

AT PLACE OF PEACE.

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Gangs of yeggmen were invading the freight yards of San Andora. There was war—real war—the yeggmen on one side and the employees on the other.

Four men met in the office of Yardmaster O'Curran. They had met there the previous evening, joking with the grim humor of men whose lives are suspended on a hair between two worlds.

Tonight there was no humor in their grimness. Tonight there were four of them. The previous night there had been six.

Tom Clarkson, brother and chief assistant of the chief, snapped the magazine of his automatic into place and expressed the sentiment of them all.

"There's only one way to beat these murderers," he said, "and that is, if you see your man before he sees you, shoot him first and warn him after."

"Tis the only way," agreed Yardmaster O'Curran, "and 'tis the plan I shall use myself if I get into anything. My brother Martin is on his way home, and I want his welcome to be more fitting than a funeral."

The two Clarksons turned in quick surprise to the big yardmaster. "That's good news, Tim," said the chief, "when do you expect him?"

"Within the week," answered O'Curran, smiling happily. "Tom Clarkson put out a hearty hand. 'Tis a long and lonely trail he's been on, Tim," said he. "I hope he doesn't bear any grudge against me for his starting on it."

"Never a grudge did Martin bear in his life. I know you were rivals in pretty near everything, and by some luck you generally managed to beat him, but I reckon the winner felt more enmity than the loser, even when you beat him for the girl."

A momentary frown showed that the elder O'Curran at least felt that there was some cause for grudge. A wet mist was drifting over the yards as the men sought their various patrols. No man was more glad than Tom Clarkson that Martin O'Curran was coming home, for it was when he had married the girl both had courted that Martin had left San Andora on his aimless, restless tramp; but the elder brother's attitude toward him depressed him in spite of himself.

He was aroused to the need of watchfulness by the sound of a scuffle at the end of a box car, and as he advanced with drawn pistol, a man with a bluejean in his hand sprang toward him.

He fired. He fired with the intent and skill that takes no chances. A surprised, frightened gasp from the stricken man's lungs. For a second he stood upright, then sank to the ground—dead.

From beyond the car came the sound of fleeing footsteps. Clarkson sprang past the inert figure and stumbled over another man slowly struggling to his feet between the rails. He was evidently dazed, and Clarkson, still working on the principle of taking no chances, snapped a pair of handcuffs on him before he could recover.

"All right, bo," said the man resignedly. "You can't prove nothin' on me no'n trespass. Did you get the guy you fired at?"

"You bet I did. It's the only way to make sure of you murdering thiers."

"Huh! Then I guess there'll be somebody to pay an' no brimstone hot. He warn't no yegg."

"He made a pretty good imitation of one when he came for me with his club."

The yeggman laughed sardonically. "Say, bo," he said, "I reckon you shot the yardmaster's brother. That's who he said he was. He clubbed me on the head when I tried to make him go in with us."

The sickening horror of that minute, and the ordeal of the next few days wrote haggard lines upon the face of Tom Clarkson.

Sad of soul, he went back to duty, and the big yardmaster, Tim O'Curran, with a pitiful ache in his heart, read and reread the letter in which his brother had told him that his fit of wanderlust had passed and he was coming home.

Two days after the funeral Tom stepped softly into the yardmaster's office and closed the door after him. The yardmaster, bending unseeingly over some papers, looked up as the shadow fell across the light.

"Tim," said Clarkson, "I don't know exactly what I've come to say, but somehow I want to add my sorrow to yours and to know that you bear me no enmity."

O'Curran stared at him with hard eyes and grimly set lips without saying a word, and Clarkson knew that the hope that he had felt was vain; but pity for the sorrow he had brought was in his heart.

"I hope you bear me no enmity, Tim," he said gently. The thin, grim line of O'Curran's lips parted. He spoke in his low, rich, Irish voice, with the faint suggestion of brogue.

"Tis the family feud, Tom," said he. "I guess 'tis the family feud. Me an' Martin, an' you an' Jim have been arrayed against each other since we were in knee pants, an' I guess we shall be till one of us ends the feud forever. Me an' Jim, the two eldest, were pretty even matched, an' it was more a game of give an' take."

"But Martin was a soft an' gentle kind, an' you beat him at pretty near everything. Finally you beat him out for the woman he loved as only the tender heart of him could love, an' that sent him wandering on his lonely quest for peace."

"Whether 'twas peace or strength he found, I don't know, an' now I never will know; but he was coming home. You knew he was coming, an' whether you feared an' hated him I'll never know that either, but you met him—an' you killed him. 'Twas the feud, conscious or unconscious. 'Twas still the feud."

"Do I bear you enmity? Listen! I hate the air you breathe an' the ground you walk on. I hate the clothes you wear an' the food you eat. You bested him always, an' then you killed him, an' I hate you till the soul of me aches with hatred of you an' of your brother. An' so I will till the end of the feud."

That night the soft snow lost itself in the wet misery of rain-drenched surfaces as it vainly tried to cover the harsh outlines of things, and black thoughts were stirred in the mind of Tim O'Curran by the distorted memories of the years.

The next morning Tom Clarkson was found in the northwest corner of the freightyard, a thin film of snow jeweling the blackness of his clothes and glazing his face.

It was the chief who found him—his brother. He was sitting on the ground, propped against a flat-car wheel, his head thrown back and his dead eyes staring into space, as though anxiously following the flight of his departed spirit.

An ugly dent marred the fine outline of his forehead, brutally sufficient for its murderous purpose. The chief dropped onto his knees and ripped the stiff gloves from the stiff fingers, trying, with something of hysteria, to chafe life back into the loved hand. Then he ripped open overcoat, coat, vest, and shirts—beyond the cold flesh the heart was still forever.

The crunching of heavy footsteps aroused him, and he turned the agony of his strong face to the eyes of Tim O'Curran, the yardmaster. At the sight of it the black vengeance died from the heart of Tim O'Curran like a small fire of hate before a deluge of pity. The sorrow of the grief-stricken man leaped straight to the sorrow of O'Curran's own grief-stricken heart.

The quickened memory of his own anguish wrapped itself around the anguish of his enemy and bound him closer than kin or love.

He ran forward, white as the dead face, and in his heart he wished that God would end his grief and remorse with annihilation. Tenderly Clarkson let the stiffening form rest against the wheel and arose.

"The yeggmen have got him, Tim," he said hoarsely, grateful for the pale sympathy of O'Curran's face. O'Curran, in desperate hope, bent down to the lifeless clay, from which he knew the life had gone six hours before.

"'Twas a cruel deed," he muttered. "'Twas a cruel deed," but his fast-falling tears would not warm back the life his own hand had taken. Together they carried him to the freight shed.

The O'Curran and the Clarkson plots were side by side, and two days later they laid him beside the man whom he had sent on the journey so short a while before him.

But the spirit of tragedy still hovered over the freightyard of San Andora, for Tim O'Curran knew that this was not the end of the feud.

With bent head he stood by his brother's grave and fought the matter out with his soul.

At length he found strength for the resolve he would make.

"Resolve he would make. I took for the life of you, Martin," he muttered, "but 'tis the grief of the living an' not the ghost of the dead that has haunted me ever since—the grief of the woman your true heart loved, an' the grief of the strong man that I saw like a little child. I can feel the love an' the ache of his heart, for did I not feel it for yourself. An' now his is added to my own."

"'Twas a cruel an' a senseless feud, made in my own mind as it is borne in my own heart, an' 'tis myself only can end it. So I will go to Jim Clarkson an' I will say:

"My pity has eaten the heart out of my revenge, but 'tis by the mercy of God. So now, end the feud, but do it by the way of the law, an' so gain ease for your grief an' rest for my soul."

He knelt for a moment by the grave, then, arising, turned to go, and brighter than the moonlight, looking into his own were the eyes of Jim Clarkson.

Snow began to sift through the still air. For an eternity they stood and stared into each other's eyes. Finally Clarkson spoke.

"So it was you who killed my brother," he said.

"Jim," said O'Curran, "I was crazy with grief for the poor boy coming home. As for the dead, Jim, 'tis but a little hastening on the road; but for yourself my heart has broken itself over your sorrow, an' my spirit has brooded over yours as a mother trying to comfort a child, and 'twas the punishment of God that I could give you no comfort. So now, take me, an' end the feud an' ease your grief."

"I will end the feud," said Clarkson quietly. "Pity has eaten the heart out of my revenge, too, and over these graves let us end the feud."

With wonderful gentleness he took the hand of O'Curran. The snow fell softly, white and clinging, as the benison of heaven.

Time Mortar is Ancient.

The use of lime as binding material for mortar originated in the remote past. It is probable that some savages when using limestone rocks to confine their fire noticed that the stones were changed by the action of the heat. A passing shower may have slaked the lime to a paste, and they discovered that the paste was smooth and sticky and was a better material than clay to fill the crevices in their crude dwellings. From this discovery it was but a step to add sand to the paste in order to produce a mortar.

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Table with columns: NAME, BUSINESS, and various entries for different towns like AARONSBURG, AXEMANN, BOALSBERG, BELLFONTE, etc.

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MERCANTILE APPRAISEMENT OF CENTRE COUNTY.

Large table with columns: NAME, BUSINESS, and various entries for different towns like AARONSBURG, AXEMANN, BOALSBERG, BELLFONTE, etc.

N. T. KREBS, Mercantile Appraiser 60-18-4t