring with the engineers, sir."

"Oh, you would!" General Dodge's eyes kindled. Evidently he liked that kind of work, himself. "Why? It's the most dangerous job of all—away out in the Indian country, with only a handful of men and maybe no help except your own guns."

"I think I'd like it, though," stammered Terry. "If I could be any use, George Stanton's out there somewhere."

"Who's George Stanton?"

"He's another boy. He's my pardner. We were station hands on the Overland [that was the stage line] before we joined the railroad."

"Where is George?"

"I don't know, exactly. He went out with his father in Mr. Bates' survey party, as a sort of a cub to learn engineering. I guess he cuts stakes."

"Oh, I see. The Bates party are bound from Utah, to run a line this way. But they'll not be back before winter. Probably none of the survey parties will turn up before winter. I'm afraid it's too late for a job with the engineers in the field, this year. Maybe you'll have to stick to your old mule, and haul rails for General Casement."

"Well, if there's nothing better I can do," agreed Terry. "It's fun to help the track go forward, anyhow. We'll beat the Central folks."

"Yes, siree!" General Casement declared. He was a great little man, this General "Jack" Casement: a wiry, nervy, snappy little man, not much more than five feet tall, peaceful weight about 135 pounds and fighting weight about a ton—"an' sure there's sand enough in him to ballast the tracks clear to Californy," Pat asserted. He had a brown beard and a bold blue eye and a voice like a whip-crack. His brother "Dan" Casement was smaller still, outside, but just as big inside. They two were commanders of the grading and track-laying outfits.

"There's one more party to go out yet," General Dodge suddenly said; "and that's mine. If General Casement will lend you to me, maybe I'll have a

place for you. We'll see if we can't find the Bates party, and George Stanton." And he added, with a smile, to the other men: "A fellow can always use a boy, around camp, you know, gentlemen."

"Golly! I'd sure like to go, sir," Terry blurted.

"Were you ever farther west?"

"Yes, sir. I helped drive stage, when I was working for the Overland. And George and I had a pass to Salt Lake, but George broke his leg up on the divide, in the mountains, so we quit and came back."

"How did you happen to get a pass?"

"Just for something we did. We brought a stage through, when the driver was near frozen. 'Twasn't much, though. But we were glad to get a pass. We'd never been west over the line."

"How far east have you been over this line?" asked the general, keenly.

"North Platte, is all. I joined at North Platte, this spring, when you began the big push to make 290 miles before stopping again."

"Two hundred and eighty-eight," the general corrected. "That will take us to Fort Sanders in the Laramie Plains. But I think you ought to inspect what's been done in the two other years. It's up to the Union Pacific to treat you as well as the Overland treated you. Did you ever ride on a railroad?"

"I guess I did when I was little, before we came out to Kansas. We drove out to Kansas from Ohio in 1858; but after that Harry Revere and I drove across to Denver."

"Who's Harry Revere?"

"He's a friend of George and me. He was an Overland man, too—he was station-keeper at Beaver Creek station while George and I were hostlers. Then he rode Pony Express for a while, between Bijou Junction and Denver. He's a dandy; as spunky as a badger. He's back east somewhere, on the railroad, doing telegraphing."

"You build railroads, but you don't travel on them, eh?" laughed General Blair.

“Yes, sir. All I do is haul rails and watch ’em being laid—but the graders don’t even see the rails. They just shovel dirt.”

“You’ll be out of sight of the rails and the dirt, too, if you go on that western trip with me,” General Dodge said, grimly. “So first, you’d better get acquainted with the finished end and see what those rails that you’ve helped lay are being used for. Suppose you stay right aboard this car and take a trip back, of a couple of hundred miles, if General Casement will spare you.”

“I’ll spare him if you’ll spare some of that 288 miles,” General Casement retorted. “You’re breaking up my army.”

Evidently even a boy was important, these days.

“Jimmie Muldoon’s brother will spell me, while I’m gone,” Terry proffered. “He can ride my mule. Her name’s Jenny. She’s smart. She’d do the hauling without anybody on her.”

“All right. You make your arrangements with Pat and Jimmie Muldoon, then,” said General Casement.

“And I guess I’ll ask my father.”

“Where’s he?”

“He’s the engine driver for the boarding-train. That’s his job, because he got crippled up in the war.”

“Oh, Ralph Richards?” queried General Dodge. “He was one of my soldiers, in that same war. You’re his boy, are you? Any more of the family on the U. P.?”

“My mother’s down at Denver still, but here’s my dog. His name’s Shep. He’d fight Injuns, only today there was too much shooting, so he stayed in the engine.”

“Well,” spoke the general, “you see your father and Pat Miles and Jimmie Muldoon; then bring your dog and come along back to the car. We’re going down to North Platte tonight, and tomorrow I’ll take you as far as Kearney, anyhow. How’ll that suit you?”

“Fine, sir.” And Terry hustled out, his head in a whirl of excitement.

Matters were speedily fixed; but before he could return dusk had settled over the great expanse of lonely plains. The Pawnees were on guard. Far up the grade a few lights twinkled, from the graders' camps. Already the track-layer gang were going to bed; some inside the boarding-train, some on top, some underneath—just as they all pleased.

Ordinarily Terry would have spread his blankets on top, where there was plenty of fresh air. However, this night he was to be a guest of the big chief, General Dodge himself, in the headquarters car, for a trip over the new U. P. Railroad, to see that the rails were O. K.

And so was Shep. Shep usually tried to go wherever Terry went—except, of course, when guns were banging too recklessly.

The men were still up, in the rear or office end of the headquarters car, talking together.

“The rest of us won't turn in till we're back at North Platte,” the general explained. “I've had a bunk opened for you, up forward. Do you think you can sleep?”

“Yes, sir. I can always sleep,” Terry assured.

“All right. Good night. You won't miss much. We'll probably lie over at North Platte till morning.”

The bunk was a clever arrangement. During the day it was folded against the side of the car and nobody would know it was there. At night it was let down, and hung flat with a curtain in front of it. The car probably had several such bunks. They were something new, the invention of a Mr. Pullman; and when Terry climbed into his, he found it mighty comfortable. Shep curled underneath, between the seats.

Lying snug and warm, Terry prepared to calm himself, and sleep; but the future looked very bright. He caught his thoughts surging ahead, upon the survey trip half promised by the general: maybe clear to Utah, exploring and finding George and the Bates party. Hooray! Indians, bear and buffalo, new country—! Pshaw! He was getting wide awake. He ought to sleep. So he began to figure.

Over 300 miles, so far, by the Union Pacific, in the two years and a quarter; 700 miles yet to Salt Lake, and then as much farther as they could get

before meeting the Central! The general had planned to lay nearly 300 miles more—288 anyway—this year! Whew! Forty car-loads of supplies to every mile; 400 rails and 2,650 ties to every mile; ten spikes to each rail, three blows of the sledge to each spike—then how many rails, how many ties, how many sledge blows, how many galloping charges back and forth of Jenny and the little truck, to cross plains and deserts and mountains and win the race with the Central?

This tour by train was going to be nice enough, but it seemed tame compared with end o' track work, and with surveying. And the laying of the track looked to be such a big job that perhaps General Casement couldn't spare him again. Shucks!

While figuring and bothering, Terry fell asleep. He did not know that his trip east and back was not going to be as tame as it appeared in advance.

CHAPTER IV

DOWN THE LINE—AND BACK

SOMETIME in the night he knew that they were in motion—the engine was pushing them along, over the track. But when he really woke up, they were standing still, in daylight. North Platte, as like as not; or maybe Kearney. No, it couldn't be Kearney, could it, for Kearney was 100 miles and more, and that seemed a long way to go, in just one night. At any rate, they were standing in some town; there was a lot of noise outside, of shouting and engine-puffing and feet-scuffling. So he put on his clothes in a jiffy and jumped down through the curtains.

By the rattle of dishes and the smell of bacon the cook was getting breakfast, but the main part of the car was empty. Everybody had left. Seemed as though General Dodge didn't take time to sleep, himself, for no other bunk was open. Here came old Shep, yawning, from his night's quarters. Terry hastened to the platform, to find where they were.

North Platte, sure. They'd come only sixty or seventy miles, and must have been lying here quite a while. Yes, it was North Platte, on the south bank of the North Platte River just above where the North Platte joined the South Platte to help make the big Platte.

North Platte was the end of the road, for traffic; the terminal point, that is. The freight and passenger trains from Omaha, 293 miles, stopped here and went back; only the construction-trains went on, with supplies for end o' track. But North Platte was considerable of a place—and an awful tough place, too, plumb full of gambling joints and saloons.

It had started up in a hurry, last December, when the road had reached it and had made a terminal point and supply depot of it, for the winter. There hadn't been a thing here, except a prairie-dog town—and in three weeks there had been a brick round-house to hold forty engines, and a station-house, and a water tank heated by a stove so it wouldn't freeze, and a big hotel to cost \$18,000, and a knock-down warehouse (the kind that could be taken apart and fitted together again) almost as large, for the Casement

Brothers, and fifteen or sixteen other business buildings, and over a thousand people, including gamblers and saloon keepers, living in all kinds of board and sheet-iron and canvas shacks.

When Terry had joined the road, at the close of winter, North Platte boasted 2,000 people, counting the graders and track-layers, and was a “roaring” town. There was some talk of making it the headquarters of the Union Pacific, instead of Omaha.

It used to be livelier at night than in the day-time, even; but it certainly was lively enough this morning. A long freight-train was unloading ties and iron, to be added to the great collection of ties and iron already waiting for the haul onward to the next supply dump, toward end o’ track. A passenger train had pulled in from Omaha. The passengers were trooping to the Railroad House (which was the name of the \$18,000 hotel) or to the eating-room in the Casement Brothers’ portable warehouse, or bargaining to be taken by wagons across the South Platte ford, where the Overland Stage for Denver connected with the railroad.

As fast as the Union Pacific, on the north side of the Platte River, lengthened its passenger haul from Omaha, on the south side of the Platte River the Overland Stage shortened its haul to Denver and Salt Lake.

After a while there would be no stage haul needed, through this country. The stages would run only between Denver and wherever the railroad passed by, north of it; and people would go through from the Missouri River in two days instead of in six.

An engine and tender backed up and hooked on to the Dodge car; a fine-looking car, which must be the Lincoln car for the Government commissioners, had been coupled on, behind. While Terry gazed about, from his platform, trying to take in all the sights, here came General Dodge and Superintendent Reed, as if in a hurry.

“All aboard!” The general waved his arm at the engineer, as he sprang up the steps. To ring of bell and hiss of exhaust the little train started. There was no time lost.

“Hello, young man,” the general greeted, to Terry. “Ready for the day?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I expect you’d like to begin with breakfast. So would Mr. Reed and I. We’ve made one beginning but we’ll make another. We all can eat and watch things go past at the same time.”

Decidedly, it was fun to sit at a table and eat while whirled along across country at a tremendous pace, with the landscape flitting by in plain sight just outside the windows.

“How fast are we going now, please?” Terry ventured.

The general looked at his watch a minute, and seemed to be listening.

“About twenty-five miles an hour, I should judge. Is that right, Sam?”

“Pretty nearly right,” agreed Superintendent Reed.

Whew! And when Ben Holladay, the King of the Overland Stage, had made fourteen miles in an hour with his special coach and a special team of fours, that had seemed like a lightning trip.

They had thundered over the long bridge above the North Platte River, and were scooting eastward, parallel with the main Platte. From across the river the emigrants who still stuck to their slow prairie schooners or covered wagons, waved at the train. At a safe distance some antelope fled, flashing their white rumps. Prairie-dogs sat up at the mouth of their burrows, to gaze.

Once in a while a ranch, with low adobe buildings, might be seen, south of the river; and an old stage station there, before or behind, was almost always in sight. The Overland had quit running, east of Cottonwood station, near North Platte.

On this side of the river there was not much to see, except the railroad telegraph poles, and the prairie-dogs, and the line of rails that stretched clear to Omaha on the Missouri River, and a side-station of one little building which slipped by so quickly that Terry could not read the sign.

The general and Superintendent Reed went back into the Lincoln car, to talk with the commissioners there. They left the headquarters car to Terry, Shep and the black cook.

“How you like this sort o’ travel, boy?” queried the cook, as he tidied the car with a dust-rag.

“We’re sure moving,” Terry grinned. “It beats staging. How fast are we going now, do you think?”

“Oh, mebbe thirty miles an houah. Reckon we gotto meet ’nother train. This heah road is shy on meetin’ places yet. But, sho’, thirty miles ain’t nothin’, boy. When the gin’ral heahs somethin’ callin’ him, he jest tells this old cah to step on the injine’s tail, an’—woof! ’Way we go, fifty, mebbe fifty-five miles an houah! Yessuh. Sometimes the gin’ral he likes to show off a bit, too, when there’s gover’nment folks abohd. He shuah gives ’em a ride, so they’ll know this ain’t any play road, down today an’ up tomorrow. Where you from?”

“End o’ track,” answered Terry.

“What you do there?”

“Haul rails.”

“Was you up there yestuhday, when they fit the Injuns?”

“You bet. They found we were bad medicine, too. They almost set the boarding-train on fire, though. That was a right smart fight, till the general and the Pawnees came and drove ’em off in a jiffy.”

“Hi yi!” the cook chuckled. “We-all had jest got into Nohth Platte when the gin’ral, he heard about it. He’s a powerful fightin’ man, the gin’ral is. He’s fit Injuns a lot o’ times befoh. An’ those commishners, they’re fightin’ men, too; they done fit in the wah. An’ there was a passel o’ seemed like white trash here, who was quittin’ work on the road because they’d got paid off. But the gin’ral, he calls out: ‘You boys, the Injuns are ’tackin’ our camps up the road. Pile in, if you want to go with me.’ An’ they shuah piled in, every last one of ’em, same as though they hadn’t quit the road at all. Yessuh! An’ when they piled in, this chile he piled out, t’other end. He guessed like he wasn’t needed. Hi yi! No, suh! He’s got too much scalp. His hair ain’t like white man’s hair; it’s same length all ovuh his haid.”

“Indians don’t scalp negroes. They can’t. And they think it’s bad medicine,” said Terry. “They call you buffalo soldiers.”

“I ain’t no buff’lo soldiers. I’m a cook, an’ I knowed they didn’t want no cook up yonduh,” the darky retorted. “Yessuh. An’ in case it come on night,

Injuns might not make any diff'rence 'tween a white man an' a black man. No, suh."

"Not unless they felt your hair," laughed Terry.

The cook seemed to turn a shade pale.

"No Injun's gwine to feel my hair. No, suh! Not unless he can outrun this heah train; an' then when he reaches in he's got to catch me, foh if I once get out the othuh end—oh, boy! I'd jest hit the ground twice between the train an' Omaha. The Injuns'd be sayin' 'There he goes' the same time Omaha was sayin' 'Heah he comes!' Yessuh! I'm powerful scared o' Injuns. It's gwine to be a mighty bad yeah, foh Injuns, too."

"How do you know?"

"'Cause I heard the gin'ral sayin' so. I heard him say he'd asked foh moh soldiers, to guard the line cl'ar to the mountings. Yessuh. He's asked Gin'ral Sherman. How far you gwine?"

"I dunno. To Omaha, maybe. Why?"

"Got some kin there?"

"No. I'm ridin' for fun."

"You ridin' foh fun?"

"Yes."

"When you get to Omaha, then you gwine back where you come from?"

"Sure thing. I've got a job, at end o' track."

"Don't you do it; don't you do it, boy," advised the cook, as darkly as his face. "Don't you ride 'round these pahts foh fun. No, suh! An' don't you staht back from Omaha till Gin'ral Sherman's soldiers have killed ev'ry one o' them Injuns. Yessuh! You let Gin'ral Sherman an' Gin'ral Dodge 'tend to one end o' track, an' you get a job at t'other end."

Terry had to laugh, but the cook's words struck home. Matters looked bad. The Indians had started in, that was certain; and everybody appeared to think that this was an "Injun" year. Somehow, he felt that he was deserting his post. He was leaving Paddy Miles and the gang to their troubles, and was making for safety, himself.

“When do we stop next?” he asked.

“I dunno. Mebbe we’ll stop at Willow Island, foh ohduhs; an’ mebbe we’ll stop at Kearney. Jest depends on the gin’ral. We stop whenever we please, or whenever the injineer needs wood an’ watuh, or whenever we got to meet ’nothuh train.”

“How far is Kearney?”

“Hundred miles from Nohth Platte. We’ll get there befoh noon, an’ we’ll get to Omaha befoh dark. Yessuh, we’ll travel right along.”

The cook went on about his business, and Terry stared out at the flying country, which danced a reel in tune with the roaring wheels. This was great fun, of course, to be speeding over the new Union Pacific Railroad, in a private car, but——! And he wondered how Jenny and Jimmie Muldoon’s brother were holding down the job at end o’ track.

With a swoop and a whistle they rushed past a long freight-train, waiting on a siding. At every siding there was one of these long freights, plumb loaded and headed west, or partly empty and headed east.

They might get a glimpse of Fort McPherson, at Cottonwood Springs on the stage road along the other side of the river. Then they whirled right through Brady Island station of the railroad. But stop they did at Willow Island, which bore the same name as the old Overland station, across from it.

The station buildings, except the station-house itself, were of sod, and loop-holed so as to fight off the Indians. They looked like a fort. A lot of cedar bridge-piles and telegraph poles and cottonwood ties were stacked here, brought in by ranchers’ wagons from the places where they had been cut. The road didn’t get much of such stuff, on these bare plains, but once in a while there was a valley or some bottom-land with a little timber growing. Cedar ties and cottonwood ties were no good, though, until they were soaked in zinc, to make them hard and lasting. The best ties came from Missouri, Iowa and Wisconsin.

The next stop was at Plum Creek, also named for the old stage station, opposite; then there was a pause on a side-track, to let another train by; and they were off again. It certainly was fast work.

General Dodge entered his headquarters car.

“How do you like railroading, now?” he asked.

“Fine, sir. We go some, don’t we!”

“Rather beat the stages, or your old yellow mule, that’s a fact,” the general admitted. “But if it wasn’t for you fellows that lay the track in such good shape, we couldn’t go at all.”

“And the men who discover the trail—they count a heap, too, I guess,” Terry added.

“Yes, siree. The surveyors’ job is the most ticklish job, especially out on the desert and in the mountains. Track-layers, graders, and surveyors—they’re all heroes. They do the hard work, but the people who never see them don’t think of them. Well, will you stay aboard into Omaha?”

“Would I be a long time getting back?” Terry queried.

“No, sir; not unless the road is tied up by Indian trouble. I’ll put you on a train and send you right through to North Platte; then you can jump a construction-train, and keep going to end of track again. You’ll have your pass.”

“Where do we stop next, please?” Terry asked.

“At Kearney. We’ll be there in about an hour. You can get off and stretch your legs, and so can the dog.”

“Could I go back from Kearney?” Terry blurted.

“Oh, pshaw!” And the general’s eyes twinkled. “You aren’t homesick already, are you? You might have to wait there until two o’clock in the morning, for the passenger train. You could catch the same train farther down the line. No; you’d better ride on to Omaha, and see the whole system that you’ve helped build.”

“Yes, sir,” agreed Terry—but somehow he felt a little doubtful. If he should be kept at Omaha, on account of Indian trouble—oh, that wouldn’t do at all. His place was at the front.

Kearney had been named for old Fort Kearney, across the river. It wasn’t much of a place, yet: just the station and a store and scattering of small houses. There were several soldiers from the fort standing around. General Dodge and Superintendent Reed had jumped off and seemed to be having

business with an officer, while the engine took on water; so Terry and Shep jumped off, too. Then a man came running from the station door, with a piece of yellow paper—a telegram—for the engineer.

He was a lively young man, with a limp. Staring, Terry scarcely could believe his eyes. Now he, too, ran, yelling, and Shep bolted ahead, barking, and they caught the young man, who turned, astonished.

Yes, it was Harry Revere, all right—good old Harry, ex-school teacher, ex-Pike's Peaker, ex-pro prospector, ex-Pony Express rider, ex-Overland Stage station-keeper, and a dandy partner.

"For heaven's sake, what you doing here?" he demanded, as they shook hands.

"Oh, I'm traveling special, inspecting the U. P.," grinned Terry. "What you doing?"

"I'm the boss lightning-shooter at this shebang," proclaimed Harry. "You couldn't travel at all, if it wasn't for me. See? Wait till I deliver this dispatch."

In a moment he came back.

"Thought you were somewhere down the line farther; thought you were in Omaha, maybe," said Terry.

"So I was, but I'm getting promoted out toward the front. That's where I want to be. I won't stop till I'm clear through to Salt Lake. But where you going? Thought you had a job at the front, yourself? How's Jenny? [Jenny really was Harry's mule, but she was working for the company.] How are your folks?"

"They're all right. So's Jenny. Jimmie Muldoon's brother is riding her and spelling me. I'm going to Omaha. General Dodge invited me."

"You haven't quit?"

"No. I'm just on a little trip."

"What do you want to go on to Omaha for?" scolded Harry. "Shucks! This is no time to take it easy, when we're trying to make a big year. I want to be at the front, myself. There's nothing between here and Omaha. Where's George?"

“He’s on survey, ’way out.”

“Wish I was with him,” asserted Harry. “But I’m getting along, by hops and skips. I don’t savvy why you want to go to Omaha, when you were at the front, yourself, with Jenny.”

“I don’t want to go, Harry,” Terry confessed. “Gee, I’d like to be back already. General Dodge has asked me, though; I guess he thinks it’s a treat for me to ride to Omaha. I’m sick of loafing—I’ve been gone a night and half a day, now, and I ought to be back, in case they need me.”

“Bully for you,” Harry praised. “I’ll tell you: You stop off here with me, for a couple of hours. You can explain to the general that you’d rather stay and visit me than go on to Omaha. You won’t have to wait for the passenger train. No, sir! I’ll fix you out.”

“I’ll ask him,” answered Terry, on the run again.

The general seemed to understand perfectly.

“You see, sir,” Terry finished, “I’d like to be on the job till you come through next time, and then maybe I can get off to go out on that survey trip, if you have room for me. I’d rather find George Stanton than go to Omaha. I like the front, and I’ve seen a whole lot of the road, now.”

“That’s all right,” General Dodge approved. “The front’s the best place. You stay there, and keep your share of the rails moving up. We can’t run trains without rails, and unless we have the rails we can’t get to Salt Lake and beat the Central. So good-by and good luck. I’ll have a wire sent to your father that you’ve turned back.”

“Please tell him to tell Pat Miles that I’ll be there tomorrow morning sure, and I’ll want my mule and truck,” Terry begged.

The general laughed. He and Mr. Reed boarded their train and it pulled out. Terry and Shep found Harry Revere in the operator’s room of the passenger station—which also was the station-agent’s room.

“What do you have to do, Harry?”

“Nothing much. I only sell tickets and check up freight and bill express and send dispatches and read the wire and wrestle baggage and sweep out and answer questions and once in a while tend some woman’s baby while she

goes home after something she's forgotten. When there's nothing more important, I eat or sleep. But I'm hoping to push on up front, where it's lively. I aim to get to Salt Lake as soon as the rails and poles do. Were you in that Injun fracas at end o' track, yesterday?"

"I shore was. How'd you hear?"

"I picked it off the wire. I just sat here and made medicine while you-all fought. Nobody scalped, was there? Did they hurt Jenny? I asked the North Platte operator and he laughed at me. 'Ha, ha!' was all he said."

"Nope; nobody scalped, except a couple of the Sioux. They put a hole through Jenny's ear, though."

"The low-down villains!" grumbled Harry. "Abused the beautiful ear of my Jenny, did they? When I come along I'll bring her an earring. Reckon a little bale of hay would please her most: an earring to represent a little bale of hay. And a cob of corn for the other ear, if she gets a hole through that too. Say," he asked, "you didn't see Sol Judy in those parts, did you?"

"No. Is Sol around there?"

"Yep. He's a scout at Fort McPherson, helping guard the line." That was good news. Sol Judy was another old friend. He dated away back to the Kansas ranch, where he'd appeared on his way from California. And he'd been with them in the Colorado gold diggin's, and had driven stage and scouted along the Overland; and now here he was again, still doing his share of work while the country grew.

"Our whole family's joining in with the U. P., looks like," Harry added.

"All except my mother and George's mother and Virgie." Virgie was George Stanton's sister. "And I bet you they'll be on the job some way, before we get done with it."

"You win," Harry chuckled. "That's their style—right up and coming. Well, let's go to dinner. How'd you like fried ham and saleratus biscuits?"

"Fine."

"Good. Yesterday I had saleratus biscuits and fried ham, today we'll have fried ham and saleratus biscuits; tomorrow there'll be just biscuits and ham. It's a great system."

They ate in the section house, at a board table covered with oilcloth. After dinner they swapped yarns and visited, while Harry busied himself dispatching or attending to the people who dropped in. A passenger train from the west came through, and a freight.

About three o'clock Harry took another message, and reported on it.

"Now you can get out of here. There'll be a freight along in about half an hour." That was welcome news.

"From the east, you mean?"

"Yep."

"Hooray," Terry cheered. "I'll be on the job again in the morning."

But Harry scowled as he juggled his telegraph key.

"Dead once more," he complained.

"Who?"

"The line west."

"Maybe the operator up there's asleep."

"No. It's lack of juice. I can tell. Something's busted."

"Injuns did it, huh?"

"Naw, don't think so. Ever since that buck tore a wire out and tried to ride off with it, and lightning struck the line a mile or so beyond and killed him and his pony both, the Injuns have let the Talking Spirit alone. 'Cept of course they shoot the insulators off, now and then. And the Overlanders chop the poles for firewood and use a piece of wire when they want to fix their wagons. At least, they do that on the other side the river, and I reckon they reach over and do it on this side. And the poles make mighty fine scratch sticks for the buffalo to rub against."

The Overland Telegraph Company's line across continent followed the stage road, south of the Platte; the Union Pacific Railroad line followed the rails on this side of the river. But when the railroad was finished, there would likely be only the one line.

"What are you going to do?" Terry asked.

“Find Bill Thompson. The break’s between here and Willow.”

“Who’s Bill Thompson?”

“Head lineman. He’ll have to get out and fix it. You stay here and keep shop while I hunt Bill.”

“Supposing the freight comes along,” queried Terry. “Do I jump it?”

“Nary a jump,” Harry answered, from the door. “Let her come. She dassn’t run through without orders from the boss, and that’s Harry Revere, chief lightning-shooter, station-agent, ticket-seller, express-toter, freight-slinger, baggage-wrecker and baby-tender. I’ll be back and tell ’em what to do.”

He was gone about twenty minutes, and returned considerably flustered.

“Bill’s fishing. Dog-gone him! He never catches anything, either. He went up the Platte or down the Platte; left word he was going down, so probably he’s up. Now traffic on the Union Pacific Railroad will have to wait on Bill. I’ve got people hunting him.”

The freight pulled in. The engine stood fuming; the crew lolled about; yes, everything and everybody waited on Bill Thompson. Terry felt that he was losing valuable time. This was pretty tough. He wanted to be on his way.

Bill appeared, breathless, at half-past four—and he hadn’t caught a single fish, either. Now he had to get his men together and his handcar out.

“How far’s he going?” Terry demanded, struck with an idea.

“As far as Willow, anyway. North Platte, maybe, if he takes the notion,” said Harry. “There’s better fishing at North Platte—and better eating, too. Besides, he’s got a girl up there, at an all-night hash counter.”

“Gee, then! Why can’t Shep and I go too?” Terry proposed.

“Sure thing. There’s nothing like a handcar, for seeing the country from. Climb aboard. Tell Bill I sent you.”

“But won’t the freight pass us?”

“Not till you get to Willow. It’ll have to wait till Bill gives the O. K. These freights are mighty uncertain—they’re strictly limited. When they don’t happen to be moving they’re standing still, waiting for something. The main

business of a freight crew on this line seems to be hunting a side-track. So if you're really in a hurry you'd better take the handcar."

"All right. Good-by." And Terry ran for the handcar.

"I'll see you at Salt Lake," called Harry, after.

The handcar crew were about ready. They numbered four, in broad-brimmed slouch hats, flannel shirts, and trousers tucked into heavy boots. They were just stowing their climbing irons and other tools on the car, and a couple of rifles, also.

Bill Thompson, the red-faced head lineman, with whiskers on his chin, granted Terry a sharp look.

"What's the matter, bub?"

"Harry said I could go up track with you, if you don't mind."

"An' the dawg too?"

"Yes, please."

"An' 'ow fur might you be goin'?" By his speech Bill was English.

"Clear to North Platte, if I can. I've got a job with the track-laying gang at end o' track."

"You 'ave, 'ave you? H'all right. H'aint afraid o' h'Injuns, h'are you?"

"No, sir."

"Needn't be scared of Injuns, boy," remarked one of the other men, as Terry and Shep hopped aboard together. "They don't bother the track. These here guns are for antelope. You sit at one end, out of the way, and hold your dog where he won't be stepped on."

With a running start they were off. Harry waved from the station door.

Shep lay braced, considerably astonished; but he was a wise old dog, and put his trust in his master. Terry sat with his legs hanging over the rear end of the car; the men, two to a bar, pumped regularly; the car gathered way, and moved clanking over the rails. This assuredly beat riding upon a train, because a fellow was right outdoors and could see everywhere.

It was sort of go-as-you-please, too. The men kept close watch of the telegraph line; now and then they stopped the car, and one of them put on his climbing irons and shinned up a pole, to inspect. But they didn't find the break, yet. Meanwhile the sun sank lower and lower, and presently entered a bank of clouds in the west. Dusk began to gather; the plains seemed very quiet and lonely, and the handcar small and lost.

What with the frequent stops, to investigate, darkness was making everything dim when they rolled into Plum Creek station. Plum Creek was as lonely as the country around; the station was locked and the agent evidently had gone for the night.

"E wouldn't know h'anything, any'ow," remarked Bill Thompson. "E h'ain't a h'operator."

They bowled on, through Plum Creek, and into the darkness.

"Ow's a man expected to see a broken wire this time o' day?" Bill grumbled.

"Tisn't day; it's night."

"Right you h'are," he answered. "We'll go h'on to Willow an' find out if h'anybody there knows h'anything. An' when we're at Willow we're 'alf way to North Platte, aye? Might as well go on to North Platte, aye? H'are you game? North Platte's a proper kind o' place. 'Bout time this line was inspected clear through, h'anyway. Climb a pole, one o' you, an' test out. We're liable to pass that break unbeknown."

With a torch, one of the men climbed a pole.

"I can raise 'em east, but I can't get 'em, west," he called down. "The break's on ahead still. I see a light, 'way up track."

"What kind o' light?"

"First I thought it was a train a-comin'. Doesn't seem to move, though. It's 'round a curve. You fellers on the ground can't see it."

"Trampers, maybe."

"Or the h'operator from Willow is tryin' to fix that break 'imself," added Bill. "Come down an' we'll go h'up."

So the man came down from the pole, and the handcar moved on, pump-pump, clank-clank, with everybody peering ahead.

Yes, after a time they could glimpse the light, before, where the track led. It flickered ruddily, but did not move. Looked to be a bonfire.

“I don’t see any figgers at it,” said one of the men.

“They must be workin’ on the wire,” said Bill. “Or else layin’ an’ toastin’ their shins.”

“You don’t reckon it’s Injuns, do you?”

“What’d h’Injuns be doin’ with a big fire to show their whereabouts?” Bill reproved. “H’anyway, ’ere we come.”

The distance lessened, and the bonfire grew plainer. It was a hundred yards before, on the curve—it was seventy-five yards—it was fifty yards; the handcar had slackened, while everybody gazed curiously; and suddenly, as if out of the very ground, there had sprung into ruddy view on both sides of the track a dozen figures, a horse and a foot.

Bill yelped alarmed.

“H’Injuns, boys! Don’t stop. Give it to her! We’ll run right through ’em!”

The men bowed their backs. The handcar fairly jumped as it charged the fire and the figures. Hanging hard and squirming flat, Terry held his breath. A moment more, and ’midst a chorus of yells they were there, running the gauntlet. Then, to a violent crash, they and the car were hurtling together, high in the air.

CHAPTER V

THE CHEYENNES HAVE SOME FUN

WITH a terrific jar Terry landed far in the brush and went ploughing and rolling, topsy-turvy. He thought that he heard Shep yelp (as if Shep had landed, too, somewhere); then he brought up, in a heap, wedged at the bottom of a little wash.

He lay without moving, listening and wondering if any bones were broken. No; he seemed to be all right. But there were chases, through the brush, in the darkness; the Indians were riding hither-thither, shouting and shooting. He heard it all—the shots, the yells of triumph, a groan or two. The Indians were killing the handcar men!

It seemed to him a long time before that was over with, and every moment he expected an Indian to ride on top of him. But the yelling and shooting and scurrying died away. The Indians appeared to be gathering at their fire.

Ah! What was that? He heard a faint rustle, near him. An Indian was scouting about, on foot, looking for him? He scarcely dared to breathe as he hugged the earth, and his heart thumped like a drum. Then something paused, beside him; next something cold, like a knife blade, pressed against his neck, and he heard a little whimper.

It was Shep, and Shep's nose! Shep was alive and had found him. Oh, Shep! Good old Shep! Be quiet, Shep. But Shep knew. He was satisfied, and crouched close, only once in a while growling low in his throat.

Here they were—the only ones left alive, Terry felt, from the handcar. Now what could he do? The Indians were talking and laughing, at a little distance. He gradually untangled himself, and inch by inch raised his head, to see, in the direction of the fire. He had to crawl a few feet, to the edge of his wash. He peeped over.

The Indians were collected around their fire, beside the track. Between his place and the fire there was a narrow gully, bridged by a wooden culvert; and upon the track over the culvert there was a tie, fastened to the rails by

wire, but knocked askew. That was what the handcar had struck; and he had been thrown clear across to this side and luckily had landed in this wash cut diagonally by the rains. The sage was quite high here, too. He guessed he hadn't been counted on the handcar, because he had been lying down and the four men had been standing.

He could just see the handcar, bottomside up, in the brush on the slope of the gully. Now the Indians were leaving their fire and trooping down track a little way. They began to pry at the rails, with poles. They were planning another wreck. This one had been a success, but it was only a small one. Perhaps they thought that a tie would not wreck a train, and they wanted to wreck a train.

They pried and worked, loosening the rails. What could a fellow do? That freight at Kearney might have got tired of waiting, and be along any time. Or a passenger train might come. Terry thought upon breaking for Willow Island, to give the alarm there. No, that wouldn't be the quickest way. If he might only get around the Indians, and run to Plum Creek—it couldn't be more than five or six miles, and he might meet the train this side of it and stop it, somehow.

“Whisht! Come on, Shep. Careful, now,” he whispered. He started to crawl. Shep crawled behind him. Once down in the gully, maybe they could follow it up a way, and make a circuit around that gang. They reached the bottom, and were about to do finely, when Terry heard a groan.

It sounded from the brush, beyond the gully. He listened, and heard it again. It was a groan in English. One of the handcar men was alive. Well, he ought to go and see.

“’Elp!”

That was Bill Thompson! Bill was groaning for help. Oh, dear!

Up he crawled, seeking the place of the groans.

“Hello! Where are you?” he asked, cautiously. He was almost into the fire-light.

“’Ere. Who are you?”

“Terry Richards. I’m coming.”

He kept crawling, and pretty soon he found Bill lying flat on his side, with his head on his arm. In the faint glimmer of the flames a ghastly thing he was.

“You bad hurt, Bill?”

“’Ello. They shot me through the h’arm an’ knifed me in the neck an’ scalped me, but I got the scalp.”

“What?”

“Yes. ’Ere ’tis, in my ’and. The bloomin’ beggar didn’t ’ang onto h’it. ’E dropped h’it. H’I saw ’im. Felt like the ’ole top o’ my ’ead was h’off, but I got h’it when they wasn’t lookin’. D’ you think h’it’ll grow on me again?”

“I dunno. We’d better get right out of here, though. He may come looking for it.”

“’E ’asn’t missed it, I reckon. H’it was in ’is belt. What they doin’ now?”

“Tearing up the rails, so as to wreck a train. I’m going to try to make Plum Creek. I’ll help you into that gully; then I’ve got to go.”

“H’all right,” groaned Bill. “You go. Never you mind me. H’I can manage.”

“No,” said Terry. And suddenly he crouched lower. “Keep quiet, Bill. They’re coming back.”

“Oh, the bloody villains,” groaned Bill. “Make a run for it, while you can. Never mind me.”

“I can’t,” answered Terry. And even if he would, he didn’t dare. They might see him; if they didn’t catch him, they’d find Bill——!

The whole body of Indians were roistering back, up track, for their fire; probably to hide near it, as before, and wait. Some were afoot, some on ponies; and a hideous sight they offered, to Terry, crouched here on the outskirts of the fire-light, and daring to move not a muscle. Cheyennes; that’s who they were: Cheyennes!

They began to scatter out, for ambush. Perhaps there’d be a chance to risk it and crawl farther away. Ah! Oh, thunder! One of them was coming across, straight this way, prowling through the brush.

“Lie low, Bill. Watch sharp.”

“What’s doin’?”

“They’re at the fire, but one of ’em’s coming.”

“’E’s lookin’ for ’is scalp,” Bill groaned.

They stiffened, motionless. Shep growled, and Terry nudged him frantically. The Indian—he had feathers in his braids and a gun in his hands—ranged right and left, and all the time drew nearer. At that rate, he couldn’t miss them—not if he kept on. Terry didn’t know whether to bolt or to stay. If Shep only would quit that growling——! Or if the Indian would only turn aside. To be shot, or tomahawked, would be awful. It took a great deal of nerve to stiffen, here, and hold one’s breath, and wait and pray. There was just the chance that they wouldn’t be discovered—but the Indian was coming, coming, in sure and easy fashion, looking for that scalp!

Quit it, Shep! Bill was gasping, in his efforts to utter no sound. It was worse for him, because he couldn’t see. Terry could see, with the corner of an eye, through the brush—and he’d about made up his mind that at the last moment he would bolt, and run, dodging, for the open. He’d have to risk a bullet, and have to risk being overhauled; but he might get away, and that would lead the Indian from Bill, too. There wasn’t any use in the both of them being found, in this one spot.

He was all braced, to make his dive, when on a sudden Shep took matters into his own hand. The Indian was scouting about, in the brush not more than twenty yards before—and out Shep charged, with a furious snarly rush, in defense.

Terry had no time in which to grab him; and it would have been too late, anyway. An instant more—so brief a space that the Indian was taken by surprise—and out from the brush Shep had sprung for his throat. He knocked the Indian backward. They staggered around together, Shep snarling and snapping, the Cheyenne fighting him off. Terry half sat up, to watch, his heart in his throat.

“It’s my dog,” he panted, to Bill.

The Cheyenne seemed to have Shep by the neck or jaw, and was thrusting with his other arm, stabbing him. Shep yelped, snarlily. With a kick and a fling the Cheyenne threw him aside; and as Shep pluckily struggled to his

feet and still snarling made for him again, the Cheyenne quickly leveled rifle, and fired.

The bullet drove poor old Shep in a heap. He lay black and lax, scarcely moving, except to lift his head, and drop it. He had happened to land in a bare spot, and Terry could see him plainly. Yes, he was dead.

Such a hot wrath surged into Terry's brain and to his very finger-tips that all he wanted now was a chance at that Indian, himself. If he but had a gun—or if he might grab the Indian by the legs, drag him down, and get atop of him! Anything, so as to avenge brave old Shep. For the moment Terry was too hot to think of himself, or Bill, or anybody except Shep, and that Cheyenne.

The Cheyenne stood over Shep, kicked him once or twice, and then seemed about to come on again. Terry crouched, tense and alert. Shep had not saved them, after all. Too bad.

“Is 'e comin'?” murmured Bill. “'E killed the dawg?”

“Sh!” warned Terry.

No! Hurrah! The Cheyenne stopped, and looked back. The Indians by the fire had whooped to him, and were disappearing. The Cheyenne turned and ran for them.

“He's going, Bill!” Terry gasped. “It's the train. That's coming. I can see the headlight. Oh, Bill!”

Bill struggled, to see also. Afar down the track there was a light, wavering and flashing, and they could hear a dull rumble. Several of the mounted Indians had dashed away, in that direction. The others were scuttling and hiding.

“H'it's the freight,” Bill groaned. “H'it's the freight that was at Kearney. Bully Brookes, 'e's h'engine driver, 'Enshaw, 'e's the stoker. H'it'll be a smash, an' we can't 'elp it. Is your dawg killed?”

“Yes, I guess so. But if he hadn't run out the Cheyenne would have found us and we'd have been killed, too.”

“'E was a good dawg, a sure-'nough 'ero. 'E stopped the h'Injun, but we can't stop that train.”

“There are two trains, Bill! I see another light, 'way behind the first one!”

“H’it’ll be plain murder,” Bill groaned. “An’ we can’t do a thing. I wish you’d never found me.”

“I couldn’t have got there in time, anyway,” said Terry.

The first light rapidly grew larger, the rumbling increased. Terry stared, fascinated. He didn’t wish to see, but somehow he had to. If Bully Brookes or his fireman, Henshaw, only would discover the lifted rails and stop, in time, themselves. But it did not seem as though they were going to stop or slacken. Flaring and wavering, the headlight was coming on.

The engine began to whistle madly, with long shriek after long shriek. Had it sensed its danger? But it did not slacken—it was coming faster. And see! The Cheyennes were nagging it; by the glare from the opened firebox as the fireman shoved in the cordwood sticks the Indians were shown, racing on either side, brandishing their bows and guns, egging the train on.

The engine jetted steam from its cylinder cocks; the whistle shrieked and shrieked; the firebox glowed redly as the firemen stoked with the cordwood, the Indians lashed their ponies and plied their arrows. It was a wild scene, and terrible. Terry trembled with excitement. Bill sank back, groaning.

“Tell me when she ’its,” he pleaded.

The engine was approaching the bonfire. It had not reached the tilted rails, yet. Oh, would nobody see them?

They were seen, they were seen! Listen! The notes of the whistle had changed to frantic yaps like those of a frightened animal. “Down brakes, down brakes, quick!” the whistle was imploring. The engine wheels spurted sparks, under reversed throttle. Too late. The racing Cheyennes swerved apart, for safety; even while Terry gazed, and before he had time to close his eyes, the engine rose right into the air, with a roar and a plunge left the track, and dragging the tender and car after car it went lurching into the prairie.

It toppled over, cars toppled, and in a moment everything seemed to be piled in a long heap. The engine was almost buried from sight. Out of the jangle there welled shouts. From the rear, men came running; from the front the Cheyennes charged. One man with a lantern—the conductor, maybe—arrived at the fore; the Indians seemed to miss him, in the excitement, for he

turned and ran fast, again, down track, throwing his lantern away. He was going to the train behind, and it looked as though he got off, safe.

The Cheyennes chased about, circled the engine heap, and danced and whooped. Flames burst forth, licking up through the heap, and the scene grew brighter and brighter.

“I think we’d better move, Bill,” Terry stammered. “They’ll see us here, sure, as soon as the train gets to burning. We can hide in the little gully where I was.”

“H’all right,” Bill groaned. “H’it’s a good time, while they’re murderin’ somebody h’else.”

That was a hard journey, with Bill hitching painfully through the brush, using one arm and carrying his scalp and stopping every little while to rest and pant. The wonder was, that he could move at all—a man who had been shot and stabbed and scalped; but he had a lot of will power, and was determined to live and make the scalp grow on his head again, “to fool them bloody h’Injuns.”

At last he was settled in the gully, with Terry’s coat under his head. Terry crawled up to the edge again, to lie shivering, and see what more occurred. It wasn’t very likely, though, that the Indians would leave the wreck until they had to.

No, they stayed there. One or two of the cars following the engine and tender had been loaded with brick. They had landed right on top of the engine, and the bricks were scattered all around. The Indians were pelting the heap with the loose bricks; they acted like children; but pretty soon the fire got too hot for that, so they withdrew, to squat in a circle, and curiously watch.

The second train had backed down track, and was far distant, still backing. Had gone to Plum Creek, probably, for help. Shivering Terry and groaning Bill Thompson were left alone, with the Indians and the blazing wreck. What a night! When would help come?

Terry never forgot this night. Up the track, and down the track beyond the wreck nothing moved. The Indians stretched out and seemed to sleep comfortably in the warmth of their big fire, as if waiting until morning. In the gully Bill now and then groaned. On the edge of the gully Terry huddled

and nodded—but whenever he started to doze, he woke with a jump, seeing things.

Poor old Shep! He had Shep in his mind a great deal. Yes, Shep was a hero, and he should not be left there, for the coyotes to eat. That would not be fair.

“H’are you ’ere?” Bill called up, faintly. “’Ello, lad.”

“I’m here,” Terry answered. “I’ll stay with you, Bill. I’m going to stay till people come. I want to bury my dog.”

“’E was a fine dawg,” Bill agreed.

Finally Terry did manage to sleep, in spite of his shivering and his bad dreams. He awakened stiff and bewildered. Where was he? Oh, yes; here in the brush, still, outside the wreck. He might see about him. The air was thin and gray, morning had come. He cautiously raised higher, to look. The wreck was smoking, the Indians were there—they were moving about, and flocking down track, and climbing over the cars. No rescue had come yet. Oh, dear! The telegraph wires had been used, for tying the tie that wrecked the handcar, to the track, but why didn’t help come from Plum Creek way?

Was Bill dead? No, he spoke.

“’Ello?”

“Hello. How are you?”

“Wish I had a drink. What’s doin’ now?”

“They’re robbing the wreck.”

“Yes, that’s what,” groaned Bill.

The Indians were enjoying themselves. They had broken into some cars loaded with drygoods, and were strewing the stuff right and left. As the morning brightened, that was an odd sight, down there. The Cheyennes wrapped themselves in gay calico and gingham and red flannel and other cloths; they tied whole bolts of the same cloth to their saddle horns and their ponies’ tails, and darted hither-thither over the plain, while the bolts unrolled and other riders chased after, trying to step on the long streamers. They had so much plunder that they seemed crazy.

Suddenly they all galloped to one side, to a little rise, and gathered there, like a flock of magpies, gazing up track. Had they seen Terry? He felt a thrill of fear, and huddled lower. Then he bethought to look behind, up track, too—and he saw smoke!

It was a train! A train was coming, from the west. And how it did come! A rescue train! Hurrah!

“Bill! A train’s coming! The Injuns are quitting!”

“Where from?”

“Up track.”

“’Ow’d they get word, thereabouts?”

“I dunno; but it’s coming, and coming lickity-split, as if it had soldiers.”

“’Ooray!” Bill groaned. “An’ I ’ope it ’as a doctor, to stick this ’ere scalp on me again.”

The engine shrieked, and the smoke poured blacker. The Indians were getting restless. Then away they scoured. Terry stood up and yelled and waved his arms, the train—a short train of box-cars—pulled in and soldiers tumbled out. How good their blue coats looked! Terry went stumbling and staggering to meet them. He saw somebody he knew—the scout in buckskin who was leading the soldiers, with the officer.

“Sol! Hello, Sol Judy! Oh, Sol!”

But Sol scarcely knew *him*.

“Who are you? What? For heaven’s sake, boy! You aren’t Terry Richards?”

“Guess I am.” And Terry sank down. His legs had given out. “Oh, Sol! They wrecked our handcar, and Bill Thompson’s in that gully with his scalp gone, but he’s alive, and they killed Shep and then they wrecked the freight and killed a lot more.”

In a moment he was surrounded and picked up. He had to tell his story all over again, while some examined the wreck, and some got Bill and carried him up, and the Cheyennes meanwhile made off.

They were soldiers from Fort McPherson, beyond Willow. A man had ridden around the Indians, from Plum Creek, and taken the word.

“There aren’t enough of us to follow those fellows,” explained Sol. “But the Pawnees are on the way from end o’ track. They’ll do the business. Now you and Thompson can go back with this train.”

“I want to bury Shep, first,” Terry pleaded.

“Sure you do. He died fighting, like a soldier, and ‘Killed in action’ is the report on him. A good U. P. hand he was, wasn’t he? So we’ll just bury him right here, where he can watch the tracks.”

Nobody seemed to blame Terry any for crying, when he and Sol and a couple of soldiers put Shep away. Sol understood; he had known Shep a long time, himself.

The bodies of the handcar men and a brakeman (the engineer and fireman had been burned) were placed aboard, for Willow. Taking Bill Thompson and Terry, but leaving the soldiers on guard at the wreck, the train backed up track. Bill’s scalp had been stowed in a bucket of water, to keep it limber. It curled about, as it floated, and looked exactly like a drowned rat. No doctor ever did succeed in planting it and making it grow again on Bill’s head; but Bill got well and went to work, wearing a skull-cap.

However, Terry went to work, the first, at end o’ track once more, the next morning. Jenny was glad to see him. His father had been mighty glad, too, and together they mourned the brave Shep.

“I hear tell ye lost your dog,” said Paddy Miles, kindly.

“Yes, that’s so,” Terry answered, with a gulp.

“Ah, well; ’twas a bad night, sure enough, for him an’ you an’ them others,” mused Pat. “But him an’ they are not the only wans. There’s many a grave beside the U. Pay., behind us, an’ there’s more on ahead an’ more yet to be made, before the road goes through. ’Tis a big job an’ a cruel job an’ a long road to travel; but ’tis sich a job as is worth the dyin’ for anny day, say I—though I’d fair like to live jist to see the Cintral baten into Salt Lake an’ the U. Pay. track stretchin’ out clane across Nevady.”

CHAPTER VI

MOVING DAY ALONG THE LINE

ON marched the rails of the iron trail, at a giant's stride of one to two miles in a day, as if trying to catch the tie-layers and the graders. But the tie-layers, planting their ties every two feet, managed to hold the advance; and twenty, thirty, fifty miles in advance of them, the graders followed the stakes of the engineers. Back and forth along the grade toiled the wagons, distributing ties and provisions. From Omaha to North Platte thundered the trains, bringing fresh supplies, other rails and other ties, to be taken on by the construction-trains.

And into Omaha were pouring, by boat up from St. Louis and St. Joe, and by wagon from Iowa, still other rails and ties and provisions, from the farther east. It was said that if a double line of dollar bills were laid, instead of rails, from Omaha across the plains, they would not pay for the cost of the roadbed alone.

The Indians were still bad. They had not given up. They ambushed grading parties whenever they could—killed stragglers and hunters, and ran off stock. The Pawnee scouts and the regular cavalry and infantry constantly patrolled the right-of-way, camped with the men, and tried to clear the country, before and on either side. But the construction-trains sometimes fought at full speed, or narrowly escaped a wreck.

Every morning the track-layer gang of the boarding-train piled out at reveille, the same as in the army; they marched to work, in columns of fours, at a shoulder arms, under captains and sergeants, stacked their guns, and were ready to spring to ranks again at the first order.

“B’ gorry, the same as a battalion o’ infantry, we are,” said Pat Miles. “An’ there was no better battalion durin’ the war, either. From Gin’ral Casement down to the chief spiker we got as good officers as ever wore the blue, wid five years’ trainin’ behind ’em—an’ there’s many a man usin’ a pick who’s fit to command a company, in a pinch.”

Little was heard from the engineering parties in the field. They were scattered all through the mountains, from up in Wyoming down into Colorado, and on across into Utah, beyond Salt Lake. In fact, last year the surveys for the best routes had been pushed clear to California—so as to be ready.

The parties that had come in, in the winter, to report and draw their maps, had gone out again in early spring for another season's work. Some of the parties even had stayed out all winter, measuring the snow falls and learning the weather at the passes.

General Sherman, commanding this Military Division of the Missouri, which extended from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, had issued orders that the military posts should furnish General Dodge with all the soldiers who might be spared, so that the road and the survey parties should be protected.

Just the same, the surveying job was a dangerous job; ten and twelve miles of the survey lines were run, each day, and the chain-men and rod-men sometimes were far separated from the soldiers—and the chief of the party was supposed to go in the advance, to discover the easiest country.

Last year the mountains and the deserts on either slope had been pretty well covered. Now it was understood that the road was not to turn south for Denver and the Colorado Rockies—no good passes had been found; it was to turn for the northwest, instead, and cross the Rockies in Wyoming, by a pass that General Dodge himself had discovered in one of his Indian campaigns two years ago.

So onward marched the rails—that double line ever reaching westward. Back and forth, hauling the truck, Terry rode old yellow Jenny—and how many miles he traveled, to every one mile of track, he never quite figured out, but seemed to him that he already had ridden the distance to San Francisco.

“We’ll be after changin’ the base to a new Julesburg—as soon as the rails reach yon,” said the men.

“Sure, if it’s base o’ supplies ye mane, that’ll be changed before ever the rails get there,” was the answer. “Any day now they’ll be comin’ through—

wid their gin mills an' their skin-games an' all on wheels, to be set up an' waitin' for our pay-car."

And that was true. The railroad followed up along the north side of the South Platte River. The Overland Stage road followed up along the south side, with the six-horse teams and the round Concord stages plying over it between North Platte and Denver, on the Salt Lake haul. And stage road and railroad grade headed westward toward the old stage station at Julesburg.

It seemed likely that a new Julesburg would be the next supply base. It was about the right distance from North Platte, the last base, or ninety miles; for about every ninety or one hundred miles the supply base was relocated, farther along, at end o' track.

Sure enough. The middle of June, when old Julesburg itself was in sight, two or three miles before, on the south side of the river there appeared a long procession of wagons, buggies, horses, mules, men, women and children.

"B' gorry! Here they come, an' there they go. Ain't they kind, though, to be all waitin' for us?"

The wagons were loaded high with canvas, lumber, and goods; men and women were perched atop, or riding in buggies, or upon saddle-animals. The procession looked like a procession of refugees from a war—there must have been over two hundred people. They certainly raised a great cloud of dust.

The track-gang paused to cheer and wave; the women and the men waved back. The graders on ahead waved and cheered, as the procession passed them, to ford the river again at old Julesburg and wait for end o' track.

But Paddy Miles, the rugged Irishman, growled indignant.

"Bad cess to the likes of 'em. 'Tis hell on wheels, ag'in, movin' on to ruin many a man amongst us. Sure, if the Injuns'd only sweep the whole lot from the face o' the trail, I'd sing 'Glory be! There's a use for the red nagurs, after all.'"

The way these new towns sprang up was wonderful. The railroad sort of sowed them—and they grew over night like Jonah's gourd or the bean-stalk of Jack-the-Giant-Killer. There was North Platte. Before the rails touched it,

it had been nothing except a prairie-dog village. But in three weeks it had blossomed into a regular town.

Now part of its people were moving along, to tag the pay-car. These were the saloon keepers, gamblers, and speculators, in haste to fleece the railroad workers. The track men and the graders got three dollars a day, which meant rich picking for people bent upon selling nothing for something.

The land agents of the railroad company had selected the site for the next terminus town. Evidently it was across from old Julesburg, for this evening lights beamed out, in a great cluster, up the grade, where the “Hell on Wheels,” as the wrathful Pat Miles had dubbed it, was settling down like a fat spider weaving a web.

In the morning there was revealed the tents set up, and the board shanties going up—a mass of whity-brown and dingy dun, squatted upon the gravelly landscape on the railroad side of the river.

Several graders had been killed, in shooting scrapes; the night at new Julesburg had been a wild one; the track-layers who were anxious to spend their money waxed impatient to arrive. As soon as the rails reached the sprawling tent-and-shanty town, on the third day, the terminus supplies were moving up, on flat-cars, from North Platte.

The big building used by Casement Brothers, the contractors, occupied a car by itself. It could be taken apart like a toy building of blocks or cardboard. All the sections were numbered; and were unjointed, piled upon a car, moved on, and set up again.

That was the case with a number of other buildings—stores and offices, and the like. Some of them were painted to look as though they had brick or stone fronts—but they were only flimsy wood. Why, anybody who wished to erect a home on a lot could buy the house for \$300 in Chicago, and have it shipped, ready to be stuck together.

The railroad company owned the lands upon which these terminal towns or “base” towns were located. The company land agents sold or leased the town lots, and the speculators who acquired the lots ran the figures up as high as \$1000.

The rails paused a few days at this new Julesburg, while the supplies from North Platte were brought up, and side-tracks were laid for switching. After

supper the first night in, Terry and little Jimmie, his side-partner, went sight-seeing—like everybody else.

What a place—what an ugly, sprawling, dusty, noisy place, of tents and shacks and jostling people, flannel-shirted, booted track-layers and graders, blanketed Mexicans, even a few Arapaho Indians, attracted hither-thither by the shouts and songs and revolver shots, while candles, lanterns and coal-oil lamps tried to turn the dusk into day.

“The man over there is yelling ‘Hurrah for the wickedest town in America!’ Hear him?” half whispered Jimmie.

“It’s a heap worse than North Platte ever was,” Terry answered. “North Platte’s a division point and will be a city; but Pat says this town won’t last long. When the gamblers and whiskey-sellers move on with the rails, there won’t be anything left.”

Suddenly he and Jimmie met, face to face, General Dodge himself, with little General “Jack” Casement and a party, two of them in military uniform. The generals stopped short.

“What are you boys doing here?”

“Jist lookin’ ’round, sorrs,” stammered Jimmie, in his best brogue, with scrape of foot and touch of fingers to his ragged cap.

“You go back to the train. This is no place for boys,” General Casement ordered sharply. “I think,” he added, to General Dodge, “that I’ll instruct the police to keep all minors off the streets, at night, unless with their parents or guardians.”

“A good idea,” agreed General Dodge. “But I’ll relieve you of one boy, anyway. He goes along with me, I believe. You still want to go to the very front, do you?” he asked, of Terry.

“Yes, sir, if I can.”

“Well, you can, with General Casement’s permission. I’m on my way now. My party is camped a few miles out, beside the river. You’ll see the tents, in the morning. And you’ll find an old friend of yours with us: Sol Judy.”

That was good news.

“Is Sol going? Do you know Sol, sir?”

“Yes, indeed. Sol’s been my guide before. He mentioned you when we got to talking over the Plum Creek massacre. That was a close call, wasn’t it! And you lost your dog.”

“Yes, sir,” faltered Terry, with a little twinge in his heart. “I lost him. But he saved Bill Thompson and me. I suppose losing those men was worse.”

“They all gave their lives to the service,” said the general, gravely. “People will never know what it costs to build this road and keep it open. Now, we break camp at five o’clock tomorrow morning. You report to me here at Casement Brothers’ headquarters at six o’clock. Bring your campaign kit along, for we’ll be out all summer. We’ll provide a horse for you.”

“Yes, sir. I’ll be there,” Terry exclaimed, rejoicing.

“How about this other lad?” pursued the general, a twinkle in his eye as he scanned the red-headed Jimmie Muldoon. “Does he want to go out into the Indian country?”

“No, sorr; plaze, sorr,” Jimmie apologized. “Sure, we have plinty Injuns where we be, an’ I’ll stay wid the Irish. Me father’s chief spiker, sorr, an’ me mother washes clothes, an’ me brother’s water carrier an’ I’ve another brother who’s like to have Terry’s job; so it’s the Muldoon family that’ll see the end o’ track through to Salt Lake.”

“All right,” the general laughed. “Stay ‘wid the Irish.’ You’ve a loyal corps, Casement. But both you boys go back to your train and keep out of trouble.”

With Jimmie, Terry was glad enough to beat a retreat to the boarding-train, set out a little way in the cleaner brush and sand, where the air was pure and the night was peaceful. A number of the men, also, soon had enough of “town,” and were already turning in, to sleep. But there was no sleep in new Julesburg. All night the hubbub and hurly-burly continued, in spite of the police stationed by General Casement.

However, tomorrow this would be left behind. Many a mile yet into the north of west stretched the grade, waiting for the rails; and beyond the grade itself stretched the surveyors’ location stakes; and beyond the line of location stakes stretched widely the desert and the mountains, where other stakes were being driven—and where Terry Richards was about to explore,

in company with Scout Sol Judy and no less a personage than the bold General Dodge, chief engineer of the whole road.

George Stanton, somewhere out there, having fun while he chopped stakes and maybe even held the end of a surveyor's chain, was likely to get the surprise of his life.

CHAPTER VII

OUT INTO THE SURVEY COUNTRY

IT was a tremendous large party. In fact, it looked like a regular military excursion, instead of a survey trip, when in the early morning it moved out from new Julesburg (the “roaring town” was dead tired at this hour) and headed northwest up Lodge Pole Creek by the old Overland Stage road on the Oregon Trail.

There were two companies, B and M, of the Second Cavalry, from Fort McPherson, commanded by Captain (or Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel) J. K. Mizner and First Lieutenant James N. Wheelan, to ride the country and guard the long train of supply wagons. There was Surgeon Henry B. Terry, of the army medical corps—a slender, black-moustached, active man in major’s shoulder-straps. There were the teamsters and farriers and wagoners and cooks and what-not.

There were General Casement, and Construction Superintendent Sam Reed, and Colonel Silas Seymour of New York (the consulting engineer who was General Dodge’s assistant), and Mr. T. J. Carter, a Government director of the road, and Mr. Jacob Blickensderfer, Jr., an engineer sent from Washington by the President, and Mr. James Evans, the division engineer who was going out to examine the route to the base of the Black Hills range. There were General William Myers, chief quartermaster of the Department of the Platte, who was to inspect the site of a new army post on the railroad survey, and several surveyors who were to take the places of men that had been killed by the Indians.

And there was General Dodge’s own party, with notables enough in it to make a boy feel rather small.

Of course, the tall, lean man in buckskin was Scout Sol Judy, a real rider of the plains, always ready for Indians or anything else. He knew the country from Omaha to California.

The pleasant, full-bearded man who rode beside General Dodge himself was none other than General John A. Rawlins, chief-of-staff to General

Grant, at Washington. General Rawlins was not well, and General Grant had asked General Dodge if he might not be taken along, sometime, on a trip, to see if roughing it in the Far West might not do him good. So here he was. He and General Dodge had been noted commanders in the Civil War, and were warm friends of each other and of General Grant, too.

The alert trim-bearded man in corduroy coat was Mr. David Van Lennep, the geologist, whose business was to explore for coal-fields and minerals in the path of the survey.

The tall heavy-set, round-faced boyish-looking man was Captain and Major William McKee Dunn, General Rawlins' aide-de-camp, of the Twenty-first Infantry.

Another round-faced boyish young man was Mr. John R. Duff from Boston. His father was a director of the railroad company.

The tall slim man with side-whiskers was Mr. John E. Corwith, of Galena, Illinois, who was a guest of General Rawlins.

For Terry to get the names and titles straight required most of the day. General Dodge had introduced him in bluff fashion: "Gentlemen, this is Terry Richards, one of the company men who are laying the rails across continent. He'll be one of us, on the trip."

Beginning with General Rawlins, they all had shaken hands with him. But it was young Mr. Duff who explained who they were, as on his horse Terry fell in behind, to bring up the rear.

That was the place chosen by Mr. Duff and Mr. Corwith, the other civilian guest.

"So you're out to see the country, too, are you?" queried Mr. Duff, genially. "What are you? Track inspector in advance?"

"I don't know," Terry admitted, a little uneasy in his faded old clothes. But clothes seemed to make no difference. "General Dodge said I could be his 'striker'—that means help around his tent, and General Rawlins' tent."

"Heat the water for the bath, eh?" laughed Mr. Corwith.

"Shucks! No, Corwith! Nobody bathes on a trip like this," retorted Mr. Duff. "Not unless we come to some hot springs. After a while the water'll

be as cold as ice—right out of the snows. Isn't that so, Terry? Where's your home town?"

"U. P. boarding-train, end o' track," promptly replied Terry. "It's a traveling town," he explained.

"I should say so. Ever been out much farther in this country?"

"Yes, sir. I've ridden on the stage part way to Salt Lake."

"That must have been a great trip. But think of riding by railroad there! Whew! The stage took about ten days, didn't it? And the railroad'll do it in three! I was out to end o' track last fall—on that big excursion from the East and Omaha. We started to go to the Hundreth Meridian, or 247 miles from Omaha; but you fellows built so fast that we kept going till we were thirty miles beyond."

"Yes, sir. They all laid 260 miles of track in eight months, last year. This year General Dodge and General Casement want us to do 290, about. That'll take us over the top of the Black Hills mountains."

"But what'll they do without your help?" asked Mr. Corwith, slyly.

"Aw, I don't amount to much," Terry informed, for fear they might think he had bragged. "I just ride a mule that hauls a truck-load of rails for the men to lay."

"Don't the Indians bother?"

"Some," admitted Terry. "They kill the men they can catch. But they can't whip the graders or track-layers in a regular battle, though."

"When do you track-layers expect to reach Salt Lake?"

"In 1870, anyway. It's 650 miles yet. Congress gives us till 1876 to meet the C. P., but General Dodge and General Casement are going through in half that time."

"You'll have to tackle the Rocky Mountains, though."

"Y-yes," said Terry. "But we'll do it."

"The Central Pacific of California have been building only forty or fifty miles in a year, in their mountains."

“We can beat the Central. They have timber and supplies close where they’re working, and we haul ours clear across the plains; but Casement’s Irish can lick the Chinks any day,” scoffed Terry.

“Expect to beat the Central to Salt Lake, do you?”

“We’re going to meet them away beyond Salt Lake. They’ll come east as fast as they can and we’ll go west as fast as we can, and then we’ll both see.”

“Yes; and the Central Pacific say they’ll meet the Union Pacific on the west side of the Rocky Mountains, in Utah,” bantered Mr. Corwith.

“Well, they won’t. We’ll meet them before they’re out of California,” boasted Terry. “General Casement says he’ll put on 10,000 more men and be grading several hundred miles ahead, all the time. The mountains will give us ties. There are gangs cutting timber in the Black Hills now, and getting it ready. A railroad will be into Council Bluffs across from Omaha, right away, so we’ll get our rails quick from the East. We’ve got fifty locomotives, and 700 freight-cars, to do the hauling with, and next year there’ll be a lot more. The bridges are made in Chicago and shipped out all ready to be put up. Our men lay four rails every minute—just as fast as they can grab and run forward,” he added proudly. “And the spikers hit each spike only three times.”

“We can see that you’re an enthusiastic U. P. man,” laughed young Mr. Duff. “You ought to be on the board of directors, along with my dad. But the question now is, where are we going? Wonder if we’ll meet any Indians.”

“General Dodge plans to take General Rawlins through to Salt Lake, I understand,” spoke Mr. Corwith. “The surveys have been made, and he wants to check up. We cross the Black Hills by the pass he discovered two years ago, when the Indians chased him. He says it’s a remarkable route for a railroad—an easy climb to over 8,000 feet; if the Indians hadn’t forced him into it, he might never have known about it. But he made a note of it, and sent the surveyors out, and it’s all right.”

“How long before we reach it, then?”

“The Black Hills are 150 miles yet, I guess,” said Terry.

“Ever there?”

“No, sir. The old stage road and the Salt Lake trail went up around north of them. The stage road now goes south of them. There’s never been any road over the Black Hills, in here.”

“Well, hope we see some Indians, anyway,” chatted Mr. Duff. “But all these soldiers probably’ll scare ’em off. I’d like to be out with one of those surveying parties. Those are the fellows who have the good times.”

“George Stanton—he’s my partner—is out with one. He’s out with Mr. Bates,” Terry announced. “General Dodge said that maybe we’d find them.”

With the toiling wagons, they were several days in passing the many gangs of graders. The low huts, called “railroad forts,” of sod walls and sod or sheet-iron roofs only about four feet above the ground, were strewn for miles and miles in advance of the rails.

The old Overland stage road soon branched to the north, for Fort Laramie, and guided by only the railroad grade, the General Dodge expedition plodded on. The ties ceased, the farthest outpost of the graders’ camps was at last left behind, and presently the final squad of construction engineers engaged in running the line of stakes and levels, had been dropped.

Now only the open country of the high rolling plains lay before. The air was frosty, at night, but warm by day. The curious antelope constantly stared, with heads up, at the march, and skimmed away. They supplied fine meat, when hunted by the soldiers and civilians. General Rawlins appeared to be enjoying himself immensely, but he was not strong.

During the day the cavalry rode before and in the rear, and scouted on the flanks. The General Dodge party cantered in the advance. At night camp was pitched, in military order.

This seemed like home ground, to the general. He had explored through it to find a railroad route away back in 1855; and he had campaigned against the Sioux and Northern Cheyennes, hereabouts and beyond, in 1865. That was the time when the Indians had helped him to discover his pass.

A long line of dusky, frowning mountains was gradually getting higher and plainer in the west. These, said the general and Mr. Van Lennep, were the southern end of the Black Hills—the first barrier by the Rocky Mountains.

“I think that tomorrow we’ll strike Crow Creek,” spoke the general, tonight, to the party around the blazing camp fire. “That’s where we locate the next division point, at the eastern base of the Black Hills. I sent word to General Auger at Fort Laramie to meet us there. He has instructions from General Grant to locate a military post where the railroad locates its division point.”

“Then we climb the mountains, do we, general?” young Mr. Duff asked, eagerly.

“Yes, sir. Up we go. But it’s a very easy trail, by a long ridge. According to the engineers’ estimates the grade is only ninety feet rise to the mile. The country is smooth and open. As soon as the Sioux forced my detachment to follow down by the ridge, in ’65 when we were returning from the Powder River campaign up north, I knew that we had found the first passage of the Rocky Mountains. In fact, I told my guide, then: ‘If we save our scalps, I believe we’ve found a direct railroad pass from the plains.’ And as soon as I reached Omaha, I described the place to the engineers and my idea proved to be correct. In the morning I’ll show you the little saddle, on top, that we’ve named Sherman Summit, in honor of General Sherman.”

“And what’s next, general?”

“The Laramie Plains, watered by the Laramie River.”

“And then what?”

“A great basin, without any water at all. And the Bitter Creek country beyond that, where the water is worse than none at all.”

“But where do you cross the real Rockies—the big snow mountains?”

“Oh, before we drop down into the Salt Lake Valley. But we’re 6,000 feet up, right here on these plains. Sherman Summit of the Black Hills, at over 8,000 feet, will be the highest point reached by the railroad. There are several passes in the snowy range, of between 7,000 and 8,000 feet, that we can use. This Sherman Pass is the only one yet discovered by us that will take us over the front range. The company engineers spent two years in the field, exploring all the way from Denver up to the old South Pass of the Oregon Trail, looking for just this very thing; and then it was found by accident—thanks to the Indians.”

“Rather a joke on them, that when they tried to keep you out they showed you through,” laughed Major Dunn, the aide-de-camp.

“There’s something almost miraculous about it,” added General Rawlins. “But the Central Pacific hasn’t been as fortunate, I understand.”

“No, sir. They had a head start on us, but the Sierra Nevadas have fought them hard. While we’ve been laying 370 miles of track across the plains, they’ve been held to 120. They have an enormous amount of blasting and tunneling and trestle building. In 100 miles they’re obliged to climb from sea level to over 7,000 feet. It’s a big job and they’re not out yet. The snows there are heavier than in the Rockies.”

“Some people say the railroad across continent can’t be operated in winter at all, on account of the cold and snow in the mountains,” put in Mr. Corwith.

“Nonsense,” muttered Mr. Van Lennep.

General Dodge laughed.

“Oh, when the road is built, the operating will be attended to. American engine men and train crews who have fought Indians from cab and box car and caboose, and hauled supplies in spite of savages and weather and new roadbed will get the trains through, snow or no snow.”

This was the first of July. The next morning they rode on, and made noon camp on Crow Creek—named, General Dodge explained, not for the bird but for the Crow Indians. The camp was to be a camp for several days, or until the general had picked out the best location for the division point.

There was no sign of any railroad grade—except in the distance before, and behind, tall stakes with white rags tied to them: surveyors’ flags, planted this spring or last fall. So the grade was only waiting for pick and spade to awaken it.

“Those things extend clear to Nevady,” grunted Sol Judy. “Injuns look on ’em as heap medicine. They’re dead afraid to touch ’em. They’re leary of the way the surveyors can squint through a telescope set on three sticks, and set a flag further off’n it can be seen by an Injun eye. They used to call the general ‘Long Eye,’ and when he began to lick ’em, they got the notion he could shoot as far as he could see with his spy-glass.”

General Dodge had taken General Rawlings, Colonel Seymour, General Casement, Superintendent Reed and the Government officials, with an escort of the cavalry, to reconnoiter along the line. Mr. Van Lennep stayed to write up some geological notes, and the rest loafed around camp.

The Black Hills, bulky and dark and brooding, loomed near in the west. They did not appear so very high, because they were so big and rounded; pines on them gave them their name "Black." Down here on the plains there were few trees; everything was whity-brown.

Sol jerked his head to the northward and spoke shortly.

"Here they come."

"Who? The Indians?"

"Nope. Those aren't Injuns; they're troops—cavalry. General Augur and his escort from Laramie, I reckon."

"What makes you think they're soldiers, Sol?" questioned young Mr. Duff. "Maybe they're Sioux."

"I don't think; I know," Sol retorted. "Don't you s'pose I can tell the difference 'tween a white man and an Injun, far as I can see?"

Sol's eyes were the best in the camp; for when Mr. Van Lennep leveled his field-glasses upon the little bunch of moving figures wending down over the rolling ridge of the north, he pronounced them soldiers, sure enough.

They drew on. Presently the cavalry formed to receive them, and Colonel Mizner galloped out to meet them.

It was General C. C. Augur, all right, commanding the Department of the Platte, and an escort of a troop of the Second Cavalry, from the headquarters post, old Fort Laramie.

"Yes, by gosh, and old Jim Bridger! Hooray! Dod rot my cats!" And Sol, striding out, shook hands heartily with the guide.

"Jim Bridger! That's the man I've been wanting to see," exclaimed young Mr. Duff. "He and Kit Carson are famous, aren't they? They're the greatest scouts in the West."

Sol Judy and Jim Bridger proceeded to squat and hobnob, while Terry and Mr. Duff—and Mr. Corwith, too—lingered near, curiously listening. General Dodge's party returned in haste. Tonight all camped together. The general had about decided upon a site for the division town; but old Jim principally held the floor with his funny stories and quaint remarks.

He was a tall, wiry, leather-faced man; not so very old in years but old in experience. Had trapped beaver in the far West since 1823—had explored the Salt Lake in a skin boat in 1826—claimed to have been through the marvelous Yellowstone region years before it was known to white men—had been owner of the Bridger's Fort trading post, in the mountains on the Salt Lake and California Overland trail until the Mormons of Utah had driven him out—had guided the army through Indian country; and withal was so full of funny stories that he could keep everybody in a roar.

He and General Dodge were great friends.

"These gents thought I couldn't tell you fellows from Injuns, Jim," complained Sol. "Yes, sir; and didn't believe me till they leveled the glasses on you. Just as though I didn't have eyes of my own."

"Pshaw, now; that's not a wrinkle to what I've had to put up with," drawled old Jim. "When I was guidin' the troops on that thar Powder River campaign, same time Gin'ral Dodge was out, I see an Injun smoke only 'bout fifty miles yon, t'other side a few mountains, an' I reported to the cap'n. Says I: 'Cap'n, thar's an Injun camp yon, t'other side them mountains, an' they're watchin' ye, like as not.' 'Whar, major?' says he. 'Right over thar by that 'er saddle,' says I, p'intin' for him. Wall, the cap'n looked through his spy-glass, an' said he couldn't see nary smoke. Then he reported to the gin'ral—Gin'ral Conner, that was—an' the gin'ral he looked through his glass, an' he couldn't see. An' thar was the smoke colyumns as plain as the nose on your face, only fifty mile away. So I didn't say 'nother word, 'cept that it had come to a pretty state o' things when a passel o' paper-collar soldiers'd tell a reg'lar mountain-man that thar wasn't smoke when thar was. But in two days some o' Cap'n North's Pawnees come in from a scout yonder an' blamed if they didn't say they'd located an Injun village precisely whar I'd seen that thar smoke. So all we had to do was to go over an' get the Injuns, in the battle o' Tongue River."

“You must have wonderful eyesight, major,” complimented Mr. Corwith. “I expect you are used to seeing things.”

“Yep, arter forty years in the mountains a man gets used to seein’ things. But even then he can’t ’most always sometimes tell. Did ye ever hear about when I was in the Yallerstone? Wall, one time thar, I think I see a passel o’ Injuns in camp ’bout three mile off, an’ I reckoned they saw me; but I watched ’em a long time, kinder curyus, an’ they didn’t get any closer; an’ when I was sneakin’ ’round, durned if I didn’t run slap ag’in the side of a mountain, solid crystal, cl’ar as air, an’ three miles through. You see, them Injuns war on t’other side of it; an’ they couldn’t get at me an’ I couldn’t get at them.”

“That wasn’t the same mountain the Indians chased you around, was it, major?” slyly asked General Dodge.

“No, sir. But that thar was a great trick, wasn’t it? You see, gents, some Injuns got arter me, on the side of a mountain. So I jest run an’ run, afoot, ’round an’ ’round, like a squirrel on a stump, an’ they tuk arter. We all run an’ we run; and what with bein’ on a slant, like, pretty soon the down-hill legs o’ the Injuns’ ponies got stretched, tryin’ to keep their footin’; an’ when I seed, I made for level ground. Then the ponies couldn’t do nothin’ but run circles, their legs bein’ unequal; an’ I got away, easy.”

The next morning the site of the new division point was staked by Mr. Evans and surveyors, under direction of General Dodge. There did not seem to be much choice—the bare rolling plains looked all much the same, clear to the foot of the Laramie Range which was called the Black Hills; but he had figured closely. Crow Creek would supply water; Denver was about 115 miles south, Julesburg was 140 miles east—a branch line would be run down to Denver, and the trains from the east would change engines here, for the climb over the Black Hills. It would be a place for a junction, and for a round-house.

“I name it Cheyenne,” said the general, “for Cheyenne Pass, which you see to the north.”

“The military post will be just north, gentlemen,” quoth General Augur. “The War Department approving, it will be named Fort D. A. Russell, in honor of Major-General David Allen Russell, a gallant soldier who won

honors in the Mexican War and was killed in battle September 19, 1864, where his conduct gained him the brevet of major-general.”

“Wall, this hyar business o’ locatin’ towns whar thar ain’t people seems to be rather pecoolar,” drawled Jim Bridger. “A feller hyar with last month’s pay in his pocket couldn’t spend a cent. Anyhow, thar’s plenty elbow room. That’s the best thing about it.”

“Wait till the news gets to Denver, and Julesburg. In six months you won’t be able to turn around, where you’re now standing,” smiled Mr. Van Lennep.

“Listen!” General Dodge sharply ordered.

Distant in the south there welled the faint reports of volleying fire-arms.

“Injun scrimmage, shore,” pronounced old Jim. “Fust an’ original inhabitants are on hand.”

“Sounds like an attack on a wagon train,” rapped the general. “Mount, gentlemen.”

“Here come the cavalry. Hurrah!” cheered young Mr. Duff.

The soldier escort were straightening in their saddles, awaiting command; but from the camp a bugle had pealed, and Troops B and M, led by Lieutenant Wheelan and Surgeon Terry, were tearing in columns of fours across the plain, following the battle signals.

CHAPTER VIII

GENERAL DODGE SHOWS THE WAY

“COME on. Let’s see the fun!” excitedly cried young Mr. Duff, to Terry. “Maybe we can take a hand.”

“Yes—an’ mebbe you’ll lose yore hair,” Jim Bridger reproved.

“What do you say, General Rawlins? Shall we go over?” General Dodge queried—in tone about as eager as Mr. Duff’s. “We can show you Indian fighting——”

“General Augur commands, here, I believe. We’re in his department. If he thinks best——”

General Augur immediately barked a gruff command. The lieutenant in charge of the escort company shouted gladly. The company were already at attention, ready.

“By fours, march! Column right, march! Comp’ny, trot!” And——
“Gallop!”

Away they dashed: The cavalry, old Jim Bridger (who rode like an Indian, his long hair streaming from under his greasy slouch hat), General Dodge, General Rawlins, General Augur, General Myers, Colonel Mizner, Major Dunn, young Mr. Duff, Mr. Corwith, Mr. Van Lennep the geologist, Sol, Terry, and all.

“The yaller legs are thar,” called Jim. For the bugle had shrilled again, from the two companies now out of sight; and the heavy reports of the cavalry carbines joined with the other battle sounds.

“Right front into line!” The cavalry escort spread into company front; but as they charged into sight of the field, the gun-shots had become fitful and scattered. From the last little rise they saw what had occurred.

Down in the flat, before, a number of hooded wagons had partially corralled, or formed a circle—the horses still hitched. Beyond, a portion of

the cavalry were pursuing some fleeing Indians; and the rest of the cavalry were rounding up and catching a quantity of loose horses and cattle.

Doctor Terry was busy, passing among the wagons, occasionally stopping here and there.

“Pshaw! We’re too late,” panted Mr. Duff, as everybody slackened pace. “What is it—emigrant train?”

“No. A grading outfit coming in to the road,” answered General Dodge. “Who were the Indians, major? Cheyennes, I judge.”

“Sioux, too, I reckon,” replied Jim Bridger. “A passel o’ Dog Soldiers, like as not.”

“Cavalry made ’em run. They can’t stand the cavalry,” exulted Mr. Corwith.

“Aw, sho’, now!” grunted Jim. “Pony soldiers don’t worry ’em none. It’s the walk-a-heap soldiers that set ’em to thinkin’. They know the walk-a-heaps have got to fight or be killed—can’t run off.”

“They certainly made a bold attempt, to attack like this within a mile of a military camp,” General Rawlins remarked.

“That’s their style of fighting, general,” replied General Augur. “When you don’t see them and don’t expect them, there they are.”

It was a Mormon wagon train to help the road along. The Indians had ambushed them from a ravine—had killed two men, wounded others, stampeded the loose stock, and likely would have “wiped out” the whole party, Jim Bridger asserted, had the troops not arrived in nick of time.

“That’s a sample of what’s been happening to train crews, track-layers, graders, and survey parties from Fort Kearney in Nebraska clear to the mountains, general,” remarked General Dodge to General Rawlins. “The people out East cannot appreciate. We’re simply having to fight our way through, and every mile is stained with blood. It was only six miles east of Cheyenne that poor Hills, one of my best chief assistant engineers, was killed.”

Their wounded having been attended to by Dr. Terry, the Mormon graders sent a delegation to the division site, where the two dead were to be buried.

“We start that thar town with a graveyard,” Jim Bridger grimly announced. “An’ they ain’t the last who’ll be buried thar with their boots on.”

The sturdy Mormon graders were given a small escort of the cavalry, to guard them on their farther journey. They reported that the Indians were very bad, along the trail west.

“We’ll camp here another day, and spend the Fourth,” General Dodge said, this night. “I think it will be only fitting for General Rawlins, who represents the commander of the United States Army, to make the Independence address, as Orator of the Day.”

“I’ll do it with pleasure, sir,” agreed General Rawlins.

Two other surveying parties, under Assistant Engineers Maxwell and O’Neill, joined the camp. The next day General Rawlins delivered a splendid patriotic speech, to the paraded cavalry, the wagon train and the railroad men—here, July 4, 1867, on the site of the future city of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

After that there was a split-up. Mr. Maxwell and Mr. O’Neill and their surveyors were set at work completing the survey lines from the east into Cheyenne, so as to have it ready for the graders from Julesburg. When they had done this, they were to finish the surveying of the town lots of new Cheyenne.

General Augur and his escort rode for Fort Laramie, northward. General Myers went back to end o’ track, for Fort McPherson near North Platte, in order to attend to his quartermaster’s department.

Geologist Van Lennep prepared to scout southward, and locate coal-fields. Coal-fields and building stone and minerals were important on a railroad route.

Taking General Casement, the chief “builder,” and General Rawlins, the guest of honor, and Division Engineer Evans, and the government officials, and the rest, including, of course, Terry, General Dodge proceeded west.



THE WAGON TRAIN

“By the time we return through here, there’ll be a town in full blast,” promised the general.

“We’re empire builders, not railroad builders,” laughed Mr. Corwith. “As we travel on, we leave towns where we tread.”

“I feel like a Columbus, myself,” young Mr. Duff declared. “Opening a new world.”

“Well, you know what Senator Benton said, twenty years ago. He proposed that where the first railroad crossed the Rocky Mountains the Government ought to carve a big figure of Christopher Columbus out of a peak, overlooking the rails east and west.”

“Yes, and when somebody called such a line a modern Colossus of Rhodes, another senator twisted it into Colossus of Rail-Roads!”

“When do we strike the pass, general?”

“We’ll be into it when we camp tonight. But I’ll wager that none of you will know the difference.”

“What, sir?”

“There is Evans Pass, gentlemen, in plain sight. First named Lone Tree Pass, then Sherman Pass, and finally changed to Evans Pass in honor of Mr. Evans himself, who was the chief engineer in the field party that surveyed it after I had described the landmarks to him. He found it by a lone tree at the foot. You may have noticed a lone pine, a short distance back. That was our landmark.”

“I don’t see why you call it a pass, general,” ventured Mr. Corwith.

“Well, it’s a pass because it gets the railroad over the high country. Nature seems to have made it especially for a trans-continental railroad. We are following the backbone of a long ridge which extends from the plains to the top of the Black Hills. These Black Hills don’t look to be so very difficult, but their flanks are so broken by ravines and steep slopes, that the grades and fills are impossible. This ridge is a natural divide with scarcely a break, and carries the road like an inclined trestle. We rise 2,000 feet in thirty-two miles; that gives us, according to Mr. Evans’ surveys, a maximum grade of ninety feet to a mile, and the Government allows us 116 feet to a mile, at a pinch.”

“You consider this the beginning of the base of the Rocky Mountains, do you, general?” queried Mr. Blickensderfer.

“Yes, sir. In fact, the base begins at Cheyenne, as you and Mr. Carter may determine from the table of altitudes prepared by the engineers. The rise is deceptive. It’s the only bit of good luck we’ve struck. Our engineers looked for two years, to find it.”

“The Government allows you \$48,000 a mile, in building over the mountains, doesn’t it?” asked General Rawlins. “And you can build here almost as fast as on the plains.”

“Faster. But the allowance is \$48,000 a mile for only the first 150 miles from the base of the mountains. After that we get \$32,000 a mile for the distance to the base of the California mountains. On the plains, to this point, we’ve been allowed \$16,000 a mile, and that nearly beat us. We’ve had to haul our ties and iron and timbers and supplies at ruinous expense. However, here we’re close in touch with the timbered mountains and we may be enabled to float our ties down the streams to points near the grades;

this red decomposed granite under foot makes perfect ballast; many of the cuts will be in soft soil; and we'll have good coal for the engines. Cheap fuel is an important item in railroading. The next engines to be sent out from the East will be coal-burners instead of wood-burners."

Assuredly, Terry thought, there were a number of items to be planned for, when building a railroad line.

"So," continued the general, "at \$48,000 a mile, in such a country, we may be able to save a little money for the work ahead, where we'll get only \$32,000 a mile, mountains or no mountains. The Central Pacific had easier going, at the start. They began almost at once with \$48,000 a mile, in the California foothills; but as they climb, they've found so much blasting and tunneling and bridging necessary, that their mountain money looks about as small to them as our plains money to us. It will be nip and tuck between us."

"We'll get there first, just the same," Terry blurted. He could not help it.

"Where, young man?"

"To Salt Lake, and a lot farther, too, sir!"

"Hurrah for the track-layer gang!" cheered young Mr. Duff; and they all laughed.

The climb could be felt, if not seen. The saddle-animals puffed, the four-horse and six-horse wagon-train teams tugged at the heavy wagons. The trail, marked by the few survey stakes and flags set last year by Engineer Evans, stretched on, across little ridges and flats and ravines, each higher than the preceding one. Crow Creek seemed to have sunk into a broad valley, below and behind, and the site of Cheyenne, with its two graves, had merged into an unfolding flatness. Mr. Blickensderfer, who had been sent by the President to decide upon the real base of the Rocky Mountains, could not but admit that the base was back where the engineers' map located it.

The country before and beyond unfolded, too, little by little, and spread out in vastness. A mountain chain—mountains with snow patches on them—uplifted far and farther, high and higher. The breeze began to waft chill. The outcrops of rocks were many and curious, like witches and giants and towers.

The next afternoon the general suddenly halted the advance, scanned right and left intently, and with a word to Engineer Evans removed his slouch hat.

“Sherman Summit, gentlemen. This is the top, at 8,250 feet. Sherman Station and a water tank will be on this very spot.”

“Over already, general?”

“Down grade from here on.”

“Couldn’t you have run the road around the north end of this divide?” asked Mr. Blickensderfer.

“Yes, we could. The engineers surveyed for a line there, to strike the old Oregon Trail and the famous South Pass which had been used for many years by the emigrants. But we would lose a number of miles, and we’d miss the coal-fields. We also wished to build around the south, through Denver, but the mountains of Colorado seem to offer no easy passes.”

“This isn’t the Continental Divide, is it, general? Not the divide between the Atlantic and Pacific?”

“No. It’s a spur of the front range of the Rockies. Yonder in the west you can see the Continental Divide—a portion of it: the Medicine Bow Range of the main Rockies. From here the road descends into the Laramie Plains, and follows a wide trough or basin for perhaps 100 miles northwest, to round the Medicine Bow. After that, from the North Platte River the route is undetermined, but is being surveyed.”

“Yes, and once across the Laramie Plains you’ll carry yore water with you,” said Sol Judy, gazing ahead as, dismounted, he leaned on his long musket. “By Jinks, beyond the Plains there’s a stretch of desert country that even a bird can’t cross without packing its own supplies.”

“Which is one thing that we’ve come to look into,” General Dodge replied. “Percy Browne and his party are running a line, over in there, now. He has the division from the North Platte River west to Green River, 180 miles. The Tom Bates party are off in there, too,” the general added kindly, to Terry. “They’re working east from the Wasatch Mountains of Utah, while Browne works west from the North Platte edge of the Laramie Plains. So we’ll keep an eye out for your boy friend.”

“About like looking for a needle in a haystack,” remarked young Duff, aside, to Terry. “That all is the biggest country I ever saw.”

And big it was, as they marched down from Sherman Summit: range after range of towering mountains to south, west, and north with glimpses of immense valleys between, and the slumberous basin of the Laramie Plains below.

Engineer Evans’ survey stakes led on. He had run the line clear to the Laramie River at Fort Sanders. Superintendent Reed was an engineer, also, and had surveyed through the Wasatch Mountains and down to Salt Lake, in 1864. The talk about the country ahead was mighty interesting to Terry, and Mr. Corwith, and young Mr. Duff.

Sol Judy and others spoke well of the Laramie Plains.

“The finest hunting-country in the world, down there,” asserted Sol. “Plenty running water, buffalo, antelope, beaver, and Injuns. But t’other side—I tell you, a jack-rabbit won’t go in without a canteen, and a crow sheds tears when he bids his family good-by.”

They camped this night on the west slope of Sherman Summit, amidst more strange rock figures, of chimneys and spires and castle turrets. Then they wound on down, to refit at Fort Sanders near present Laramie City of Wyoming—— “The terminal point of the 288 miles of track that we expect to lay this year, although people say that we can’t do it,” explained General Dodge.

At Fort Sanders they received bad news.

Young Mr. Duff brought the word out to the camp, while the general and others were at the post headquarters talking with Colonel Gibbon, the commander.

“Well, the Indians have added some more graves to the survey stakes, boys,” he said.

“What?”

“Where?”

“How do you know?”

“Mr. Van Lennep told me—and I heard it at headquarters, too. Van Lennep’s been here several days, waiting for us. It’s the Percy Browne party, this time. The Sioux struck them north of here, short time ago; killed a cavalry sergeant—fine fellow—and a civilian named Stephen Clark, from Albany, New York—another fine fellow. He was a nephew of Thurlow Weed, the big New York State politician and editor. The Indians almost captured the whole camp; ran off some mules and seized a lot of supplies. Mr. Browne brought Clark’s body in here, to the fort, for burial. Then he went out again. No Indians can stop those surveyors.”

“Did you hear anything about the Mr. Bates party?” Terry asked, anxiously.

“No, I guess they’re away out, beyond reach. The soldiers say the Sioux are on a rampage, this year. Hope nobody else is killed. We’re going to travel along, just the same. The general means to find the Browne and the Bates gangs, and see about matters. We’ve got men enough to lick the reds.”

Fort Sanders was a small, lonely post, beside the Laramie River in the south end of the Laramie Plains, twenty-five miles from Sherman Summit. Colonel, or General, John Gibbon of the Thirty-sixth Infantry commanded. There was one troop, G, of the Second Cavalry, under First Lieutenant John A. Wanless.

Lieutenant Wanless and other officers paid a visit to the cavalry camp of the expedition; and when, after two or three days of resting and out-fitting, the expedition pulled out again, Lieutenant Wanless rode a half mile with his brother cavalrymen.

“Good-by and good luck,” he bade. “You clean the trail in the one direction and we’ll be watching for the engine smoke in the other.”

CHAPTER IX

MORE BAD NEWS

It was the easy Rattlesnake Pass that finally led out from the farther edge of the great Laramie Plains, and down to the North Platte River.

“There’s the last of the main streams which flow eastward, men,” remarked General Dodge, as from the top of the pass they emerged into view of the valley below. “Once across that, and over the next plateau, and we’ll be into the unknown country.”

“Can we see the Overland stage road, general?”

“It keeps to the base of those south hills, on the headwaters of the side streams, for fording.”

“I should think that the railroad would follow the stage road, by the trail already made,” spoke Mr. Corwith.

The general smiled.

“No. The grades are too sharp and there are too many ravines and gulches, too many streams, too many detours. A railroad always seeks the path of least resistance; and we’re limited by the Government to the grade of 116 feet to the mile, at the maximum. The Union Pacific will keep to the open country, and do away with curves as much as possible. Sharp tangents cut down speed. Lack of water doesn’t bother a railroad, if wells for tanks can be drilled, at intervals. In fact, the fewer streams to cross, the better.”

A month had gone by since from Sherman Summit they had descended a thousand feet into the Laramie Plains. It had been a continuous hunting and camping trip with the Indians at safe distance. The general had traveled by easy stints, to favor the health of General Rawlins, and let Geologist Van Lennep make his investigation for coal and ballast. A courier from Sanders had brought a dispatch saying that Mr. Evans’ wife was ill, in the East, and he had turned back.

The Laramie Plains had proved to be a great basin or park, watered by trout streams, tinted with red soil and rocks, and green brush and trees, broken by strange buttes and spires, and surrounded by snow-capped mountains. It stretched fifty miles wide, and 100 miles long, in northwesterly direction. The railroad line was to follow it and take advantage of such an open way.

Several times they had signs of other parties—the Browne surveying crews, General Dodge pronounced them. Now and again an abandoned surveyor's flag fluttered from bush or pole.

“Who'd 'a thought when Jim Bridger and I trapped our beaver and fought for our meat in here, that the iron hoss'd be rampaging through before ever we lost our scalps,” Sol Judy mused. “That is, if we don't lose those same scalps in the meantime.”

They followed down a stream which emptied into the Platte, and camped this night on the banks of the North Platte itself, which flowing north from Colorado turned for the east and joined the South Platte 300 miles away, at North Platte Station on the railroad, in Nebraska.

“And next year at this time the railroad will be here, I guess,” Terry ventured. “Wonder if the river knows.”

“It doesn't seem possible,” Mr. Corwith mused.

“And in another year the rails will be climbing those mountains that look like cloud banks,” added young Mr. Duff.

“Your eye-sight's improving, young man,” Sol joked. “You're spying the main Rockies; and if 'twarn't for those clouds I reckon you could look another hundred and fifty miles, into Utah.”

Sol had been scouting around, and had found traces of a deserted camp down stream a short distance. The general was quite certain that this had been a camp of the Percy Browne surveyors and escort.

“Camp's about three weeks old, I judge,” Sol reported.

“Hoo-ee-ee!” sounded the high call, through the dusk.

“White man, that,” Sol uttered. “Yep, and there they are.”

Across the Platte there were two or three horsemen, who had united in the “Hoo-ee-ee.” Now here they came, fording and swimming. General Dodge

beckoned them in, and met them as they rode forward, dripping.

He and Colonel Seymour, the consulting engineer, held a short confab with them. They all turned for the camp.

“That’s Frank Appleton, Percy Browne’s assistant,” Superintendent Reed exclaimed. “Wonder if anything’s gone wrong again.”

“Well, men don’t swim cold rivers for nothing,” drawled Sol, who was standing and warming the tails of his army overcoat.

The General Dodge squad arrived at the big camp fire. The general’s face was grave; so was Colonel Seymour’s. Everybody at the fire waited intent—General Rawlins, lying under a blanket to rest, half sat up.

The new-comers were two surveyors and a cavalry trooper. They and their horses appeared worn to the bones. The two surveyors dismounted stiffly, to advance to the fire, with a haggard smile and a brave “Good evening.” The trooper led the horses aside, for unsaddling and picketing out.

“Gentlemen, permit me to introduce Mr. Francis Appleton, and Mr. Bane, of the Percy Browne party,” spoke the general. “Mr. Appleton was the assistant engineer; now he is in charge of the party. He brings word of the loss of his chief. Percy Browne, a young engineer already at the top of his profession and one of my right-hand men, has been killed by the Sioux.”

“What! Another—and this time Browne!” gasped Mr. Blickensderfer.

“I sorter felt it,” remarked Sol.

“Where did that happen, and how?” queried General Rawlins.

“Can you tell them about it, Frank?” suggested General Dodge.

Engineer Appleton—he was young, too—sat down and stretched his legs and hands to the blaze.

“It happened about two weeks ago. We were running a line on the main divide, near Separation, about fifty miles west of here, or at survey station 6,801, when Mr. Browne left us, to reconnoiter in the basin country farther west. He’d found the maps of the region were wrong—they did not cover all that territory, especially a new basin that we call the Red Desert. The Salt Lake stage road skirts the edge of it, on the way to the Bitter Creek desert.

“Mr. Browne took eight of the cavalry escort and some pack animals. We were to work on a line at the east edge. It seems that he had almost crossed the Red Desert, when a band of 300 Sioux, who were making south to attack the stage stations, surrounded him and his escort. The men succeeded in fighting their way to a little hill, and there they fortified, and held the Sioux off from noon until after dark. Just at dusk a ball had struck Mr. Browne in the stomach, and put him out of action. He knew he was done for, so he ordered the soldiers to leave him and break for safety; but they wouldn’t do it.”

“What! Soldiers leave their officer? Never!” rapped Colonel Mizner. “Not the Second Cavalry men—nor any other men, either.”

“And they didn’t,” asserted Mr. Appleton. “They refused to obey Browne’s orders. They let the Sioux stampede the horses and mules, which seemed to satisfy the red-skins, who drew off. So this same night those eight soldiers made a litter of a blanket slung on carbines, and afoot they carried poor Percy fifteen miles through the sage-brush and the sand to LaCleda stage station on the Overland. They didn’t save his life, though, for he died soon after they got in with him.”

“A gallant deed,” said General Rawlins. “I’ll see to it that it’s brought personally before General Grant himself. We must have those soldiers’ names.”

“The news was telegraphed from the stage station to Sanders,” continued Mr. Appleton, “but of course General Dodge had passed through, before that. The soldiers found us, where we were waiting for Mr. Browne to return. I went ahead running a line according to the instructions, until my party became pretty well exhausted through lack of water and provisions. I was coming in to Fort Sanders, for more supplies and for further instructions, and sighted your fires, here. I guess that’s about all. The rest of the party are about forty miles west. They’re short of water, and animals, and unable to move forward—but they hate to quit. With a little help we’ll push right along, as Mr. Browne had intended, and finish out the survey according to his plans.”

“By Jiminy! That’s the stuff!” applauded young Mr. Duff.

“Yes, sir. The survey shall be carried out. We’ll enter the Browne basin,” declared the general. “We’ll give Mr. Appleton and Mr. Bane a day’s rest here, while I check over with them. Unfortunately all of Mr. Browne’s notes were lost when the Indians attacked him. But we’ll march on, to the Appleton party ahead, fix them up, and proceed to find the Bates party, too. Nothing has been seen of them, Mr. Appleton says.”

The North Platte flowed through a wide and shallow valley of sage-brush and reddish gravel, blotched by bright green cottonwoods and willows, with a scattering of small pines and cedars on the slopes. The river had to be forded; but the wagons were tugged through, and they all toiled up the west slope to the top of a broad plateau.

“The beginning of the Bitter Creek plains,” General Dodge uttered. “Any streams in here, Frank?”

“We discovered none, sir,” Mr. Appleton answered. “That is, none now flowing. There are numerous dry courses.”

The high plateau stretched onward into the west. It was of reddish gravel, plentifully cloaked with sage, like the rolling swells of a mighty grayish sea, and now and again blotched with the white of alkali, like the patchy froth of a sea. Sharp buttes, like islands, rose in the distances around, breaking the surface. Altogether, it was a lonely sight.

“How far are your party, Frank?”

“We’ll reach them tomorrow, sir. There’s a plain trail—my own trail, and the lines we ran.”

The party were all right, and waiting patiently for water and horses. The general decided to send them back to the North Platte, to rest and refit from Fort Sanders; but he took Mr. Appleton, as a guide to the great basin which Mr. Percy Browne had entered.

He and General Rawlins and Mr. Appleton led, with Terry and Sol Judy close behind; the rest of the party followed; the wagon train labored in the rear, while the cavalry bobbed up and down on either flank, riding dusty and sunburned, but watchful for Indians.

Indeed, dusty and sunburned were all: the once smooth faces of Major Dunn and Mr. Duff had sprouted beards, Terry’s face was parched and

roughened, and everybody had the appearance of old campaigners.

It was hard on General Rawlins. The water in the casks had been divided with the survey party; that in the canteens was warm; and General Dodge had ordered that the casks and the canteens be tapped just as seldom as possible.

“I’d give my commission for a drink of good water,” suddenly spoke General Rawlins. “But I don’t suppose there is such a thing.”

“You shall have it, general,” answered General Dodge. “If you’re able, we’ll ride ahead of the main party and see what we can find. Mr. Appleton and Sol can bring them on.” He turned in his saddle and swept the group with keen eye. “Who’s with us? You’ll want your aide, of course. All right, Major Dunn. Then I’ll take my own aide. Come along, Terry. Gentlemen, we’ll have fresh water waiting for you, when you catch us.”

Weaving among the outcrops of red and gray rock, and the clumps of silent sage, while the gravel crunched under hoof and the sun beat hotly above, they four rode for an hour, leaving the cavalry and wagon train farther and farther behind. Every draw was dry. General Rawlins began to droop in his seat. He was not strong—had consumption; but he was plucky, for he was a soldier.

“I think we’ll do better to spread out,” General Dodge finally directed. “Four abreast. But each of us must halt on the top of every ridge and swell, until the others are in sight. We can’t exercise too much care, in this kind of a country.”

They rode for still an hour, into the west. The Browne survey had been through here—Terry himself saw the trails, here and there, and the flags and stakes; but pretty soon he lost them. His course, on the right of the searching line, took him where the only traces of life were the jack-rabbits.

Then, dipping down into another of the gravelly draws, he noticed a narrow trail swinging through the middle of it. His tired horse pricked its ears, and quickened its pace. A coyote trail, this—yes, marked by antelope hoofs, too; evidently going somewhere. An antelope trail usually led to water, if followed far enough. If the water happened to be near—then, hurrah! It would be great luck for a boy to find water when General Dodge, the explorer, and General Rawlins, chief-of-staff of the United States Army,

both were looking for it. So Terry hopefully pressed forward, in the narrow antelope trail.

The draw turned a rocky shoulder; a couple of coyotes lifted their sharp noses, and were away like tawny shadows; Terry's horse eagerly nickered; and here, near before, there was a spot of green in the desert dun.

A spring, sure enough!

Terry hauled his horse about—"General Rawlins first, old fellow. But you'll get some"—and forced him up the side of the draw, to spread the good word.

One after another the men saw him, and in they came, answering his signals. General Dodge was nearest.

"What is it? Water?"

"Yes, sir. We found a spring."

"Good! Where?"

"Straight down in this draw, sir."

"Sweet water? Did you taste it?"

"No, sir; I didn't taste it, but it looks sweet. The coyotes and antelope have been drinking it."

"Rawlins!" shouted the general. "Come along. Here's water."

General Rawlins came. So did Major Dunn. Following Terry, in they went.

"General Rawlins is entitled to the first drink, I believe," said General Dodge, huskily, as they reined their horses around the little spring.

"You fellows are as thirsty as I am. Who found it? This boy? Then the finder is entitled to the first drink."

"He's declined. Drink, man, or it's liable to disappear."

They gravely watched General Rawlins throw himself down and quaff.

"Whew!" he gasped, pausing. "It's a miracle—cold and sweet."

They all drank—General Dodge, Major Dunn, and Terry last; they let the horses drink.

“I told you that a boy would be handy to have in camp and on the march, general,” slyly reminded General Dodge.

“I feel as though he had saved my life,” and General Rawlins smiled. “This water is the most gracious thing of the whole march, to date. There’s nothing that takes the place of sweet water, when a man is thirsty. If my name is ever placed upon a map, I hope that it will be applied to a spring.”

“Your wish is granted at once, general,” laughed General Dodge. “Here is the spot, and I name it Rawlins Springs. The line of the railroad will run very close to it, I think—we’re about the right distance for a townsite. Within a year there’ll be a Rawlins Springs town here.”

“Well, if the town’s anything like Julesburg, they’ll be drinking other fluids than water, I’m afraid,” General Rawlins smiled.

The cavalry and wagon train were signaled in, and camp was made at Rawlins Springs, near where today is situated the city of Rawlins, Wyoming, on the first of the railroads across continent.

“Now, if you’re only lucky enough to find the Bates party, and your friend George Stanton——!” young Mr. Duff proposed, this evening, to Terry.

That was so. Sol Judy and Mr. Appleton declared that the country on ahead was much worse. George was somewhere in it—and Terry began to worry a little.

CHAPTER X

A MEETING IN THE DESERT

“THE roof of the continent, gentlemen.”

It was the second day after leaving Rawlins Springs. Mr. Blickensderfer, the government representative; Mr. Carter, the director; Colonel Seymour, the railroad expert, General Casement and Superintendent Reed had turned back yesterday, for the Black Hills again. They had taken an escort and a couple of wagons. So now the party were formed of only General Dodge, General Rawlins, Geologist Van Lennep, Mr. Corwith, young Mr. Duff, Engineer Appleton, Sol Judy and Terry, accompanied by Colonel Mizner, Lieutenant Wheelan, Surgeon Terry and the cavalry and teamsters.

From Rawlins Springs on across the high plateau there had been a gradual steady climb, according to the general; until here, this late afternoon, he made the startling announcement:

“The roof of the continent, gentlemen.”

“You mean this is the ridge dividing the waters that flow east from the waters that flow west?”

“Yes, sir. The Continental Divide, formed by the Rocky Mountains.”

“Well, it doesn’t look it,” complained young Mr. Duff. “It’s too flat. I expected to see more of a ridge. This is nothing but a long hump. Are we higher than Sherman Summit of the Black Hills?”

“No. Sherman Summit, at 8,250 feet, is the highest point on the proposed line. The main divide, here, is scarcely more than 7,000. That is one beauty of the survey as run by Mr. Browne before his death. We cross the Continental Divide at its lowest point, by an easy grade. South in Colorado we would have to cross at 12,000 feet; and north we would have to cross at 9,000 feet.”

“Speaking of ridge-poles, young man,” Sol put in, “you cast yore eye ’round and you’ll see where the ridge-poles were used. But once in a while

the builders of this roof had to make a spot to sit down on.”

And truly, the view from this immense “hump” was superb. Far in north and south and west uplifted the jagged snowy ranges—the real mountains of Colorado, Wyoming and Utah, with this great bare plateau stretching between like a broad trough. Behind, or east, they could look back upon the Laramie Plains, shimmering below.

“Mr. Appleton says that tomorrow morning we’ll sight the Percy Browne basin of the Red Desert,” Mr. Corwith remarked, after supper, in camp.

“How far ahead?”

“As soon as we cross this divide. Then we drop right into it.”

General Dodge had been correct. Within a few miles from camp, in the morning, they were going down hill. The Laramie Plains were cut off, so was much of the plateau itself, but the mountains before, and hazy in the distance, rose more and more, with a flat desert gradually creeping out from their base. After all, the “hump” was a rounded ridge—a sort of welt.

It fell away, with a long slant—and suddenly the party halted short, craning forward, almost speechless, to the pointing arm of General Dodge.

“The unknown land,” he uttered. “The Browne basin, and the Red Desert.”

“Where poor Percy gave up his life,” added Engineer Appleton.

“Yes, and where many another good man has ended his trail,” added Sol Judy.

From the foot of the slant, onward below there extended, now fully revealed, so vast a basin that it might have been the floor of a dry ocean. They were gazing down into it, as if from the side of an amphitheater. Lofty mountains, some of them a hundred miles away, surrounded it with a fringe of cloudlike crests. The clear air rested upon it and gave it a setting of crystal.

There were abrupt little cone-like peaks, patches of white, patches of red, patches of dark brush; and over all a wondrous blue sky without a break, through which the hot sun rode high.

The basin looked enchanted and mysterious.

“The unknown land,” repeated General Dodge, thoughtfully. “The Overland Stage road crosses, for the Bitter Creek country, beyond. But there are no other trails. There may be no streams, either. Those white patches are soda and alkali, of course. The red is granite and sandstone—good ballast stuff for a roadbed. Lacking any streams flowing west, we’ll have to travel by compass, and save our water as much as we can. But we’ll go in; see what Percy found, and maybe find Bates.”

“So that’s where your friend is, is it?” inquired Mr. Duff, of Terry.

“Yes, sir, he’s liable to be. But I hope he isn’t.”

“So do I,” agreed Mr. Duff. “That country certainly spells Desolation with a capital ‘D.’”

“I told you before that a jack-rabbit always makes his will and kisses his family good-by, when he starts in from the edge of that country,” reminded Sol.

“Do you expect to build a railroad right through, general?” queried General Rawlins. “No easier route?”

“None that’s short and of the proper grades. The mountains block us off, north and south. This is the natural highway for the rails, I think. The Central Pacific will have just as bad a desert, in western Nevada, until we meet them. If we can bring up our water from behind, while we’re building, we’ll put the rails across, and sink wells to supply the engines and stations. I’ll be glad to find that the Percy Browne surveys are the best for the railroad. The iron track through, by the trail that he discovered, will be an eternal monument to his memory.”

Down they all went, into the basin. It was rougher and even larger than it had seemed from above. There were many bare red-rock ridges, cutting the surface—many smaller basins between, white with alkali and nasty scum; many strange pedestals and figures carved by wind and sand; but no water except in poisonous stagnant pools.

It was no place for George Stanton, or any other human being.

This first evening they made dry camp. The rocks and gravel were growing redder; and where after storms the water had soaked into the soil it left red

washes of caked mud. A weird, glowing landscape this was, as if blasted by a wizard's spell.

In the morning the general, Engineer Appleton and Sol rode to the top of a rock rise, to survey around. The general peered long through his glasses—handed them to Mr. Appleton, and Mr. Appleton peered. Sol squinted.

They turned their horses and came in at a gallop.

“Injun sign out yonder,” cried Sol.

“Colonel! Oh, Colonel Mizner!” summoned the general. “We’ve sighted what may likely be a party of Indians, on before. Whether they’ve seen our camp smoke, I can’t tell. We’ll go ahead, of course; and if you’ll kindly make arrangements accordingly, we may wipe out a few scores. I’m sure we’ve got a good fight in us.”

“I only hope they’ll give us a chance to show it,” answered the colonel. And—“My compliments to Lieutenant Wheelan, and tell him I’d like to speak with him,” he said, to his orderly.

Away ran the orderly. Lieutenant Wheelan was delighted— “It’s been a long trip without a scrimmage. The men are famished for a brush or two,” he cheered.

With wagon train closed up, guarded well, and with cavalry riding the flanks in compact lines, the march proceeded. Sol, the colonel, and General Dodge and General Rawlins held the advance.

“How far are those beggars, I wonder,” said young Mr. Duff. “Bet they’ll run away.”

“Only ten miles, but the glasses could scarcely pick them out, among the rocks,” replied Mr. Appleton.

“The general sees ’em again!”

The advance had halted, to scan with the glasses. Sol galloped back.

“They aren’t Injuns. They’re white men, and act like they’re in trouble. They’re afoot an’ leading hosses. Fetch on yore water, for we’ll probably need it.”

“There’s the Bates party, I’ll wager,” rapped Mr. Corwith; and all dashed forward.

General Dodge and Major Dunn had forged ahead, but Terry, wild with fears, pelted close after. The horses’ hoofs rang on the rocks, and thudded in the reddish sand and gravel.

The slowly toiling figures were down, flat, as if exhausted; one struggled to get up, staggered blindly, and fell again. The general arrived first, was off his horse in a jiffy, to kneel and raise the figure against him. He quickly unsnapped his canteen, and poured from it and dabbled with his handkerchief.

“To the next, major,” he ordered. “I’ll take care of this one.”

But with a cry Terry stopped short, and tumbled off. The figure against the general’s knees was George Stanton!

Yes, George Stanton—and his own mother scarcely would have recognized him. However, Terry knew George; a fellow learns not to be mistaken in his brother or his chum.

“That’s George Stanton, general!” he gasped. “That’s my pardner—the boy I’ve talked about. Is he dead? George! Hello, George!”

“No, not dead; but pretty near gone, from thirst. This must be the Bates party, then. You tend to him—keep his face and mouth wet, but don’t give him too much water, at once. He’ll be all right, soon. I’ll pass along to the others.”

Terry took charge—holding George tenderly, shoulders up, off the hard rock and hot sand, and sopping his face and dribbling into his half open mouth.

Once, George had been a wiry, snappy, black-eyed package of nerve; now he was wasted to a framework of bones, his skin was drawn tight and parched, his lips were shrunken apart and his tongue, black and stiff, almost filled the space between.

“George!” Terry repeated. “You’re all right. We’ve found you. I’m Terry—I’m your old pard Terry. Swallow this water. There’s plenty more.”

The rest of the advance party had passed along, to administer first aid. The surgeon and some of the cavalry arrived.

Doctor Terry, the army surgeon, paused an instant, beside “Doctor” Terry the amateur, for a swift survey.

“Keep up the work, boy. He’ll be all right—he’s coming ’round.” He laid finger on George’s withered wrist, for the pulse. “Good! Pulse regular. Wet his wrists, occasionally. Who is he? Know him?”

“Yes, sir. He’s George Stanton—the other boy I was looking for.”

“Great Scott! That’s luck, sure.” And on passed the doctor.

George’s eyeballs rolled, his lids fluttered, and he groaned. He clutched for the canteen.

“Not yet, old fellow. I’m tending to you. Too much at once might make you sick.”

George stared up, vacantly; then he actually grinned, as his head swayed.

“Where you come from?” he asked, thickly.

“Oh, just riding through, looking for you. You’re found.”

“Water. More. Darn it, lemme drink,” complained George. That was exactly like him—peppery and obstinate.

Beyond, the General Dodge squad and the soldiers were working over other members of the survey party, who had been scattered in a straggled line across the desert. George wriggled and groaned more and more, and suddenly sat up, of himself.

“Why don’t you let me drink?” he scolded.

“You have been drinking, George.”

“It never got down. It soaked in part way.”

“I’ll ask the doctor.”

Surgeon Terry was coming back, on a tour of inspection.

“Aha! How’s the boy now?”

“He wants to drink.”

“Ten swallows. And in five minutes another ten swallows. Will that suit?”

George nodded and eagerly reached for the canteen.

"I'll count, and at ten you quit," Terry instructed.

He grabbed the canteen from George's lips at the eleventh swallow, and George grudgingly yielded.

"Where's Mr. Bates? Did you find Mr. Bates?" he asked, still a bit thickly. "And my dad?"

"Yes. They're coming 'round. They've asked after you, too. You're all going to be all right. Tongue more limber, eh? What happened to you fellows? Get lost?"

"I guess so," George confessed. "Trying to run a line across—for railroad—no water—no water 't all—three days—awful dry——" and his voice fell off. "Don't I get 'nother drink?" he wailed.

"Let him have it," bade the doctor, and turned back.

It was the grandest thing in the world to watch George drink, and drink, and swell with the moisture, and grow stronger.

"Whew!" he sighed, rubbing his eyes. "I was like an old buffalo carcass lying out for a year or two. Nothing but hide and bones. Now I'm loosening up. Golly, but I'm glad to see you. We all thought we were goners, except Mr. Bates. He said we'd get through, but he was worse off than any of us. I was sorry for dad. Wish I could see 'em. How far's the railroad in?"

"It's past Julesburg."

"Old Julesburg?"

"Yes, but we made another Julesburg, north of the river. It's a 'roaring town,' too. You ought to see it. Toughest town yet."

"Thought you were hauling rails."

"So I was. But I came on with General Dodge, exploring and to fight Injuns—and to find you fellows. He invited me because—well, just because. He says he'll open the way. We've got two companies of cavalry and Sol Judy."

"Sol? Say, I want to see Sol. Had any fights?"

"One big one, when we were laying rails between North Platte and Julesburg. They didn't get us, though. And we had another at Plum Creek, only it wasn't a fight; it was plain massacre."

“What were you doing down there?”

“I’d gone for a ride on the road, in a special train. Got as far as Kearney, and who do you think I found? Harry! He’s lightning-shooter there. So I stopped off. Then I started back on a handcar with some linemen. And this side of Plum Creek the Cheyennes wrecked us in the dark. They just slung us every which-way, and killed three of the men and scalped Bill Thompson (he was head lineman), and corralled him and Shep and me—and then one of ’em killed Shep in a hand-to-hand fight when Shep was protecting us.”

“Oh, the dickens!” George mourned. “I’m awful sorry about Shep. Did you get the Injun?” That also was just like the spunky George!

“Naw. How could I? They’d wrecked a train, too—a freight. We had to lie and watch ’em do it. Then the soldiers from McPherson came down and the Injuns skipped. But Sol Judy and a soldier and I buried old Shep. We saved *his* scalp, anyway; and his motto is: ‘Killed in action.’”

“You surely have a lot to tell me,” George asserted. “Seems as though you’ve been having most of the fun and hard work both. How’s your father?”

“He’s fine. He’s running 119, and I’m running Jenny, when I’m there.”

“How many miles of track have you laid? A hundred?”

“I left the job at Julesburg, to come on this trip. We’d laid only about ninety miles, account of storms and Injuns. Reckon by now they’ve laid a hundred more. The rails’ll be on top the Black Hills pass, by fall—maybe down to Fort Sanders, before winter, the general says.”

“That’s certainly hustling,” George praised. “I’d like to be there and help, for a spell. All I’ve done is to drive stakes and carry chain. You’ve had the big end.” This sounded queer, when he’d been out here in the desert and had nearly died. “We’ll beat the Central Pacific, won’t we? If only we get across this desert——”

“Aw, we will,” Terry asserted. “Nothing can stop us. And over the mountains and into Salt Lake, and keep going. The Irish’ll beat the Chinks.”

“Guess so! But we’ve the long way. We’ll have to lay two miles of track to their one.”

“Shucks! The U. P. track and grading gangs work like soldiers,” Terry scoffed. “They’re on their toes, and they’ve got system. We’ll finish up, this year, 500 miles from Omaha; then we’ll have only about 500 more to Salt Lake. We’ll get there by 1870, sure. Five hundred miles in two years is nothing, to the U. P. gangs. Did you fellows have any Injun trouble?”

“Not much. Mainly water trouble. The last water we found was poison—made us awful sick; and Mr. Bates has been trying to run by compass straight east, out of here, before we all died on him. We’ve lost a pile of horses and mules; but we’ve got one wagon, still, somewhere behind. If any Injuns had come, they’d have had an easy time.”

“That’s so,” Terry admitted. “The Sioux wiped out Percy Browne. Did you hear?”

“No! Aw, thunder!”

“Yes. Three hundred of ’em corralled him and eight soldiers, in this same basin. They shot him, and the soldiers carried him clear to LaCledé stage station, but he died. Mr. Appleton, his assistant, is with us now. We met him back at the North Platte.”

“Well, I reckon we’re lucky,” sighed George. “We did hate to quit the survey, though. Come on. I want to see dad and Mr. Bates and Sol Judy.”

The General Dodge squad and the soldiers were collecting the Bates men into a central spot, for noon camp. The few horses and mules had been given bucketfuls of water, and had perked up. Terry lent George an arm, and they went in, themselves.

George’s father was sitting up, wan and weak but getting O. K.

“Hello, dad. I’m ’round before you are,” George challenged, gaily.

“So I see,” Mr. Stanton retorted. “But you’re smaller. It doesn’t take so much water to fill you. How are you, Terry? Think you’d like a survey job, eh?”

“I dunno,” Terry confessed. “’Tisn’t all a picnic, I guess.”

“I told you about the jack-rabbit and his canteen, didn’t I?” reminded Sol Judy, as he shook hands heartily with George.

Mr. Bates—Thomas F. Bates, called “Tom” by those who knew him—was not only the chief of the party but also head engineer of the whole Pacific Division of the company. He had recovered enough to talk.

“By what you’ve seen of the Bates party, and by what you’ve heard and seen of the Browne party, you all will appreciate the stuff that our engineer corps is composed of, gentlemen,” General Dodge was proudly saying. “Yes, and some of the difficulties connected with these advance surveys. Winter and summer the men are out, and they never know from day to day what is before them. But I’ve yet to learn of a coward among them, from the chief down to the greenest stake-driver. What are your plans now, Tom?”

“I mean to check up, sir, and revise my notes; and then if you’ll lend us a little water we’ll run our lines.”

“Your year’s work is done, if you say so,” offered the general. “You ought to take a rest. You’d better go on into Fort Sanders, to check your notes.”

“No, sir.” And Engineer Bates smiled out of a haggard face. “It’s early in the season. I’ll have to travel light, but I want to run our lines. I’ll have plenty more checking over to do, this winter.”

The general’s eyes flashed, but he pondered.

“All right. Just as you say, Tom. I’ll give you a wagon or two, and a small escort—eh, colonel?”

“By all means, sir,” nodded Colonel Mizner.

“But you’d better cut down your force, Tom.”

“How much, general?”

“This boy George is too young for another spell of desert work. He ought to go out, for a rest, and then on to the railroad. I’ll send some dispatches back, for General Casement.”

“Aw——!” George blurted. “Please let me stay. I’m all right. I——” and with a burst of tears he collapsed in Terry’s arms, as they sat.

“Humph! Fainted,” murmured Doctor Terry, the army surgeon, sprinting for him. “It’s nothing serious,” he reported, feeling George’s pulse, and then working over him. “Weakness. I like his spunk.”

“So do I,” General Dodge declared. “But you all can see that he ought to go. Can you spare him, Tom?”

“He’s as good as any man in my outfit, general. And he’s no quitter. He won’t go unless he’s ordered. What do you say, Stanton? You’re his father.”

Mr. Stanton shook his head.

“That makes no difference, sir. He’s a member of the party. I ask no favors for him. You’re his chief. He’s stuck it out so far and acted like a man. But I don’t deny that I’d feel easier, myself, if he was at work somewhere else, for a change.”

“I’ll order him,” spoke the general, briskly. “I’ll re-assign him. And the dispatches must go.” His eyes wandered musingly over his company.

At George’s wail of disappointment, and his collapse, Terry’s heart had risen chokingly. With sudden impulse he stood up and saluted.

“I’ll take them and go with George, sir, if you please. He—we sort of hang together, and he’d feel better about it, to have me along.”

“Good!”

“I don’t want to quit. ’Tisn’t that, sir,” Terry explained anxiously. “Only—I guess you can get on without me, and I’ve had a splendid time, and now I can help George and be back to lay some more rails, to the Black Hills.”

“You’re a brick, by Jiminy!” exclaimed young Mr. Duff. “Wish I had a pardner like you. Don’t know whether we can get along without you, or not.”

“Soldier’s orders, on special duty as dispatch bearer—that will free you of any suspicion of ‘quitting,’ my boy,” said General Rawlins. “That’s the understanding, general?”

“Detached service, of course. But he’ll not miss much, except discomfort. The best part of the trip lies behind us, unless we get through the desert in time to cross the mountains before snow.”

When George heard of the plan, he kicked vigorously—not about himself, any more, but about Terry. However, Terry only laughed.

“No, sir; I’m the man,” he insisted. “I can be spared the easiest of anybody, and I’m ready to see the rails again. We’ll have a lot of fun, on the way.”

Colonel Mizner detached a squad of the cavalry, under red-faced Sergeant Ryan, for an escort to Sanders, and by way of Rawlins Springs they backtracked for the Laramie Plains; one day hove in sight of Fort Sanders—and Terry pointed before, with a shout.

“See ’em? Hurrah! The first gang’s across the pass. Now the rails will follow.”

For southward, at the base of the Black Hills, the tents of camps glimmered, and a reddish line of upturned earth showed like a thread. The advance of the railroad graders were already attacking the new survey—and, as Terry had cheered, the rails would soon follow.

CHAPTER XI

MAJOR HURD IN A FIX

AFTER all, it seemed good to be getting back into the midst of things again. Now George was all on fire to hasten ahead, and see the “doings.” So they stopped for only a night at the outpost of Fort Sanders on the Laramie River at the western foot of the Black Hills, twenty-two miles from the summit.

“Colonel Gibbon has directed that I furnish you with another escort,” said Lieutenant Wanless.

“We don’t need an escort now, lieutenant. The trail’s plain. There’ll be the graders’ camps,” objected Terry.

“Yes, and there’ll be the Sioux,” smiled the lieutenant. “They and the Cheyennes are busy—making their last fight, I guess. They’ve tied up operations several times since you passed through. Either you take the escort or you don’t go on.”

“Shucks!” George grumbled, privately. “We could travel faster alone. I want to see what’s on the other side of the hills.”

But orders being orders, they set out with a squad of G Company of the good old Second Cavalry, who were instructed to land them with the first survey party going in.

Yes, those were the advance graders, all right—sweaty, grimy, jovial Irishmen in their red shirts and scuffed boots and brogans, just knocking off work for nooning when the Fort Sanders escort, convoying two explorers, trotted in.

“An’ where have yez been?” asked the boss, Big Mike, curiously, of Terry.

“Into the Red Desert with General Dodge, for me, laying out the trail for you fellows. But my pardner’s been clear to the Green on the other side.”

“An’ what did yez find?”

“Injuns and desert, Mike. Powerful far between water, but the road goes through.”

“That kind of a country, is it?” Mike sighed, and puffed at his stubby black pipe. “Ah, well; for the Injuns we don’t care a rap, b’ gorry; an’ as for the wather, sure we’ll take wan big drink when we start in an’ another when we get out. Lucky for the road that ’tain’t dependin’ on them Chinymen, who have to have their tay three times a day. For it’s hard to make tay widout wather.”

“What’s doing eastward, Mike?”

“Work—an’ work ag’in. But ye’d better stay hereabouts this night. There’s nothin’ in the pass yet. We’re waitin’ for powder for the blastin’, so’s to lay the roadbed in the rock.”

“Have the rails reached Cheyenne?”

“I dunno. They hadn’t reached it whin I lift, but the people had. ’Tis another town started, an’ before winter ’twill be roarin’, for the rails are comin’ fast an’ all the toughs from Julesburg’ll follow.”

They camped this night with the next grading camp, at the foot of the pass.

“The powder’s on its way front Julesburg,” reported the gang boss. “Engineer Hurd’s fetchin’ it from end o’ track—an’ supplies, too. Orders be to work till the snows stop us. Did yez hear tell, out west, where the Cintral is by this time?”

“About two months ago they were on the east side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California, and coming on down. That’s what the telegraph operator at Green River stage station said,” answered George. “They’ve got 10,000 Chinese coolies!”

“An’ while they’re a-comin’ down we’re a-comin’ up, aye? We’ll see if thray-dollar-a-day Christians can’t bate a-dollar-a-day haythen.”

Before the next noon, from the Sherman Summit they craned eagerly to catch the first view of the wide land before. Gradually it unfolded, as they wound over and entered the downward trail—and on a sudden Terry uttered a sharp cry of amazement.

“Great Cæsar’s ghost! Look at Cheyenne.”

“Where?”

“Down yonder. See that bunch of whity dots and rusty roofs, away, ’way off. It’s Cheyenne, I bet. Gee! And when we came through in July there wasn’t anything.”

The air was still and marvelously clear; in straight line as the crow flies, one might see miles and miles—seemed as though one could see to Omaha, the beginning of track—and one probably could, “if,” as Sol Judy would say, “he only looked far enough!”

At any rate, on the brownish plain twenty-five miles by air-line there was smoke, black and blue, and a collection of the whity and brown dots betokening a town.

“Yes, sir; there’s what they call Cheyenne, the ‘Magic City of the Plains,’” quoth Corporal Williams. “Two months old, with a thousand people, and a town government already, and a daily paper being started, and the telegraph almost through up from Denver, and coal mines staked off, and lots that the railroad company sold for \$150 fetching \$2000 and better. She’s a hummer.”

“How near are the rails?” demanded Terry. That was the important matter.

“Fifty miles out yet. The Injuns have bothered a heap—corralling the graders and crews and running off stock. But those Irish keep at it, between times. Maybe if your eyes are good you can see the smoke of the construction-train, against the horizon.”

“Is Cheyenne as tough as Julesburg?” asked George.

The corporal laughed.

“Wait till the pay-car comes on, along with end of track. That graveyard the Injuns planted will be ’tended to by the white men. She’s grown already.”

Down the slope of the pass and to Cheyenne the grade was marked, and knots of ants were busy—but not ants, they were men, of course. As for the smoke of the construction-train, no one could be certain that he saw it, from this distance. However, it was there, seventy-five miles distant, at end o’ track; and mile by mile, this very day, it was drawing nearer.

You could trust in Paddy Miles for that.

“Squad, halt,” barked the corporal. “Dismount. We’ll make noon camp, boys. By evening we’ll meet that wagon train, yonder, and learn the news. I expect there’ll be some surveyors I can leave you with, on the right o’ way, who’ll pass you along. The orders are for me to get back to Sanders as quick as ever I can.”

Another gang of graders were passed, on the downward trail, after the noon hour. They were digging a cut—wielding their shovels lustily, and throwing the dirt and gravel out upon the dump, while their stacked guns stood near, and the ploughs and scrapers clattered.

“Drill, you tarriers, drill!” daringly shouted Terry, as with George and the cavalry squad he rode along the line. But only two or three of the men lifted face, to stare and wipe their brows; the rest stuck to the job as if they had no time for nonsense.

Now there was an interval of a couple of miles; and then a little crew of surveyors, checking a grade already leveled. They worked with revolvers hanging at their waists, and picked up their rifles and blanket-rolls whenever they moved on with level and transit.

“Where’s your camp, boys?” queried the corporal.

“Anywhere we spread our beds, corporal. We bunk and eat with the grading gangs, mostly. You’ll likely find a real camp further on, before night.”

There was another interval, of five or six miles—and then the wagon train. It was moving slowly—a dozen of the great white-canvassed freighter wagons, a number of trudging teamsters, a handful of riders ambling at the head, and a cavalry company guarding the rear and scouting in the fore.

“Supplies from headquarters, I reckon,” spoke the corporal. “Fetching up that powder and some provisions, like as not.”

The two parties approached each other. Jones, the big “buck” private riding behind Terry and George and the corporal, exclaimed shortly:

“Those ain’t the regular cavalry; they’re some o’ them Pawnee scouts.”

“Yes—and they see something, too.” Corporal Williams’ voice issued tensely. “Close up, men. Draw—carbines! That looks like hostiles, somewhere around.”

“I see ’em!” George yelled. “Down to the south! Making ’round that point of hills.”

“And watch those Pawnees go after ’em!” ejaculated Corporal Williams. “Squad, halt! Steady, men, till we see what’s what.”

The wagon train, about two miles before, had changed formation in a hurry. Its escort had suddenly bunched, and now were streaming furiously across country, in wild charge upon another bunch of horsemen skirting the range of hills on the south. The Pawnee yells might be heard faintly, as the scouts urged their ponies with their quirts and heels, and wrestled out of their clothes as they rode.

The quarry had seen, as quickly. They were fifty—Indians, sure, driving a herd of stock.

“Sioux, I bet yuh!” rapped the corporal. “Robbed a graders’ camp. I see more of the beggars, too—those hills are full of ’em. But look at those Pawnees! Never think of the wagon train, they don’t. Plumb left it, set on getting scalps. It’s corralling. Squad, ’tenshun! For’d, march! Trot! Gallop! We’d better get there while we can, boys.”

Away they dashed. The train had corralled, in a complete circle of wagons, wheel to wheel and the teams turned inside. The ground there was rough and rocky, among rises. “Granite Canyon” it was called, after the railroad grade had been blasted through.

The Pawnees were still scurrying; the Sioux had defiantly paused, as though to give battle. If while they fought, the other Sioux came down—well, there’d be considerable trouble.

“They’ll not cut us off, now,” declared Corporal Williams. “They’re a little too leary.”

And with horses blowing the squad tore in, to the corralled train.

“This way! Here’s a hole for you.” They were inside.

“Glad to see you.” It was Major Marshall Hurd himself, the principal engineer assistant to Mr. Reed, superintendent of construction. “What do you think of my Pawnees?”

“They’re keen on a fight, sir. Just show ’em some Sioux, and away they go; but they don’t wait orders,” laughed the corporal.

“Hardly.” And Engineer Hurd smiled grimly. “There were no white officers with this bunch, to hold ’em, and away they went. Now here we are, with a wagon train of powder and provisions, and no guard. Station your men, corporal, where they can help the teamsters. We’ll put up a white man’s fight, and the Pawnees can go hang. Colonel Seymour, you take command of this side of the corral, if you please, and show your Civil War training. I’ll take command of the other side. These boys——”

“Hello!” Colonel Silas Seymour (for it was he, again, evidently on another trip to the Black Hills) addressed Terry. “You’re back, are you? Where did you leave the general?”

“In the Red Desert, sir. He and the rest of the party are with the Bates party, but he sent my pardner and me in with dispatches for General Casement.”

“All right. You’ll find General Casement at Cheyenne. They’re still doing business with end o’ track. I saw your old yellow mule, and one of the Muldoons on her back. Now you and your partner crawl under a wagon and help out. Grab a gun apiece. You can shoot? Good!”

The Pawnees had disappeared; and although the wagon corral waited all the afternoon, they did not return—did not come even into sight, again!

Several other Sioux were to be seen, in the rough country north of the line. They seemed to be spying. They did not venture nearer, but Major Hurd was wise enough not to open the corral; all along the line the graders’ camps, if they knew about the enemy, were playing safe, too.

Dusk settled, and still there was no sign of the Pawnees.

“This will never do,” finally Major Hurd declared. “We’re only twenty miles from Cheyenne, and the whole line is being held up. I hate to spare a single man, but we’ll have to send back for an escort, colonel. I can’t risk taking this train on, without better protection. It’s too valuable a prize.”

“You can detail a couple of those soldiers, I suppose.”

“We may need them; but it can’t be helped. Where’s the corporal? I’ll——”

George nudged Terry, and Terry understood. He stood forward and saluted.

“We’ll go, major. We’re carrying dispatches anyway.”

“You two boys? I don’t doubt you’d do as well as anybody, if the Indians didn’t get after you, but in a case like this——”

“Aw, shucks!” blurted George, who wasn’t much on military discipline. “We’re used to Injuns. ’Tisn’t far, Mr. Hurd. Only twenty miles. Injuns wouldn’t see us any quicker than they would anybody else. We’ve ridden worse trails than that.”

“And we’ve got General Dodge’s dispatches, too,” added Terry. “Wish you’d let us go, sir.”

“I expect they could make it as well as two men, major,” put in Colonel Seymour. “That is, if they’re as smart as they think they are.”

“We’re smart enough to fool Injuns,” asserted George. “Anyway, we’re not afraid.”

“You’re a likely pair,” said Major Hurd, abruptly. “I’ll chance your getting through. You’ll start at midnight. That’ll bring you there by daylight. I’ll give you a dispatch for the military commander at new Fort Russell. There’ll be several graders’ camps along the way—but you’d better keep out from them if you can, or somebody’ll take a shot at you. If you’re driven into one, then halloo in good English before you arrive.”

“Yes, sir. I don’t believe we’ll need any help, though,” answered Terry; and George proclaimed:

“Sure not. We’ll not stop for help. Injuns don’t bother in the dark.”

“Huh!” Terry replied. “Don’t they, these days? You ought to have been with us at Plum Creek!”

CHAPTER XII

TWO ON THE SCOUT TRAIL

THEY left shortly after midnight, with Major Hurd's dispatch tucked inside Terry's shirt along with the General Dodge letters. The men of the wagon corral, except the sentries, were asleep, but Colonel Seymour had stayed up. He and the major shook hands with the two couriers.

"Good luck to you. We'll depend on your sending that escort and opening the line again."

"What was that General Dodge said? Boys are mighty handy, sometimes—wasn't it?" George chuckled, as they rode away.

"That's what," agreed Terry. "But this is nothing. All we've got to do is to keep going—same as the railroad."

"Can't hurry, though, and kick up a fuss," warned George. "Sure and steady, is the word, boy. We want to steer clear of those graders' camps, too. They shoot first and ask questions afterward."

"You bet."

The plains before stretched wide and lonesome in spite of the railroad work. On either side of the survey stakes and the few graders' camps it lay for hundreds of miles, by day broken with uplifts and ravines and ridges, but by night shrouded all in mystery, and looking all the same.

Above, the bright stars studded the black; below, there were no landmarks, except the upturned earth where the graders' ploughs and picks and spades had followed the stakes. And frequently there was not even this, when the work had been interrupted or postponed.

The horses traveled, with ears pricked, at fast walk. Their hoofs occasionally clinked on a stone; and again were muffled in the sand and sod. The canteens now and then jingled, the saddle leather squeaked, one horse or the other blew snorting. But the silence of the night, in such a country, was too big to be disturbed by such small noises.

However, with a good horse under him, and a Spencer repeating carbine across his saddle horn, and a stanch chum by his side, and a trail to which he was used, before him, a fellow need not feel afraid.

They jogged on. The darkness was not the thick kind; it never is, in the clear night in the great open. The graded trail loomed blackly, and warned by his glowing eyes they once or twice glimpsed a coyote slip away, like a shadow.

They tried to parallel the railroad survey, until, after they had ridden for an hour, maybe, in the distance ahead they heard a dog barking.

“Graders’ camp, huh!” George grunted.

“Yep. Can’t be Injuns. Injuns wouldn’t camp along the right o’ way. Not when the Pawnees are out after ’em. We’d better branch off and go ’round.”

“Right you are. Edge off, toward the North Star.”

So they veered from the due east and catty-cornered in the direction of the North Star.

“Keep it between chin and shoulder. That’ll take us ’round, I reckon, and we’ll know how far to turn back in,” Terry directed.

“Aw, we couldn’t miss the railroad grades, anyway,” George scoffed.

“A fellow can miss almost anything, at night, unless he’s mighty careful.”

“Couldn’t miss Cheyenne, though.”

“Well, this is a big country, just the same.”

They rode and rode. The barking of the dog had quit. They were surely past the graders’ camp; it was high time to turn in. George suddenly exclaimed:

“What’s the matter, up yonder? Blame it, the sky’s clouding. Can’t scarcely see the North Star, now.”

“That’s right. It’s light enough down here, though. Doesn’t feel like a storm.”

“No; but how’ll we keep direction?”

“Guess at it. If we travel in a straight line as we’re heading, we’ll strike the grade somewhere.”

Terry turned more sharply, to make certain, and they rode. They rode—and they rode, with eyes keen to catch the first traces of the railroad survey.

“Do you reckon we’ve crossed it?”

“No. It’s in front of us. Must be.”

“Wish some dog would bark,” George complained. “Let’s stop a minute.”

They stopped, and listened. They did not hear a sound.



THE TWO SCOUTS IN A FIX

“I’ll be darned!” George grumbled. “Just when we need a dog, he doesn’t bark. And there’s not a single star in the whole blamed sky. How can a fellow travel by night without stars?”

“Injuns can.”

“Well, we aren’t Injuns.”

“So could Jim Bridger, I bet you.”

“So could I, if I knew where I was going,” retorted George.

“Keep going.”

“Keep going,” George echoed.

They rode. The horses no longer pricked up their ears; they plodded with only an occasional shying off from unexpected objects, but otherwise did not take much interest. That was a bad sign. The country under foot seemed to be growing rougher. A deep gully cut the blind trail, and had to be followed for a piece, until the horses plunged in, and out again.

Terry reined, and spoke.

“Either we’re lost or the grade’s lost.”

“Shucks! We’re hefty scouts, to lose a railroad line.”

“Wouldn’t have lost it, if the sky hadn’t clouded over. And we haven’t any compass.”

“Next time we’ll ride right through any graders’ camp and let ’em shoot,” declared George. “What had we better do? Keep going?”

“Seems to me we’re headed nearly right, anyhow,” mused Terry. “I don’t think that gully threw us off, much. These horses are liable to take us somewhere if we give ’em the rein—liable to take us to a camp or into Cheyenne.”

“Maybe they don’t know about Cheyenne.”

“Gwan!” bade Terry, to his mount; and they rode on again, through the stillness and the monotonous dusk.

After what might have been a long time, of plodding and stumbling and rasping through brush and over rocks, the horses halted, of themselves, at the base of a steep slope which slanted up into the night. Their riders peered, and hope died.

“We’re plumb lost, for sure,” growled George. “There’s no railroad grade here; it’s somewhere else. Which way’s east, I’d like to know.”

“’Tisn’t this way. We must be north of the grade, still. We’d better follow along this hill, and strike in another direction. Come on.”

They rode (the horses were glad not to climb) and leaving the slope they presently arrived against another slope, in the new direction.

“Say! The farther we go the farther we are from anywhere,” George flatly declared. “I vote we quit till daylight. Then we can see something. This blundering about and getting no place isn’t any fun.”

“W-well,” sighed Terry, “I reckon you’re right, boy. Might as well save our hosses. But I hate to give in.”

So did George. Still, as he had said, they weren’t getting any place with all their riding. He plumped from the saddle, and fumbled at his picket rope.

“What you doing?”

“Going to picket this horse, and take a snooze.”

He was practical, George was; nothing phased him.

“All right. Leave the saddles on, though, and the bits in, so we can mount in a jiffy.”

“You talk sense, pard,” George answered broadly.

They picketed their horses close within reach, and snuggled down like old campaigners.

“When the sky gets light, we’ll know where the east is, then, sure,” remarked Terry.

“Yes; and we may find ourselves right close to the grade, or we may be a thousand miles from nowhere,” George sleepily murmured. “Br-r! Wish we’d brought a blanket.”

The night was chill. Terry grew colder and colder, and shivered. He hunched up, longing for daybreak—he nodded off, and shivered awake. The horses cropped and snorted; George always could sleep at any time and at any place, and now began to gurgle. Terry dozed for short intervals; finally let himself go (there wasn’t any use in mounting guard, here, over the two of them); and when again he opened his eyes, the blackness had paled.

Morning!

He scrambled to his feet, and easily located the east, by the brightness of the sky there. Birds were twittering in the brush—hill slopes of sage and gravel rose on right and left, as the night thinned; but all the landscape was

lonely, without trace of other human beings. Not even an antelope was in sight.

He shook George.

“Wha’ ’smatter?”

“Morning. Let’s get out of here.”

“I should say!” And George staggered to his feet. “Did you sleep, too? Where are we, anyhow?” And he blinked about.

“I don’t know. But we’ll hit south as fast as we can. There’s the east. Once we’re out of these hills, then we can see something.”

Without wasting time George stumbled for his horse; they hung the picket ropes to the saddles, swung aboard, and were on their way again.

“Follow down this draw?”

“Yes. If it doesn’t lead right we’ll climb a hill and take a look.”

The morning brightened rapidly. The draw seemed to lead in the right direction. It opened into a rolling plain—hurrah! And now they saw, far before, a column of smoke suspended in the still air.

“Camp! There’s the grade!”

“How in thunder did we ever get away out here?”

“I dunno. We ought to have been at Cheyenne by this time.”

“Well, we’ll get there now,” asserted George. “But we’re hefty dispatch-bearers.”

The smoke column was some three miles yonder. They pushed for it, at a trot—thought that they could see the line itself, and Terry was just saying: “Cheyenne can’t be very far, either,” when George’s voice broke in a little gasp.

“Terry! Injuns! Look quick. We’ll never make it.”

Terry looked. Quartering on their right, ahead, out from a low place in the range of bare hills, there, the Indians were coming, at last. There was no mistake about that. They were less than a mile away—they rode like

Indians, they acted like Indians, and Indians they were, charging full tilt; twenty-five or thirty of them.

Terry's heart surged into his throat. A wave of sickness swept through him. He hauled on the rein.

"Run for it, George. Never mind the grade—they'll cut us off. But we'll beat 'em to Cheyenne. Got to."

"Sure have. They may quit."

"We can fort and fight 'em off, till help comes. Blame the luck! Major Hurd's counting on us."

"Never say die till you're dead," panted George. "Maybe Cheyenne isn't far. Maybe a graders' camp has seen."

They tore on at best speed. Terry glanced aside, to measure distance again. The sky in the east had cleared, and the sun was just launching his first level rays across the sage. They brought the Indians into plainer view. The gap between the two, pursuers and pursued, had narrowed. Those were good ponies as well as good riders, and the horses were stiff and sluggish.

"Dog-gone! They're closing in on us," George remarked, as if trying to speak matter-of-fact. George never got rattled, in a pinch. He might be depended upon, to the last inch.

"Guess they are." And Terry also tried to speak cheerfully. "If we could only get to that ridge yonder, maybe we'd see Cheyenne."

The Indians were beginning to whoop. Their cries wafted shrilly and threateningly—likewise gleefully. They were between the boys and the distant grade—were closing in almost parallel. From the grade nobody was coming, to the rescue. It seemed horrible to be cut off, this way, and forced to fight for one's life, right within sight of other persons—right within sight of possible help; but that had been the story of the railroad, to date. The same thing had occurred along almost every mile of the track, and the grading, and the surveys.

"When we come to a good place, stop quick. We'll have to fight 'em off, George," spoke Terry. "We can't make even the ridge."

A fellow could always do that, if he was smart: down his horse, fort behind it, and shoot true.

The yells were louder. The Indians were within easy range. In a moment the bullets would commence to sing.

“Now!” rasped Terry—and at the instant George’s horse stumbled, pitched to his knees, and sent George flying over its head. Terry reined in a jiffy, tumbled off, and leveled his carbine across the saddle.

“Give it to ’em. Get up—catch your hoss. I’ll hold ’em off.”

The sight blurred in his eyes—but the Indians swerved madly—he saw the nearest lift hand, palm to the front, heard him shout—and heard George also.

“Wait! Don’t shoot. They’re Pawnees!”

So they were—the Pawnee scouts, several of them in army breeches made into leggins. They had bunched and halted, the leader (the one with the hand up) was riding forward, grinning; now the rest followed. The relief was so great that Terry felt faint and trembly.

“I suppose they think it’s a great joke,” panted George. “It’d served ’em right if we’d wiped out a few of ’em. And we’d have done it, too, in a minute more.”

The Pawnees evidently did think it a great joke. They came on laughing and prancing. The leader, their sergeant, shook hands with Terry, and with the angry George.

“What do you mean by chasing us, anyhow?” George demanded.

The sergeant, who wore breeches-leggins with a commissioned officer’s yellow stripe down their seam, grinned broadly.

“Heap run,” he chuckled. “No good. Pawnees ketch ’um, samee Sioux. Make young warriors. Good boys.”

“Humph!” Then Terry found himself smiling, too. There was no use in being sour over such luck. “Where you going?”

“Where you go?” answered the sergeant.

“Cheyenne.”

“All right. We go Cheyenne. Come.”

George’s horse was unhurt; they mounted.

“You with Major Hurd?” queried Terry.

“Yes. Chase Sioux; kill heap; many scalps. Take ’um Crow Creek, have big dance.”

“Why don’t you go back to the wagon train?” scolded George. “That’s where you belong. What are you out here chasing white men for?”

“No wagon train. Kill all Sioux, now bring scalps to soldier chief. Scare white boys, make ’em run. Hoo-rah!”

The Pawnees were in the highest kind of spirits. They seemed to think nothing of having left the wagon train in the lurch, but they thought a whole lot of their successful fight with the Sioux. Now they were going back to Crow Creek, or Cheyenne, to celebrate.

Taking the two dispatch-bearers, they laid a straight course—knew exactly where they were heading. And sure enough, from the crest of the next little rise Cheyenne was plain in sight, with the railroad grade running into its collection of tents and shacks and new buildings, and through and on east to meet end o’ track.

The first thing to do, of course, was to hustle the Major Hurd dispatch into the hands of the commanding officer at the new Fort Russell, which was as yet only a tent camp outside of town, and leave their Spencer carbines; then to look up General “Jack” Casement, and give him the General Dodge dispatches and report for duty; all before breakfast.

Scarcely had they reached town, from the fort, when a detachment of cavalry was trotting into the west, to relieve the Hurd wagon train. That was good. Now for General Casement.

“It’s shore some town,” George commented, as they ambled through, curiously inspecting.

And so it was, they were to find out: the “Magic City of the Plains,” with already over a thousand people, here where three months before there had been only a bare expanse, and a graveyard of two dead men; with streets named, and city officers in charge, and a daily paper, and shingled roofs as

well as sheet-iron and canvas, and several two-story buildings, one of which, 55 × 25 feet, had been erected of raw rough lumber from Denver in forty-eight hours!

Luckily, whom should they sight but General Casement himself, getting this, the new terminal, into shape to receive the sidings and his warehouse and all, for end o' track was only forty miles out and coming fast.

They vaulted off, where he was talking with Superintendent Sam Reed. Terry saluted.

"Dispatches from General Dodge, sir," he said.

"Hello! It's you again, is it? Well! Where'd you hail from, this time?" demanded the little general.

"From the Red Desert, sir; the both of us. I found George Stanton—or we all did, I mean, with the Bates party. The general sent us back."

"I see."

General Casement quickly tore open the dispatches, and read them.

"Very good," he said. "Had your breakfast?"

"No, sir."

"Had a pleasant trip?"

"Yes, sir. The Pawnees charged us, to scare us; but we forted behind our horses and were going to fight them off, only we didn't need to."

"They gave us the peace sign just in time, too," George added; "or else they'd have lost some scalps." And he wagged his head and growled hostilely. "The laugh would have been on them, I'll bet."

"Hah!" chuckled the little general. "That's the talk. You're the right stuff. You ought to be corporals, at least. Now what? Ready for work?"

"Yes, sir. I've got a job at end o' track," Terry answered.

"I'll take a job somewhere if I can get one," asserted George. "I don't want to loaf."

"All right. Mr. Reed and I, between us, will see that you don't loaf, young man. Nobody loafs, along the U. P. But first you get breakfast, both of you.

Then you can have till noon. Report to one of us at noon; if we're not here, go on out to end o' track and find us."

"Sha'n't I start in hauling rails again, sir?" Terry asked.

"You'll start in at something or other, never fear; and so shall this other boy. How are you fixed for funds? Got breakfast money?"

"I haven't," George confessed.

"Guess I have," said Terry.

"Never mind. Here." And General Casement scribbled upon a pocket pad and tore off the leaf. "You take this to the Home Cooking restaurant, two blocks up and right around the corner to your left. It's run by two women—regular white women. It's a fine place. I eat there myself, and so does Mr. Reed."

"I recommend it without reserve," Mr. Reed asserted. "The best cooking this side of Omaha. And very clean, pleasant women."

The leaf said:

Feed these two boys two big meals each. Charge to me.

J. S. Casement, U. P. R. R.
(Late Brig. Gen., U. S. V.)

"Turn your horses in at the Square Deal corral, for feed and water," bade General Casement. "Tell the man I'll settle for them when I settle for my own."

"And be sure to try the apple pie," added Superintendent Reed. "It's the real thing."

"Yes, sir; we will. Thanks very much," they replied, replying to all instructions at once.

"Don't forget the apple pie," Superintendent Reed reminded, after them, as they rode away.

"Do you suppose we can get apple pie for breakfast?" George queried, anxiously.

“I dunno. We can ask. Jiminy! I haven’t had a piece of real apple pie for a coon’s age,” said Terry. “We’re in luck, anyhow. We might have had to go clear to end o’ track without eating.”

“‘Home cooking’ restaurant sounds good to me. But you can’t always tell. Sometimes those names are frauds—they don’t pan out. Golly, I’d like to sit down to regular home cooking again, by women like my mother.”

“Or like mine. So would I,” agreed Terry. “Men cooks are all right, but it doesn’t seem to come natural to ’em. Now a woman, she just slings stuff together and you never know how it’s going to taste except it’ll taste exactly right.”

“That is, if she’s like our mothers,” George persisted.

All Cheyenne was ringing with the sound of busy hammering, as scores of men labored with might and main to put up still more buildings. It certainly was a lively place. They stowed their horses in the Square Deal, and on foot found the Home Cooking restaurant.

“Doesn’t look much,” George criticized, when they inspected it from the outside.

“’Bout the same as the rest of ’em, only smells kind of good.” And Terry sniffed.

The Home Cooking restaurant was of canvas walls boarded part way up, and corrugated sheet-iron roof painted red, and seemed brand new. A large square canvas sign hung up in front, with the name on it. The front door was ajar. Through it there wafted those odors that had made Terry sniff. Inside there was hammering and voices.

“Gee, I do smell pie—or something,” George declared, wrinkling his nose as he drew long breaths. “Shall we try it?”

“Sure. Come on. We’re not afraid of women, even if we aren’t washed up.”

So in they clumped. The room was as neat as wax. There was a long counter with a row of stools in front of it, and several signs—“Home Coffee,” “Home Bread,” “Home Doughnuts,” “Home Apple Pie,” “We Are Ladies. Please Be Gentlemen,” “Remember Your Mother, Boys.”

A woman in a blue checkered gingham dress was tacking shiny white oilcloth upon the counter. That was a part of the hammering. She had her back turned, and hadn't heard them enter.

"Please, ma'am, may we get breakfast here?" Terry asked.

Whew, how good that room smelled!

"Why, I think I can accommodate you," the woman answered, speaking through the tacks between her lips. "We can give you something—we're just opening up——" and she took her tacks out and raised her head, to face them.

"Anything that's homey, ma'am," pleaded George. "We——"

But Terry fairly screeched.

"Ma! Jiminy whillikens! Say—aren't you my mother?"

"Why, Terry Richards! What are you doing here?"

"What are *you* doing here?" retorted Terry, as they rushed together and hugged.

"We're on the U. P., too. We're——"

From the kitchen another woman hurried in, her hands all flour, to find out what was going on. And George shouted and charged.

"There's *my* mother. Hooray!"

"For goodness' sake!"

"Never mind your hands, ma. I'm dirty, anyhow."

And she didn't; he didn't, either.

"Well, well, well! We thought one of you was out at end of track and the other was surveying."

"So we were. We just got into town. And we thought you were down at Denver."

"So we were. And we've just got in, too—only two or three days ago. We've hardly opened up for business, yet."

"What are you going to do?"

“Run a nice little restaurant.”

“But you can’t, ma,” Terry objected. “These railroad towns are awful tough towns, at first.”

“Yes, we can. As soon as the men find out that we’re ladies, and serve such good food, they’ll treat us all right, we’re sure. We haven’t had a bit of trouble, so far. We won’t serve a great variety, but what we do serve will be real home cooking.”

“Does dad know about it?”

“Not a word, and I don’t want him to know till the track gets here. Then we’ll surprise him.”

“But, ma! We’ll all be going on again. We won’t be here very long, maybe. You both can’t stay in Cheyenne, running a restaurant.”

“We don’t intend to,” laughed his mother, briskly. “We’re going on with you—clear through, with the U. P. Aren’t we, Mrs. Stanton!”

“Indeed we are. We’ll hire somebody to pack our things, each time the town moves. And at every new town you boys and your fathers (I only hope George’s father will be near) will know just where to get something good to eat. Oh, we’ll watch after you.”

Now there was another interruption. She was a girl, George’s sister. He called her his “little” sister, but she was growing faster than he.

“Hello, Virgie!”

Virgie stared.

“It’s no fair!” she accused. “We aren’t ready. We wanted to surprise you.”

“Well, I should say you did surprise us,” Terry comforted. “We didn’t know what the Home Cooking restaurant was.”

“Where’s Shep?” Virgie asked.

Terry sobered.

“We’ll tell you about Shep. We’ve got a lot to tell.”

“Do we have pie for breakfast, ma?” prompted George. “General Casement gave us a meal pass, for here; and Superintendent Reed said to be sure to try

the apple pie.”

“Oh, those two men!” scoffed Mrs. Stanton. “They’ve almost eaten us out. Yes, you can have apple pie for breakfast, if you want it. Luckily we’ve got some fresh in the oven.”

“That’s what we smelled, George,” Terry exclaimed triumphantly.

“We leave the door open on purpose, when we’re cooking,” explained Virgie.

“Do you like Cheyenne, Virgie?” Terry asked, as the two mothers bustled to gather breakfast together.

“No; it’s too dirty and noisy. But I sha’n’t stay here. When Uncle Ralph (that was Terry’s father) brings his engine in, I’m going to ride up and down the track on it, all the time.”

“Breakfast will be ready in a minute,” called his mother. “You can wash out here in the kitchen; and you and George can be telling us about your fathers and about yourselves, and everything.”

CHAPTER XIII

SET FOR THE GREAT RACE

END O' TRACK, again! With the secret of the Home Cooking restaurant kept close from Engine Driver Richards; with Pat Miles urging the work, and the red-shirted, gray-shirted, blue-shirted Irish track-layers and spikers and ballasters sweating, and the sledges whanging, and the truck-loads of rails hauled by Jimmie Muldoon and brother astride horse and yellow mule rumbling up, and the puffing construction-train constantly elbowing the boarding-train out of the way, and the cheery song breaking forth ever and anon:

“Drill, my paddies, drill!
Drill, you tarriers, drill!
Oh, it's work all day,
No sugar in your tay—
Wor-rkin' on th' U. Pay. Ra-a-ailway!”

“So it's fur out into the desert yez have been, is it?” asked Pat, at lay-off the first evening.

“That's what, Pat.”

“An' nigh died, one o' yez. Well, well! Is that the kind o' country? But no matter. Yez didn't see anything o' the Cintral, did yez?”

“We should say not! They're still in California, more than a thousand miles west.”

“Sure, what's a thousand miles, to a U. Pay. man? First thing they know, we'll be bumpin' their Chiny dagoes off'n the right o' way. Is it true they got 10,000 of 'em a-workin' wid white man's picks an' shovels?”

“Shouldn't wonder, Pat.”

Pat sighed.

“Ah, well. Nobody but an Irishman can handle a pick—yes, an' a shillaly, too. Wid them two weapons we'll dig to Chiny itself. We've had a hard

time wid the Injuns, since you left, Terry, me boy; but now we're hittin' our stride ag'in an' we'll not stop till we're atop them Black Hills yonder, where we can take a squint over at the country beyant."

The rails went forward, but Terry had found himself promoted from rail-hauler on the back of old yellow Jenny (and he did hate to leave Jenny) to time-checker on the back of a horse: his business to ride along among the work-gangs and get their time, for report to the Casement pay-master.

And George was settled as a clerk in the pay-car that weekly trundled up and back.

The Indian troubles were thought to be quieted. A big treaty council had been held, and another was to follow, between the Sioux and Cheyennes and the United States. At any rate, the job of riding the line and visiting the near grading-camps was not so dangerous as it might have been earlier in the season. Also, it was very pleasant, when Cheyenne and the Home Cooking restaurant drew nearer to end o' track.

The rails were marching on. Thirty miles to Cheyenne, twenty miles to Cheyenne, fifteen miles to Cheyenne, and ten, and five and two—and one more day's work and there they'd be.

There they were, on November 13, this 1867: planting mile-post 517, and welcomed by a great crowd, and a band, and a lot of flags and bunting, with the Lincoln car carrying the Government inspectors pressing after and accepting the track as far as mile-post 490, only some twenty-five miles behind. Yes, it was a well-built road.

This evening Terry guided his father up-town, and another reunion occurred, celebrated with plenty of pie and hot doughnuts.

Into the new terminal station the telegraph poles advanced. The pay-car moved up, bringing the eager George. Then came the procession: Casement Brothers' take-down warehouse and offices, and the gamblers' tents and the side-shows and saloons, which had been only waiting, at Julesburg. Cheyenne rapidly swelled to 3,000 people, for now the news had passed that it was to be the winter quarters of the railroad. The Overland Stage changed its terminal, also, to keep with the gang, and put on a run between Denver and Cheyenne.

There was nothing but the station left at Julesburg, the five months “wickedest town in America”: nothing but the station and a mess of cans and other rubbish. Cheyenne, the “Magic City of the Plains,” had swallowed it.

On the very next day after the arrival of end o’ track, the passenger trains began to roll in. The first brought a brimming excursion from the East. This meant another jollification, with speeches by the mayor and by Mr. Sidney Dillon, president of the U. P. board of directors, and by little General Casement, “champion track-layer of the continent,” and others. Town lots that the company had sold for \$150 were being resold for as high as \$2,500.

The end o’ track did not pause here long. As soon as switches and side-tracks enough had been laid the rails hastened onward, for the Black Hills.

“We’ll ate our Christmas dinner atop, boys,” Pat cheered. “An’ from yon, 8,000 feet in the air, we’ll shake our fists at the Cintral haythen, over beyant in Californy. ’Twill be better that, than shakin’ ’em under each other’s noses here in this new roarin’ town which is like to be the greediest yet after your money.”

The work grew harder. The winds of November and December blew fiercely, sweeping the sand and gravel and snow into the men’s faces; Crow Creek froze, the water had to be hauled from holes chopped through the ice, there were days when the laying had to quit entirely, until the grade was scraped clear. And the climb and curves and cuts would have slowed the march even in summer.

General Dodge was back from his exploring trip into the far west. He had taken his company through to Salt Lake, and then east again by a northern route. He had found no survey better than the Percy Browne lines; the road was to run through the Red Basin.

“To Fort Sanders was the plan o’ him an’ Gin’ral Casement,” said Pat. “Two hundred an’ eighty-eight miles for the year, that is. But we’re like to fall short o’ that an’ we’ll rist content when we’ve planted post 540 at the top o’ the grade. ’Twill be 500 miles o’ track laid in two seasons o’ twelve months altogether—near sixty miles a month—two miles a workin’ day, ain’t it, week in an’ week out? B’ gorry, I call that purty good, meself, an’

the Cintral bunch o' pig-tails can put the figgers in their pipes an' smoke 'em."

Therefore at the close of December the track and grading gangs knocked off for the winter, with end o' track almost to the top, and only ten miles this side of Sherman Summit.

The pay-car pulled in, to pay off the men. General Dodge, General Casement, Superintendent Reed, and other officials came, for the last inspection of the year. While the men were gathering their tools, to board their train and "leave the job," Terry and George and Pat rode horseback up the grade to the top, for a view.

Snow whitened the pass, changing the Black Hills to white; a wind always blew, up here, and the air was cutting cold. The curves of the roadbed hid the boarding-train and end o' track, behind, but farther in the east, and below, might be seen Cheyenne, sprawling on the drear plains, with the rails apparently spanning the distance to it. Southwest seventy-five miles there uplifted hoary Long's Peak, the northernmost sentinel of the Colorado Rockies; 'twas claimed that on a clear day you could see even the celebrated Pike's Peak, the southernmost sentinel, 150 miles by air-line. Northwest, about 100 miles, beckoned the great, lone Elk Mountain, at the western end of the Laramie Plains.

In that direction Pat gazed—they all gazed, with watering eyes. Pat sighed.

"Sure," he said, "'tis a weary march, yet, rail by rail, twenty-eight feet by twenty-eight feet, across them plains, an' across the waterless desert, an' across the snow mountains, and down to Salt Lake, an' on, ever on, into the west, for twice the distance we've come already. But we'll make it, lads. Aye, we'll make it, if we finish on our hands an' knees. I hear tell there be folks back in the States who say that no head of a daycent-size family will live to see the iron horse crossin' continent from the Atlantic to the Paycific. They say he'll die of old age, before. But I, Paddy Miles, construction foreman o' Casement Brothers, a-layin' the U. Pay. tracks, say that afore the Irishmen on the right o' way have grown whiskers, the smart-licks themselves'll be ridin' on passes (if they can get 'em) from Chicago to 'Frisco widout change o' cars." He turned his horse. "Come on back now. We'll winter in Cheyenne, an' be ready to start in fresh on the job by the time the wild geese are flyin', in the spring."

“Hurrah for the U. P.!” uttered George. “But what I want to know next is, what has the C. P. done?”

“Well, they ain’t been loafin’, b’ gorry,” Pat assured. “They’ve been workin’, whilst hangin’ on by their toes.”

And that was so. In 1866 the U. P. had laid 260 miles of track; the C. P. only thirty-eight. This year the U. P.’s record was 240 miles—“an’ ivery mile a fight,” as Pat said; the C. P. record was only forty-six miles—but such miles, according to the California and Salt Lake newspapers!

It was a thrilling story. The Central Pacific people had started in 7,000 feet up, at the top of the Sierra Nevada Range. They had had to haul their rails and other supplies over snowy grades of ninety and 100 feet to the mile—one grade was the limit of 116 feet to the mile! It took two of the most powerful engines yet built, to each construction-train; the snow was fifteen feet deep on the level, and half of the graders had to spend their time shoveling it off the roadbed. The track could not get over the top, on account of the grade, and the snow there twenty to 100 feet deep, so it went through, by a tunnel a third of a mile long, drilled into solid granite rock, and blasted out with powder. Some of the charges blew 3,000 tons of rock into fragments at one whack—and rocks weighing over 200 pounds were sent flying over half a mile. The powder expense for one month was \$54,000.

The company could not wait to get their engines and rails by ship around Cape Horn, so they were ordering them by the railroad across the Isthmus of Panama—a shortcut. The freight bill on one locomotive was \$8,100; and two of the giant engines had cost the company, when delivered, \$70,752!

Forty miles of snow-sheds, of heavy timber, were necessary, so that the road should not be snowed under completely. There was to be one snow-shed over twenty miles long! There was a tremendous amount of high trestles, as well as a tremendous amount of chiseling and blasting to make a roadbed in the faces of the precipices.

Twenty-five saw-mills were busy, turning out timbers and ties. Ten thousand Chinamen had been engaged, as graders and track-layers. They were paid \$30 a month—or a dollar a day, including Sundays—and furnished their own meals. They worked so close and with such system that

in a space of 250 feet there sometimes were thirty carts and 250 graders, all as busy as bees. White men could not be depended upon; the white laborers were always being tempted away, to the gold and silver mines.

The Central Pacific Company had not waited to finish the big tunnel, or shovel off the snow. They had sent several thousand men on ahead, in wagons, twenty miles over and down, to work where the snow was lighter. They had loaded a locomotive, taken apart, and forty miles of rails and bolts and spikes, upon wagons, and sent them over, too.

So that while the tunnel was being drilled and blasted, and the grading done beyond, the advance gangs were building, also. On December 13 the tracks had descended the mountain as far as the Nevada line; were getting down into the foothills, and early in the spring would be amidst the sage-brush of the Nevada desert, with an open way to Salt Lake!

“Gee! We fellows’ll have to hustle,” George remarked, after he and Terry had succeeded in reading the tattered newspapers, passed around at Cheyenne. “They’ve got 600 miles yet to go, but it’s level; we’ve got 500 miles, and we’re just starting in on the mountains.”

“That Nevada desert country is fierce, though. No good water for miles and miles, and lots of loose sand and soda and alkali. Injuns, too—the Diggers and Snakes. Our engineers have been across it surveying.”

“Can’t be worse than our Red Desert,” retorted George—who had been there, himself. “And we’ve got the Wasatch Mountains, besides.”

“Just the samee, I’ll bet on the Irish. We’ll beat the Chinks into Salt Lake, and we’ll meet ’em while they’re still coming,” Terry answered hopefully. “You watch our smoke, boy, as soon as spring opens. The Northwestern Railway is into Council Bluffs across from Omaha, you know; we don’t have to haul our stuff by wagon and boat any more—we get the rails quick, right off the cars. We’ve got plenty timber close to the line, in the Black Hills, for ties, and the tie-camps are cutting and sawing now. We’re graded already clear ahead to Sanders on the other side of the Black Hills, and the surveys are about finished from here to Salt Lake. Do you know how many miles those engineers have covered since April? Three thousand, three hundred and ten! I reckon General Dodge has everything mapped, and sees just what he’s going to do.”

“They say the company’s plumb out of money. We lost, at only \$16,000 a mile across the plains. Had to do too much hauling at long distance.”

“Well, I guess the Central didn’t make much money, at \$48,000 a mile in those mountains; and look at the freight bills they’ve been paying. Now we get our \$48,000 a mile, for easy grading; and after that, \$32,000 a mile. The U. P. ’ll raise enough to start on again.”

And evidently this was to be the case. General Dodge went to New York, for a company meeting. After he had explained the route, and had shown the maps of the surveys, the company told him to go ahead as fast as he could.

It was a busy winter in Cheyenne. Supplies of rails and spikes and bolts and other iron ammunition poured in as rapidly as the trains could bring them. Tons and tons—thousands of tons—were stacked in the Casement Bros.’ warehouses. And out along the line over the Black Hills, and down, and away into the Laramie Plains huge piles of ties and culvert and bridge timbers were being collected.

Cheyenne boomed. It had 3,000 buildings and 6,000 people; and what with the graders and track-layers who wintered there, several of the business firms were selling goods to the amount of \$30,000 a month! The Home Restaurant did a fine business, besides feeding its “men folks.”

Early in the spring General Dodge called all the chiefs of departments to meet him at Omaha, the U. P. headquarters. At the close of the meeting the word was spread:

The trail had been decided upon. There was no good route through Salt Lake City, and around the south end of the Great Salt Lake. Ogden, at the north end of the lake, thirty-six miles north of Salt Lake City, was to be the Utah terminal point. But the engineers were to set out at once, snow or no snow, mountains or no mountains, and run their stakes from the Laramie Plains to Humboldt Wells over 200 miles west of Ogden!

The graders were to start in as soon as the frost was out of the ground so that they could dig.

The track-layers were expected to lay 500 miles of track in eight months—and then keep going the 220 miles farther, so as to meet the C. P. at Humboldt Wells in the next year, 1869!

“For th’ love o’ Hiven!” Pat Miles gasped, reading the orders. “To Ogden, is it, 500 miles, t’other side the snow range, at one jump—an’ 220 miles across the desert, at another? Oh, well! Faith an’ we’ll do it. The Cintral have their 10,000 Chinks, but the U. Pay.’ll have 15,000 white men. That’s all we nade: men, men, an’ more men—an’ a bit o’ money to pay ’em wid.”

The additional men poured into Cheyenne, like the iron was pouring in. They raised the population to 10,000. An army of picks and spades, sledges, ploughs and scrapers only awaited the word: “Forward!” The surveying parties had gone at once. From Omaha the chiefs had passed through, picking up their squads on their way. Some were camped on the Laramie Plains; some were camped at Rawlins Springs of the high plateau; some were into the Red Desert; some were crossing the Wasatch Range of Utah with sleds, over snow to the tops of the telegraph poles; some were in the Nevada desert beyond the Salt Lake, and facing the Central engineers. That was George’s father’s job. He had not come in at all, but had wintered at Salt Lake and Ogden.

It was to be the greatest race ever run on the American continent. Every mile gained meant \$48,000 or \$32,000; it meant also a grant of land twenty miles deep on either side of the tracks; and it meant beating the other fellow.

CHAPTER XIV

THE “TARRIERS” MAKE A RECORD

“HURRAH! Everybody come out to end o’ track tomorrow. We’re going to throw a scare for sure into those Central gangs.”

That was Terry, bursting in through the back doorway of the Home Cooking restaurant, in this last new base and division point, of Bryan, far western Wyoming. Time: Friday evening, late in September, 1868.

“What kind of a ‘scare,’ Terry?”

“Track-laying. Another record. The Central matched our six miles in a day by claiming seven. General Casement is out yonder, with General Corse and a bunch of other big-bugs, and they’re feeling good; and tomorrow General Casement is going to show us off and put a stopper in the Central’s brag.”

“How far away are you now, boy?” George asked.

“Eighteen miles. They’re setting mile-post 877, at a side-station named Granger. We’ve just crossed the line into Utah (for Utah had not yet lost so much of its northeast corner) and that’s one reason we celebrate. Pat says he’ll lay eight miles as a mark for the ‘C. Pay. haythen’ to aim at.”

“I don’t believe it can be done,” Terry’s father declared.

“Yes, it can. Sure it can. Look at what we’ve been laying right along in the desert: two and three miles, and four, and once six, in mighty bad country.”

“I’ll be there, Terry,” Virgie cried. “I want to see.”

What a spring and summer that had been! And what a fall and winter it was to be! The great race was in full swing.

In middle April the U. P. track-layers had finally broken loose from winter quarters in Cheyenne, and since then they had not wasted a day.

At the start, the grade had not yet been clear of snow, nor the ground thawed, and it took twenty-four days to make thirty-three miles to the Laramie River just below Fort Sanders across the Black Hills.

A third of Cheyenne flocked here, to the new base named Laramie City. Even before the track got in, Laramie City boasted the title “Gem City of the Mountains,” had 500 shacks and 3,000 people, and was “roaring.” The freight trains were close behind end o’ track, and the passenger trains from Omaha began to roll in again.

In rolled, on wheels, the Cheyenne take-down buildings and the gambling and saloon and side-show outfits—and among the very first of all the outfits to report, was the Home Cooking restaurant. It had proved so popular that, as George said, it was given a “front seat.”

Terry and his father, at the farther front, were glad indeed to welcome it. But the grading gangs were on ahead, and the track-layer gang stayed only long enough to lay the switches and sidings. Then the rails leaped forward, on the trail.

“’Tis a long way yet to the ind o’ the 500 miles, lads,” reminded Paddy; and with him urging, and extra wages promised for Sundays and holidays, the track-layers scarcely straightened their backs except at darkness.

The track flew through the length of the Laramie Plains and found a bridge ready at the North Platte River almost on the very spot where young Engineer Appleton had swung across with the news of Percy Browne’s death. Leaping the river the rails paused to plant another terminal and supply base just beyond brand-new Fort Steele.

One hundred and twenty-six miles in sixty days. That was doing better——
“But we’re a bit soft still,” Pat apologized.

The supply base was named Benton. It proved to be the “roaringest” town yet—a seething town of red dust, of North Platte, Julesburg, Cheyenne and Laramie gamblers and saloon keepers, and of night turned into day. The river was three miles away, east, and water for the town people had to be hauled by wagons, price ten cents a bucket; but many of the inhabitants cared little for water.

Benton grew in a twinkling to 5,000 citizens; take-down business blocks were put together and set up in a day; it was said that two boys with screw-drivers could set up an imitation “brown-stone front” house (which arrived all boxed and numbered), in three hours. One gambler outfit ran the Big Tent—a canvas building 100 feet long and forty feet wide, and floored for

dancing. But in three months Benton was less than Julesburg; there was not even a station.

For the rails had again sprinted. They passed right through the ravine of Rawlins Spring, dipped down into the Red Desert at the place where George and the rest of the Bates party had been rescued, and following the Percy Browne survey they never stopped for water or anything. The construction-train brought the water from behind, in tanks, until wells were drilled; wagons carried it forward to the grading gangs. Much of the water was rank with alkali and soda; it made the men ill, and foamed and encrusted in the engine boilers; but the Red Desert had no terrors for the U. P. gangs.

Long before, the reconnoitering surveyors, led by the division chief, had picked out the landmarks of hills and streams, as guides for the location surveyors. The location surveyors pressed after, with their maps and charts, to drive the stakes—at four, eight, twelve miles a day. Eating the stakes, 100 miles at a mouthful, the grading gangs, 8,000 and 10,000 strong, tried to keep fifty miles ahead of end o' track. In their rear, ten and twenty miles ahead of end o' track, the bridge crews and culvert crews plied hammer and saw. Behind them, and four or five miles ahead of end o' track, the tie-layers and ballasters tugged and tamped. And end o' track pursued with 500 other men and fifty teams.

In a perfect cloud the freight and supply wagons toiled back and forth beside the grade. They formed a line of alkali dust 150 miles long, stirred up by the hoofs of 5,000 horses and mules. And east of end o' track were the puffing boarding-train and the busy construction-train, while Jimmie Muldoon and his little brother dashed down and back, fetching the loads of rails.

The Red Desert never had seen the like. In fact, the whole United States was getting excited. Every night the news was flashed by telegraph to New York: "The Union Pacific today laid two (or three, or five) miles of track," and it was published in large headlines across the first pages of the New York papers.

General Casement lived constantly at the front; his brother Dan Casement worked day and night moving the supplies out of the warehouses. General Dodge made trip after trip from Omaha and by stage and horse across the

mountains, even clear to Humboldt Wells of Nevada. Mr. Silas Seymour, the New York consulting engineer, was out; so were Mr. Hoxie and Mr. Snyder, who had charge of the operating of the road, from Omaha. And in mid-summer there had come a very distinguished party indeed, who inspected from Fort Sanders to end o' track.

These were General U. S. Grant, himself, the chief of the Army; General Sherman, General Phil Sheridan, half a dozen other famous 'way-up army officers, Mr. Thomas C. Durant, of New York, the vice-president of the Union Pacific company and the man who raised the funds; and Mr. Sidney Dillon, again—the chairman of the board of directors.

They rode in a special Pullman car, and the track-layer gang eased up long enough to cheer them as they tumbled out and gazed about.

The Lincoln car was being kept busy chasing the construction, and accepting the track in sections of twenty to forty miles at a time, for the Government.

End o' track traveled too rapidly for it. Far westward, in western Nevada the Central was putting in its best licks, too. One day its track-gang laid five miles of rails, and wired the news to New York, as a record. Pat was told, and grunted; and that same week the U. P. gang laid six miles in a day. The Central heard, and retorted by laying seven miles at one rush.

“An' what o' that?” growled Pat. “Sivin, you say? Wait till we get our toes set in a likely place, an' we'll hand 'em eight, as sugar for their tay.”

In the middle of September another supply base had been planted—Green River, 150 miles from Benton, and 845 miles from Omaha.

Three hundred miles of track, counting sidings, laid in five months of mainly “bad weather an' worse wather,” as Paddy said. Average, sixty miles a month. The news was flashed to New York.

When the pay-car pulled in once more, Terry and George celebrated again in the Home Cooking restaurant. Pat himself was well pleased. So were General Dodge and General Casement. That had been a hard stint, in the desert, but the desert was conquered.

Only a thousand people gathered at Green River. End o' track was traveling too fast also for some of the toughs who sought to make “roaring” towns—

and some of them had been killed on this westward trail. But the Home Cooking restaurant bravely kept up the march.

It was a great institution—this Home Cooking restaurant. The two women were being called the “Heroines of the U. P.” Everybody respected them, and they still did a splendid business in good coffee and pies and doughnuts —“like your mother used to make.” But Terry and George hid the suspicion that they stuck it out on purpose to make a home for their men-folk.

George, because he was attached to the pay-car, which had its headquarters in the terminals, drew the big end of the bargain. He might eat and sleep “at home” almost every night. His father, though, out on survey, didn’t get in at all.

As for Terry, he and his father came in every night, as long as they might, between terminals. Old 119 and its crew—Engineer Richards and Fireman Sweeny—had been transferred from the boarding-train to the leading construction-train; and this was great, because while they were within twenty miles of the terminal they could scoot back, for supper and breakfast and a visit.

Virgie was having the time of her life, riding up and down track in the engine—bent upon being the “first passenger across,” she insisted.

Green River did not last long. It was the best built of any of the roaring towns; quite a number of its buildings were adobe, or dried clay, put up to stay and to be warm winter quarters; but the railroad decided to locate its division point farther on, and staked out another town, Bryan, fourteen miles.

The bridge over the Green River was waiting; the Red Desert and the Bitter Creek Desert had been crossed at last; the Wasatch Mountains ahead were already whitened by the first snows; and presently Green River town was left behind, deserted. Everybody—including the Home Cooking restaurant—moved on to Bryan, and Bryan “roared.”

“I’ll go to end o’ track tomorrow with you, Terry. I want to see,” repeated Virgie.

“I’ll be there, as usual,” Terry’s father laughed, grinning. “You can’t lose Virgie and me and 119.”

“It’s pay-day. So I’ll be there with the pay-car, you can bet,” George asserted.

“Well, you want to start mighty early, then, or we’ll be out of sight,” bragged Terry. “They’ll begin at seven sharp and work right through to five-thirty with only half an hour nooning. That’s ten hours. Can’t you come, ma; you and Mrs. Stanton?”

“Oh, dear, no! We’ve got people to feed.”

“Maybe we can slip away once, between times,” promised George’s mother.

“I can take you up, on one trip of the construction-train,” Engineer Richards proposed. “By the way they talk, they’ll keep me busy hauling iron. Eight miles of track calls for something over 300 car-loads of material, and they haven’t near enough iron on their dumps.”

The day dawned fine and snappy. When at six o’clock the construction-train pulled out with Terry and Virgie in the cab, its cars were black with people as well as rails and spikes and fastenings. A large part of Bryan was bound to end o’ track, also.

Paddy Miles already was busy, marshalling his gang on the outskirts of Granger siding. Little General Casement, his overcoat collar turned up around his whiskers, stood nervously puffing a cigar. His party of guests were with him. The chief of them was Major-General John M. Corse, an old army friend. They all had been entertained by General Casement—hunting and fishing and seeing the country, and making the grading-camps their base. They looked as though they’d had a gay night, celebrating in advance; but no amount of work or fun ever phazed the little general.

“Sure, is that your load—mainly peoples?” Pat hailed, of the cab, as he ran down the line of flat-cars, inspecting. “Get out the way, iv’ry wan o’ yez, an’ stand clear, or we’ll be ’atin’ the iron from under yez.”

The boarding-train stood upon the siding, to leave the way open for the construction-train to back on up in the wake of the trucks. The trucks were loaded and waiting. Jimmie Muldoon, his face as red as his hair, with excitement, sat his bony horse, expectant; his brother (likewise red) sat old Jenny, the rope taut. Old yellow Jenny had grown gaunt and stiff in the service; many and many a mile after mile had she galloped, but she was still game.

The long corrugated row of ties stretched westward, waiting, too. The nearest graders were staring back as they worked, to see the start. At the very end o' track there was a dump of iron, in readiness. Every little help counted.

General Casement had been looking at his watch.

"Go!" he barked.

"Lay to it, lads," shouted Pat. "We're off. Now show them Cintral haythen a touch o' the Irish!"

"Hooray!" the crowd cheered.

A file of the men attacked the end dump. Two by two they seized the rails and hustled them forward, in pairs. "Down! Down!" "Whang, whang, whangity-whang!" The fish-plate squads sprang with bolts and wrenches. In a few moments there were two streams of the rail-carriers—one double line trotting forward, one double line running back. End o' track fairly leaped ahead. The dump became a far carry, when at a signal from Pat old Jenny and her truck-load came charging, with one-legged Dennis riding atop and Jimmie Muldoon's brother whooping for passage.

"Hooray!"

The truck was emptied rapidly, as it rolled on, yard by yard, to keep up with the track. Now it was tipped to one side, and on charged Jimmie himself bringing fresh supply. Back galloped old Jenny.

General Casement was timing.

"Faster, men," he rapped. "Down with 'em. Hit 'em hard. Be ready with those fish-plates, boys. Make every move tell. We're out for a record."

The men who had been carrying the rails turned to ballasting. So fast the track advanced that the crowd of spectators were constantly jostling onward, advancing also. George arrived, breathless, from the pay-car. Superintendent Reed had come up with it; so had Dan Casement, the general's brother and partner.

"How far've they gone now?" George panted, his eyes snapping.

"I dunno. We've just started. But look at 'em hustle, will yuh!" answered Terry.

Virgie danced impatiently, craning and cheering.

“I guess they’ll lay ten miles, won’t they?” she implored.

“Aw, what’s the matter with you?” George rebuked. “That’s just like a girl. No gang can lay ten miles in a day.”

“Mr. Pat’s gang can, though, maybe,” she retorted.

The men were sweating. Steam rose from their bended forms. Old Jenny and the truck horse were sweating, pushed at top speed back and forth. The clang of the rails and the whang of the sledges never faltered. End o’ track leaped westward, toward the distant graders. The dumps were melting and disappearing.

“Look out! Here comes the train!”

At exactly the right moment old 119, with Terry’s father and Fireman Bill Sweeny gazing rearward from throttle and bell, pushed the construction-train on up over the new track as far as it could. Its extra large crew worked madly to throw the iron overboard into more dumps, nearer at hand.

Out puffed the train, gathering speed, for another load. Right on its heels Jimmie Muldoon tore with his truck, to the farthest dump again. There was no delay.

What with the constant pressing forward, all eyes upon the rails as they were laid, it was hard to keep posted.

“How far’ve we gone now? How far’ve we gone now?” appealed George, foolishly.

“How do I know? Gee whiz!” Terry rebuked. “I forget where we started from. You ought to count the truck-loads. It takes about ten to a mile, doesn’t it?”

“Yes; but I’ve lost count,” George complained.

“So’ve I,” confessed Terry. “Anyway, we’re sure traveling. Granger’s getting out of sight.”

Time flew like the end o’ track. With shrill whistle the construction-train backed in again, ready. It scarcely seemed possible that the round trip had been made so soon. The old dumps were vanishing; the last was almost

gone; on came the train, rear end first; over went the iron, with a noisy clangor; and back started sturdy 119, dragging her rumbling empties.

On her next trip she brought Terry's mother and George's mother.

"Here come our folks," George cried, spying them as they hastened forward.

"How far?" they queried. That was the universal question: "How far?"

"About three miles. We're almost at the third mile-stake. We'll pass it in a minute or two."

"Are you coming back to dinner when we go?"

"'Tisn't noon yet, is it?"

"No, but it will be soon."

"Aw, shucks!" Terry uttered. "We can't leave for dinner. Not this noon. We'll eat here, with the gang. We've got to be on the job. And so has dad."

"That's what he says," sighed his mother. "But seems to me you can take time to eat at home."

"We couldn't do it in half an hour. Might be missing something," Terry explained. "There'll be plenty grub here."

"I'll stay," Virgie declared. "I don't want to miss anything, either."

The busy Pat had glimpsed them with the corner of an eye.

"Work hard, boys," he urged. "The Heroines o' the U. Pay. are watchin' yez. A fine big doughnut to the crew that lays the last pair o' rails in the eight miles!"

The construction-train emptied. The two mothers returned on it to Bryan. The three-mile stake had been passed, and the four-mile stake was drawing nearer. General Casement had been looking at his watch. He was right at end of track, all the way on.

"Time!" he barked.

"Toime, men," echoed Pat.

They instantly quit work and straightened up wearily. The general tucked his watch into his pocket.

“Three and three-quarter miles, and we’ll better that this afternoon,” he said, to his party. “I’ll win my thousand dollars, gentlemen. We’ll finish out our eight miles, and I’ve another thousand to say so.”

“Golly!” George blurted. “He’s bet a thousand dollars on it.”

“Well, I reckon he’ll win, all right,” answered Terry. “The gang’s just getting limbered up. Come on, you and Virgie. Let’s hunt grub.”

The cooks had coffee and meat and potato and hot-bread ready. The squads were flocking to their messes.

“We’ll eat with Pat,” Terry proposed; and so they did, Virgie having the seat of honor.

“We’ll make it, we’ll make it,” Pat assured. “Sure we’ll make it. Ain’t we got to stick up a mark for them Chinks to aim at? Yes, an’ ain’t the papers out east waitin’ wid their big type, to tell all the world about it? Aye, we’ll make it. An’ if I know the gin’ral, then that thousand dollars’ll go as ’asy as it comes to him, an’ iv’ry man’ll have a bit to cilibrate on.”

Twelve-thirty! “Time!”

“Hit ’em ag’in, lads!” yelled Pat.

“Down! Down!” “Whang! Whang! Whangity-whang!”

A portion of the crowd had gone back to Bryan for dinner. Number 119 brought them in again, with the iron. Back and forth plied gaunt old Jenny and the bony nag her partner, hauling the trucks. Back and forth, on haul ever longer, plied the construction-train. End o’ track, followed by the General Casement party and the crowd, ever shot onward.

Mile-stake Four was passed; and in record time, Mile-stake Five; and Stake Six; and when the sun was low over the crests of the Wasatch Range, Stake Seven!

“Hurrah! Seven miles! Nobody’ll beat that, anyhow.”

“Wan more, now!” rasped Pat, hoarse with bossing at top speed. “Wan more, an’ yez can stop an’ have the rist o’ the day off.”

“You’ve got the time, but no time to spare,” snapped General Casement. He was getting nervous.

“Aw, they’ll make it,” said Terry, to George and Virgie. “But I’m sort of tired, myself. We’ll have stood around for eight miles, by night. How you feeling, Virgie?”

“I’m all right.”

“It’s toughest on Jenny. Look at her. She’s about all in,” spoke George.

That was the truth. Old Jenny’s yellow hide was dark and dirty and dank with sweat. Her nostrils flared, her ribs heaved, her eyes were wide and bulging, her breath sounded wheezily, and as she toiled down and up again, kicked vigorously by Jimmie Muldoon’s brother, she frequently stumbled.

“Her legs are giving out,” Terry pronounced. “Poor old Jenny. She’s come a long way.”

“Guess so,” George agreed. “They ought to let her quit, after today, and put her on a pension.”

The eight-mile stake was in sight; the men were on their last spurt. The sun had set behind the Wasatch. That made no difference. The sun set early, these days, here.

“Down! Down!” “Whang! Whang! Whangity-whang!” The brisk chorus never ceased; the men never faltered. Some of them, too, staggered and stumbled, but they didn’t miss a step or a blow. They all were wringing wet. Several had lost their hats—they didn’t pause to pick them up.

“Wonder what time it is now,” George remarked.

“I dunno. Must be five o’clock; feels that way.”

“This is a mighty long mile!”

“Sure is. It’s going to be a close shave.”

“Well, I guess they’ll make it, all right,” said George, hopefully.

“Will, if Jenny holds out.”

Jenny was standing straddled and trembly, her long ears lax and her head hanging. Her rider scarcely could budge her, between hauls. But the truck was empty, her rope had been hooked on to the rear end, the truck was tipped aside to let Jimmie Muldoon by, it was tipped back upon the track, her rider kicked her in the ribs, and she groaned and started.

“Give that boy a pair of spurs, somebody,” called a voice from the crowd. Jenny broke from her shamble into a gallop, and went laboring down track. Jimmie Muldoon’s nag stood heaving—near spent, himself.

The men snatched the rails off. Working fast—“Down! Down!”—they bared the truck and end o’ track reached out, for the eight-mile stake.

“Tip her! Tip her!” For the truck was empty and Jenny’s truck was nearing.

“Come on! Hurry up!” And Pat frantically waved his arm.

“What ails ye?” he bawled. “Put your heels into her ribs.”

“Bite her ear, boy!” That was mean advice.

Old Jenny tried to respond, as the crowd yelled and her rider pummeled her with hands and feet. She galloped again—but no use. Suddenly she swayed aside, blindly; and down she pitched, all in a heap; struggled an instant, to rise; rolled over and lay stiffening right across the track. Jimmie Muldoon’s brother rolled also, but he got up.

“Oh!” cried Virgie, covering her eyes with her hands. “Jenny’s dead. I know she’s dead.”

“Come on!” exclaimed Terry. He ran; George ran; Pat ran; the crowd flocked, whooping and laughing.

“T’row her off’n the track. For the love o’ the saints, t’row her off,” panted Pat. “She’s blockin’ traffic.”

A dozen men toiled, grabbing her by the legs and head and turning her over.

“Iron! Where’s the iron!” That was the call from end o’ track.

Now the rope had been unhooked and with one-legged Dennis putting his shoulder to the load, a dozen men swarmed against the truck and began to roll it forward.

“Whoa’p! That won’t do.” General Corse had laughingly objected. “You’re getting outside help. Casement. It isn’t in the bargain.”

“Let the truck alone. Bring on another animal—horse or mule, but bring it on,” stormed General Casement, watch in hand. “Quick, now.”

Pat yelled and waved and danced. People worked fast, but it seemed another long time before a white horse had taken Jenny's place; and leaving her wet, muddy body lying, the truck rumbled on.

Virgie was still standing in place, her fingers pressing her eyes tight shut.

"Is Jenny dead?"

"I'm afraid she is, Virgie," answered Terry.

"Then I want to go home," she sobbed.

But what was that? General Casement had shouted—"Time!" the men had thrown down their tools, and were waiting and gazing and mopping their faces. The truck had not been a quarter emptied, and the stake was still on ahead.

"We couldn't have made it, anyway, mule or no mule," announced the general, calmly. "But we did our best. It's a record to be proud of. The Central will know we're on the job, at this end."

"They're quitting!" George gasped.

"How far do you want to call it, general?" asked General Corse.

"Seven miles and five-eighths, sir. That won't miss it more than a foot. And I also call it a mighty good day's work. Come on. Let's go to supper." With that, General "Jack," champion track-layer of the continent, turned on his heel and strode off. He didn't seem to care anything about the thousand dollars, or about Jenny.

"Close onto eight, anyhow," Pat puffed. "'Twill be somethin' for them pig-tails to chaw on."

The tired men gave a cheer, and looking for coats and hats surged to meet the boarding-train or else to their camps. The crowd raced for the construction-train, and a ride back to Bryan. Helping the weeping Virgie, Terry and George hastened for the cab of 119. They passed Jenny—or what had been Jenny. She was dead; she didn't give a sign of knowing who they were, although her eyes were staring wide open.

"Don't suppose there's any use in trying to bury her," George proposed, as they paused a moment, while Virgie ran on blubbering.

“Nope. Who’d lend a hand at it? What does the U. P. care about a horse or mule?” Terry demanded, thickly.

“She died in line of duty, just the same; like old Shep was killed in action.”

“I know it. But that’s happening to something or somebody, about every day; and doesn’t matter, as long as the rails move forward.”

Remembering the handcar crew and the freight-train crew, and Percy Browne and Surveyor Hills (who was younger still), and now counting Shep and Jenny, it did seem as though the road was taking a heavy toll. There were many others, besides—somebody or something almost every day, as Terry had said.

Each bestowing upon Jenny’s cold hide a last pat, they followed after Virgie.

“Reckon we’ll have to break the news to Harry, back at Laramie,” remarked George. Harry Revere had got as far as Laramie City, and was lightning-shooter there, now.

“Yes, reckon we will,” Terry mused. “I’m glad he wasn’t here to see. He’s powerful fond of old Jenny.”

Somehow, they all felt rather sober, that night in the cosy Home Cooking restaurant. But it had been a great day. Seven and five-eighths miles of track in the ten hours. Whew! And Jenny had not been to blame. General Casement was satisfied. He had said that they wouldn’t have made the eight miles, anyway.

CHAPTER XV

A FIGHT FOR A FINISH

“WHEW! Watch those tarriers ‘drill,’ will you!”

The fall of 1868 had vanished in a whirlpool of furious work. Now in the early winter Terry Richards stood beside George Stanton, at the entrance to a cut through snow higher than their heads, high up towards the crest of the Wasatch Mountains dividing Wyoming from Utah, and with frosty breath exclaimed while the rails went forward.

Truly an inspiring sight this was. The landscape was white. For a day there had been a thawing wind, which melted the snow of the partially cleared grade, had left the grade and ties icy, and turned the rails to twin lines which glittered under the sun of the succeeding cold spell.

Far below stretched the row of men, working in their shirt sleeves, with their breaths and the steam from their bodies floating in vapor. The rails, brittle from the frost, and handled carefully with mittens, were clanging, the rail-trucks, hauled by the white-encrusted Muldoon nags, rumbled from behind, and the boarding-train, also white-coated, had pulled in, to await the arrival of the construction-train.

Drowning the ring of sledges and clink of shovels and crow-bars, from the west distance there occasionally echoed the dull boom of blasts; for the grading gangs were not so far ahead, now; the rails were on their heels; the ground had frozen too hard for pick and plough, and every yard of earth in the cuts had to be blasted like granite. Three dollars a yard the U. P. company were paying, the same as for rock work.

George had come up, on the pay-car, again. The pay-car was halted just at the rear of the boarding-train. Down the track, but out of sight, the construction-train might be heard puffing noisily.

“I don’t reckon the C. P. folks met up with much worse than this, in their mountains,” Terry added.

“Shucks, boy! Haven’t you heard tell that their Chinks had to shovel a grade through forty feet of snow pack?” scoffed George. “Yes, and build wooden tunnels, like, to keep from being buried alive. If they were good for forty feet, we’re good for sixty. We aren’t going to stop for winter, either. We’re bound on through, straight to Humbolt Wells.”

“How do you know?” That was sudden news.

“I heard it on the way up. General Dodge and Superintendent Reed were talking about it in the pay-car. That’s what they’re talking about with General Casement now, I bet. The track-gang and grading gangs are going to work right on all winter, same as any time. General Dodge said it would cost the company \$10,000,000 extra—but he’s had orders from New York to keep going regardless, and meet the C. P. at Humboldt Wells. So we’ve got to finish those 725 miles at one stint, boy, while the C. P. are building only 300. Think of that! They’ve been building all the year and we’ve still got 400, ourselves.”

“Gee whiz!” Terry gasped. “And we’re in the mountains, to boot, with the snow piling on top of us! Wonder what Pat will say?”

General Dodge, General Casement and Superintendent of Construction Reed were walking slowly up track. The puffing of the construction-train sounded more and more labored—now and then broke into a terrific staccato or drum-fire as the drive-wheels of its two engines slipped on the rails. It had a heavy load of rails and ties both, an engine to pull and an engine to push.

The three men turned to watch it come. It was now in sight, rounding a curve below, weaving among the pines and rocks, and coughing black smoke. It entered a deep cut—emerged, and swaying and struggling struck a long fill where the dirt ballast bridged a hill slope, in a curve, and fell sharply away from under the outer ends of the ties.

“Puff! Puff! Puff-puff-puff! *Puff! Puff!* PUFF-puff-puff-puff-puff!”

The whole bank glistened with the ice; trickles from the lately melted snow seamed it; it was a south slope, and the ice and snow had melted a little today, again.

“She’ll never make it, will she?” George uttered.

“With dad and Bill running 119? Sure she’ll make it,” declared Terry. “Dad says give old 119 sand enough and she’ll climb a telegraph pole.”

Around the hill roared the heavy train, clouding all the snowy timber with its dense smoke and shaking the air with its bombardment of explosions. It gathered way as it straightened out, for a moment; suddenly began to tilt sideways—engine, tender, first car, second car—the whistle spurted steam, but before the shrieks of the engine and the shouts of the spectators mingled, the track had yielded. Yes, the train, engine and all, car chasing car in a tumbling, plunging hurly-burly while the brakemen sprawled clear, was rolling and sliding down the hill slope, taking rails and ties with it. Its trail left a wide scar in the snow. Only the pusher engine and the caboose remained, above.

General Dodge, General Casement and Superintendent Reed already were running. Terry and George ran. Amid wild shouts the track-gang, some dropping their tools, others carrying crow-bars and picks and spades, ran, slipping and staggering as they pelted down the track, or by a shortcut forged through the deep snow.

“Oh, gosh!” George panted, sprinting.

“I should say!” gasped Terry.

Marvelous to tell, the engine—good old No. 119!—had landed right side up! Engineer Richards and Foreman Bill had stuck to their posts; they were dazedly descending from the cab.

“I’ve always said she was a lucky girl,” announced Terry’s father, through the blood from a gash in his cheek.

But what a mess that was, here in the little gulch! A mixture of rails, ties, cars, extending from roadbed to bottom. But nobody badly hurt.

“A foine dump yez made,” Pat wheezed, arriving. “Aren’t yez satisfied to lave the track where we laid it? Move your feet, men,” he barked, at the staring, laughing track-gang, tearing in out of breath. “Part o’ yez on the grade ag’in; there’s rails an’ ties a-plenty, an’ I want a new track widin the hour. What’s wan train in the ditch, annyhow?”

All was good nature. The men sprang to their tasks. General Casement nodded approvingly. He and General Dodge beckoned Pat aside. Pat

listened and nodded also.

“Sure,” he agreed. “What’s the use o’ stoppin’ for weather? Give us the rails an’ the pay-car reg’lar, an’ the boys’ll keep goin’.”

So the work was to continue all winter!

The many hands made a short job of laying a new section of track. The engine with the pay-car backed down; and aiding the derrick, it and the pusher engine of the construction-train began to remove the wreck from the ditch.

The U. P. gangs knew no such words as “quit.” Their eyes were ever turned westward, peering for Ogden and for the smoke of the C. P. construction-trains, beyond.

“Wan hundred miles to the top, an’ wan hundred down, on the last leg, an’ there we are, boys,” Pat had cheered. He was a host in himself.

The Wasatch Range of the Rockies had loomed ever nearer and nearer. It had proved to be a fine hunting and fishing country; but nobody took the time to hunt or fish. It had proved to be a wonderful scenery country; but nobody had time to view the strange rocks and dashing rivers and pine-clad slopes. The men only worked, ate, slept—and worked again, to the tune of “Down! Down!” and “Whang! Whang! Whangity-whang! Whang! Whang!” From grading-camps and tie-camps, located far out in the high timbered regions, wild nights and strenuous days were reported.

The surveyors had found a pass better than the stage road pass, over the north end of the Wasatch; the advance grading gangs were being flung forward 150 miles, to blast the cuts and level the ridges; and although Omaha was 900 miles behind, the rails were coming forward in a long thunderous procession of trains and dumped at the eager front.

“No hand shall be taken from the throttle until we know that the front is supplied,” had telegraphed Superintendent Hoxie, from Omaha.

And Terry as time-checker and George as pay-car clerk were as busy as the busiest.

Up for the pass had climbed the track, following the winding line of survey stakes that frequently stretched one mile into two and three. End o’ track

was eleven miles north of old Fort Bridger, Jim Bridger's station on the Overland Stage trail, and 6,550 feet in air, when winter struck.

On that October morning Terry, the track-layers and ballasters had romped out from the boarding-train into a foot of snow and an air thick with the whirling flakes.

"Merry Christmas!"

"Sure, an' snow-birds we are!"

"Yes, an' snow-shoes we'll nade, for this kind o' work."

The men were lively, but the march was slowed. For two days the storm had raged, before the weather settled to clear and stinging cold. The construction-train, No. 119 switched to the pulling end, bucked the drifts with two engines; and as many men wielding shovels, scraping the grade, as wielded sledges and picks and crow-bars. There was plenty of wood, so that the boarding-train and camps were kept warm.

Terry rode his horse breast-high in the white mantle, to get the time from the gang bosses.

Storm had succeeded storm. It was to be a hard winter and an early winter; and of the 500 miles only some 375 had been finished. Now fairly out of their mountains and into the Nevada desert, the C. P. crews were coming fast—they had to haul fuel and ties and water as well as their rails, from far behind, but they had laid 250 miles and graded 300.

"They've got 350 miles yet to go, 'fore they reach Ogden, ag'in our 100," quoth Pat. "But if we're snowed in atop these mountains wid the passes behind an' ahid blocked, whilst they have only a few ridges to cross, faith they're like to bate us in the spring."

Mile by mile, at snail's pace instead of giant's strides, the U. P. track crept onward and upward, piercing the snow.

"Well, if we can't foller the stakes we can foller the tiligraph poles," Pat encouraged. "They're stickin' into sight."

For the railroad trail was now almost the same as the Overland Stage trail, and the telegraph had been in here since '61.

All in all, readily enough might Terry Richards exclaim: “Whew!” and wonder if the C. P. had had any worse country in their winter mountains.

Thanksgiving caught them on the summit of the pass over—7,500 feet up, but not so high as Sherman Summit of the Black Hills.

“Down grade, hooray!” the men cheered, although down grade made little difference. But they were getting west of the Rockies, at last.

Before Christmas another town and supply base awaited end o’ track. This was Evanston, named for Mr. James Evans the engineering chief, in the Bear River Valley on the west slope of the Uintah Range of the Wasatch. ’Twas a depot for the ties that had been floated down the Bear, and according to Geologist Van Lennep there were coal-fields near by.

Omaha, 955 miles; Ogden, seventy-five miles. Of the 955 miles the Government inspectors had accepted 940, already. From Bryan arrived Casement Brothers’ take-down warehouse, and the Home Cooking restaurant bringing Mother Richards and Mother Stanton and Virgie—but that was about all. The gamblers and saloon-men and toughs had gathered from Utah and the grading and tie camps.

Virgie was tickled to be at the front again. Now she might ride the engine of the construction-train, when she felt like it, and keep up her record of “first passenger across.”

“Sure, ’tis a winter quarters for them that nade such,” announced Pat—and genuine winter quarters Evanston certainly appeared to be, with the snow above the roofs of the one-story shacks. “But we’ll not stay long, oursilves; not even for Christmas cilibration of more’n a day. We’ll put Wyoming behind us, lad, an’ get into Utah wance more afore the year closes. Yis, we’ll chase that boundary till we ketch it.”

In the past few months Wyoming had passed end o’ track. It had taken a bite out of Utah’s northeast corner; and this had been discouraging. But now end o’ track forged on, out of Evanston into which the passengers and freight already were rolling. In the dusk of New Year’s Eve the track gangs threw down their tools with a whoop.

Record for 1868, 425 miles: fifty miles a month, all told, across the waterless desert and the frozen snowy mountains, into Utah again, at last!

“An’ whereabouts is the C. Pay., then? How far have they come, tell me?”

That was the great question. The telegraph ticked the answer into Evanston.

“Track completed by the Central Pacific, in 1868: 363 miles.”

Pat groaned.

“They’re short o’ Humboldt Wells only forty odd miles.” And he braced up.

“But they’re short o’ Ogden some 270, ag’in our sivinty-five. An’ the orders be to reach Ogden an’ kape’ goin’. We’ll make a frish start ’arly wid this new year.”

Suddenly the United States awakened to the fact that the Salt Lake was to be reached not in 1870 but in 1869, and that the iron highway across continent was to be ready for business six years ahead of schedule. The Government had required only fifty miles a year; the two companies were building 200, 300, 400. The newspapers of East and West flared with headlines.

“But where’ll we meet?” proposed George.

“I dunno,” Terry confessed. “If the C. P. keeps coming one way, past Humboldt Wells, and we keep going the other way, to Humboldt Wells, we won’t meet anywhere.”

CHAPTER XVI

FAST TIME DOWN ECHO CANYON

“ALL aboard, now! On wid yez. We’ve no time to lose, on the U. Pay.”

It was the voice of Paddy Miles, construction boss, and also the present “conductor” of the construction-train about to answer a hurry call sent up to Wasatch station from end o’ track, for ties and iron.

Wasatch station, at mile-post 966, had marked end o’ track on New Year’s Day, this 1869. It was eleven miles from Evanston, the supply base, and seven miles on from the sign-board which on the east side said “Wyoming” and on the west side said “Utah.”

But since New Year’s end o’ track had advanced to Echo City, twenty-five miles down Echo Canyon, and was still going, although slowly.

That had been a tough job, to get onward from Evanston. First, the sidings at Evanston were laid, in the deep snow; and just beyond Wasatch, in order to enter the pass of Echo Canyon, two trestles, one 230 feet long and thirty feet high, the other 450 feet long and seventy-five feet high, had to be built, to cross side gulches, and a tunnel 770 feet long—the longest tunnel on the line—had to be bored through sandstone, and frozen clay even harder.

When he learned that the railroad was not to touch Salt Lake City, President Brigham Young of the Mormons had refused to lend any help; but Superintendent of Construction Sam Reed had argued with him, in friendly fashion, and had proved to him that Ogden was the best point.

So President Young had fallen in again, had sent men and teams and supplies, and with Mr. Reed himself overseeing matters on that division the work was being pushed.

“An’ sure, ain’t we got to hustle?” appealed Pat. “For I hear tell that those yaller spalpeens on the C. Pay.’ve jumped ahead o’ their own gradin’ by a matter of a hundred miles an’ are startin’ in on a new division entoirely, so’s to get into Ogden first.”

“Yes. But Mr. Reed has sent some of our own graders 150 miles out, to grade into Humboldt Wells while the C. P. are trying to grade into Ogden,” laughed Terry.

“It’s a game two can play,” Pat admitted. “An’ there’ll be another game if those Chinks get in our way, wance.”

The trestles were still being put in and the long tunnel blasted. To pass around, a temporary road had been laid, in a sort of zigzag—and “Z” it had been named—or series of switchbacks, down from the ridge that divided Wasatch, in the Bear River Valley, and Echo Canyon. That had been quite a job, too; the descent was very sharp—in fact, nearly all the way to Ogden there was a sharp descent, through several canyons, where the roadbed clung to the canyons’ sides.

This day Terry was up at Wasatch, on business; George was going back with him—likewise on business at end o’ track; and Paddy Miles had the construction-train and its ’special hurry load.

“All aboard, now! On wid yez.”

There were sixteen flat-cars, and No. 119. A ride through Echo Canyon was a treat. The narrow canyon curved every which-way, was plumb full of oddly shaped figures like Hanging Rock, Sentinel Rock, Kettle Rocks, Pulpit Rock, The Great Eastern (which resembled a steamboat), and so forth—all curious to the graders and track-layers. And some of the downward pitches were ninety feet to the mile, so that the train swooped along without throttle and with brake-shoes grinding.

To sit on a pile of ties and watch the scenery spin past—that was a privilege for only employes of the U. P. Passengers of the road had no such lark.

The two boys settled themselves comfortably, with their legs hanging over the front end of the pile of ties on the first tie car back from the engine, so as to get a good view ahead. Paddy sat only a short distance behind. There was a brakeman farther along, and on one of the rear cars were a couple of Dutchmen—new hands going forward to one of the grading gangs.

Down the “Z” plunged the train (old No. 119 carefully holding back) for the first eight miles, and struck into Echo Canyon at last at the Castle Rock. The day was fine—sunny and not cold, although snow lay on the north slopes and in the shaded hollows, and the tips of the pines had scarcely

commenced to green out. But spring was in the air, for spring came earlier to the west slope of the Rockies than to the east slope.

The train began to roar between the rocky walls; the engine, running almost free, whisked to right, to left with the line of heavy cars whisked after; Fireman Bill repeatedly jerked the whistle cord, and the wails jangled from wall to wall and crag to crag.

It was a glorious ride—a charge by the U. P. construction force, bringing reinforcements to the front. The boys' hats flared back, the breeze freshly smote their faces, and every minute a new landmark in shape of pinnacle and sculpture appeared, for an instant, flashed by and was succeeded by another. Hurrah!

“Great, eh?” gasped George.

“Sure beats staging. Look at the old stage road, yonder. 'Twould take the stage four hours to make this, and we'll do it in one.”

“We're the people, all right,” bragged George. And he burst into song:

“Oh, it's work all day
On the old U. Pay.,
And keep a-goin' to Frisco Bay!”

Terry interrupted:

“What's the matter. Gee whiz! Look behind! We're busted!”

The engine also had interrupted with hoarse shriek after shriek; Paddy was standing upright, waving his arms; the brakeman was running back—and a quarter of a mile behind, up the grade, was the tail of the trains: four cars, two loaded with ties, one with rails and one with fastenings. The train, as Terry had expressed, had “busted.”

“That's a joke on the Dutchmen,” George cheered. “What we going to do? Run on and leave 'em?”

“Maybe. Yes. No. I dunno! Jiminy, look at 'em come, though! Hope they don't ram us.”

“Your father's whistling for brakes. Hear him?”

“That's not to us; it's to them.”

Terry and George sat straight, in alarm. The train had reached a short level spot, but the four cars behind were on a steep down grade and fairly leaping in pursuit. The gap rapidly closed, until, still shrieking for “Brakes,” and again for “Clear track,” old 119 sprang forward under open throttle, like a frightened horse under the spur.

Around a curve swept the train; the four cars disappeared, a moment—but here they came, full tilt, their outside wheels almost leaving the rails as they fought the tangent. Their speed had scarcely slackened. Now the train struck into a long down grade; the whistle, like the throttle, was open—but no use. Those four heavy cars roared after, unchecked, and with every yard their pace seemed to increase.

Engineer Richards was giving Number 119 all the steam that he dared, if he would keep the track. The boys’ car bounded and jerked; the pile of ties quivered; rails jingled; the whole train roared, and all the canyon was filled with clamor of wheels and whistle.

The anxious, grimy face of Terry’s father or Fireman Bill might be seen, peering backward from the cab windows, trying to measure the margin of safety, behind.

“What ails those Dutchmen, d’ you suppose?” shouted George, in Terry’s ear. “Fraid to put on their brakes. That’s all they need do: put on their brakes.”

“Sure thing. Put on their brakes. Why don’t they put on their brakes?” Terry yelled back. “Do they want to smash us?”

The four cars were gaining; down they came, like a thunderbolt, and not a sign of their two passengers was visible.

Terry half stood, the better to see—yes, and the quicker to jump clear, if necessary; George tried to imitate him, but the train hit another curve and they both were thrown to hands and knees and barely escaped going overboard before time.

Around this curve also roared the train, throttle opened wider for the more level stretch, whistle still shrieking wildly; the four cars chased hotly—across a trestle the train boomed, and the rumble of the four cars answered instantly.

Old 119 was now barely holding her own, and there were steep grades ahead. Never had a train gone down this canyon at such a rate; and those four cars acted like a hungry dragon bent upon getting a meal.

Pat and the brakeman were clutching to the ties of the rear car of the train, pitching and swaying as they gazed and waved and gesticulated, warning the four cars to keep distance.

“What they doing? Look! What they doing?” yelled George, on a sudden.

“They’re dumping off the ties! Come on. We got to help.”

That was a difficult journey, to rear of train. The curves were incessant, shooting the train to right and left, and throwing the passengers with it. Crawl, hang hard, take a run, and crawl and hang hard again, was the only way to navigate.

Pat did not pause; neither did the brakeman. They already had cleared one tier of ties from their car.

“Lend a hand here. Pass those ties along,” they only yelped, over their shoulders.

“But you’ll kill those Dutchmen,” screamed Terry.

“No. They’ve jumped, long ago.”

“Sure,” Paddy added, “either they lave the track or we do; an’ if they smash into us wance, then we’ll all be gone together.”

This was the plan: to plant a tie on the track, and derail the four cars. But although everybody worked furiously, heaving the ties over the end of the car, the ties bounded like Indian rubber—seemed scarcely to touch the track before they went hurtling and flying far to one side or the other.

“B’ gorry!” Pat gasped, streaming sweat. And—“If we only can get into Echo City wid time enough for ’em to shunt wan or the other of us into a sidin’——!”

Echo City, at the end of the canyon! There were the sidings. Now the gap narrowed again, the four cars cared nothing for the ties with which they were being bombarded, but the whistle of 119 was changed to the signal “Open switches!”

Would the crews at Echo City understand? Would they have time to work right? Hauling and tugging and dragging, Terry and George had farther and farther to pass the ties back to the outstretched hands of Paddy and the brakeman. It certainly was a mad ride, this—a ride for life, too! Blame those four cars—and blame those two Dutchmen, who ought to have stayed aboard and set their brakes!

“Will we make it, yuh think?” wheezed George, as he labored.

“Close squeeze,” wheezed Terry. “How far, wonder?”

“Dunno. Can’t read mile-posts. Must be near, though.”

Around still another of those dangerous curves—and they roared past a little group of graders, repairing the track. They had just a fleeting glimpse of the staring, startled faces and the red-shirted forms; and with the four cars thundering after they dashed on.

But Echo City was not far. Then, if the station crews failed to work mighty fast, there would be a race clear to end o’ track—and, whew!

“Look! Oh, gee!”



FAST TIME DOWN ECHO CANYON

George had yelped excited, and awed. Terry looked. He was only in time to see the four cars reared high in the air, leaving the track and with a great jump landing, askew, to plunge end over end down the side of the gulch, while the ties and rails sailed in all directions.

They evidently had struck a tie, at last. A minute more, and with whistle open but throttle closed, and the brakeman and Pat scampering from brake to brake, and the scattered section-men gaping, the train rolled triumphant and breathless into Echo City.

The crash of the wreck had been heard. Men ran up track at best speed; down jumped Paddy and the brakeman, and ran, too; with a "Come on, quick!" George legged to see, and Terry panted after.

The wreck was half a mile back; a crowd had already gathered around it—were laughing and whooping, and no wonder: for here were the two Dutchmen, sitting on the bank of the ditch, one of them smoking his pipe, and both well dazed but unharmed. They had been aboard, after all!

"An' for why didn't yez set the brakes?" Pat was storming. "Did yez want to kill us all?"

"We knowed noddings," said the man with the pipe. "Why didn't you wake us oop, to tell what the troubles was?"

"Then why didn't yez say yez were aslape, so we'd wake yez up before wastin' all the steam by whistlin' to no use?" raged Pat. "Now look at the ties an' rails an' four good cars fed to yez, an' the Cintral Paycific tryin' to bate us into Ogden!"

The two Dutchmen really had been fast asleep on a load of ties; and as they had said, they "knowed noddings" about any "troubles" until they found themselves landed with a thump upon this bank!

Not for some days did Pat get done grumbling at the "waste o' steam an' time an' good cars"; but another event speedily made him change his tune.

"Th' C. Pay." were already coming up "th' U. Pay." canyon, out of Ogden!

CHAPTER XVII

THE LAST STRETCH

“Th’ C. Pay. are this side o’ Ogden an’ a-comin’ up th’ U. Pay. grade!”

Those were the very words, plainly heard by Terry and George both; but the startling news seemed unbelievable. Pat straightened and gaped.

“What? Say that ag’in. Ye don’t mane the tracks!”

“No; not yit. But, b’ gorry, th’ C. Pay. engineers have drove their stakes, an’ th’ C. Pay. Mongolians have follered in, an’ th’ dirt’ll soon be flyin’ on two grades instead o’ wan, in the same canyon, jist ahid.”

“An’ where’s their ind o’ track, then? Tell me that,” stammered Pat.

“Wan hunderd an’ fifty mile to th’ west’rd still. Yez’ll bate ’em into Ogden wid th’ rails, but it’s smart they be. For haven’t they thrown their men beyant themselves, to grade clane through Ogden an’ into th’ mountains, so whilst th’ U. Pay. is a-claimin’ to Humboldt Wells, th’ C. Pay.’ll be filin’ a map wid th’ Prisent at Washington claimin’ their own rights, an’ pay accordin’, t’rough th’ Salt Lake Valley.”

“It’s the rails that’ll count,” Pat retorted. “We’ll be first wid the rails—wan continuous line, mark ye—an’ whilst they’re a-comin’ we’ll be still a-goin’.”

“They’re over th’ Humboldt Mountains, an’ they say they’ll be layin’ their six mile a day, on th’ level.”

“If they lay their six mile a day we’ll lay our siven an’ eight,” growled Pat. “An’ bad luck to their Chinks who get in the way o’ the Irish.”

“Golly! Hope I’ll get in often enough to see the fun,” chuckled George, to Terry. “You’ll be down in front among the graders—expect there’ll be some mix-ups when the two gangs meet.”

“There would be if the U. P. graders were Irish; but the gangs between here and Ogden are Brigham Young’s Mormons. I don’t believe they’ll fight

with the Chinamen. And Pat's track-layers won't stop to fight, yet."

The wreck was left for the Echo City crews to clean up. Pat forgot it; his sole thought now was to put the rails into Ogden. Orders reached him from Superintendent Reed to let the C. P. gangs strictly alone and attend only to the U. P. business. Out of Echo Canyon shot the track, and down the marvelous Weber Canyon, with every mile getting lower and nearer to Ogden.

Yes, the C. P. were in here. First, a few advance stakes were to be noted, piloting an up grade almost parallel with the U. P. down grade. Then a bunch of C. P. location surveyors were sighted, camped across the way. But all eyes were peeled for a sight of the "Chinks" themselves—those C. P. graders of whom so much had been said.

The end o' track, pushed forward at top speed as it wound snakelike through the canyon, passed the Thousand Mile Tree (a lone pine, beside the grade, on which the location surveyors had hung the sign "1000 Miles"), and twenty-four miles farther sort of burst into view of the Great Salt Lake Valley at last.

The Mormon graders were under separate contract and separate bosses, so that as timekeeper Terry had nothing to do with them. And he was with the Irish track-construction crew when end o' track forged by the C. P. grade.

"Th' Chinymin! Be them th' Chinymin? Faith, look at 'em wance! Ain't they th' cratures, to be workin' alongside white min?"

For there they were, the Central Pacific graders, in Union Pacific territory—and Chinamen, sure enough!

"The first I ever saw," quoth Pat, while he and the other men eyed them askance. "A quare lot, I must say."

A queer lot indeed, where in noon camp, wearing enormously brimmed wicker hats like flat over-turned bowls, and quilted blouses with large sleeves, and flappy blue-cotton trousers, and stubby shoes, they squatted around huge bowls of steaming rice and fished out the grains with their chop-sticks.

"I hear tell they work for a dollar a day an' find themselves wid rice an' pork," pursued Pat. "Well, they look it. Sure 'twould be shame to insult a

shillaly wid breakin' it on the crown o' such pore cratur—an' all I ask is that they kape out o' me way."

The Chinamen scarcely tilted their heads, under their bowl-shaped hats, to gaze at their rivals; and the rails went on.

"'Tis a fairish grade they're buildin'," Pat sized up, cocking his eye. "But who cares? The rails are what'll count, an' we're out o' the mountains an' more'n a few o' them Chinks are naded to stop a U. Pay. gang."

Out of the mountains! Date, last of February. Mileage in the two months, sixty, not including the sidings: but a tough sixty, battling the snows and frozen earth and the many curves.

Beautiful lay the Salt Lake Valley, under a bright sun; its thrifty Mormon ranches showing green, its towns clearly blocked, and the Great Salt Lake shimmering like silver, in the middle, with the desert ranges bluish beyond.

"Where's Ogden, now?"

"How fur to Ogden?"

And——

"Where's th' C. Pay. track?"

"Only nine mile north'rd 'round the base o' the mountains, to Ogden, lads," Pat cheered. "Hooray! Lave the dollar-a-day haythen to their gradin' an' their bits o' rice, for they'll have mainly their trouble as their pay. Their rails are a hunderd miles yit out on the desert t'other side them high ridges. Wan more sprint for us, an' there we are, wid 'ase."

This night there was much excitement in the boarding-train and the camps pitched alongside.

"We've bate 'em! We've bate 'em! Nigh 500 miles in under tin months ag'in their 400, an' the dead o' winter ketchin' us in the mountains, to boot!"

Three days of rush; and the first week of March, this 1869, Paddy Miles' track-construction gang entered Ogden. Distance from Omaha, 1033.4 miles.

In rolled the pay-car, with George aboard, his eyes snapping.

“Did you see those Chinamen?” he demanded. “Did you have any fight?”

In rolled the freights, and the first passenger train. Already the Government had accepted the track as far as the Thousand Mile Tree.

George and Terry climbed to a hill-side high above Ogden. Below, the track gangs and the tie-layers were celebrating; the Mormon citizens joined in. Whistles blew—the hoarse siren of old 119 rose victorious, and the whistle of the boarding-train engine tried to out-do. It was a great event, but many eyes were peering off into the northwest, like the eyes of the junior pay department.

“Can you see the C. P. grade?” queried George.

“Reckon I can. Look around the north end of the lake, to that humpy point that sticks into it. Wish I had a glass.”

“I see! Anyhow, I think I see—looks like there was a gang at work on top the ridge.”

“Jim Bridger or Sol Judy could tell. That’s Promontory Point, and both lines cross it.”

“You don’t see any rails, though! That’s only end o’ grade—the real grade. C. P. end o’ track is clear the other side of Promontory, and Promontory’s fifty miles.”

“But look at our own grade, boy! It’s almost to Promontory, itself.”

“Hi!” George chuckled. “Reckon we’re bound right through, across Utah for Humboldt Wells in Nevada. And when those two grades mix, some day, there’s liable to be tall doings between the Paddies and the Chinks.”

Excitement continued to reign in Ogden. Matters had taken a surprising turn. The Union Pacific was here first; nobody could deny that, and it proceeded to make good its foothold by occupying all the ground possible, with Pat Miles laying a maze of switches and side-tracks under the direction of Major Hurd. For Ogden was the key to the Salt Lake Valley and the vast trade with the Mormon settlers who would ship out produce and ship in supplies. Salt Lake City was only thirty-five miles south—a branch road would be built to it, of course. Then——

But the Central people also were claiming Ogden as a terminal. They had jumped across 100 miles of country and with Mormon help were running a roadbed out of Ogden and eastward up Weber Canyon, for Echo City, forty miles! They had filed a map, at Washington, showing that their line was being completed into Ogden and beyond—and almost on the very day that the Union Pacific track had entered Ogden the Central Pacific vice-president, Mr. C. P. Huntington, had been given by the Government a portion of the payment due, at \$32,000 a mile, on that new division of the road.

“Now if the Gover’mint’s ag’in us——!” Pat complained. “Sure, have we got to stop right here, when our eyes are set on Humboldt Wells, 200 mile beyant, an’ the ingineers have marked the way, an’ the tracks are ready to foller. Not a single rail can the C. Pay. show, inside a hundred miles. B’ gorry, though, they have smart min, not countin’ their pig-tailed haythen.”

“We’re going on!” George announced.

Being close to the pay-department quarters, he heard considerable straight talk; and this time he was not mistaken. Mr. Sidney Dillon, of the board of directors, had come out from New York. He and General Dodge and General Casement and other officials had a meeting; President Oliver Ames and Vice-President Thomas Durant had made a big protest to Washington and Congress was going to investigate the claims of the Central Pacific; the word was: “Forward, march, to Humboldt Wells,” and, as said Pat: “Niver mind the rice-’atin’ Mongolians. We’ll tach ’em how the Irish handle the pick.”

“We’re getting out of money, but don’t you tell,” George confided, to Terry, on the quiet. “It took over \$10,000,000 extra, for the work last winter. Gosh! I tell you we fellows in the pay-car have to figure mighty close.”

But the race was on again, just the same—only worse. General Dodge and General Casement met the Central Pacific deal by sending a large gang of Paddy’s track-layers ahead 200 miles across country, to begin a track into Humboldt Wells. And out of Ogden the main track was shoved toward Promontory Point, with the graders working ahead, on the U. P. survey.

Track-laying had slackened. It was a long, long haul, now, from Omaha, more than 1000 miles, across the plains where the Sioux were still fighting

the iron horse, and across the mountains where the storms of spring raged and the snow-slides ran. And the track-layers and graders both had threatened to strike, because of lack of pay.

But the Central likewise was having trouble. The Central, too, was far from its iron—ships bringing the rails and spikes and fastenings around Cape Horn or up from the Isthmus of Panama were sunk, becalmed, delayed; the Nevada desert was bare of forage for the horses; and for days at a time the Central work-gangs sat idle and discontented.

The two railroads resembled two staggering long-distance runners, almost exhausted as each struggled on, from opposite directions, to breast the tape.

The Central grade came eastward by its own survey, which was not at all the Union Pacific survey; and that was a funny thing—the two roads working as hard as they could, to meet, and yet not meeting.

The C. P. grade had swung around the north end of the Salt Lake, and down over Promontory Point—which was the high point that jutted into the lake. The U. P. grade had been launched northward from Ogden, along the lake shore, as if to drive the C. P. grade back. And slow work the grading was, because the country was cut by streams and rocky ridges, running into the boggy marge of the lake itself.

On some stretches the surveys were a mile separated—on others they approached close to each other. The grades would do the same.

“As long as the two gangs are a mile apart, ’twill be a peaceful country yon,” quoth Pat; “for a high fence makes good neighbors, ye understand. But,” he added, kindly, to Terry, “when they’re a-workin’ side by side like, I’d advise ye to ride wid an eye open an’ an umbrelly up. Some o’ them blastin’ crews are liable to lay a ‘grave,’ an’ I wouldn’t want ye hurt.”

Just what Pat meant by a “grave,” Terry did not know, but he was speedily to find out.

On a morning when he rode out, in advance of U. P. end o’ track, for his regular “time inspection,” the two grades were passing each other at last. The C. P. grade was holding to the higher ground, here. The long line of busy Chinamen (“Crocker’s pets,” they were called, Mr. Charles Crocker being the C. P. superintendent of construction) were toiling away, with pick

and spade and wheel-barrow, right above the long line of flannel-shirted Irishmen building the U. P. grade.

The Chinamen were saying scarcely a word, and casting scarcely a glance. They trotted with their barrows, and pecked with short little stabs, but they swarmed like rats. The Irish laughed among themselves, making remarks not at all complimentary to their rivals.

As Terry approached a cut, he suddenly ran into a blast. That is, before ever he saw the red flag of danger, cautious voices in low tone, and sly gestures warned him.

“Whisht, now! Look out. Stand where ye be.”

There was no red flag, and no shout; but heads were being turned, along the grade—in the cut the men were pausing, poised, ready to jump—everybody seemed aware, except the Chinamen above the cut; and amidst a sudden scattering for cover by the cut men, up burst the blast itself.

The rocks soared high, specking the air, and rained down, volleying among the Chinamen. The Chinamen squeaked with fright, and ducked and scurried, but several were bowled over.

This appeared to tickle the Irish graders immensely. They pretended to pay no attention; only grinned broadly, as they resumed work, while the Chinamen yelped protests, and shook helpless fists.

“But maybe you killed some of ’em, Mike,” Terry gasped, considerably flustered, himself.

“Them Chinks?” rasped Big Mike, the grade boss here. “Aw, now, don’t ye worry. Let ’em look out for themselves. Our orders be, to pay no attintion to the C. Pay. grade; we’ve our own work. What are they doin’ here, anyhow, right ferninst the blastin’? They ought to know enough to kape away. An’ a ‘grave’ is a blessin’ to a Chinyman—for as soon as he’s dead, ain’t he sint back to the ould country?”

So that was a “grave,” was it? Huh! After that Terry moved cautiously, when taking time; for other “graves” were “opened” by the cunning U. P. graders. They willingly enough dodged the rocks, themselves, in the hopes of “burying” some of the timid “Crocker’s pets.”

Superintendent Crocker made complaint straight to General Casement and General Dodge; and General Casement and Superintendent Reed ordered Big Mike to stop that nonsense among his men. Big Mike only promised—and that day another “grave” was laid.

Then the Chinamen took matters into their own hands. They also “opened” a “grave,” smack above a bevy of the Irish. It was a large one; it buried three Irishmen completely—killed two of them and wounded half a dozen others.

Big Mike was reported to have at first roared like a bull, for revenge, and to have finished by scratching his thatch ruefully.

“B’ gorry,” he said, “if it’s a game two can play at, they have the advantage o’ position. Before me min get nervous mebbe we’d better call it quits.”

And back at end o’ track Pat remarked:

“’Tis a wonder them haythens didn’t have the same sinse before. Now I guess there’ll be no more ‘graves,’ yon, o’ that kind.”

U. P. end o’ track was twenty miles out of Ogden, and half way to Promontory Point. C. P. end o’ track was eighty miles out, or thirty miles the other side of Promontory Point. One end o’ track was going one way, the other end o’ track was coming the other way; but they were not aimed to meet!

“On to Humboldt Wells,” was the slogan of the Union Pacific.

“On to Ogden,” was the slogan of the Central Pacific.

Not until the U. P. grade had climbed Promontory, to join with its grade in the desert beyond, and the C. P. grade was touching Ogden, did the fresh news break.

Pat received a telegram, read it, and burst into a flurry.

“It’s all off! The orders be for us to join ind o’ track wid the Cintral ind atop o’ Promontory Summit—an’ shame on us if we let ’em bate us there. A holiday in Salt Lake City wid full pay for iv’ry man o’ yez if yez’ll step on the tails of the tie-layers wid your rails.”

So it was to be a race for the meeting at Promontory Summit! Distance to go: Union Pacific, twenty-eight miles; Central Pacific, thirty miles. The

telegraph was already in operation, waiting to announce the victor, to the world.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE U. P. BREASTS THE TAPE

“THE C. P. say they can lay ten miles of track in one day and Mr. Durant has telegraphed \$10,000 to say they can’t do it!”

This was the excited greeting by George Stanton, when Terry met the pay-car in the latest “roaring” town of Blue Creek, at the base of Promontory Point on the U. P. side.

Blue Creek station was not really a town; it was more of a higglety-pigglety railroad camp, but it seemed to know no law. The Home Cooking restaurant appeared to be about the only decent place there. Nevertheless, there it was, just the same, arrived in its last move on the long journey from Cheyenne, more than 500 miles. The “Heroines of the U. P.” had set out to keep near their “men folks,” and bring “home” to them whenever possible. Old 119, with Engineer Richards in the cab, was still plying back and forth, in the fore; and George’s father was expected any day, called in from the Nevada surveys.

As soon as the two companies, directed by Congress, had decided to join ends o’ tracks upon Promontory Point, all advance grading and surveying had ceased. The C. P. had graded eighty miles east from Promontory Point, or almost to Echo City; the U. P. had graded 220 miles west from Ogden, or to Humboldt Wells, and had laid eighty miles of track this way from Humboldt Wells; but there was nothing doing now. The work had all been wasted.

So the majority of the graders had been discharged. A number of them still hung around, though, waiting for the tracks to join. They helped to form the U. P. camp of Blue Creek; and on the desert over beyond the Summit they helped to form the on-coming C. P. camp.

Everybody was keen to hear if the Central had anything yet to say about the U. P. track-laying record. Time was growing short. But the Central had said little. It was reported that they had had hard luck. Iron was scarce, and in order to make up for lost hours they had laid track at night, by the light of

sage-brush bonfires. Now they were out of rails, again. Their “iron-train,” as they called it, had been ditched, by a broken trestle.

The Union Pacific crept on, here to the foot of Promontory Point of the rugged Promontory Range; the meeting-place agreed upon was only nine miles up and over, and the track-layers might take things a little easy.

But the Central had braced; they had the spirit, all right, and those seven and five-eighths miles as a challenge did not bluff them.

George brought the answer.

“We’ll lay ten miles of track in one day’s stint,” was the telegraphed announcement of Superintendent Crocker.

“Ten thousand dollars that you can’t do it,” was the reply of Mr. Durant, the U. P. vice-president, from New York. “Choose your time and place and we’ll have men there to see.”

“Tin miles? Those fellers?” Pat scoffed. “Eight’s the limit o’ any gang. Haven’t we stumped ’em wid sivin an’ a bit? If they lay tin miles I’ll crawl over it on me hands an’ knees wid me nose countin’ the ties!”

“When’ll they try? Did you hear?” demanded Terry, of George.

“No. All I saw was in the Ogden paper. Expect they’ll choose the levelest place they have. You bet I’m going to be there.”

“So am I!”

“We’ll all be there,” Pat proclaimed. “For we’ll have nothin’ else to do. Wid only nine miles yet to lay we’ll all be on vacation soon; an’ if they don’t finish their tin miles, the Irish will stand ready to help ’em along to the meetin’ spot.”

“How far out are they?” asked George.

“Eighteen or twenty miles. That wreck stopped ’em.”

Up Promontory Point the U. P. rails labored, for the finish; with trestles and curves, and several switchbacks that doubled like the letter “S”—for there were grades of 110 feet to the mile, and the cuts and fills were many. Water had to be hauled in tanks, again, for cooking and drinking. In fact this finish was one of the toughest pulls in all the 1,080 miles.

On April 27, they topped the last rise. This summit of Promontory Point was a flattish plateau, dropping off at the other side into the desert. The grade led almost straight across—a mile and a half or two miles there was a collection of tents and shacks, and the men paused to stare.

“The meetin’-place? Is that yon the meetin’-place, ye say?”

“Right, me bullies,” Pat encouraged. “’Tis the ind o’ 550 miles o’ rails laid in thirteen months, b’ gorry, not countin’ the eighty that’s been wasted. So we’ll knock off ’arly, an’ tomorrow we’ll make in—an’ be frish for the nixt mornin’ when the Cintral Chinks start to lay their tin that they’re braggin’ beforehand about. Sure, that’ll lave ’em four miles yit. Like as not they’ll nade help wid their finish.”

“It’s a quare meetin’-place, where there’s nothin’ to meet,” some of the men laughed. “S’pose we tiligraph Congress, just sayin’ that th’ U. Pay.’ll kape a-goin’ an’ save th’ C. Pay. th’ bother.”

“Not much! Tin miles o’ track are they to lay in wan day, remember, wid us a-lookin’ on.”

Mr. J. H. Strobridge, the C. P. superintendent of track-construction, finally had sent word to Mr. Reed, the U. P. superintendent, that on April 29 the Central would lay their ten miles of track, from a point fourteen miles short of the meeting-place. He invited the U. P. to send witnesses—President Leland Stanford, of the Central Pacific (and ex-governor of California), and other C. P. officials would be there.

“We’ll be there, too,” had wired back Mr. Reed.

“We’ll be there,” had asserted Pat.

Before noon of April 28, the U. P. end o’ track came to a rest near the idling camp of Promontory, where a lot of ex-graders were squatted, and gamblers, eating-house keepers, liquor sellers and real-estate boomers had arrived, to await events.

One rail’s length short of the stake and flag, the track stopped—obeying orders from Mr. Reed.

Hats were flung into the air, tools went hurtling, cheers rang riotous, and George, who had hopped a ride up from Blue Creek, so as to be on hand, danced a war-dance with Terry.

“Done! Hurrah! Done!”

“Why do yez say ‘done,’ when ‘tain’t done at all, at all?” reproved red-headed little Jimmie Muldoon, severely. “Do yez expect the ingines to walk the ties, th’ same as me horse? It won’t be done until th’ C. Pay. lay their fourteen mile—an’ Pat says that mebbe we’ll have to fall in an’ help ‘em.”

“Well, we’re done, all but twenty-eight feet,” retorted George. “And if the C. P. lay their ten miles tomorrow, they’ll be about done. Four miles more is nothing. Not out of nearly 2,000. We all can pitch in and lay that in an hour. Come on, Terry, let’s figure.”

They sat down, to figure.

Union Pacific: forty miles of track laid in 1865; 260 miles in 1866; 246 miles in 1867; 425 miles in 1868, and now 125, in the four months of 1869—which made, as Pat said, 550 miles in thirteen months, not counting the sidings and switches, and the eighty miles at Humboldt Wells.

And look at the grading! From Sherman to Humboldt Wells—725 miles, in the same thirteen months.

“I reckon nobody’s going to beat that, for a while,” vaunted George, the boss figurer.

“Reckon not, boy. But the C. P. have done pretty well. While we’ve been building 1,086 miles, and that extra ‘Z’ of near ten miles more, they’ve been building something like 675, with those fourteen miles yet to go on; but they’ll match our 550 miles in thirteen months with 549, ‘cording to Major Hurd. Not much difference—huh?”

“Shucks! Don’t forget our other eighty. And besides, you fellows have been sort of loafing along, lately; and now you’re sitting here waiting. You could have been past ‘em and part way to Humboldt Wells, if the Government hadn’t stopped you. You’ve been bucking the mountains, too, while they’ve had the desert.”

“They had the mountains in the beginning and we had the plains,” Terry reminded. “But, anyhow, if they’ll lay ten miles of track tomorrow, I’ll take off my hat to the Chinks.”

“So’ll I,” George agreed.

“I’ll ate mine,” declared Jimmie Muldoon. “An’ I’ll ate my brother’s, too. But say: is that what your figgers show? Have we all come wid the rails 550 miles in scarce more’n wan year?”

“Sure thing, Jimmie.”

“Glory be!” sighed Jimmie. “An’ me on the back of a horse, doublin’ the distance tin times iv’ry mile! Faith, I’ll ride back on the train. An’ what’s th’ whole distance, by miles, from Omyha to this place here?”

“One thousand and eighty-six miles, Jimmie.”

Jimmie uttered an Irish whoop.

“I’ve ridden a horse around the world,” he shouted. “But wance is enough. A reg’lar cin-taur I be!”

George had leave to spend the rest of the day here. That was good. It insured his being on hand bright and early, for the great event, tomorrow.

The track-layers knocked off work. With many of them, the long job was finished. Only a few were to be needed, now, and the rest only waited for their pay, or for the joining of the tracks.

They lay around, smoking their pipes, or celebrated in the Promontory camp, or proceeded down to Blue Creek, where there was more amusement. A crew of the track ballasters proceeded to settle the ties. The boarding-train stood at ease, and the construction-train, having unloaded, pulled out for Blue Creek, itself. Jimmie Muldoon and his brother turned their rail-truck horses out to grass.

The grade stretched on, across the flat summit, westward still, and out of sight. Its ties had all been placed; it needed only the Central Pacific rails. A few Chinamen were working on it.

The summit of Promontory Point was a sort of pass over the end of Promontory Range. It was a plateau, covered with grass and sage-brush—a basin held between a high ridge north and a high ridge south. Only a glimpse of the shining Salt Lake might be seen. But by climbing the south ridge, a fellow got a fine view.

From here, all the mighty lake lay outspread, below, fringed by its mountains and broken by its islands—one could see the smoke of Ogden,

thirty or so miles in air-line although fifty-two by track, and even of Salt Lake City, farther southeastward. And where the grade westward dipped down from the plateau, into the sagy desert, could be sighted the construction camp of the Central Pacific people, fourteen miles away.

“There’s a big crowd of ’em, all right,” Terry remarked.

“It’ll take a big crowd to bring up the stuff for ten miles of track at once, and have iron and everything ready.”

“Well,” mused Terry, “maybe they’ll do it and maybe they won’t; but I wish our men could have a try.”

When they went down to camp, General Dodge and General Casement were inspecting the ground in company with two visitors. One of these was a fine-looking, trimmed-beard man in black broad-cloth (somewhat dusty) and black soft hat with wide brim.

“That’s the Honorable Leland Stanford, ex-governor of California—the Central’s president, and a powerful smart man,” said the report in the U. P. camp.

The other was an energetic, heavy-set man, with masterful gray-blue eyes, a determined mouth, and face smooth-shaven except for a thick moustache.

He was Mr. Charles Crocker, the Central’s road-builder—the man who had hustled the work while Governor Stanford in the West and Mr. Huntington, the vice-president, in the East, managed the money end.

The two Central officials started to ride back to their own line.

“By this time tomorrow, gentlemen, we’ll be nearing the end of our ten miles,” Governor Stanford bantered, on parting, as they turned their horses.

“You have our best wishes; you can’t come on any too fast, for us—but we’ll be here to check up on you,” laughed General Dodge.

He and General Casement passed near Terry and George, who, like the other men, respectfully saluted. General Dodge checked his horse.

“What do you boys think of this ten-mile-in-a-day proposition?” he queried, with a twinkle in his tired eyes. “How about it, Terry? You’ve watched our Paddies for 800 miles, and General Casement says they can beat the world.”

“If the Central can lay ten miles, our men can lay eleven, sir,” Terry stoutly replied.

“Thank Heaven, they won’t have to,” rapped General Casement. “But I’ll wager that they could, myself.”

This evening, and into the night, the bonfires of sage-brush built by the U. P. camp were answered by the distant glow of the bonfires built by the C. P. camp. The two camps were like the camps of two armies waiting for a test of strength on the morrow.

CHAPTER XIX

THE C. P. SHOW THEIR METTLE

SEVEN o'clock in the morning of April 29, 1869.

Since before daybreak the people from the U. P. camp had been streaming westward down the grade, toward the C. P. camp. Afoot, ahorse and by wagon they hastened along, to arrive in time for the track-laying contest.

Track Boss Paddy Miles was here, with Big Mike the grading boss, in a graders' wagon; George had found a mule for hire, and had ridden over with Terry; the two Muldoon lads were here, on their gaunt rail-truck nags; half of Promontory was here; General Dodge, General Casement and his brother Dan Casement, Superintendent Reed, Major Hurd—they had come up from below; and there was a delegation of U. P. surveyors and Mormon citizens, from Ogden and even from Salt Lake City.

The edge of the plateau was alive with wagons, carts, horses, mules, and figures on foot, forging on for the Central end o' track.

The Central folks seemed to be in no great hurry. The sun was above the Wasatch Range, pouring his beams upon the plateau and ridges of Promontory Point. At the very tip of the Central track waited the C. P. rail-truck, or iron-car—a low flat-car shorter than the U. P. rail-trucks. It was heaped high with rails, spikes and fastenings; and on either side of end o' track were other piles of iron.

A long iron-train, and the boarding-train behind it, stood with steam up, as far forward as they could get. Ranged along the iron-truck the rail-placers were ready; they were white—for, as Pat said, “yez can't get along widout the whites, no matter how many Chinymin yez have!” Behind this squad were the first spikers and bolters (“white min, too, mark ye!”) and two groups of Chinamen, also with sledges and with wrenches. And behind these extended, in parallel lines two deep, still more Chinamen—the ballasters with spades and picks.

A host of other Chinamen were gathered, chattering and laughing, to watch the work begin.

Now the U. P. men had a good chance to size up the C. P. track-crew and grade-builders—mainly those “haythen Chinese” who lived on tea, rice and pork (and rats, as Pat asserted); who fed no “roaring” towns, who did not get drunk, who gave no trouble to the bosses, and who asked only their dollar-a-day, and tended strictly to business; but who had been buried by snow in the Sierras, had worked in the fire-light on the soda-whitened Nevada desert, and now were arrayed to “show the Melicans.”

The track boss was white—Hi Minkler; Mr. H. H. Minkler, that is. He was passing to and fro, with sly words to keep the crews on edge. The man who met the U. P. officials and ushered them on to Governor Stanford and the other Central officials was Mr. James Campbell, superintendent of the C. P. Salt Lake Division. Mr. Strobridge, the C. P. construction superintendent, shook hands with the U. P. superintendent, Mr. Reed; and Mr. Crocker, the C. P. chief of construction, who ranked the same as General Casement, bustled anxiously here and there, on last inspections.

“Gee! They’d better begin,” spoke George.

“Longer they wait, the better for us,” proposed Terry.

“Don’t you want ’em to win out?”

“I dunno. Why—yes, sure! If they can do it, let ’em. I guess they deserve it, and ’twon’t harm anybody. The U. P. is through. We beat to Promontory.”

Mr. Strobridge had been looking at his watch. He snapped it shut, instantly caught Track Boss Minkler’s eyes—“Go ahead!” he barked.

“Lay to it!” roared Boss Minkler.

The air rocked to a sudden peal of cheers; but before the first note had issued, four rails at once were being laid; the nearest two rails on either side of the rail-car had been seized, each, by two men with tongs or nippers, carried forward at a run, and plunked down upon the ties as a starter!

Right away, without waiting for spikes or bolts, a crew of other men had put their shoulders to the little car and rolled it onward to the end of the second pair of rails; the first spikers and bolters jumped to set a couple of spikes,

clap on the fish-plate fasteners, and thrust a bolt or so through, while the gaugers measured and two crow-bar men stood ready to line up.

The Chinese spikers and bolt-screwdrivers were on their heels, to drive the spikes and tighten the fish-plate bolts—but before this another pair of rails were down and the rail-car had advanced again!

In their parallel double lines the Chinese ballasters were coming, like a well-drilled company. They numbered fifty. The inner lines carried spades, the outer lines carried picks. The spades scraped and shoveled and tamped, between the ties; the picks rose and fell, piling up the dirt along the ends; thus the ties were settled and the track leveled, like lightning.

“Keep back, everybody!” shouted Superintendent Strobridge, as the people crowded and craned.

“In the name o’ the saints, wad yez look at ’em travel!” That was the exclamation of Paddy Miles, who had pressed afoot into the front rank of spectators, and was staring agape.

General Casement had his watch out.

“Five lengths of rail to the minute!” he announced.

“Gee! One hundred and forty feet!” gasped George. “How many minutes to the mile, then?”

“Not much over thirty. They’re liable to do two miles an hour, if they keep up,” Terry calculated.

The rail-truck was partly unloaded; at a bark from Boss Minkler a lot of Chinamen dumped the remaining rails at end o’ track—and back down track rumbled the car, its crew at a dead run, for the near supply while the rail-layers were working.

It had not stopped before it was being reloaded at top pace; and back it charged, for end o’ track again. The Chinamen in its path barely sprang aside; then bent once more to their jobs.

The track had been lengthened by half a mile! “Toot, toot!” and “Toot, toot!” signaled the two engines at rear. Here they came, too, with their fresh supplies, halted upon the newly laid track, dumped more ammunition, and backed out, to clear.

The work never slackened for the trotting rail-layers to ease their arms. The spikers and bolters pushed them hard—the Chinamen rarely uttered a word, as they shuffled forward, machine-like. Every man on the job was dripping with sweat. The car crew—Chinamen, they—strained and panted as they shoved at the heavy car; suddenly at a word they fell out and another crew dived into their places.

Along the squads from rear to front and back to rear hurried the water-carriers, with dippers and splashing buckets, ladling right and left.

To keep up with the rails the crowd had to be constantly on the move, themselves; end o' track was always getting away from them.

It all was so exciting that time flew, like the track.

“Major Hurd says eight-thirty—one hour,” uttered George. “And now look at where they started, at those last tents. Back a mile and a half, or more!”

“Don't believe they can keep it up.”

“They've got 4,000 men to draw on; mostly Chinks.”

“Only so many can work at once. It takes a lot of practice to lay rails and drive spikes just right.”

“If they do keep it up, they'll have time to spare. Maybe they'll go straight on to the U. P. track, fourteen miles!”

The C. P. men were so well drilled that they worked without signals. “Plunk, plink, plink, plank,” sounded the rails, dropped as regularly as a clock ticks—a pair of rails every ten seconds! “Whang, whang, whang, whang whangity-whang, whang, whang!” clanged the sledges, with one continuous rapid-fire. The spades rang and the picks thudded, and the Chinamen grunted. Up to end o' track, end o' track, end o' track again, rolled the iron-truck—every minute, as seemed, boomed back, shoved by its sweating crew, for another supply, and charged in through the midst of the pig-tailed, grunting ballasters, who flowed together again in its wake. The iron-train edged onward, ready.

Track Boss Minkler held the fore, darting from crew to crew, inspecting, scolding, praising, calling the attention of the gang bosses to now this, now that, and seeing that the rails did not lack. He was sweaty and grimy—worked as hard as any other man. Pat Miles could have done no more.

Chief Superintendent Crocker rode restlessly hither-thither, along the whole line from train to end o' track—appeared to see nothing but the job, and he saw everything there.

“Lay to it, boys. Workee allee time chop-chop, John. No stopee till topside ten miles. Sabee?”

And the Chinamen answered, with shrill little yaps:

“Hi-yah, Meestee Clocky. Workee chop-chop, you bet.”

“Golly! At the third mile-stake, already,” said George, while the procession moved on. “’Tisn’t more than nine o’clock, either!”

“Shucks!” Terry blurted. “These C. P. fellows could build a whole track, grade and all, ten miles in a day, at the rate they’re going. Wonder if they’ll quit for noon.”

“They’ve got the dead-wood on Paddy Miles, sure,” George chuckled. “Look at him, with his mouth open and his pipe out!”

Higher rose the hot sun; still the rails clanked, and the sledges whanged, and the iron-truck rumbled, and the picks thudded, and the spades scraped, and ever and anon the two trains tooted their “coming up” signal. The air fairly quivered with action.

The sight was fascinating: the rail-layers, four on a side, always on the run; the gaugers, clapping their gauges to each pair of rails as soon as dropped; the rail-truck, with its load projecting fore and aft, and its pusher crew straining with bowed backs; the spike and bolt placers, who never straightened but scurried, head down, on the heels of the pushers; the Chinese sledge men and wrench men, pressing closely; the two double lines of ballasters, as busy and as orderly as marching ants; Boss Minkler and Big Boss Crocker prancing and urging; the iron-train dumping ahead of time and pulling out for more; and all the grassy, sagy slope, under a blue sky and fringed by desert mountains, thronged with the intent spectators wearing every sort of garb, from Governor Stanford’s broad-cloth and General Dodge’s corduroys, down to the U. P. red-flannel shirts and the C. P. cotton blouses.

“Great Scott! More than five miles, and they aren’t going to stop for noon,” Terry gasped.

They didn't. They went right along, for another hour—they went along, until on a sudden Mr. Crocker reined his horse at end o' track, raised his hand, dropped it sharply, as if driving a lance—

“That'll do. Knock off.”

The men straightened, and stared about dazed, while they wiped their brows.

“The six-mile stake, and the new station of Victory,” shouted Mr. Crocker, to the crowd around. “One thirty o'clock. Six miles of track laid in six hours. We'll take an hour's rest.”

“B' jabers, yez've earned it,” Pat bawled, just as a great cheer answered the announcement. “Take two hours; take thray.”

Mr. Crocker again raised his hand, for silence.

“There'll be dinner for all, right here. Superintendent Campbell is bringing up the boarding-train.”

The exhausted track-gang tossed down their tools, and staggered aside, to drink, and wash, and throw themselves down, also, for a breather until the cooks beat the dinner gongs.

The dinner was served upon long tables set up in a jiffy in the open air—but the Chinamen squatted around their big kettles of rice and stew and tea. The U. P. officials dined with President Stanford and the other C. P. officials at a separate mess, near the headquarters private car.

“What are you going to do? See it through?” asked George, of Terry, while they cleaned their platters.

“I dunno. Guess there's no doubt about those ten miles.”

“Well, I should say not! Only four miles yet, and five hours to do them in. But let's stick around.”

“All right. We'll stay as long as General Dodge and the two Casements stay. Down on the plains we used to think three miles was a big day's work; but, gee, these Central gangs can double that in half a day!”

“So could the U. P. gangs, if they wanted to show off,” George asserted. “Look what we did on the Red Desert, and in the mountains last winter. We

could start in and lay twelve miles tomorrow, if we had the chance.”

At two-thirty o’clock prompt the whistle of the iron-train tooted one shrill blast. The C. P. track-crews had been stationed for five minutes, poised and waiting. The sweat had dried on them—they were a bit stiff and tired; but they were game for the finish. Like a machine when a lever has been pulled, at the sound of the whistle they all broke into motion again.

Some of the spectators left. It seemed to be a certainty that the ten miles would be won, although of course there might be a hitch. Four miles to be added to six, in the shank of a day, was a chore.

On marched end o’ track, carried by these C. P. cracks, and escorted by the expectant crowd; to the seven-mile stake—and the eight-mile stake—but backs and arms, and eyes also, were getting tired.

The sun was sinking toward the desert ranges in the west; end o’ track was moving forward more slowly.

Terry measured the distance between sun and mountains.

“Dunno whether they’ll do it or not. They’re pretty well petered out. Those track-layers are plumb tuckered. Reckon their hands and feet, both, are blistered.”

“The spikers’ tongues are sure hanging out,” added George. “’Twon’t be fair for ’em to work by night. They’ve got to finish inside of a day.”

The U. P. officials were still here; so was Pat, and Big Mike the grading boss, and quite a bunch of other spectators who, like Terry and George, had resolved to “stick it out.”

The nine-mile post! The sun now was low over the western edge of Promontory Point.

“One more stake, boys,” hoarsely urged Boss Minkler. “Plenty of time, if you just keep at it.”

“No stopee, John. Keep chop-chop. Almost topside,” shouted Mr. Crocker.

“Hi-yah, Meesty Clocky. Keep chop-chop, make topside, you bet,” panted the Chinamen.

The sun of April 29 was touching the western ridge; the shadows of workers and spectators stretched long—the rail-layers’ shadows seemed to lead on, marking the way.

“What time is it?” Pat demanded.

“Close on seven o’clock.”

“B’ dad, an’ they’ll make it, then; for yon’s the ten-mile stake. Yis, an’ I hope they do, even if I have to pay the \$10,000 myself.”

Rail by rail it was, with the sweaty forms staggering after, in the wake of the little rail-truck. Rail by rail—only a few more needed——

What! The ten-mile stake? Hooray! And seven o’clock precisely! Ten miles of track, laid in ten and one-half hours’ working time, or almost at the rate of a mile an hour! A world’s record, by the Central Pacific Railroad.

“Finish out the truck-load, boys,” bade Mr. Minkler. “Give the U. P. good measure.”

And they finished the truck-load.

“Ten miles and 200 feet extra, gentlemen,” Mr. Crocker announced. “Are you satisfied?”

“You win,” smiled General Dodge.

The track-crews eased their weary back, and tried to smile, too; but they drooped as they leaned upon their tools. The panting rail-carriers threw themselves flat, exhausted.

“That was a giant’s feat, gentlemen,” proclaimed Mr. Crocker. “I want to introduce to you these eight men who carried ten miles of rails in one day, without a pause except for nooning. Their names are Michael Shay, Patrick Joyce, Thomas Daily, Michael Kennedy, Fred McNamara, Edward Killeen, George Wyatt, and Michael Sullivan. They’ve moved bodily over a million and a half pounds of iron.”

The crowd cheered.

“An’ sivin of ’em are Irish, an’ the other ought to be,” shouted Pat. “So it’s all in the family, an’ we don’t begrudge yez the job. Faith,” he added, to his rival, Track Boss Minkler, “a trifle over 2,000,000 pounds o’ iron have your

gangs handled this day. For hiven's sake, send your min to bed, or my brain'll burst wid lookin' at 'em. B' dad, an' wance I thought we could skin yez at the track game. Mebbe we can—I'm not sayin' we can't, but we're lucky to quit before-time."

"It's laid and well laid," Division Superintendent Campbell was remarking, to General Casement. "And to prove the fact, I'll engage to run a locomotive over the entire distance in forty minutes."

So he did, on the return to the C. P. camp; but only a few of the visitors remained, to witness. The sun had set, soon the darkness would gather, and the bulk of the crowd commenced to stream eastward, for Promontory, the U. P. camp, Blue Creek, and even beyond by wagon and train.

General Dodge and General Casement and Mr. Reed stayed, to be the guests of Governor Stanford at supper.

"What do you reckon Pat meant by his 2,000,000 pounds?" George queried, as he and Terry cantered on their way to camp. "All those figures sound like heap talk."

"Let's ask Major Hurd."

They dropped back to Major Hurd, the U. P. assistant superintendent of construction.

"Crocker knows, and Pat made a shrewd guess," said Major Hurd. "It's quickly figured. I have the items right here." And he consulted his pocket memorandum book. "The C. P. are using thirty-foot rails, weighing fifty-six pounds to the yard. In one mile there should be 352 rails, each weighing 560 pounds, and the total weight for ten miles sums 1,971,200 pounds, in rails alone. The ten miles calls for 55,000 spikes, 7,040 fish-plate fasteners, 14,080 bolts; and while they may not bring the total quite to the 2,100,000 pounds, we'll call it that in round numbers. And every pound of the iron had to be handled—and handled several times."

"Whew!" sighed George, as if the very thought made him tired. "Wonder when the next big show will be."

"Which?" Terry asked. "Pat counting the ties with his nose? There are over 26,000 of them."

"No. The joining of the tracks. The C. P. have only four miles to go."

“The wedding of the rails, you mean?” prompted Major Hurd. “May 10 is the date suggested, I understand. That will give both roads time to arrange for a program and for bringing in the people who’ll wish to come, from the East and West. General Dodge is talking the matter over with Governor Stanford now, so as to report to New York.”

“Thank you. We’ll stick around, then, I guess,” George asserted. “I’ll have to stick, anyway,” he added, to Terry, as they two rode ahead, “till the men are all paid off. And maybe so will you.”

“Haven’t been paid, myself, for a month,” laughed Terry. “But that doesn’t count. I’m going to see this thing through. The wedding of the rails is liable to be a regular humdinger of a celebration.”

CHAPTER XX

THE WEDDING OF THE RAILS

“HAVE ye seen the grand tie that them Californy people are givin’ toward the big doin’s tomorrow?”

Paddy Miles put the query to Terry, in the U. P. construction camp on the border of the Salt Lake near Blue Creek. The weather of the past few days had turned raw, blustery and rainy. Both the U. P. and the C. P. camps had been moved from the high windy plateau down to lower ground. Now they were out of sight of each other.

“No. What kind of a tie, Pat?”

“Red as rale mahogany, an’ polished like satin, an’ set wid a silver plate. ’Tis the last tie, to be laid under the inds o’ the last rails.”

“Where is it?”

“Over yon in the C. Pay. special car, on the sidin’ back o’ their ind o’ track. Yes, an’ ’twixt you an’ me (but ’tain’t to be repeated), there are two spikes o’ solid gold, wan of ’em topped wid a big nugget, an’ worth \$400, come along wid it, an’ two silver spikes, from Nevady an’ Arizony. Minkler’s guardin’ the car, wid a squad o’ track men, but I dare say if you go over an’ tell him I sent you, he’ll let you have a peep.”

This was Sunday, May 9. The ceremony of laying the last rails had been up in the air, so to say. President Stanford’s special car bringing a party of C. P. officials and their guests, including the governor of Arizona and dignitaries of Nevada, had arrived on Promontory last Friday, the seventh, thinking that the ceremony was to occur on Saturday, the eighth.

But General Casement had met them at U. P. end o’ track with the Superintendent Reed special coach, to tell them that the U. P. guests could not possibly get in from the East before the tenth. So he had taken them back to Ogden, on a sight-seeing tour of the mountain country.

However, San Francisco had begun to celebrate, anyway. Omaha and Chicago and New York, Washington, Philadelphia, Boston and other eastern cities were making ready. They awaited only the word.

The Central had laid their four miles of track, lacking a trifle. Like the Union Pacific, they had stopped one pair of thirty-foot rails short of the meeting-place.

They had renamed their station of "Victory," and changed it to Rozel. They had set up a sign-board at either end of their ten-mile stint, to announce to overland passengers: "Ten Miles of Track in One Day." Their eight rail-carriers—Mike Shay, Pat Joyce, Tom Daily, Mike Kennedy, Fred McNamara, Ed Killeen, George Wyatt and Mike Sullivan—who had toted all those ten miles of rails, without being spelled once, were still the heroes of the day.

Having nothing especial to busy him this Sunday afternoon, Terry straddled his horse and rode up to the summit, to see the wonderful tie and the precious spikes.

The summit of Promontory Point was pretty well deserted, today, except for the little collection of tents and shacks forming the "town" of Promontory. The Central people had started a short siding, but had quit, over Sunday. Down at the U. P. camp Pat was darkly hinting that this C. P. siding would never be finished, now.

"For they've gone to slape on the job; an' b' gorry when they wake up they're like to see a U. Pay. sidin' in place, an' the U. Pay. ownin' the switchin' rights at the meetin'-place terminal. We lost Humboldt Wells, mebbe, but we'll not lose Promontory Point if we can help it."

Only the small gap of two rails' length remained to be filled in before trains might pass over the new Pacific Railway between the Missouri River and the Pacific coast. A mere fifty-eight feet, beyond the telegraph pole that proudly floated a United States flag (hoisted there by orders of General Dodge), broke the iron trail of 1,770 miles. The tracks could be connected up in a jiffy.

The Stanford special car, which was the private car of Mr. Charles Crocker, the C. P. contractor and construction boss, stood yonder upon the C. P. siding spur. It was gaily decorated; but all the steps on one side had been

torn away in the trip out from Sacramento. A careless Chinaman, felling timber above the track, had landed a log upon the rails, and the Stanford special, of only engine and car, had just escaped a bad wreck.

The car had got through, though; and here it was, guarded by the C. P. track-layer boss, H. H. Minkler, and a squad of armed track men. Those gold spikes would be a great prize for some of the “floaters” in Promontory.

Terry being a friend, Mr. Minkler obligingly unlocked the car and ushered him inside. There was nobody here except a timid Chinaman cook. Everybody else was sight-seeing.

Mr. Minkler removed the canvas cover from the tie.

“What do you think o’ that?”

“It sure is a beauty.” So it was—red and polished like true mahogany, and set with a silver plate on the side. “Where does it go, Mr. Minkler?”

“Read the plate and you’ll see.”

Terry stooped and read.

THE LAST TIE
Laid in the Completion of the Pacific Railroad
May 10, 1869

That was the top inscription on the plate, followed by the names of the officers and directors of the Central Pacific.

“Heft it.”

“Whew, but it’s heavy! Is it made of mahogany?”

“No. Californy laurel; and a good solid piece, too. Eight feet long, eight inches wide and six inches deep, it is.”

“Somebody’ll steal it out of the track.”

“Oh, it won’t be left there. It’s a show tie. Those holes already drilled in it are for the special spikes to set in. Mebbe you’d like to see them, too. All right. Take a squint. Those two gold ones are from Californy—one for Mr. Durant to drive at the U. P. end, and the big one with the nugget head for Governor Stanford to drive at the C. P. end. The solid silver spike is from Nevady; they say a hundred men each hit it one lick, in the forging. That

other spike is from Arizony. It's a mixture of gold, silver and iron. And I hear tell there's a silver spike comin' from Montany and another from Idyho."

When Terry rode back for his own camp, he cast calculating eye at the telegraph pole, again, with the Flag floating. It stood at the U. P. end o' track, like an outpost marking a triumphal march across continent. High over this high country above the great Salt Lake the Starry Flag streamed in the evening breeze, challenging the world of lake and desert to show any better sight.

The last rays of the setting sun struck it full, promising it a bright tomorrow, and Terry swung his hat at it.

"Now if George only gets here early enough——!" he planned. "Gee! Hope he does."

That was of much importance, but was nothing to worry over. George had been kept in Ogden, mostly, with the pay-car. He'd be on hand, though. Nobody who knew George Stanton might doubt this.

"A fine day ahead of us," Pat prophesied, at the camp, with jerk of his scarred thumb toward the gorgeous yellow sunset. "Sure, we're goin' to be blessed wid that—but b' gorry we got to work all the night, to 'arn it, layin' our side-track. Them's the orders from Gin'ral Casement an' Gin'ral Dodge, an' they're goin' to boss the job themsilves whilst the C. Pay. slape. 'Twill be the U. Pay.'s terminal."

The night was sharp and starry, and ice formed on the water buckets. The morning dawned as dear as a bell, and fanned by a strong, nipping breeze. Pat's prophecy had come true.

Before daylight a few spectators had commenced to toil through, in the distance, by horse, wagon and buggy, from the ranches and towns eastward. The boarding-train was made up early, to take the men on from the construction camp. On the tender Terry arrived at the head of the procession.

The plateau was getting lively. A sprinkling of spectators by horse, wagon and buggy had come in from the west also. By all-night work the U. P. siding had been put in and completed. A squad of Pat's men were tamping the ties, and tossing jokes at the C. P. men for having been outwitted. A

squad of Chinamen from the Central camp were pottering along the C. P. roadbed. It all looked like business.

People continued to gather, and Terry fidgeted. About ten o'clock the C. P. construction-train, with the Stanford special as a trailer, puffed down, to halt at C. P. end o' track, and wait. Engine and cars were fluttering with red, white and blue flags and bunting. The name of the weather-beaten locomotive was "Jupiter."

Evidently President Stanford had been entertaining a large breakfast party, for almost all the C. P. officials piled out: the governor, and Vice-President C. P. Huntington, and Builder Crocker, and Construction Superintendent J. H. Strobridge, and Chief Engineer S. S. Montague, and Consulting Chief Engineer George E. Gray, and a bunch of others—three United States Pacific Railway commissioners and the governors of Nevada and Arizona, among them, people said.

There was one woman, Mrs. Strobridge, the Heroine of the C. P., they called her, because she had camped at the front, with her husband, all the way during the building. But the U. P. had two heroines, besides Virgie.

President Stanford and Vice-President Huntington attracted the most attention. They were fine-appearing men, in trousers and long coats of black broad-cloth, their shoes polished, everything about them spick and span as if they had come to a reception. Ex-Governor Stanford had ruddy complexion and kind, handsome face. He had been California's war governor. Vice-President Huntington was larger in frame; broad and heavy and imposing. His face reminded one of a lion's. During all the years of the railroad building he had made his headquarters in New York, raising money for the company; but he had traveled back and forth, back and forth, by stage and railroad, nobody knew how many times. Both he and Governor Stanford were reported to be very rich.

They all trudged forward, to the space that had been kept open from their end o' track to the flag telegraph pole. There was shaking of hands, and considerable eddying about. Terry viewed the crowd, and the telegraph pole, anxiously.

"Dog-gone, why don't our trains come?" he complained, to himself. "Where's that George?"

The U. P. boarding-train had backed out and entered upon the siding, to clear the track. Now a prolonged whistle sounded, from the east. Hurrah! Terry recognized it; no one of the end o' track force on the U. P. line could mistake that whistle. Old Number 119, the veteran construction-train engine, of course! And here it came, hauling the first U. P. excursion-train decorated from stem to stern with the red, white and blue. He ran down track.

The train was loaded to the guards. Engineer Richards and Fireman Bill Sweeny were in the cab; George was hanging out from the cab steps, and Virgie was riding on the pilot!

George made a flying leap, and a rush for Terry.

"Did many C. P. folks get here first? Who are they all? We brought the whole U. P. gang in that scrumptious patent Pullman—Vice-President Durant, Colonel Seymour, Mr. Dillon and Mr. John Duff of the directors, the Casements and General Dodge and Mr. Reed and Major Hurd, and two silver spikes, and a heap of people from New York and Chicago and Boston and Omaha and I don't know where else. Your mother and my mother, too. There's another train right behind us, fetching Ogden's mayor, and a raft of other Mormons, from Salt Lake City, and soldiers and a band from Fort Douglas down there. Bet we have more people than the C. P. Is that their only train?"

"Come on!" Terry bade. "I've found a place for us, if we can make it before somebody else grabs it."

"Where?"

"I'll show you."

Away they ran, Terry leading. They had to zigzag through among the carriages and wagons and horses and jostling spectators.

"We can get atop that telegraph pole, and see everything."

"Which pole?" panted George.

"The one with the flag on it."

"How'll we do it?"

"Shin up and sit on the cross-arm. It's right over the place."

“Maybe they won’t let us.”

“Yes, they will. Everything’s free.”

“Aw, shucks!” George puffed, slackening. “Somebody else is there.”

So there was: a man had mounted to the cross-arm and was astride it.

“Shucks!” agreed Terry. “I’d been saving that for us.”

He, too, slackened, disappointed.

“We can take the next pole.”

“No; it’s too far off.” Then—“Come on!” urged Terry. “He’s getting down. I know—he’s a lineman, is all, tapping the wire.”

They ran again.

“He’s leaving a ladder. Hope it stays,” George gasped. “That’ll be nuts, if only nobody beats us.” And he exclaimed: “It’s all right! That’s Harry! That’s Harry Revere!”

They caught Harry at the foot of the pole.

“Hello! How’d you get here?”

Harry grinned.

“On that train.”

“I didn’t see you,” George accused.

“Didn’t say you did. But I said I was going to end at the front, and here I am. Reached Ogden yesterday, and they sent me on out. I’m the boss lightning-shooter, today.”

“What you going to do?”

“Send the news. Connect up my table yonder at the track with San Francisco and Omaha, and tell the United States what’s happening. Today’s the day when I own the whole system; everything’s to be kept open, waiting on Yours Truly.”

Off limped Harry, all business. Terry yelled after him.

“We’re going to climb your pole, then.”

“All right. You can borrow it, but don’t you monkey with my wires.”

The people around seemed to have no thought, yet, of seizing upon the pole. They were too engaged in staring about.

“Good eye,” George praised, as following Terry he scrambled up the ladder and squirmed the rest of the way to the cross-arm. “Say! This is shore great. Where’s the place for the last spike, now?”

“Square below. It’ll be solid gold. I saw it. Seven inches long, with a nugget for a head, and worth \$400. It’s from California, for President Stanford to drive. And there’s another, not so big, for Vice-President Durant. I saw the last tie, too, and it’s a dandy—all polished like mahogany, with a silver plate tacked to it and holes ready for the spikes. Arizona and Nevada and Idaho are giving silver spikes——”

“I know,” George interrupted. “I read the whole program in the Ogden paper. The governors are to make speeches, and so are the U. P. and C. P. folks; and the telegraph line’s connected up with Harry’s operator’s outfit so that bells will strike out East and on the Coast when the last spike’s driven. Chicago and New York and Boston and Washington and New Orleans and St. Louis and Philadelphia will all be notified at the same time by Omaha, and Sacramento and San Francisco will get it direct. And old 119, and old Jupiter of the C. P., will touch noses.”

“It’s a boss place to see from, anyhow,” observed Terry.

The C. P. head officials had gone down track, to the Pullman on the end of the U. P. special train. Presently the whole party, for both roads, issued from the Pullman, and came on. George chuckled.

“Talk about ‘last ties.’ That one Mr. Durant has on beats the C. P. tie all to pieces!”

“It’s the last thing in ties, all right,” answered Terry.

Vice-President Thomas C. Durant of the U. P. New York office was rigged in festival attire, with a black velvet coat and a necktie so gay that it fairly dazzled the eyes. General Dodge, Mr. Sidney Dillon, the Casements, Major Marshall Hurd, Superintendent Reed—they were there; and a heavy bushy-white-whiskered old gentleman in broad-cloth suit, who was Mr. John Duff

of Boston, a leading director and the father of young Mr. Duff; and several others.

The crowd cheered them. The sight below was a stirring one. The second U. P. train had arrived; from it were hastening another bevy of excursionists, and the soldiers and band from Fort Douglas at Salt Lake City. The track-layers and graders and surveyors of both roads were swarming upon the standing cars—they covered the tops of the coaches, and stood upon the running-boards of 119 and Jupiter. Yankees, Irishmen, Chinamen and even Indians and Mexicans jostled one another for position.

Several people had followed Terry's and George's example and climbed the ladder, but they could not reach the cross-arm. Virgie had a good position, in the cab of 119. The two Heroines of the U. P. and the Heroine of the C. P. had met; they were given a front place of honor. The companies of the United States Infantry were drawn up, along the grade at the gap in the track.

"Comp'ny—rest!" the captains barked; and the blue-coat line, their hands in white gloves and every button shining, stood at ease, while the band played.

All the engines were tooting, also. There was another whistle, from the west. A second C. P. train was coming, decorated from pilot to rear coach. Its crowd thronged forward.

The sun was getting higher overhead. At a word from General Dodge, who seemed to be a sort of master of ceremonies, the infantry captains crisply ordered:

"Comp'ny—'tenshun! P'rade-rest!"

The officials and honor guests of the two roads ranged themselves in the open space left at the gap. General Dodge lifted his hand, for silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to begin. I will ask you all to keep quiet, until after the ceremonies. Kindly do not push forward, into this space between the two engines. The wire in here is connected with Omaha and San Francisco, so that the news will be spread east and west simultaneously. We will first listen to a prayer by the Reverend Dr. Todd, of Massachusetts. Hats off, please."

Hats were doffed. The Reverend Dr. Todd—a venerable wrinkled gentleman—stepped forward, and asked a blessing upon the work about to be completed.

Harry's telegraph instrument had been clicking, on the little table at which he sat hemmed in by people.

“The operator has said, to Omaha and San Francisco: ‘Almost ready. Hats off; prayer is being offered,’” General Dodge announced. “Now he has said: ‘We have got done praying. The spike is about to be presented.’ But first I take pleasure in introducing to you the Honorable Leland Stanford, of Sacramento—ex-Governor of the great State of California, and president of the Central Pacific Railroad Company. He will address you.”

Amidst cheers Governor Stanford stood forth, and made a short speech upon the union of the two roads.

“General Dodge! Dodge! Dodge! General Dodge! Speech!” the crowd shouted. So General Dodge, the chief engineer of the Union Pacific, made a similar short speech.

The crowd commenced to cheer again—with “Hurrah for the Pacific Railroad!” “Hurrah for Stanford!” “Hurrah for Dodge!” “‘Rah for the Casements!” “‘Rah for the Star Spangled Banner!” “Hooray for the engineers!” “And don’t forget the track men and graders! Hooray for the Irish and the Mormons and the Chinks!” “Don’t forget the money, either! Hooray for Durant and Huntington!”

This might have kept up forever had not General Dodge again raised his hand.

Here came Superintendent Reed, of the U. P., and Superintendent Strobridge, of the C. P.—the two construction chiefs—lugging the polished tie.

They carefully laid it into the little bed prepared for it, while the spectators craned and “Oh’d” and “Ah’d” in admiration.

Now here came the last rails—one pair from the U. P. end, proudly carried by two squads of the U. P. Irish, in clean shirts and trousers, and “bossed” by Paddy Miles; one pair from the C. P. end, proudly carried by two squads

of the C. P. Chinamen, in clean blouses and trousers, and bossed by Mr. Minkler.

Harry's telegraph instrument was clicking.

"Omaha has replied: 'We understand. All are ready in the East,'" announced General Dodge. "The word has been repeated in all the large cities. The management of the Western Union Telegraph Company in Washington has issued orders that the lines are to be kept open throughout the continent until after the ceremonies."

The two pairs of rails had been gently placed, and the fish-plate fastening at the joints adjusted. One double length was spiked fast in the ordinary way. Pat and his Irish squads and Boss Minkler and his Chinaman squads filed off. The crowd burst into another cheer; Terry and George, highest of all, joined.

"There she is, complete," George asserted.

"No. Wait!"

General Dodge was speaking.

"The time is at hand. The operator is sending the message, east and west: 'To everybody: Keep quiet. When the last spike is driven at Promontory Point we will say, "Done." Don't break the circuit, but watch for the signals of the hammer blows. The spike will soon be driven. The signal will be three dots for the commencement of the blows.' Omaha has replied, so has San Francisco. The country is waiting. We will now have the presentation of the spikes. I take pleasure in introducing Congressman Tritle, of Nevada Territory."

The Honorable F. A. Tritle, of Nevada (who was only trying to be governor), stepped forward, with a bright silver spike. He faced Vice-President Durant.

"To the iron of the East and the gold of the West, Nevada adds her link of silver to span the continent and wed the oceans."

He handed the silver spike to Mr. Durant, and bowed.

"Hooray!"

"Governor Safford, of Arizona," General Dodge announced.

Governor A. P. K. Safford of Arizona Territory stepped forward, with his spike, of gold, silver and iron.

“Ribbed in iron, clad in silver, and crowned with gold, Arizona presents her offering to the enterprise that had banded the continent and wedded the oceans.”

This spike also went to Vice-President Durant.

“Dr. Harkness, of Sacramento—who in behalf of California presents two spikes, of pure gold,” announced General Dodge.

“Which is the \$400 one?” George demanded, of Terry, wellnigh falling from the cross-arm as he stretched his neck. There was such a tumult of cheers that Terry barely heard him, and neither of them could hear the speech by Dr. Harkness.

But he handed the two golden spikes to Governor Stanford.

A sudden silence broke the cheering. Governor Stanford held a little sledge with a silver head. Telegraph wires ran from it to Harry’s table.

“When he hits the spike, they hear him clear at Washington,” George whispered. “And in San Francisco, too!”

“Sh!” Terry cautioned.

The governor had passed one spike to Mr. Durant, who stooped and inserted it into the hole in the polished tie, at the end of the U. P. rail. He straightened, expectantly, and grasped another sledge, with iron head. Governor Stanford gazed around.

“All ready?”

“All ready, governor. The East and the West are waiting. Mr. Durant, you may drive your spike, if you please.”

Vice-President Durant, in his gay necktie and his velvet coat, lifted his sledge; down it came, but he was nervous, for——

“Aw, he hit the rail, didn’t he? He missed!” George blurted.

“Sure did,” Terry chuckled. “But I guess it’s all right. Now Governor Stanford’s going to try.”

“The last spike will be driven by President and Governor Stanford,” announced General Dodge, at the top of his voice. “He dug the first shovelful of earth on the Central Pacific, at Sacramento; he will complete the work, on Promontory Point. Wait, everybody.”

Governor Stanford poised his silver-headed sledge. He tapped with it—and he, too, struck the rail! But that made no difference. Harry’s telegraph instrument clicked, just the same—“dot,” “dot,” “dot.”

“Three cheers, now, everybody!” shouted General Dodge. “We have signaled: ‘Done!’ The Liberty Bell in Independence Hall at Philadelphia is ringing, a great ball at Washington has fallen, the blows here have been repeated on the city hall bell at San Francisco. At the third dot from the wire a salute was fired from Fort Point, there and 100 guns are answering at Omaha. The whole nation is celebrating! Three cheers, everybody, for the Pacific Railroad—the union of the East and of the West!”

The air rocked with cheers and whoops and the shrieks of the engines. Hats went sailing helter-skelter. The band burst into “Hail, Columbia.” And again George almost tumbled from his perch, but Terry grabbed him just in time.

General Dodge called for silence. Harry was clicking busily.

“The operator is sending the following message: ‘Promontory Summit, Utah, May 10, 1869. The last rail is laid, the last spike is driven. The Pacific Railroad is completed. The point of junction is 1,086 miles west of the Missouri River, and 690 miles east of Sacramento City.’ Signed: ‘Leland Stanford, Central Pacific Railroad. T. C. Durant, Sidney Dillon, John Duff, Union Pacific Railroad.’ The remaining spikes will now be driven, before the passage of the trains; and anybody who desires is invited to strike one blow each, in turn.”

Paddy Miles and Mr. Minkler had rapidly set the spikes; and immediately a regular line of people formed, to seize the sledges. The U. P. and C. P. officials and their guests of honor started in, first, though—the Heroine of the Central blushing forward by Vice-President Huntington, and the two Heroines of the Union Pacific escorted by Vice-President Durant.

“Come on!” bade George, excited. “I want to hit a lick, don’t you?”

“You bet I do.”

And down they slid, to the ladder, and from the ladder to the ground.

“Maybe we’ll be too late.”

“Listen! Some of ’em are hitting the rails, again.”

Judging by the laughter, that was true. But they wormed their way through, to the fore. One after another the amateur spikers were whanging at the spikes. Terry espied Pat.

“Don’t we get a chance, Pat?”

“An’ haven’t yez hit a spike, yet?” Pat likewise was excited. “Sure, now, nayther have some o’ the rists of ’em. I wouldn’t pay the best two bits a day, on me gang. But take my sledge, now. There’s the wan silver spike from Nevady, a-waitin’, set in its hole. Hit her a whack apiece an’ niver mind whether it’s silver or iron. An’ if annywan says for yez to lay off, tell ’em Paddy Miles told yez to go ahead.”

George grabbed the sledge, and dived for the silver spike of the U. P. rail, opposite the U. P. gold spike.

“You first,” Terry panted. “Quick. Don’t you miss it.”

“I’m—not goin’—to—MISS—it,” hissed George, as his sledge came down—Whack! “There! Hit her a lick, yourself.”

Terry struck—Whack! Buried the silver spike.

“By Jiminy, we drove one spike, anyhow,” they proclaimed.

They had been none too soon. Only the last golden spike remained untouched, except for the light taps by President Stanford and Vice-President Huntington himself.

Governor Stanford shouted vigorously.

“Stand aside, everybody. The path-finders of the two roads—the men who led the rails to the meeting-point: Chief Engineer General Grenville M. Dodge of the Union Pacific, and Chief Engineer Samuel S. Montague of the Central Pacific, will land the final blows upon the last spike.”

The two engineers stood, each with a sledge.

“I first?” politely queried General Dodge.

“No, general. The last blow shall be yours. You have come the farthest,” Mr. Montague insisted.

He landed easily; made a good shot, and the nugget-headed spike was sunk two-thirds way. Mr. Montague stepped aside; with a bow and a smile the general took position; landed, and the spike had sunk to its battered nugget.

“Let’s skip to our pole, so as to see when the engines touch noses,” George proposed. He and Terry scuttled for their pole, again. Up they scrambled, for the cross-arm—a very fine place.

The rails had been firmed. The people were being forced back, to clear the track. Old 119, of the U. P., Terry’s father and Fireman Bill Sweeny—yes, and George’s father and Virgie also—in the cab, and old Jupiter, of the C. P., had been unhooked from their trains; they whistled—Toot! Toot!—and slowly advanced toward each other, bringing the cheering track men and graders who clung to every inch that was not too hot.

Slowly, slowly, they crept forward, the one over the U. P. rails, the other over the C. P. rails; and just at the gold-and-silver-studded laurel tie they touched pilots.

Terry’s father swung out from his cab, to the pilot, a bottle of champagne in his hand. The engineer of old Jupiter swung out, opposite, with a bottle. They reached aside, and each broke his bottle upon the other’s cow-catcher, so that the wine flowed down upon the joint and tie.

“The wedding of the rails is accomplished,” shouted General Dodge. “The two roads have been made one, never to be parted.”

“Hooray!”

“Same as the launching of a ship, huh?” George blatted. “Sure. It’s a wedding and baptizing, both.”

The two engines, rubbing noses, waited until a photographer had taken another picture or two. Then they backed out again, coupled on to their trains, the C. P. train backed farther——

“Look!” cried Terry.

For old 119 was coming on, train and all, with Virgie perched alone on the pilot! It passed clear over, into C. P. territory.

“She said she’d be the first passenger across by U. P., and so she is,” George remarked. “That’s right But she’s awful stubborn.”

“Hooray! Hooray!” And Virgie waved, delighted.

The U. P. train backed, to clear, and old Jupiter hauled the C. P. train across, into U. P. territory.

As soon as the C. P. train had backed out again, and the meeting-place was free, Paddy Miles and Mr. Minkler led a charge of workmen into it; like experts they pried the ends of the rails from the last tie, jerked out the precious spikes, and the precious tie; slipped an ordinary tie under and in business fashion spiked the rails down again with ordinary spikes.

“What’s their rush, do you reckon?”

“You’ll see,” laughed Terry.

Scarcely had the track squads left, bearing their spoils, when the crowd swarmed into the spot, and jostled and clawed and dug.

“Souvenirs! They’re after souvenirs!” George rapped. “Want one? Want a piece of tie, or something?”

“Shucks!” scoffed Terry. “We might as well go down, though. Everything’s over. But I guess after a fellow’s lived at the front for a couple of years, and helped build the road, like you and I have, he doesn’t need any ‘souvenir’ to remember it by!”

“Right you are, boy,” George agreed. “I’d rather have something to eat. Best thing we can do is to catch a ride back. It’s a quarter to one.”

Down they plumped, to the ground, and were breaking for the U. P. trains, when they ran almost slap into young Mr. Duff.

“By gracious! Hello. Where’ve you boys been? I wondered——”

“Up on the telegraph pole, most the time,” explained Terry, as they all shook hands heartily. “Where’ve *you* been? Funny we didn’t see you.”

“Oh, I’ve been running ’round, with the crowd. I came out from Boston with my dad. You both have grown so, I didn’t recognize you, on top that pole. But hurrah, anyway,” and young Mr. Duff laughed boyishly. “Well, here we all are, at the finish. So you stuck it out, did you?”

“Yes, siree!” declared George. “Everybody stuck it out. Nobody quit.”

“The two roads laid over 1,000 miles of track in thirteen months; did you know?” Terry asked.

“Of course I know. The whole country knows; papers have been full of it. Whew, but I’d like to have been along, on the job; across the deserts and across the mountains, and clear here, to the meeting of the tracks. Expect you’re right proud.”

“Naw, we’re too hungry to be swelled up much,” bluffly answered George. “But it was no slouch of a job, just the same. Was it, Terry?”

“Not for Joe!” Terry asserted, in the latest slang. “But everybody’s proud, I guess—from General Dodge and Mr. Durant, down to us.”

“Do *you* know?” said young Mr. Duff, abruptly—as if he had discovered something. “When a fellow looks at this iron trail, clear across country, he realizes that it’s a great thing to be an American.”

THE END

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES:

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected.

Inconsistencies in hyphenation have been standardized.

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OPENING THE
IRON TRAIL : OR, TERRY AS A "U. PAY." MAN (A SEMI-
CENTENNIAL STORY) ***

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