

# ZEN OF THE Y.D.

A Novel of the Foothills  
By ROBERT STEAD

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The spirit of the West, especially of the prairies and foothills of Western Canada, becomes a living thing through the medium of the pen of Robert Stead. He was born west of Winnipeg and for 30 years made his home on what is now a disappearing but not quite vanished frontier. He served alternately in farming, commercial and newspaper lines until called upon by the Canadian Government to occupy a responsible position in its immigration and colonization work.

While still in his teens he was writing poems inspired by the tawny prairies, the foothill trails, the great limestone cliffs and the hardy settlers of the region, for the Canadian Magazine. These poems were collected in a volume and published under the title of "The Empire Builders." Other volumes of poems which appeared later were "Prairie-Born," "Songs of the Prairie" and "Kitchener and Other Poems." He has also written a number of interesting novels about the country, the better known titles being "The Bail Jumper," "The Cow Puncher," "The Homesteaders" and "Neighbors." He visualizes the zealous, virile characters who conquer a wilderness and make it fruitful. His prose has the graces of diction and beauties of sentiment to be expected from one who has excelled in poetical expression.

His latest novel "Zen of the Y.D." is the fruit of a mature skill acting upon stirring incidents and characters of western life that have come, more or less, under his actual observation. Where so much of a thrilling nature and so much color existed, and where human types were ready at hand, it was only necessary for the author to employ his story-telling ability without drawing greatly upon his imagination. This tale differs slightly from his others in that he has chosen for the principal male figure a rather unusual man from the eastern part of the United States. The heroine is a typical girl of the plains.

## CHAPTER XX

Transley returned by an earlier train than he had expected, found Sarah at the house and Wilson engaged in a dialogue with the family pig. The lad on hearing the motor, rushed to his father's arms.

"Well, well, what a big boy you are!" cried Transley, swinging him up to his shoulders. "And how is the pig? And how is your friend Grant?"

"Mother hasn't let me go to see him lately. I don't know why. Ever since the night I slept at his house—"

"You slept at his house? When?"

"The day you went away. And mother was there in the morning—"

"Wilson, where is your mother?"

"I don't know, daddy."

He strode sharply into the house.

"Sarah, where is Mrs. Transley?"

"I don't know, sir," said the maid. Then, frightened out of her reticence by her master's unusual severity—"I think she has gone to the old quarry, sir. She often goes up there of an afternoon."

"A trysting place!" Transley gasped inwardly. He dropped the boy and, in his own room, found a revolver and cartridges. A moment later he was swinging in long, angry steps up the quarry road. Wilson, puzzled by the sudden interruption of his father's greeting, followed at a discreet distance.

"I've suspected—I've suspected," Transley was raging as he walked; "I've suspected—more than I've said. Give 'em enough rope. That's my plan. And now they've taken it. By God, if they have!"

With every step the wrath and horror within him grew. He was at the quarry before he knew it. He paused for a moment to listen. Yes, there were people present. There were sounds—Lord, it sounded like a fight!

Transley rushed in. A man and a woman were reeling in each other's arms. "I hate you! I hate you!" the woman was crying. "You coward! You coward!" The woman was his wife. The man was—not Dennison Grant.

Although Transley had a revolver in his pocket it was not his customary weapon, and his thought did not turn naturally to it. In this tremendous moment he forgot it altogether. He rushed in upon his wife's assailant, clutching at his throat.

With the strength of a madman Drakz flung Zen to the ground, where she fell unconscious at his feet. Then he tore himself free from Transley's grip about his throat. The next moment the two men were swaying about in a struggle of death.

As they swung in each other's arms, crushing, choking, clutching at each other's throats, it was slowly forced home upon Trans-

ley that his was a losing fight. His assailant had the strength, and, after a hesitating moment of surprise, the ferocity of a lion. He had broken Transley's grip about his throat and seemed in momentary prospect of reversing the situation. There were no talk, no cries, no oaths; it was a silent fight save the grunting and panting which became more and more labored as the minutes drew on. In their clutches Drakz's stubbled face rubbed into Transley's well-groomed cheek; his snarling teeth snapped, but missed, at Transley's jaw.

Then it was that Transley remembered his revolver. Breaking Drakz's grip by a superhuman effort, he drew the weapon and fired. The shot went wild, and the next instant Drakz was upon him again. In the struggle the revolver fell from Transley's hand, and both men began fighting toward it. As Drakz's fingers clutched it Transley kicked his feet from under him, and the two

went down together. Rolling about on the rocky floor of the quarry, the edge of the precipice that fell away to the river.

On the very edge Transley realized this new and hideous danger, and scrambled to his feet, dragging Drakz with him. Drakz realized it, too, and gleefully, fiendishly joined again in the combat, deliberately forcing the fight toward the river.

"I've got you, Transley!" he hissed, speaking for the first time since Transley's fingers had closed about his throat; "I've got you and you're goin' over there—with me. Zen tried to drown me once; now I'll drown you, if I have to go with you, Transley!"

"Drakz!" Transley exclaimed, a light of recognition breaking through upon him. "You!"

"Yes, me—Zen's old lover, and you give her to me, or we go out together!"

"You're mad, Drakz, mad!" Transley cried. "Why—"

But at that moment, Drakz, by a sudden contortion, whipped a knife from his pocket. Transley felt its sting—once, twice, three times; then darkness fell. Zen, recovering from her stun, sat up in time to see her husband staggering in the arms of Drakz.

Half a mile away Dennison Grant had been lazily plowing and down his prairie field when he suddenly saw Wilson approaching at his topmost speed. Since the night of the storm he had

missed the boy tremendously; sometimes he had thought that if only he might have the companionship of Wilson he could be reconciled to the loss of Zen. He knew that a veto had been placed on Wilson's visits, and he bore Zen no ill-will; he felt that he understood her motives. But now as the boy came racing toward him, Grant felt his heart bouncing about in an extraordinary manner.

"Why, what's the matter?" Grant cried, as Wilson drew up beside him. "Has something happened to the pig?"

It was a moment before the boy could speak.

"A man—is—fighting—my—father—and shooting at him," he gasped. "And my mother's—dead!"

Grant cleared the plow at a bound. "Where?" he demanded. "At the old quarry. I ran all the way."

But Grant was already stripping the harness from Prince. The next moment he had flung himself upon the horse's back and, leaving the boy to follow as he could, was galloping across the prairie to the quarry trail. Under his urging the astonished plow horse developed a quite surprising speed; in a couple of minutes they were on the old road to the quarry, and a moment later horse and rider dashed into

(Continued on Page 7)

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