# The Wreckers

**FRANCIS** LYNDE

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#### SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.-Graham Norcross, rail-road manager, and his secretary, Jimmle Dodds, are marconed at Sand Creek sid-ing with a young lady, Shella Macrae, and her small cousts. Unseen, they wit-ness a peculiar train holdup, in which a special car is carried off.

chartes in .-Norcross recognizes the car stolen as John Chadwick's, financial magnate, whom he was to meet at Fortai City. He and Dodds rescue Chadwick. The latter offers Norcross the managership of the Pioneer Short Line, which is in the hands of eastern speculators, headed by Breckenridge Dumton, president of the line. Norcross, learning that Shella Macrae is stopping at Portal City, accepts.

#### CHAPTER II

Mr. Chadwiek's Special

Of course, as soon as the skip-out of the four hold-up men gave us a free hand we knew it was up to us to get busy and do something. It was a safe bet that the Alexa was carrying her owner, and in that case Mr. John Chadwick and his train crew were somewhere back in the hills, without an engine, and with a good prospect of staying "put" until somebody should go and hunt them up.

"We've got to find out what they've done with Mr. Chadwick," Mr. Norcross broke out. And then: "It can't be very far to where they have left the engine, and if they haven't crippled it-" He stopped short and slung a question at the two women: "Will you two stay here with Jimmie while I go and see what I can find in that gulch?"

They both paid me the compliment of saying that they'd stay with me, but the young woman suggested that it might be just as well if we should all go up the gulch together. So we piked out in the dark, the boss helping Mrs. Shella to hobo along over the cross-ties of the spur, and the little girl stumbling on behind with me. We had followed the spur track up the gulch for maybe a short quarter of a mile when we came to the engine. As we had feared it might be, the big machine was crippled. There was a key gone out of one of the connecting-rod crank-pin straps; one miserable little piece of steel, maybe eight inches long and tapering one way, and half an inch or so thick the other; but that was a-plenty. We couldn't make a move without it.

I thought we were done for, but Mr. Norcross chased me up into the cab for a lantern. With the light we began to hunt around in the short grass, I had been sensible enough to show the little girl the other connecting-rod key, so she knew exactly what to look for, and it did me a heap of good when it turned out that she was the one who found the lost bit of steel.

"I've got it-I've got it!" she cried; and sure enough she had. The hold-up



"I've Got It!" She Cried.

people had merely taken it out and thrown it aside on the extremely probable chance that nobody would be foolish enough to look for it so near at hand, or, looking, would be able to find it in the dark.

It didn't take more than a minute or two, with a wrench from the en-

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION. Having qualified as administratrix of the estate of Turner Thompson, decased, late of Union county, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said decased to exhibit them to the undersigned, or her attorney, at Monroe, N. C., on or before the 1st day of April, 1922, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment.

This the 30th day of March, 1921. Administratix of Turner

MRS. CORABEL THOMPSON, W. O. Lemmond, Attorney.

gineer's box, to put the key back in place. Then, with one to boost and the other to pull, we got our two passengers up into the high cab, I threw a few shovel-fuls of coal into the firebox and put the blower on; and when we were all set, the boss opened the throttle and we went carefully nosing ahead over the old track, feeling our way up the gulch and keeping a sharp lookout for the Alexa as we ground and squealed around the curves.

It must have been four or five miles back in the hills to the place where we found the private car, pushed in on an old mine-loading track at the end of the spur. The other members of the crew were off and waiting for us; and standing out on the back platform, in the full glare of the headlight as we nosed up for a coupling, there was a big, gray-haired man, bareheaded and dressed in rough-looking old clothes like a mining prospector.

The big man was "Uncle John" Chadwick, and if he was properly astonished at seeing us turn up with his lost engine, he didn't let it interfere with our welcome. Mr. Chadwick seemed to know Mrs. Shella; at any rate, he shook hands with her and called her by name. Then he grabbed for the boss and fairly shouted at him: "Well, well, Graham!-of all the lucky things this side of Mesopotamia! How the dev-how in thupder did you manage to turn up here?" And all that, you know.

The explanations, such as they were, came later. As a matter of course, the talk jumped first to the mysterious hold-up and kidnaping and the reason why. There had been no violencethe pistol shots had been merely meant to scare the trainmen-and there had been no attempt at robbery; for that matter, Mr. Chadwick hadn't even seen the kldnapers, and hadn't known what was going on until after it was all over.

Mr. Norcross told what we had seen, and how we had come to be where we were able to see it, but that didn't help out much, either. From any point of view it seemed perfectly foolish, and the boss made mention of that. If we hadn't happened to be there to bring the engine back, the worst that could have befallen Mr. Chadwick and the crew of the special would have been a few bours' bother and delay. In the course of time the conductor would have walked out and got to a wire station somewhere, though it might have taken him all night, and then some, to get another engine.

Naturally, Mr. Chadwick was redhot about it, on general principles, I guess he wasn't used to being kidnaped:

"I can't help thinking that it is connected with what is due to happen to-morrow morning, Graham," he said, at the end of things. "There are some certain scoundrels in Portal City at the present moment who wouldn't stop at anything to gain their ends, and I am wondering now if Dawes wasn't mixed up in it."

"Who is Dawes?"

"Dawes is a mining man in Portal City, and beforeal'd been an hour in town yesterday he hunted me up and wanted me to go over to Strathconn to look at some gold prospects he's trying to finance. I said 'No' at first, because I was expecting you, and thought you'd reach Portal City this morning. When you didn't show up. I knew I had twelve hours more on my hands, and as Dawes was still hanging on, I had our trainmaster give me a special over to Strathcona, on a promise that I'd he brought back early this evening, shead of the 'Flyer' from the west-the train you were on.

Mr. Norcross nodded, "And the promise wasn't kept."

"No promise is ever kept on the Ploneer Short Line," growled the big magnate. And then, with a beautiful disregard for the mixed figures of speech: "Once in a blue moon the chapter of accidents hits the bull's eye whack in the middle, Graham When Hardshaw wired me from Portland, I knew you couldn't reach Portal City before this morning, at the very earliest. That was going to cut my time pretty short, with the big gun due to be fired tomorrow morning. and you cut it still shorter by losing twelve hours somewhere along the road-they told me in the dispatcher's office that your train was behind a wreck somewhere up in Oregon. But it has turned out all right, in spite of everything. Tou're here, and we've got the night before 118," Then I suppose he nodded toward me, for the boss said:

"Oh, Jimmie's all right; he knew what I had for dinner this evening. and he'll know what I'm going to have for breakfast tomorrow morning."

With the bridle off, the big man went ahead abruptly, cutting out all the frills.

"You finished your building contract on the Oregon Midland, Graham, and after the road was opened for business you refused an offer of the general managership. Would you mind telling me why you did that?"

"Not in the least. There is nothing in it. An operating head is now nothing more than a score-keeper for a national gambling game. The boss gamblers around the railroad post in the Stock exchange-tell him what he has to do and where he has to get off. Stock gambling, under whatever name it musquerades boosting values. buying and selling margins, reorganizations, with their huge rake-offs for the underwriters is the incubus which is crushing the life out of the nation's industries, especially in the railroad field. It makes me wish I'd

never seen a railroad track," "Yet it is your trade, Isn't it?"

asked the wheat king.

roads as well as operate them; and there are other countries besides the United States of America. I'm on my way home to Illinois for a little visit with my mother and sisters; and after that I think I shall close with an offer I've had from one of the Canadian companies."

"Good boy!" chuckled the Chicago magnute. "In due time we might hope to be reading your name in the newspapers-'Sir Graham Norcross, D.S.O., or something of that sort. Then, with a sharp return to the sort of gritting seriousness: "You've been riding over the Pioneer Short Line since early this morning, Graham; what do you think of it?"

I couldn't see the boss' smile, but I could figure it pretty well when he said: "There may be worse managed, worse neglected pieces of railroad track in some of the great transcontinental lines, but if there are I haven't happened to notice them. I suppose it is capitalized to death, like many of the others."

"Fictitions values doubtless have something to do with it at the present stage of the game," Mr. Chadwick admitted, "It has always been a good earning property, being largely, even yet, without much local competition. But from the day it was completed its securities have figured in the market only for their speculative values. The property itself has never been considered, save as a means to an end; the end being to enable one bunch of the Wall Street gamesters you speak of to make a 'killing' and unload on another bunch."

"The old story," said Mr. Norcross, "We are bumping over the net result, right now," Mr. Chadw 'k went on, "Pioneer Short Line is practically in the last ditch. The stock has slumped to forty and worse; Shaffer, the general manager and the only able man we have had for years, has resigned in disgust; and if something isn't done tomorrow morning in Portal City, I know of at least one minority stockholder who is going to throw the whole mess into the courts and try for a receiverable."

Mr. Norcross looked up quickly. "Are you the minority stockholder, Uncle John?" he asked, letting htmself use the name by which Mr. Chad-

wick was best known in the wheat pit. "I am-more's the plty. I had a little lapse of sanity one fine morning a few years ago and bought in for an investment. I've done everything I could think of, Graham, to persuade Breck Dunton and his Wall Street accomplices to spend just one dollar in ten of their reorganization and recapitalization stealings on the road itself, but it's no good. Dunton has been making an inspection trip over the system with a dozen or so of his New York cronies. It's a junketing excursion, pure and simple, but while they're here they'll get together and go through the form of picking out a new general manager. I'm on the board and they had to send me notice. though it's an even bet they hoped I'd stay away.'

"Are you really going to spring the receivership on the Dunton people to-

"I'm going to give Dunton his chance. He can appoint the man & want appointed as general manager, with full power to act, and ratify a little plan I've got up my sleeve for providing a bit of working capital for the road, or-he can turn me down."

"And if he does turn you down?" "Then, by George, I'll see if I can't persuade the courts to put the property into bankruptcy and install my man as receiver!"

"I don't envy your man his Job, either way around; not the least little morsel in the world," said the boss, quietly. And then: "Who is he, Uncle John?"

The wheat king gave a great laugh. "Don't tell me you haven't guessed



"You're the Man, Graham."

it," he chuckled. "You're the man,

But now Mr. Norcross had some thing to say for himself, sitting up straight and shaking his head sort of sorrowfully at the big man in the padded chair.

"No, you don't, my good old friend; not in a thousand years! You'd lose out in the end, and I'd lose out; and, besides. I'm not quite ready to commit suicide." And then to me, "Jimmile, suppose you go and tap on the door and tell the ladies we're pulling

into Portal City." I hong around while the boss was

"It is; but luckfly I can build raft- telling Mrs. Shella and Maisie Ann good by, and I was in the baggageroom, digging up the put-off stuff, at the good by minute. But I guess they didn't quarret any-the boss and Mrs. Sheila. She was laughing a little to herself as I belped her down from the car, and when I asked her who e she wanted to go, she said I might ask one of the porters to carry the traps, and we'd walk to the hotel, which was only a few blocks up the main street.

She took Maisle Ann on the other side of her and let two of the blocks go by without saying anything more, and then she gave that quiet little laugh again and said, "Your Mr. Norcross anuses me, Jimmle. He says I have no business to travel without a guardian. What do you think about 87

I told her I hadn't any thinks coming, and she seemed to take that for a joke and laughed some more. Then she asked me if I'd ever been in New York, and I felt sort of small when I had to tell her that I had never been east of Omaha in all my life. With that, she told me not to worry; that if I stayed with Mr. Norcross I'd probably get to go anywhere I wanted to.

Something in the way she said it made it sound like a little slam on the boss, and of course I wasn't going to stand for that,

"There is one thing about it: the boss will make good wherever he goes," I hit back. "You can bet on that.

"I like your loyalty," she flashed out, "It is a fine thing in a day that is much too careless of such qualities, And I agree with you that your Mr. Norcross is likely to succeed; more than likely, if he will only learn to combine a little gentle cleverness with the heavy hand."

"I don't think you have any cause to blacklist Mr. Norcross," I said. "Hasn't he been right good and brotherly to both of you this evening?"

"Oh, I didn't mean that," she said real earnestly. "But in the stateroom in Mr. Chadwick's car: the ventilator was open, you know, until Maisie Ann got up and shut it, and we couldn't very well help hearing what was said about the kidnaping. Neither Mr. Chadwick nor Mr. Norcross seemed to be able to account for it."

"Can you account for it?" I asked, bluntly enough, I guess.

At this she smiled and said, "It would be rather presumptuous for me to try where Mr. Norcross and Mr. Chadwick failed, wouldn't it? But maybe I can give you just a wee little hint. You saw the two men who went over to the auto and smoked while they were waiting for the other two to come back? If I am not mistaken, I have seen them many times before, and they are very well known here in Portal City. One of them, the smaller one with the derby hat and the short overcoat, was either Mr. Rufus Hatch or his double; and the other, the heavy-set one, might have been Mr. Gustave Henckel, Mr. Hatch's partner in the Red Tower company."

This didn't help out much, but you can bet that I made a note of the two names.

"You are going back to Mr. Chadwick's car?" she asked, when she was teiling me good by and thunking me for coming up to the hotel with them. I told her I was, and then she came around to the kidnaping business

again of her own accord. "You may give Mr. Norcross the hint I gave you, if you wish," she said; "only you must be a good boy, Jimmle, and not drag me into it."

"I see," I nodded; "I'll tell the boss, when I get a good chance, and you can bet your last dollar he won't tangle you up in it-he isn't put together that way."

"Well, then, good-night," she smiled, giving me her hand. And with that she sort of edged the little girl into the elevator before we could get a chance to shake hands, and I heard her tell the boy to take them up to the mezzanine landing.

By and by, I went down to the station and began to hunt for the Alexa. The boss and Mr. Chadwick were facing each other across the table, which was all littered up with papers and maps and reports, and they hardly noticed me when I blew in and sat down a little to one side.

Just after I broke in, Mr. Norcross jumped up and began to pace back and forth before the table, with his

hands in his pockets, "No, I can't see it. Uncle John," he said, still sort of stubborn and determined. "You are trying to make me believe that I ought to take the biggest job that has ever been set before the expert in any field; to demonstrate, on this rotten corpse of a callroad, the solution of a problem that has the entire country guessing at the present time; namely, the winning of success, and public-and industrial-approval for a carrier corporation which had continuously and perstatently broken every commandment in all the decalogues of bust ness; of fair-dealing with its employees; of common honesty with everybody."

Mr. Chadwick nodded. "That is about

the size of it," he said. "I wouldn't say that it can't be done," the boss went on, "Perhaps it is possible, for the right man. But I'm not the right man. You need somebody who can combine the qualities of a pretty brutal slugger with those of a fine-baired, all-things-to-all-men, diplomatic peacemaker. I can do the slugging; I've proved it a time or two in the past. But I'm no good at the other end of the game. When it comes to broul pr the fellow with a 'pull,' I've c'l's, got to smash him or quit. I am too heavy-handed for this job of yours. And as for the other thingthe industrial side of it; that's a large a killing of some sort with Mr. Dunit's the right thing to do."

"Right or wrong it's a thing that is coming, Graham," was the soher reply. "If we don't meet it halfway-well, the time will come when we of the hiring and firing side won't be given any option in the matter. You may call it Utopian if you please, and add that I'm growing old and losing my grip. But that doesn't obliterate the fact that the days of the present master-and-man relations in the Industries are numbered.

"We'll let it rest until morning and give you a chance to sleep on it. You have spoken only of the difficulties and the responsibilities, Graham; but there is another side to it. In a way, it's an opportunity, carrying with it the promise of the biggest kind of a reward."

"I don't see it," said the boss, briefly.

"Don't you? I do. I have an idea rambling around in my head that it is about time some bright young fellow was showing the people of the United States that a railroad needn't be regarded as an outlaw among the industries; needn't have the enmity of everybody it serves; needn't be the prey of a lot of disloyal and dissatisfied employees who are interested only in the figure of the pay-day check; needn't be shot at as a wolf with a bounty on its scalp. Let it rest at that for the present. Get your hat and we'll walk up-town to the hotel."

When we got out of the car, Mr. Norcross told me to go by the station and have our luggage sent to the ho-

It was some time after eleven o'clock when I got around to the hotel with the traps. Mr. Chadwick had disappeared, but I saw the boss at the counter waiting for his chance at the clerk. The people melted away at last, all but one-a young swell who would have been handsome if he hadn't had the eyes of a maniac and a color that was sort of corpse-like with the pallor of a booze-fighter. He had his hat on the back of his head, and he was ripping it off at the clerk like a drunken hobo,

It seemed that he had caught a glimpse of somebody he knew-a womnn, I took it, because he said "she"looking down from the ratt of the mezzanine, and he wanted to go up to her. And it appeared that the clerk had told the elevator man not to take him up in his present condition.

The boss was growing sort of impatient; I could tell it by the way the little side muscles on his jaw were working. When he got the ear of the clerk for a second or so between cusses, he asked what was the matter with the lunatic. I caught only broken bits of the clerk's halfwhisper: "Young Collingwood . . . President Dunton's nephew . . . saw lady . . . mezzanine . . . wants to go up to her."

The boss scowled at the young fellow, who was now handing himself around the corner of the counter to get at the clerk again, and said: "Why money back plan. don't you ring for an officer and have

him run in?" The night clerk was evidently scared of his job. "I wouldn't dare to do that," he chittered. "He's one of the New York crowd-the railroad people - President Dunton's nephew guest of the house."

The young fellow had pulled himself around to our side of the counter by this time and was booking his arm to make a pass at Mr. Norcross, trimming things up as he came with a lot more language. The boss said, right short and sharp, to the clerk, "Get his room key and give it to a boy who can show me the way," and the next thing we knew he had bashed that



Cuffing Him Along to the Nearest Elevator.

lunatic square in the face and was cutting him along to the nearest eleva-He came back in a few minutes

looking as cool as a cucumber. "What did you do with him?" asked the cierk, kind of awed and half

scared. "Got a couple of the corridor sweepers to put him in a both and turn the cold water on him. That'll take the whisky out of him. Now, if you have a minute to spare, I'd like to get my

assignment," We hadn't more than got our rooms marked off for us when I saw Mr. Chadwick coming across from the farther of the three elevators. He was smiling sort of grim, as if he'd made

order; a whaling big order. I'm not ton, and instead of heading back for even prepared to say, off-hand, that his car he took the boos over to a corner of the lobby and sat down to smoke with him.

They didn't seem to be talking anything private, so I sat down just beyoud them, so sleepy that I could hardly see straight. Mr. Chadwick was telling about his early experiences in Portal City, how he blew in first on top of the Strathcona gold boom, and how he had known mighty near everybody in the region in those days.

While he was talking, a taxi drove up and one of the old residenters came in from the street and crossed to the elevators; a mighty handsome, stately old gentleman, with fierce white mustuches and a goatee, and "Southern Colonel" written all over him.

"There's one of them now; Major Basil Kendrick-Kentucky born and raised, as you might guess," Mr. Chadwick was saying.

I grabbed at the name, "Basil," right away: It isn't such a very common name, and Mrs. Shella had said something-under the water tank, you recollect-about a "Cousin Basil" who was to have met her at the train. I was putting two or three little private guesses of my own together, when one of the elevators came down and here came our two, the young lady and the chunky little girl, with the major chuckling and smiling and giving an arm to each. They had apparently stopped at the Bullard only to wait until he could come after them and take them home.

I saw the boss sit up in his chair and stare at them. Then he said: "That's Mrs. Macrae with him now. Is she a member of his family?"

"A second consin, or something of that sort," said Mr. Chadwick. "I met her once at the major's house out in the northern suburb last summer."

Mr. Norcross let the three of them get out and away, and we heard their taxi speed up and trundle off before he said, "She is married, I'm told. Where is her husband?"

Mr. Chadwick looked up as if he'd already forgotten the three who had just crossed the lobby.

'Who-Shells Macrae? Yes, she has been married. But there isn't any husband-she's a widow."

For quite a while the boss sat staring at his cigar in a way he has when he is thinking right hard, and Mr. Chadwick let him alone. Then, all of a sudden, the boss got up and shoved his hands into his cont pockets.

"I've changed my mind, Uncle John," he said, looking sort of absent-like out of the window to where the major's taxi had been standing. "If you can pull me into that deal tomorrow morning-with an absolutely free hand to do as I think best, mind you-I'll take the job."

(Continued in the next issue.)

## No More Dandruff

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## EXECUTOR'S NOTICE.

Having this day qualified as executor of the last will and testament of Mrs. Virginia C. Whitfield, deceased, before the clerk of the superior court of Union county, this is to notify all persons holding claims against the estate of the said Virginia C. Whitfield, deceased, to present the same duly verified to the undersigned executor of the last will and testament of Virginia C. Whitfield, deceased, on or before the 2nd day of May, 1922, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery, Those owing estate are requested

to make prompt settlement. This the 2nd day of May, 1921,

W. S. BLAKENEY, Executor.

#### EXECUTOR'S NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

Having this day qualified as exe-cutor of the last will and testament E. J. Griffin, deceased, before the clerk of the superior court of Union county, this is to notify all persons holding claims against the estate of the said E. J. Griffin, deceased, to present the same duly verified to the undersigned executor of the last will and testament of E. J. Griffin, deceased, on or before the 1st day of April, 1922, or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery.

Those owing estate are requested

to make prompt settlement. This the 1st day of April, 1921. CARL GRIFFIN, Executor. J. R. Price, Attorney.