By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

ILLY MORGAN, foreman of Thorpe's ranch, was half awake when the knock came at the door of his shack. Instinctively he reached for his gun, while his eyes were opening. Along the Arizona border midnight knocks at cabin doors were not welcome in this year of watchfulness: and caution along the frontier,

A moment later, following a second knock, he heard Thorpe's voice outside. With his gun still in his hand he went to open the door, shuddering a little as he thought of the message that Thorpe might be bringing him. In the big ranch house a pistol shot away lay Thorpe's wife and the tiny bit of humanity that had come into the world that morning. Billy was thirty and had never loved a woman. At least, that was what he told himself. And yet, deep down in his heart, so deep down that no one had ever found the secret, he knew that he could have loved and perhaps did love this brown-haired, blue-eyed woman who looked to Thorpe as the one and greatest man in the whole world ... Billy had left the light burning, and he saw that the ranch owner's face was white when he entered.

"How-is she?" he asked.

"Better, thank God!" said Thorpe, and he held out hand that was cold and clammy when Billy took it. "And-the kid?" whispered Billy.

"Fine!" replied Thorpe. He took off his bat and wiped his face. Billy noticed that his hand trembled, which was not like Thorpe.

'Look here, Jack, what's up?" he demanded.

"Are you sick?"

I was-five minutes ago, said Thorpe. 'Listen! That's Rusty Smith's horse you hear out there. Rusty just came in from the Red Butte ranch to tell us that a big band of Apaches are going down the valley straight for MacCauley's. My God! you know what that means, Billy! They're going to strike at Mac because they know he's the weakest of the bunch. He's cleaned down to half a dozen men, and there ain't-three-good fighters-among them.

He-said-no-more, but Billy understood. Ten days before Esther Thorpe had gone over to visit her girl chum at the MacCauley ranch, twenty miles down the valley. Everything had appeared safe then. It was not thought that the Apaches would strike so far east. Billy was already dressing.

We'll hike over and get her," he said cheerfully, though inside him his heart was pounding like an engine, for two-thirds of Thorpe's men were at a round-up ten miles in the opposite direction. "I'll start on ahead," he added, "and you can send word over for some of the boys to come on and meet us. I'll hit the crick bottom both ways. We'll have Essy

back here for breakfast.". Thorpe's tense face relaxed a little at Billy's confidence. They went out together and saddled Billy's mare. As they passed close to the ranch house, Thorpe approached his wife's open window. Then he turned and called softly to Billy. Both looked in. The woman's pale, beautiful face was smiling at them. She looked wonderfully sweet and girlish and happy, her loose hair a shimmer of gold and brown in the lamp_glow, her blue eyes bright with the starlight of motherhood; and Billy felt again, as he had felt a thousand times before, that strangling grip of a strange joy and a strange grief at his heart. For see, the Indians are causing trouble, and your father. wants you at home." "Oh"

In a flash he saw that she understood, even as the woman might have understood. But she said nothing more until they were riding off together .-

"Why don't we take the valley trail, Billy-O?" she asked, calling him by the pet nickname she had given him. "Are they that near?"

"They're pretty near."

"And we might in them?"

"We might.

"And we may meet them, mayn't we, Billy? -Wouldn't it be-fun-if-nobody-was-hurt? It would be a lot more exciting than playing Indian on horseback, like we've done."

"Yes, a lot more exciting," agreed Billy.

He caught her in profile as she cantered close at his side. She was bareheaded and her cheeks were flushed with excitement. Her heavy braid had come undone. Billy loved to see her shining curls blowing loose about her as they were doing now .- More thanonce he had told her how pretty they were, and when he had last told her that, not so very long ago, she had cut off one of the prettiest of them and given it to him for "good luck." During the last week Billy. had taken that curl from its hiding place in the cabin for at least a dozen times. He had worshiped it alone, had kissed it, and its warmth and sweetness had seemed that of the woman. For until this morning-until now-Esther had been only a child to him.

She turned suddenly and caught the look in his eyes. It was the woman who looked at him, with pouting mouth, laughing eyes, and yet with a seriousness back of it all that made him tremble.

"If they did come, would you fight for me, Billyfight real hard, like they do in books?"...

Something in her words and voice made him clutch tighter at his carbine.

"Yes, I would, Essy. I'd fight harder than they do in books.'

She laughed mischievously, and yet there was a tremble in the laugh.

"In books they—they die for—for---" "For the girl one loves," finished Billy,

I'd do that, Essy.'

They had come to the top of the second ridge. The glow in Eather's face was like that of a wild flower. She looked on far ahead, searching the edge of the mountains and the bottom, lighted now by the first red glow of the sun. They had stopped their horses, and she looked again at Billy. Billy had turned in his saddle and was staring behind.

"Do you know, Billy," she said, "I wish I could see them, all in paint and war feathers, and riding like you've told me they ride. I wish' - and there was a woman's sweet coquetry in her voice-'I wish they'd come_riding_down_the mountain-there, so you could fight for me just like they do in books!"

Billy turned his face slowly to her, and it was whiter than death.

"Good God, little girl, your wish is coming true!" he said, and pointed behind. "Look there!"

Less than half a mile away a score of horsemen were bearing swiftly down upon them. Even at that distance they could see the half-naked bodies and feathered heads of the Indians. Billy threw back the breech of his carbine with a above

the earth. In another instant he was out of his saddle. Esther had dragged herself from the stirrups and was swaying on her feet when Billy caught her in his arms. Even as he held her close to him, thanking God that she was unharmed, the fallen horse struggled to one foreknee, and fell back with a groan, In that futile effort to rise Billy saw that its leg was broken. He uttered no word, but swung Esther up behind his own saddle. Then he cried, tremblingly,

"Hold tight-little sweetheart. We'll beat them yet!"

Her arms were about his neck. He felt the warmth of her sweet face against him. Her soft curls clustered about his shoulders and blew over his." lips. He knew-now. After all he had only loved the woman because the girl was a child. But nowit was different. "We'll beat them !" he cried again.

"We'll beat them, Billy-O!" repeated the girl, and something warm and soft and thrilling pressed for an instant against his cheek. He knew that she had kissed him, and as there came from far behind the savage yell of their pursuers Billy's lungs cleared themselves in one wild whoop of defiance.

From the beginning of that hopeless flight Billy knew what he must do. The Indians would overtake them within half an hour at the longest, and in that time there was no hope of Thorpe's men appearing. Billy figured that they were just about leaving the ranch, sixteen miles away. A mile shead of them the mountain swung in close to the creek, which ran through a deep chasm at that point. Here he would dismount and hold back the Indians while Esther rode on alone. If he could fight them off for fifteen minutes Esther would be safe. He told her this, while the yells of their pursuers came louder and clearer behind them. Esther's arms tightened about his

"I'm not going to leave you, Billy-never, never, NEVER!" she said, her lips close to his ear. "Let me take the revolver. I can shoot!"

"It's your one chance, Essy," he persisted. "You've got to ride on alone."

."And you, Billy-you-you-YOU?"

"I'll lick the stuffin' out of them while you're going, Essy."

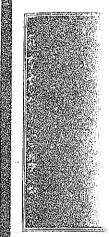
You can't!" she cried almost fiercely. "I know what you're planning to do, Billy. You mean to hold them back while I get a start. But you can't do it long. They'll kill you. I WON'T GO!"

An inspiration came to him then. He lied hopefully.

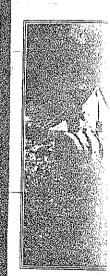
"No, I won't die-if you hurry, Essy. The boys must be pretty near us now. I'm sending you to hurry em up. I can hold the Indians back for an hour in that narrow place. If you don't go if you WON'T go-there's no hope for either of us. But if you will, and ride hard, you can save us both. There's the place-just ahead. My God, you'll go, won't you, dear? You'll ride hard-as hard as you can, and tell the boys that I'm here, fighting 'em back? You'll do that-for me-won't you?"

"Billy-you're-you're not ying-to me?" "God strike me dead if I am!"

"Then-I'll go-and I'll ride hard, Billy. And if you've lied-and they kill you--"



A lumnting to



Preparing

"Look here, Jack, what's up?" he demanded. "Are you sick?"

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For three hours Billy rode into the east. Dawn was breaking when he looked down from the last range upon MacCauley's ranch, and he gave a deen breath of relief when he saw that all was right. Fifteen minutes later he was breaking the news to Mac-Cauley.

"If they make an attack this morning it will be some time within the next hour," said Billy. "I'd like to stay, Mac, but I've got to get away with Essy. I've promised that. Will you get her up-and give us a couple of fresh horses?"

Billy was alone when Esther ran in to meet him. A little over two years before, when Billy had first come to the Thorpe ranch, he had thought that he had never seen a more beautiful creature than Esther, In two years she had grown to look wonderfully like the woman. Her eyes were bluer and filled a little more with the sunlight of laughter, and there was a shade more of gold in the lovely hair that rippled about her pretty face in a way that always made Billy think of a marvelous painting he had once seen before he came West.

"You-you want me home?" she asked, and Billy could see that her heart was breaking with fear. "Is-mother---

"Mother just wants you to come home and take a look at little brother," he laughed softly; and suddenly; as he looked at her, he saw again the sweet face of Thorpe's wife, the blue of her eyes, the gold and brown of her shining hair. And for a strange, wonderful moment Esther's eyes were the eyes of a woman, and he felt his heart thrill at a thought that had never entered it before. They looked at him

"You're sure—that's all—Billy?"

"That's mostly it," assured Billy. "Then, you

ing-until now-Eather had been only a child to him. She turned suddenly and caught the look in his eyes. It was the woman who looked at him, with pouting mouth, laughing eyes, and yet with a seriousness back of it all that made him tremble.

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"Do you know, Billy," she said, "I wish I could see them, all in paint and war feathers, and riding like you've told me they ride. I wish"-and there was a woman's sweet coquetry in her voice-"1 wish they'd come riding down the mountain there, so you could fight for me just like they do in books!"

Billy turned his face slowly to her, and it was whiter than death.

"Good God, little girl, your wish is coming true!" he said, and pointed behind. "Look there!"

Less than half a mile away a score of horsemen were bearing swiftly down upon them. Even at that distance they could see the half-naked bodies and feathered heads of the Indians. Billy threw back the breech of his carbine with a sharp click. He was loosening fresh cartridges in his belt when he saw Esther reach out her arms toward him.

"Billy, Billy, Billy-oh, I'm so sorry-so sorry I said that_____'

His strong, white teeth gleamed in a smile and there was a look in his face she had never seen there before. He was the old, fighting Billy-the Billy... men had feared on the other side of the range in the gun-record days before he had come under the influence of a good and beautiful woman.

"Ride, and ride hard, little girl," he urged. "We've got to beat them out!" They started in a gallop down the slope and had almost reached level ground when Esther's mount stumbled. Billy swung his head in time to see both horse and rider crash to

A Commencement Romance.

SAW her on Commencement Day

All gowned in girlish white.

And in her treases bright,

And we together danced.—

Her lightest word, entranced,

Next morning for a spin,

and breathed to her my fond dealer

Her heart and hand to win.

But when I clasped her fingers small,

She drew ber hand away,

And coyly murmured, "I'm engaged

-MINNA IRVING.

To old Professor Gray."

With roses on her molden breast

I mel her later at the ball.

I hung upon her every look,

I took her in my motor-car

ranch, sixteen miles away. A mile shead of them the mountain swung in close to the creek, which ran through a deep chasm at that point. Here he would dismount and hold back the Indians while Eather rode on alone. If he could fight them off for fifteen minutes Esther would be safe. He told her this, while the yells of their pursuers came louder and clearer behind them. Esther's arms tightened about his neck.

"I'm not going to leave you, Billy-never, never, NEVER!" she said, her lips close to his ear. "Let me take the revolver. I can shoot!"

"It's your one chance, Essy," he persisted. "You've got to ride on alone."

"And you, Billy-you-you-YOU?"

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"You can't!" she cried almost flercely. "I know what you're planning to do, Billy. You mean to hold them back while I get a start. But you can't do it long. They'll kill you. I WON'T GO!"

An inspiration came to him then. He lied hope-

"No. I won't die-if you hurry, Essy. The boys must be pretty near us now. I'm sending you to hurry 'em up. I can hold the Indians back for an hour in that narrow place. If you don't go if you WON'T go-there's no hope for either of us. But if you will, and ride hard, you can save us both. There's the place-just ahead. My God, you'll go, won't you, dear? You'll ride hard—as hard as you can, and tell the boys that I'm here, fighting 'em back? You'll do that-for me-won't you?"

"Billy-you're-you're not-lying-to me?"

"God strike me dead if I am!"

"Then-I'll go-and I'll ride hard, Billy." And if you've lied-and they kill you-

He had pulled in his horse, and now aprang to the

"Hurry, Essy-hurry-if you care anythingbout me," he pleaded....

She reached down and took his head in her arms. "I'll hurry, Billy-O," she whispered, "and I'll never, never hever love any other man in all my life like I love you!"

- In another moment she was gone, and Billy dropped behind the rocks.

Billy knew how hopeless the whole thing was. Esther had gone scarcely three hundred yards when his first shot rang out and urged her on still morefiercely toward the help which he had told her was only a little way shead. The Indians had not expected this, and as one of their horses went down with a builet that had fallen too low for its rider they swung rapidly in toward the mountain. Billy leaped high up on one of the rocks and fired three times in plain view. He wanted them, to know that he was dismounted, and his ruse worked. The Irdians sprang from their horses and began to crawl up among the rocks. He saw a head, and fired. Half a dozen shots replied from different quarters, and spat among the stones about him. Close to the mountain there was a narrow break, and suddenly one. of the Indians broke across this like a deer, making for the higher cover. Billy stopped him midway with a single shot. Another followed, and a third shot sent him almost across the body of the first. Billy laughed, and reloaded. It was an unpleasant. hopeless sort of a laugh, for he saw that the redskins were doing what he had figured they would do. They were sneaking up the mountain. He changed his position, drawing back still deeper among the rocks and nearer to the edge of the creek chasm. He looked at his watch. Esther had been gone seven minutes. He placed the timepiece face up on a stone and waited. Another minute-two-three-five passed, and he saw nothing. Then, so close ahead

(Continued on page 61)





her. H. Great White met great cro wille, flabby-far we seen, with facicans, swarmi: busces, and I we By the time I h.. hold that God creatures of en har-house growt Sprouting up lil. has no doubt, do civilization he l are in no wise i of culture. The today would be peradoes than is or the clown-fac

qualities are no qualities are des James Creek. only hope of a power rests in n.

ad Cure

What Is Socialism?" Etc.

ier thirty-one, this is the thirty-second and last in-marailty in the United States. The series is based this article is of such absorbing interest and covers white slavery evil, however, will not end with Mr. on by earnest and prominent advocates of social hisago; "The Olif From the Southern Farm," by "set," Alice, a Tragody of the Street," by George H. Mraignment of Weak Women," by Hugh Walker

nat it is setting a premium upon the perpetua system that sells women into bondage, that more righteousness than the Missouri Com-

is needed is not the repair of the present at the creation of a new system. There are : !aws upon our modern statute-books, but mement of these laws has, under the present proved impossible. In the matter of real me, the Chicago commissioners found:

at records show that practically no effort has been made cust three years to prosecute owners and real estate are renting properties for immoral purposes. The law on is a dead letter, because, first, of the indifference of and second, but perhaps more vitally, such property orbitant rate of interest on the capital invested.

set, I refer such critics as depend upon the . eminent non-socialist authority-to Charles aan, district attorney of New York City. rays Mr. Whitman, "little that the law can ese women. The result of my experience is t of them come out of the workhouse worse went into it.'

pheal to the police to enforce the existing hen remember the experience of Chicago, · police force is of quite average ability and

When the police in that city enforced the hidding the sale of liquor in white slave he rental of those houses dropped to half its figure and the profits of the keepers were but the slavery remained. "In one displace of the law. In another the law berative to a slight degree, while in still a apparently enforced. . . . Again, it is subat it is not fair to lay blame entirely upon . . . The law-abiding citizen will not pay my one for protection of his business. It is person who is engaged in an unlawful busiwill do so. . . . The police force of Chiade up of . . . one policeman to every 590

till think that political reform will helpcan be wrought by the election of a new the return to office of an old party? The tates government reports have shown that wherever firmly established, does election r the local political gangs of either of the s; and the experience of every city that has a reform administration shows that the evil er never been more than a little lessened, as never been ended, and that it has always beturned in its former vigor. Always the mill has been at its work of production.

y that you will applish the places where the goes on. Do you know what those places ey are the public parks, the amusement cheap theaters that are the recreations of the employment agencies, the clerks' en-, shops, the railway waiting-rooms. You (some difficulty in suppressing these places; ou-did-suppress them, or even properly them, do you imagine that the recruits

The Fight at Red Fork Creek, (Continued from page 54.)

that a cry of astonishment almost broke from his lips, he saw a single feather complaining against individuals; I am it, his carbine leveled.

nim to look behind, but he dared not change that system. take his, eyes from that rock, half a We must make good citizens, and to ...zen gun lengths away

Tick-tick-tick-SNAP!

effort he flung himself backward, grip-list of wrongs. ping at his antagonist's throat, and under him and that he was alive.

A long time after that he seemed to speak or understand.

arms. It was only for a moment or two decent living is \$416 a year. that he could see the gladness that swept into her face as his eyes opened, and than a dark cloud came between them. But he heard her speaking to him, and she spoke the words he had heard once before-"I'll never love another man in all my life like I love you!"

And she has kept her word all these years, bless her dear, dear heart.

White Slavery-Cause and Cure.

(Continued from page 60.)

quivering above a rock. He watched complaining against a system that is the work of no individual, but of the whole Tick-tick-tick-his watch counted race-of both those who profit and those off the seconds. The feather did not who suffer-against a system of which move and a slow sweat broke out on the richest man is as much the creature Billy's face. Something seemed urging and puppet as the poorest. We must

do that we must look forward. Good citizenship means good conditions. As quick as a cat he whirled about; Good citizens mean socially conscious and in that same movement plunged women and men. To have socially connwn upon his face. He almost felt the scious men and women to-morrow, we ire of the rifle that had been aimed at must have sound education to-day-trade is back. While he was still on his education, general and economic educathrees the savage who had crawled up tion, education in the hygiene of sex. mehind him leaped to the hand-to-hand The result of that will be competent conflict. The compact of their bodies workers, with a knowledge of the values ent them to the edge of the chasm, and of life and sex, an understanding of Billy saw the rocks about them sud- what is wrong with the world, and a denealy come to life. With a mighty sire, a determination, to eradicate that

Here, then, are the facts at which we together they plunged over the edge of have, by unprejudiced testimony, arthe cliff. Darkness came after that rived: White slavery exists. It is re-When the Indians peered down from the cruited almost wholly from the poorly wall of the chasm they saw the two paid trades and is the product of low nodies still and lifeless among the rocks economic conditions. It remains pracbelow. There was other work to be done tically unchanged by changes of politics. and they turned away. None guessed It will remain unchanged by the applithat Billy had struck with his enemy cation of punitive, repressive and individually reformative measures.

Remember this. Remember that we hear voices coming from a great dis- have 3,000,000 men workers in the tance away. Then he was conscious of United States to-day who are too poorly being carried, though he could not see or paid to marry. Remember that we have 3,000,000 little children under twelve When at last I opened my eyes-I years of age at work, and that the avermean when Billy opened HIS eyes, he age wage per child is only \$152 per saw first the wall of a room-and then a annum. Remember that we have about face. It was Esther's face, and he knew 9,000,000 women at work, and that the that she was kneeling beside him, and average wage per woman is only \$300 a that his head was resting in one of her year. And remember that the cost of a

> Remember all this, and you will surely perceive that the only thing that will check prostitution is the only thing that will check poverty.

A Compromise. - Tenant - "Sir, you must lower the rent."

Landlord-"Why must I?" Tenant-"Because I can't raise it."



People Talked About







A Square Deal for the Bookkeeper

What chance have you to become a motive force in the business as ong as your brain is chained to the rutting, routine of figure work?

Save your time and mental energy for the real problems of office nanagement-initiative effort-something worth while,

Let the Comptometer do the machine work-use your head for

By simply pressing the keys-no other motion - all your additions, multiplications, divisions, subtractions are made with the Comptometer, Handles fractions as easily as whole numbers. Makes figuring of every kind what it should be--a purely mechanical operation,

Write for our booklet "Rapid Mechanical Calculation;" or the machine itself on free trial, prepaid U.S. or Canada.

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