

Dark Lightning

By Helen Topping Miller

CHAPTER XIX
(Continued)

"That fellow?" drawled Hickey. He's a lawyer. Slide Ellis, from up in town."

"I was looking for him. Been smelling trouble ever since last night. Looks as if it had got here early. Generally they wait and sue you when you hit the sand."

"Might as well slog along down there and see what he wants," Hickey suggested.

"He's talking to Mason. Mason will tell us what it's all about, if it's any of our business."

"Any kind of trouble on this job is our business, looks to me," said Hickey.

Harvey and the lawyer walked toward the house, and Gary went back to the slush pit, but unease made him prickly. He went to the house an hour later, heard loud voices barking at each other in the living room, and slipped upstairs unobtrusively, knowing that grief had moved in.

He heard the front door close while he was shaving, and then the sharp slam of the back door as Harvey went out. Then Ellis' car went snarling out of the drive and when Gary went down again, Mona Lee was lingering, frightened and pale, in the hall.

"Gary, Slide Ellis was here," she began at once. "There's some kind of trouble. I could hear from upstairs—part of it. It's something about this place."

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"This place? But you own it. You've owned it for years."

"We haven't owned all of it for years. We started with this hundred acres along the road and year by year we bought more. Harvey traded for some of it and then he bought up some mortgages and foreclosed when he knew the people didn't have any intention of paying them off. He said it was all right. He said that was the way people got land."

"Don't worry till you have to. If it's serious, we'll hear about it soon enough—and until then we won't worry." Gary gave her a filial hug.

"You're a big comfort, Gary," she sighed. "I can talk to you. But I can't talk to Harvey any more."

Gary went back to the derrick, found Harvey standing there glaring at it, his brow drawn into a frowning knot.

"Well, it's begun," he snapped. "That was Slide Ellis—that fellow who was out here. He says he's going to get out an injunction now, to keep me from putting down this well."

"How on earth can he do that? What grounds has he got for enjoining you against drilling this well?"

"He hasn't any real grounds at all." Harvey's neck was swelling again. "It's all a cooked-up mess, and Ol Kimball at the bottom of it. I found out he'd been to considerable expense, traveling around, seeing the big oil fellows. Told them all he could handle me, that I'd do what he advised—got some of 'em practically signed up to take over these leases before he said anything to me about it, much. Then, when I wouldn't lease, it made him look like a say, and he's sore. And now he just wants to show me that I'm a sap and an old cowman who couldn't put down a drill pipe without running into a mass of trouble—and I'm just mad enough to lick him at it, if it takes the last nickel I've got."

"Just how is this fellow Ellis going about stopping you on this well?" Gary asked. "He must have something that he thinks will stand up in court, or he wouldn't be able to get an injunction or threaten you with one."

"He thinks he's turned up a flaw in this title—title to that piece of pasture out there that I bought from old Elmer Plummer, back in '28. Slide says he represents one of Plummer's minor heirs."

Hickey, who had sidled nearer and was frankly listening, spat disgustedly. "How could old man Plummer have a minor heir?" he demanded. "Plummer wasn't never married to nobody."

"Slide Ellis claims Elihu had a common-law wife. Claims there's a boy seventeen years old that he can prove was Elihu's son—and that the boy's property rights in this land were violated when Elihu sold out to me."

"A holdup," said Gary. "Old stuff. They always try to get away with it. Sometimes it's a long missing son of a long lost brother. But the common-law wife is the usual graft. He was ready to settle out of court, of course? He didn't want to embarrass you and delay your operations by bringing the case to trial? That's the usual gag."

"He did hint that there might be some kind of outside settlement, but what he was most bent on was stopping me from drilling. I could see that. I asked him straight out what his price was—wanted to get him in a spot—but he was cagy, he sidestepped committing himself. Then he got mad and said he'd stop this well in twenty-four hours, and I told him to go ahead and bust his guts doing it."

"He may be able to get an injunction, you know," Gary reminded him.

"I won't compromise with a low heel like Slide Ellis—nor with that cummy son-in-law of mine either. I'm going ahead with this well, if I have to fight the whole state of Texas to do it."

"I'd advise you to see your own lawyer, at any rate," Gary said. "You can't fight a slick bunch of crooks without the law on your side—and there are a lot of curves that laymen don't know about."

"I'll go and see him the first thing in the morning. And I'll let those birds know they're in a fight."

(Continued)

The Tiny Folk

Continued from page 10

mother.

"I'd like a book, please, one that tells all about the farm or farm animals. Is there one?" he answered.

Soon they found just the book they were looking for. It told about a farm, with lots of brightly colored pictures of animals. It was just right, so they bought it too.

"Now that will be all for you for this trip, Laurie," his mother said. "No, I want one thing more," Laurie insisted.

"I want to take something home to poor little Frisky. He'll be lonesome without me today. Could I take home some cans of dog food, please, Mommy?"

His mother agreed, so off they

went to the grocery store. There they found just what Laurie wanted. "I'll take this one with the picture of the cute little dog on it," Laurie said. "This little dog looks just like Frisky."

At last their errands were all done. Laurie's little legs were getting so tired, for he had walked a lot for a three year old boy, but now he could settle down and have a nap on the trip home.

"I had a good day Daddy," he yawned as he snuggled down on the seat between his mother and father. "But I'm glad I'm going home now." And in five minutes he was sound asleep.

AS THE CROW FLIES

The straight-line distance from Land's End to John O'Groats in the United Kingdom is 603 miles.

BURGESS BEDTIME

Continued from page 10

made ready to start out, something held him back. He was still afraid. Perhaps it was the fear of the night holding over. Anyway, hungry as he was he somehow couldn't bring himself to leave that snug hiding place in the big hemlock tree.

This was the time of day when he dared approach the homes of Man. He often found scraps in doorways that he wouldn't dream of going near in broad daylight. Now it was growing lighter and lighter, and soon it would be too light for him to dare visit any doorways.

After awhile Blacky very, very slowly and cautiously peeked out of an opening between the snow-

covered boughs. He looked this way. He looked that way. He saw no one. Still, he didn't go out. He did no more than poke his head out, and sit perfectly still, looking and listening.

Now in all the Green Forest there are no better eyes than those of Blacky the Crow. Blacky was using them now as he long ago had learned how to use them. He searched through every neighboring tree. He studied the snow-covered ground under the trees. There seemed to be no reason at all why he should not start out to look for a breakfast, a breakfast he so sorely needed. Still he hesitated, and still he didn't know why.

Then suddenly he did know why. He top of a tall, dead stump of a tree had moved. Stubs of trees don't move, but the top of this one had moved. Blacky knew what

STANHOPE W. M. S.

The regular meeting of Stanhope W. M. S. was held at the home of Mrs. Ray Carr on January 21. The meeting opened by singing hymn "Savior Like A Shepherd Lead Us" which was followed by the president leading in litanies of Worship and Praise and a response by the members.

that meant. He knew that Hooty the Great Horned Owl was perched on the very top of that stub and, until he had moved his head, he had looked to be a part of that stub.

Very, very, very slowly Blacky withdrew his head until he was once more fully hidden in his snug retreat under the snow-covered boughs of the big hemlock tree. Breakfast would have to wait.

Mrs. Lawson led the members in a prayer in unison. The devotional period closed with hymn "O Word of God Incarnate."

Six members answered the roll call. A letter concerning books for conducting meetings was read and discussed. It was decided to have opening hymn to correspond with roll call word: that is next month the roll will be answered with verse of scripture containing word "Faith" and the opening hymn will be "My Faith Looks Up To Thee", following the Lord's Prayer will be repeated in unison.

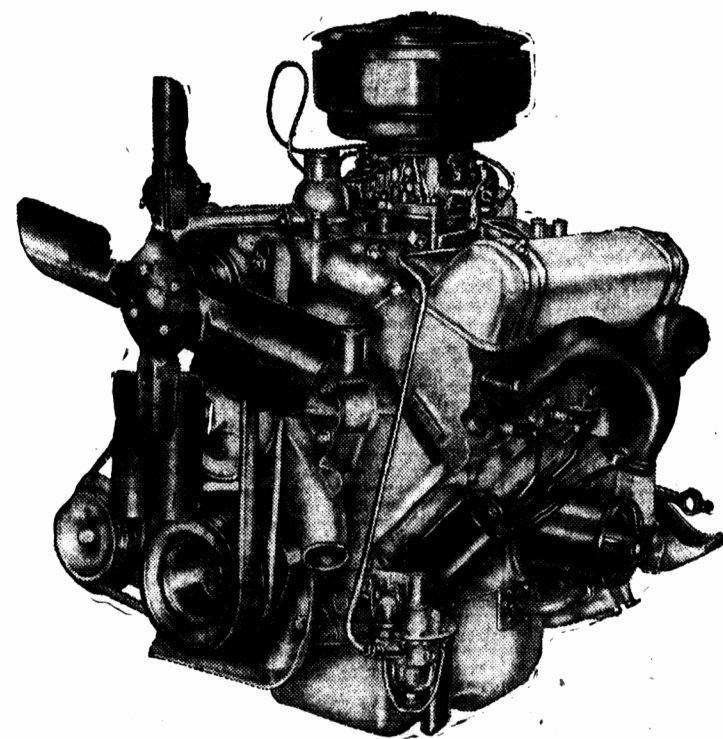
Singing of "Sun of My Soul" brought the meeting to a close. Next meeting is to be held at the home of Mrs. Lloyd Shaw.

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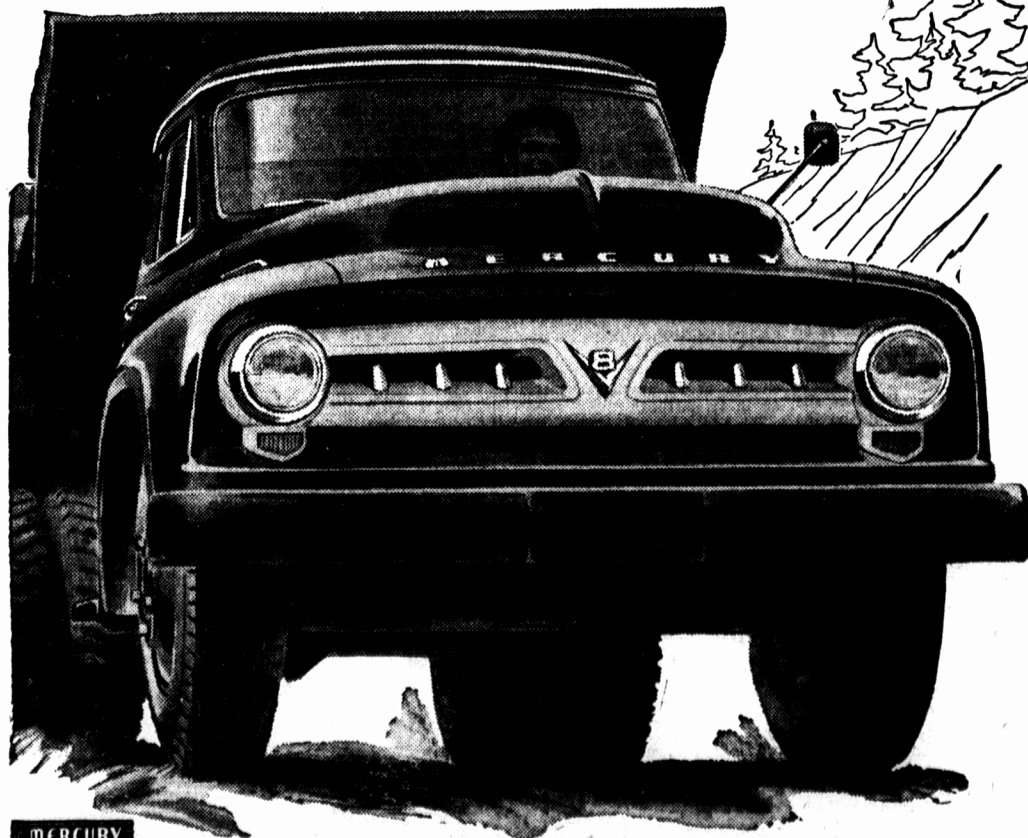
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