

Whig's New Serial --- Pictures At Griffin's Theatre

The GIRL and the GAME

A Story of Mountain Railroad Life
By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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

NOVELIZED FROM THE MOVING PICTURE PLAY OF THE SAME NAME. PRODUCED BY THE SIGNAL FILM CORPORATION. COPYRIGHT, 1915, BY FRANK H. SPEARMAN.

CHAPTER I.

In the midmorning quiet, the bathing beach and the ocean reflected only the brightness of the inviting sun. But a little way back from the glistening sand and converging through a small park toward a suburban station the streets of the seaside resort were alive with men and women, hurrying to the city for the grime of the day. Motor cars, too, glided noiselessly along the boulevards, drew up in turn before the station and discharged their passengers. From one of these a middle-aged, military-looking man, General Holmes, an ex-army officer and a railroad man, alighted on the platform. A governess and pretty little girl, Helen—General Holmes' only child—had accompanied her father to the train, and when he turned to the open automobile to say good-by, Helen sprang impulsively half into his arms. His train pulled in as he quite simply but affectionately kissed his child and boarded the nearest car.

Helen, promised a morning in the park, left the motor car with her governess the moment they crossed a small scenic railroad running back of the beach. She already had her eye on what she wanted to play with. A contented dog, at peace with the world and sunning himself on a grassy slope, had riveted her alert eye; Helen advanced joyously to get acquainted. The dog seemed not averse to a passive friendship, but the little maid, sitting down, sought something more, and by pulling hard and with confidence at his neck, soon had his unpromising head—after a fashion, at least—in her diminutive lap.

The strain on his sensibilities appeared more, than her amiable and carefree friend could stand. After submitting for a time he rolled over, jumped up and trotted briskly away for a new section and a new peace. Helen, undaunted, sprang to her feet and followed. Her governess, engaged with the chauffeur, saw nothing of this part of the incident. But a moment later the few spectators in the scenic railroad square, waiting to board one of the miniature trains, saw a protesting dog trotting rapidly away from a curly-haired girl, who pricked and relentlessly followed.

A newsboy, relaxing against a convenient lamp post after the morning rush, watched the pursuit for a moment with languid interest, then started to look at an approaching train on the scenic road. He seemed no more than half awake. His wits, in truth, were wool-gathering. Every morning found him absorbed greatly in the mysteries of the miniature engine that pulled the scenic railroad train.

A shout, then a chorus of cries aroused him from his reverie. The puffing train was pulling swiftly toward the open space. The unhappy dog, casting reproachful glances over his shoulder at his pitiless friend, was galloping uncertainly, but directly down the narrow track toward the oncoming train. Helen, seeing or hearing nothing of the train and fixed only on her chase, ran after at top speed. A dozen people saw her danger as the train rounded the curve just in front of her—only one of them made a move. Dropping his unsold, the day-dreaming newsboy, waking sharply, ran headlong after the heedless girl.

It was none too soon. The dog, dismayed alike by the cries and a second pursuit, sprang, almost in the teeth of the engine pilot, right across the track. Helen, fast on his heels, was ready to jump after, but it would have been pretty certainly a jump to her death. The newsboy caught her arm and whirled her from the engine just as it shot past with brakes screeching on the drivers. Helen sprawled headlong beside the track, and the boy, unbalanced, rolled on the gravel near her.

He was on his feet in a trice, standing over Helen. She was frightened and breathless, and without speaking he knelt by her. Her eyes began to fill with big tears. She sat confusedly up as her companion brushed the granite dust from her pique skirt and with a coarse handkerchief began wiping the blood from a cut on one of her pink knees. Her rescuer made little of the accident. He told her not to cry. He even brushed the round tears from her cheeks—Helen liked him. "What is your name, little boy?" she faltered in a would-be commanding tone.

"I'm no little boy," returned her rescuer gruffly. A crowd had gathered and he was already red in the face. Helen gave the bystanders no heed. "What are you, then?" she demanded gravely.

"I'm a big boy. My name is George Storm; I'm named after my father. He was a railroad engineer. My father got killed on a train. Who's your name?"

"Where did that dog go?" quivered Helen, not answering.

"Geel! I didn't see. You pretty near got killed. That dog wasn't any good," declared the boy scornfully. "Some day—" he stopped the blood on her knee once more with his handkerchief, and then added firmly: "I am going to drive a big engine sometime myself, like my father."

A frantic governess, followed by an open-mouthed chauffeur, came running at that moment toward them.

The child parted reluctantly from her new-found friend. "Are you going to be a really-truly engineer and smoky?" she asked.

George faced her unabashed. "You better believe I am," declared Helen, gulping solemnly while the governess tried to hurry her away. "I won't ever forget you—no matter what you are."

At eighteen, Helen had lost none of the characteristics of her childhood. They were held in deeper reserve, but they were just as persistent. Restrained by convention, she was still adventurous in spirit and her father's own anxiety, old soldier though he was, was that a spirited horse or an ocean undertow would some day be his daughter's undoing. At that, he was forced to admit, the reckless girl could get more out of a horse than he himself could.

Closest among her father's friends, was Amos Rhinelander, a New York man of large means, and General Holmes, returning on Helen's eighteenth birthday with Rhinelander and Rhinelander's nephew—Robert Seagrave, himself a young and ambitious railroad promoter—from a trip of inspection of the tidewater terminals of Holmes' road, was eagerly awaited by his daughter at their country home among the San Pablo foothills. A message sent up to her from Signal, the suburban station of the country seat, had asked her to meet her father that day on No. 20, the through eastern passenger train.

The motor car had gone ahead and Helen, hunting Rocket, one of her favorite hunting horses, rode down at her leisure to the station.

While far from being a spoiled child, Helen felt very much at home anywhere on the Copper Range and Tidewater railroad. Reared at home, under a discipline almost military, and under teachers held sternly to account for her education by her only living parent, the growing girl had still preserved an innate simplicity—something almost naive—which was reflected in her friendship for the employees, high and low, of the entire Tidewater line, of which her father was president and in which he owned a substantial interest.

On the day that Helen cantered lastly down through the foothills toward Signal, a long west-bound freight train,



The Air Pump Had Quit.

climbing the grade east of a big hill known on the division as Blackbird pass, found itself in trouble. The air pump, after balking all morning, had quit, and the conductor going forward found the engineer, after repeated efforts with the big machine, helpless. Without losing much time, the conductor rigged up his emergency telephone and asked for instructions from his dispatcher. The answer to his request was curt: "Bring in No. 14 by hand brakes." The crew spread to their posts on the decks and the lumbering string of heavily laden cars painfully got under way up the hill. It was a struggle all the way to the summit; then, dropping over the hill, the long string began rapidly to pick up. It picked up, indeed, too rapidly. The crew vainly strove to hold back the unwieldy train. Clubs in hand and with the brakes jammed, they saw their monster resistance

getting away from them. The train crew tumbled forward, for a conference to the cab. The conductor, comparing watches with the engineer, looked serious—within ten minutes they would be running on No. 20's time; they might even meet her at the bottom of the hill before they reached Signal.

The conductor acted quickly. Picking up a lump of coal he scratched a message on a white signal flag and wrapped it around a wrench. Cedar Grove station was hardly a mile ahead. As the engine dashed past it, the conductor, in the gangway, hurled the message through the office window. Picking it up and hastily reading the rough scrawl, the startled operator wired the tidings instantly to the next station. That station was Signal.

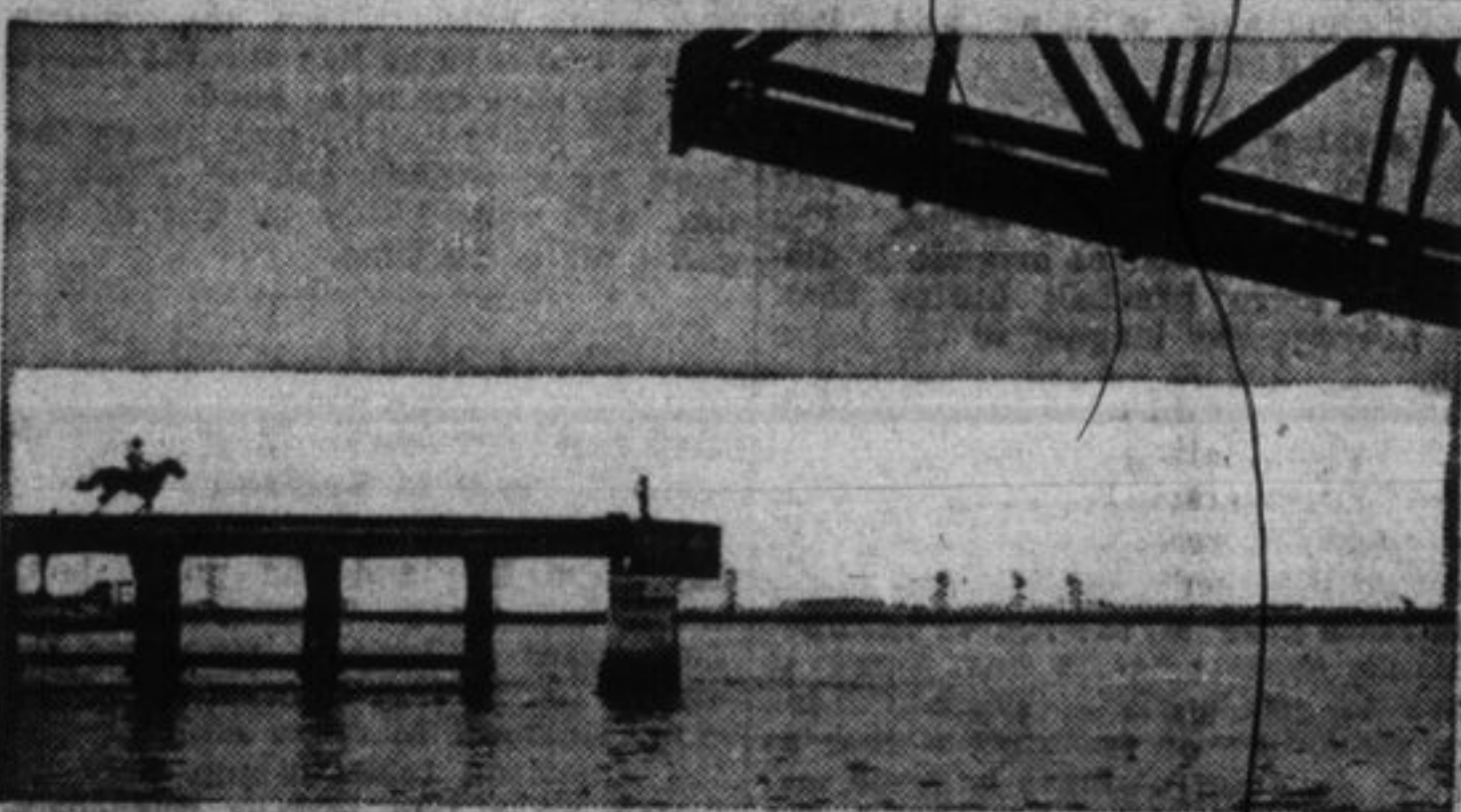
In the bouncing engine cab there were grave faces. "What are you going to do?" shouted the engineer. Without hesitation the conductor cried: "Cut off the caboose and stop it—let the train go!" The engineer agreed: "We've only got one life apiece. No time to lose. George!" he yelled to his fireman, "make for the caboose."

The fireman, perhaps the youngest man in the two crews, without answering, continued to hunt for a wrench. "Wake up, George," shouted the conductor, "come on!"

Searching the tool box, the fireman shook his head. "What do you mean?" demanded the engineer, catching in excitement at his companion's arm, "aren't you coming?"

The fireman did not hurry his answer. "No. I'll stay here," he said, turning simply. He was a stubborn, well-set fellow, really a big, clean-looking boy—with a heavy head of dark hair pushed under his grimy cap and a slow, clear eye matching his deliberate way of speaking.

"Stay here!" thundered the conductor in surprise. "Are you crazy?" He caught the fireman's other arm and with the engineer talked to the obstinate fellow. The two, who liked him, pulled the boy toward the tender. He shook loose. The brakeman joined



Helen Heeded Rocket Straight for the Open Draw.

in the struggle. Again the fireman wrenched away. "That's all right—you fellows go ahead."

"It's suicide for you, man," protested the engineer.

"No, Dan," retorted the fireman. "It's every man for himself," he repeated, backing across the footplate. "I'll stay with the cab."

"Stay and be—hanged," shouted the conductor, with a stiff expletive. "Let him alone, boys," he cried, angrily. "He's dippy. Come!" And with his companions hustling close after, he started over the coal on the tender.

The train had attained a frightful pace. Already glimpses of its long, curving roll on the distant hill might be seen from the window of Signal station, where the disturbed operator had taken the message of the runaway from Cedar Grove and was reading it to Helen Holmes, breathless beside his table.

"AIR BRAKES BROKEN DOWN. RUNNING AWAY. SIDETRACK NO. 20. NO. 145."

It was the import of the last sentence which for an instant froze her senses. Her father! The passenger train facing that runaway on the single track below Signal. More than once she had heard her father declare that the stretch between Signal and the next station, Beaman, must be double-tracked—only, money was so hard to get. If the lack of it should now cost him his life, the lives of perhaps half a hundred others!

While she was thinking, the operator was working furiously at his key with a message for Beaman station. His one hope of avoiding the head-on collision was to catch the passenger train beyond Beaman.

"STOP NO. 20. RUNAWAY ON MAIN LINE."

He told Helen, closely watching the dots and dashes, what he had sent. "I should have an answer in a minute." It came almost at once. Signal station operator first tried to write it, then threw down his pen and repeated its words unsteadily to the frightened girl.

"NO. 20 LEFT ON TIME. BETWEEN HERE AND THE RIVER."

With wide-open eyes she looked intently toward the mountains. At the moment, the rolling hills now hid the runaway, but the situation was charting itself, like lightning, in her mind. Between where she stood and where the passenger train was coming, the line crossed San Pablo river, a navigable tidewater stream and a waterway that fed a considerable traffic to the railroad. Her father had put across the San Pablo a huge jack-knife drawbridge—the best an honest engineer and an honest railroad directorate could build. Just over the river from Signal station he had already put in, as a last towards double-tracking, a long passing track.

With everything of this speeding

like a film through her head, Helen was dashing out of the office when the scream of a whistle signal bore down on her ears. Confused as she was, it meant nothing to her. A chance, a hope, had flashed across her mind and her resolve had been taken—to reach the passing track switch and sidetrack the fatal runaway before it should strike and scatter to destruction the helpless passenger train.

Rocket, without a thought other than of alfalfa and undisturbed repose in his drooping head, stood at hand in the sunshine. To his amazement his mistress running to him, headlong, vaulted upon his back. In her fear, she cried to him. The horse heard—it seemed as if he understood. He woke, quivering, at the impact of her body. Whirling with his charge, at the touch of the reins, so quick he almost bolted from under his mistress, who was trying to seat herself, the brute galloped with Helen down the main track for the river bridge.

She panted at great drafts of sunny mountain air as Rocket's wiry legs stretched and bounded under her. With every stride her mind cleared. With this, her courage mounted. It was, after all, no more than a smart dash for her to attain for everyone's safety. The bridge was a difficulty, but Rocket, who could thread a lava bed without bruising a felloe, or cross a prairie-dog town at full speed and hold his mistress as steady as if she were sitting a rocking horse, was not likely to balk at galloping over mere ties—besides, she would give him his time. At the worst, any bridge, she said to herself, must be reached before it can be crossed, and her eyes were already fixed hard on the one she must cross, when she thought she saw the great jack-knife span ahead moving mysteriously on its balanced bed. Urging her horse to his best, centering all of her faculties on mastering the ticklish task ahead, Helen's eyes set in a stare on the jack-knife, to determine whether it was moving or tricking her, straining senses. In almost an instant her doubt was resolved; to her consterna-

tion she saw the huge knife draw moving unmistakably upward. Her eyes sought the bridge tower. The bridge tender was standing at the open window. He knew the runaway stretch of river, then, she remembered, then she understood, that she knew, all-a-river tug was bearing rapidly downstream; she could see the pilot and the captain in the wheel-house; the bridge was lifting for the boat's passage. She had heard its loud whistle at the moment she rushed from the station.

The balked girl drove her little spurs into Rocket. The horse sprang, infuriated, to greater effort. If she could make the draw in time she would jump it—a slight rise—nothing should keep her back. She wildly wavered her free hand at the bridge-tower. He was watching the boat and the span was slowly rising; but a few strides closer and she would have risked making the jack-knife—she realized now she was too late.

Without averting for an instant from her purpose, without shrinking from her single alternative, and only praying for time still to make good her endeavor, Helen headed Rocket straight for the open draw. His feet struck the pier. She gave the horse his head. The wry beast saw what yawned ahead. He heard his mistress' quick word. As his feet touched the brink of the abutment the horse coiled like a spring, and for an instant quivered. His mistress with a sharp cry of command rose in her stirrups, then launching himself and his burden, like an arrow far out, the hunter sprang with Helen cleanly into the river. There was a great splash and the parted water closed over their heads.

A pilot, captain and brigadier tender stood as men dazed, looking on. The river captain, yelling the crew to quarters, hurried forward to throw out lines as soon as the tug should come within reach of the imperiled girl. The brigadier tender, in the window, glued to the scene, watched the circling bubbles where horse and rider had plunged down, waiting for them to reappear. For an interminable instant the onlookers waited. It seemed as if the two would never come up. Then a girlish head of soaked curls rose among the ripples, a young face emerged from the troubled pool, and Helen, throwing herself free from Rocket, shook the water from her eyes and nose with a swimmer's quick certainty puff and struck out for shore. Rocket was not far away. With a few powerful strokes his mistress caught his mane and recovered him. The tide, running heavily through the channel, carried the two together before the pier on the opposite bank. But Rocket, scrambling in a moment from the water, bore his charge unhurt up the steep bank, and under her urging ran up the track to the tower.

The brigadier tender, at the door, confronted her. The dripping girl, seated on her quivering horse, told the astonished man in a few hurried words what had happened, and as he hurried into the tower again to lower the draw Helen urged Rocket at a run down the track. It seemed as if her ears bubbled and rang with the rumble of the two approaching trains, but her brain had ceased to take note of anything beyond her one stubborn resolve to reach the passing-track switch—she could see it plainly ahead. The brigadier tender was hastily lowering the knife for the freight. Determined, while in the river, to leave the bridge open and wreck the freight, Helen believed she could avoid even that, and had given the tender his orders accordingly. The tug, which had been whistling wildly, low heeled violently toward the wharf, where the captain, a game sport, had resolved to make fast and see the excitement out. With the boat crew ashore and dashing across the wharf to watch Helen, she crouched like a jockey over Rocket as he crushed and scattered the cinders under his flying feet, and in what seemed another moment—so fast had she flown—checking the horse cruelly she threw her lines and slid from his back beside the passing-track switch.

Running to it, she grasped the lever only to find the switch locked. She had feared, almost expected, as much—but now, how to open it! She looked ahead. A shrill engine whistle startled her, and her cup filled—the passenger train, bearing down the long tangent at full speed, was whistling for her home crossing, hardly two miles distant.

She could see smoke streaming from the stack of the engine. Behind, she had no need to look, the rumble of the head-end of the runaway was thundering on the bridge. Desperation cleared her head. She caught up a heavy stone from the right of way and pounded fiercely at the switch lock. She struck at the stout bow and hammered in a fury at the resisting cover.

No mechanism could stand such an assault for long. The ground under her feet was vibrating with the fearful pound of the great freight engine as it dashed with its heavy drag over the close-by rails. She knew the reeling machine must be almost on her and the thought spurred her to unnatural strength. The staple gave way. The excited girl jerked the twisted half fainting beside it as the monster engine struck madly at the switch points. Then, with a shock that tore the heavy roadbed and the roar almost of an earthquake, engine, tender and train lurched heavily into the siding. Car after car jumped and pounded at the stubborn rails. On and on they came, shaking the solid earth under Helen as she panted and gasped. But the thundering, jumping wheels continued to catch the switch in safety and the points held. The long train made the siding to the very end and Helen, almost stunned, saw, in something like a vision, the passenger train, its brakes throwing streams of fire from the grinding wheels, race past her down the main track toward the bridge. The sight meant little to her now—her senses were too numbed to realize what it meant—that the passenger train at last was quite safe.

The runaway freight was less fortunate. At the farther end of the passing track three box cars stood patiently waiting for orders. They had been standing there unmolested for days; they had carried one moment too long. The runaway engine with its still obstinate fireman, at times on the running board and at times in the cab, was heading viciously for them. But the fireman saw the game was clearly up. He chose his moment and jumped, landing violently in the cinder ballast. Bruised and cut, he lay breathless, almost insensible. He heard confusedly the terrific crash into the idle box cars. The huge engine scattered them in dust and kindling high in the air. He tried to roll farther from the threatening wreck—for the head-end of the train had been derailed by the impact and the jamming string of cars was zig-zagging wildly across the right of way. The first realization that came to the stunned boy was of someone struggling to help him get away from the wreck—some puny strength exerted to drag his heavy body to greater safety. With a breath, the first he had been able to draw, he opened his eyes. A young woman was bending over him. Two eyes fixed anxiously on his—a girl's face, strange and yet—what could it be of recollection that struggled through his whirling senses?

Nor had Helen, as she knelt and worked over the injured man, dreamed of seeing any face she had ever looked into before. Even had it been unfamiliar she would hardly have recalled it under ordinary conditions. But two people, a young man, now and a young woman, were meeting under extraordinary circumstances and their eyes were very close together. The man caught at her hand as it passed his forehead, stopped it, and looked keenly into Helen's eyes. With that look, a vision swept across their memories.

"I surely know you," he said, not taking his eyes from hers. Unusual

to releasing her gaze, she stared at him without speaking. "I'm sure I know you," he exclaimed, perplexed.

He rose of a sudden to his feet—so easily it surprised her. "It was the beach," he went on, slowly. "You were hurt—the miniature railroad!"

She regarded him a moment in silence. Then she spoke: "Is it possible?" she murmured. "You are—" "I'm the little boy," she smiled grimly. "Till now, I've never seen the little girl since."

A sense of confusion assailed her; she wanted to escape his look. "You are hurt," she said, dismissing with an effort all consciousness of their strange meeting.

He hesitated; then he saw, and he thought he understood. "No," he said brusquely, almost rudely, "only a few scratches."

A cry of recognition and amazement cut off their words. The passenger train had backed down on the



"You Are Hurt," She Said.

scene. Her father, his friend Rhinelander, young Seagrave, the Signal station operator, the tug captain and the train passengers crowded the observation platform looking at her and the shaken-up fireman.

The flagman could hardly raise the step cover quick enough to release Holmes so that he might get down to his daughter. He knew all—the operator had told the story. He caught his daughter in his arms with a shower of misty reproaches. "What! he cried. 'Have you lost your mind? Are you mad?' Helen's eyes fell before her father's anger. She was a dutiful girl. 'Don't you know what danger is? Have you no sense of fear?' he stormed. She raised her eyes and paused an instant; then she asked, shyly: "Where was I to get it, father?"—she looked queerly up at him—"from you?"

"Gammer!" he blustered, edging away from the subject, beaten. "Who's this boy?" he demanded, pointing to the grimed and disfigured fireman.

"What's your name?"

"Storm, General Holmes—George Storm, fireman," responded the boy, unmoved.

"What were you sticking like a leech to a runaway engine for—why didn't you go back with the rest of the crew?" demanded the head of the road severely.

Storm met the assault calmly. "I thought I might be able to get the air pump going," he countered.

"Did you do it?" asked Holmes, with sarcasm.

"I'd have done it if I'd had time," persisted the somewhat dismantled fireman. "I guess," he added calmly, looking back at the mess of cars, "I needed a couple of days more."

"No matter, Storm," declared Holmes, secretly pleased, "you're all right."

"I should think as much," cried Helen, breaking through her reserve. "If you had many men like that!"

Amos Rhinelander took the scene in with an abundance of satisfied humor. He was a big, wholesome fellow. Beside him stood Seagrave, silent and observant. Both before and after her father introduced him, he scrutinized Helen a long time. With his introduction, he ventured something of compliment—tried, as it were, for a moment, to take the stage and seemed to await confidently an appreciation of his remark.

But Helen, whether confused by her muck-wilted plight, or engrossed by the recollection of her adventure, could hardly notice his effort to be agreeable. Storm had started back to his engine. Her father was helping his daughter back to the observation platform. From it Helen looked steadily back at Storm, now standing down the track in the midst of the wreckage. The passenger engine sounded four sharp blasts to call in the flagman. Storm looked around; the passenger train was moving ahead. He saw in the group on the rear platform one figure—that of a slender girl, in a wet jockey costume, a smile lighting her face as she looked toward him. She was lifting her hand in a good-by. He started, touched his hand to his bruised forehead and waved back her greeting. Beside Helen stood Seagrave. He did not seem pleased with her attitude and dropped an ironical remark in her ear. This one she quite plainly heard and understood: "Very gratifying," he smiled, "to find a president's daughter so very clever. And," he added softly, "she seems to take a real interest in engine men!"

Helen looked deliberately around at him—but whatever may have been his thought, she made no reply.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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