

## CHAPTER V

AT nine in the evening, sharp to the second, clad in his oldest clothes, Young Dick met Tim Hagan at the Ferry Building.

"No use headin' north," said Tim. "Winter'll come on up that way and make the sleepin' crimp. D'ye want to go East--that means Nevada and the deserts."

"Any other way?" queried Young Dick. "What's the matter with south? We can head for Los Angeles, an' Arizona, an' New Mexico--oh, an' Texas."

"How much money you got?" Tim demanded.

"What for?" Young Dick countered.

"We gotta get out quick, an' payin' our way at the start is quickest. Me--I'm all hunkydory; but you ain't. The folks that's lookin' after you'll raise a roar. They'll have more detectives out than you can shake at stick at. We gotta dodge 'em, that's what."

"Then we will dodge," said Young Dick. "We'll make short jumps this way and that for a couple of days, layin' low most of the time, paying our way, until we can get to Tracy. Then we'll quit payin' an' beat her south."

All of which program was carefully carried out. They eventually went through Tracy as pay passengers, six hours after the local deputy sheriff had given up his task of searching the trains. With an excess of precaution Young Dick paid beyond Tracy and as far as Modesto. After that, under the teaching of Tim, he traveled without paying, riding blind baggage, box cars, and cow-catchers. Young Dick bought the newspapers, and frightened Tim by reading to him the lurid accounts of the kidnapping of the young heir to the Forrest millions.

Back in San Francisco the Board of Guardians offered rewards that totaled thirty thousand dollars for the recovery of their ward. And Tim Hagan, reading the same while they lay in the grass by some water-tank, branded forever the mind of Young Dick with the fact that honor beyond price was a matter of neither place nor caste and might outcrop in the palace on the height of land or in the dwelling over a grocery down on the flat.

"Geel!" Tim said to the general landscape. "The old man wouldn't raise a roar if I snitched on you for that thirty thousand. It makes me scared to think of it."

And from the fact that Tim thus openly mentioned the matter, Young Dick concluded that there was no possibility of the policeman's son betraying him.

Not until six weeks afterward, in Arizona, did Young Dick bring up the

subject.

"You see, Tim," he said, "I've got slathers of money. It's growing all the time, and I ain't spending a cent of it, not so as you can notice... though that Mrs. Summerstone is getting a cold eighteen hundred a year out of me, with board and carriages thrown in, while you an' I are glad to get the leavings of firemen's pails in the round-houses. Just the same, my money's growing. What's ten per cent, on twenty dollars?"

Tim Hagan stared at the shimmering heat-waves of the desert and tried to solve the problem.

"What's one-tenth of twenty million?" Young Dick demanded irritably.

"Huh!--two million, of course."

"Well, five per cent's half of ten per cent. What does twenty million earn at five per cent, for one year?"

Tim hesitated.

"Half of it, half of two million!" Young Dick cried. "At that rate I'm a million richer every year. Get that, and hang on to it, and listen to me. When I'm good and willing to go back--but not for years an' years--we'll fix it up, you and I. When I say the word, you'll write

to your father. He'll jump out to where we are waiting, pick me up, and cart me back. Then he'll collect the thirty thousand reward from my guardians, quit the police force, and most likely start a saloon."

"Thirty thousand's a hell of a lot of money," was Tim's nonchalant way of expressing his gratitude.

"Not to me," Young Dick minimized his generosity. "Thirty thousand goes into a million thirty-three times, and a million's only a year's turnover of my money."

But Tim Hagan never lived to see his father a saloon keeper. Two days later, on a trestle, the lads were fired out of an empty box-car by a brake-man who should have known better. The trestle spanned a dry ravine. Young Dick looked down at the rocks seventy feet below and demurred.

"There's room on the trestle," he said; "but what if the train starts up?"

"It ain't goin' to start--beat it while you got time," the brakeman insisted. "The engine's takin' water at the other side. She always takes it here."

But for once the engine did not take water. The evidence at the inquest developed that the engineer had found no water in the tank and

started on. Scarcely had the two boys dropped from the side-door of the box-car, and before they had made a score of steps along the narrow way between the train and the abyss, than the train began to move. Young Dick, quick and sure in all his perceptions and adjustments, dropped on the instant to hands and knees on the trestle. This gave him better holding and more space, because he crouched beneath the overhang of the box-cars. Tim, not so quick in perceiving and adjusting, also overcome with Celtic rage at the brakeman, instead of dropping to hands and knees, remained upright to flare his opinion of the brakeman, to the brakeman, in lurid and ancestral terms.

"Get down!--drop!" Young Dick shouted.

But the opportunity had passed. On a down grade, the engine picked up the train rapidly. Facing the moving cars, with empty air at his back and the depth beneath, Tim tried to drop on hands and knees. But the first twist of his shoulders brought him in contact with the car and nearly out-balanced him. By a miracle he recovered equilibrium. But he stood upright. The train was moving faster and faster. It was impossible to get down.

Young Dick, kneeling and holding, watched. The train gathered way. The cars moved more swiftly. Tim, with a cool head, his back to the fall, his face to the passing cars, his arms by his sides, with nowhere save under his feet a holding point, balanced and swayed. The faster the train moved, the wider he swayed, until, exerting his will, he

controlled himself and ceased from swaying.

And all would have been well with him, had it not been for one car. Young Dick knew it, and saw it coming. It was a "palace horse-car," projecting six inches wider than any car on the train. He saw Tim see it coming. He saw Tim steel himself to meet the abrupt subtraction of half a foot from the narrow space wherein he balanced. He saw Tim slowly and deliberately sway out, sway out to the extremest limit, and yet not sway out far enough. The thing was physically inevitable. An inch more, and Tim would have escaped the car. An inch more and he would have fallen without impact from the car. It caught him, in that margin of an inch, and hurled him backward and side-twisting. Twice he whirled sidewise, and two and a half times he turned over, ere he struck on his head and neck on the rocks.

He never moved after he struck. The seventy-foot fall broke his neck and crushed his skull. And right there Young Dick learned death--not the ordered, decent death of civilization, wherein doctors and nurses and hypodermics ease the stricken one into the darkness, and ceremony and function and flowers and undertaking institutions conspire to give a happy leave-taking and send-off to the departing shade, but sudden death, primitive death, ugly and ungarnished, like the death of a steer in the shambles or a fat swine stuck in the jugular.

And right there Young Dick learned more--the mischance of life and fate; the universe hostile to man; the need to perceive and to act, to

see and know, to be sure and quick, to adjust instantly to all instant shiftage of the balance of forces that bear upon the living. And right there, beside the strangely crumpled and shrunken remnant of what had been his comrade the moment before, Young Dick learned that illusion must be discounted, and that reality never lied.

In New Mexico, Young Dick drifted into the Jingle-bob Ranch, north of Roswell, in the Pecos Valley. He was not yet fourteen, and he was accepted as the mascot of the ranch and made into a "sure-enough" cowboy by cowboys who, on legal papers, legally signed names such as Wild Horse, Willie Buck, Boomer Deacon, and High Pockets.

Here, during a stay of six months, Young Dick, soft of frame and unbreakable, achieved a knowledge of horses and horsemanship, and of men in the rough and raw, that became a life asset. More he learned. There was John Chisum, owner of the Jingle-bob, the Bosque Grande, and of other cattle ranches as far away as the Black River and beyond. John Chisum was a cattle king who had foreseen the coming of the farmer and adjusted from the open range to barbed wire, and who, in order to do so, had purchased every forty acres carrying water and got for nothing the use of the millions of acres of adjacent range that was worthless without the water he controlled. And in the talk by the camp-fire and chuck wagon, among forty-dollar-a-month cowboys who had not foreseen what John Chisum foresaw, Young Dick learned precisely why and how John Chisum had become a cattle king while a thousand of his contemporaries worked for him on wages.

But Young Dick was no cool-head. His blood was hot. He had passion, and fire, and male pride. Ready to cry from twenty hours in the saddle, he learned to ignore the thousand aching creaks in his body and with the stoic brag of silence to withstand from his blankets until the hard-bitten punchers led the way. By the same token he straddled the horse that was apportioned him, insisted on riding night-herd, and knew no hint of uncertainty when it came to him to turn the flank of a stampede with a flying slicker. He could take a chance. It was his joy to take a chance. But at such times he never failed of due respect for reality. He was well aware that men were soft-shelled and cracked easily on hard rocks or under pounding hoofs. And when he rejected a mount that tangled its legs in quick action and stumbled, it was not because he feared to be cracked, but because, when he took a chance on being cracked, he wanted, as he told John Chisum himself, "an even break for his money."

It was while at the Jingle-bob, but mailed by a cattleman from Chicago, that Young Dick wrote a letter to his guardians. Even then, so careful was he, that the envelope was addressed to Ah Sing. Though unburdened by his twenty millions, Young Dick never forgot them, and, fearing his estate might be distributed among remote relatives who might possibly inhabit New England, he warned his guardians that he was still alive and that he would return home in several years. Also, he ordered them to keep Mrs. Summerstone on at her regular salary.



But Young Dick's feet itched. Half a year, he felt, was really more than he should have spent at the Jingle-bob. As a boy hobo, or road-kid, he drifted on across the United States, getting acquainted with its peace officers, police judges, vagrancy laws, and jails. And he learned vagrants themselves at first hand, and floating laborers and petty criminals. Among other things, he got acquainted with farms and farmers, and, in New York State, once picked berries for a week with a Dutch farmer who was experimenting with one of the first silos erected in the United States. Nothing of what he learned came to him in the spirit of research. He had merely the human boy's curiosity about all things, and he gained merely a huge mass of data concerning human nature and social conditions that was to stand him in good stead in later years, when, with the aid of the books, he digested and classified it.

His adventures did not harm him. Even when he consorted with jail-birds in jungle camps, and listened to their codes of conduct and measurements of life, he was not affected. He was a traveler, and they were alien breeds. Secure in the knowledge of his twenty millions, there was neither need nor temptation for him to steal or rob. All things and all places interested him, but he never found a place nor a situation that could hold him. He wanted to see, to see more and more, and to go on seeing.

At the end of three years, nearly sixteen, hard of body, weighing a hundred and thirty pounds, he judged it time to go home and open the

books. So he took his first long voyage, signing on as boy on a windjammer bound around the Horn from the Delaware Breakwater to San Francisco. It was a hard voyage, of one hundred and eighty days, but at the end he weighed ten pounds the more for having made it.

Mrs. Summerstone screamed when he walked in on her, and Ah Sing had to be called from the kitchen to identify him. Mrs. Summerstone screamed a second time. It was when she shook hands with him and lacerated her tender skin in the fisty grip of his rope-calloused palms.

He was shy, almost embarrassed, as he greeted his guardians at the hastily summoned meeting. But this did not prevent him from talking straight to the point.

"It's this way," he said. "I am not a fool. I know what I want, and I want what I want. I am alone in the world, outside of good friends like you, of course, and I have my own ideas of the world and what I want to do in it. I didn't come home because of a sense of duty to anybody here. I came home because it was time, because of my sense of duty to myself. I'm all the better from my three years of wandering about, and now it's up to me to go on with my education--my book education, I mean."

"The Belmont Academy," Mr. Slocum suggested. "That will fit you for the university--"

Dick shook his head decidedly.

"And take three years to do it. So would a high school. I intend to be in the University of California inside one year. That means work. But my mind's like acid. It'll bite into the books. I shall hire a coach, or half a dozen of them, and go to it. And I'll hire my coaches myself--hire and fire them. And that means money to handle."

"A hundred a month," Mr. Crockett suggested.

Dick shook his head.

"I've taken care of myself for three years without any of my money. I guess. I can take care of myself along with some of my money here in San Francisco. I don't care to handle my business affairs yet, but I do want a bank account, a respectable-sized one. I want to spend it as I see fit, for what I see fit."

The guardians looked their dismay at one another.

"It's ridiculous, impossible," Mr. Crockett began. "You are as unreasonable as you were before you went away."

"It's my way, I guess," Dick sighed. "The other disagreement was over my money. It was a hundred dollars I wanted then."

"Think of our position, Dick," Mr. Davidson urged. "As your guardians, how would it be looked upon if we gave you, a lad of sixteen, a free hand with money."

"What's the Freda worth, right now?" Dick demanded irrelevantly.

"Can sell for twenty thousand any time," Mr. Crockett answered.

"Then sell her. She's too large for me, and she's worth less every year. I want a thirty-footer that I can handle myself for knocking around the Bay, and that won't cost a thousand. Sell the Freda and put the money to my account. Now what you three are afraid of is that I'll misspend my money--taking to drinking, horse-racing, and running around with chorus girls. Here's my proposition to make you easy on that: let it be a drawing account for the four of us. The moment any of you decide I am misspending, that moment you can draw out the total balance. I may as well tell you, that just as a side line I'm going to get a business college expert to come here and cram me with the mechanical side of the business game."

Dick did not wait for their acquiescence, but went on as from a matter definitely settled.

"How about the horses down at Menlo?--never mind, I'll look them over and decide what to keep. Mrs. Summerstone will stay on here in charge of the house, because I've got too much work mapped out for myself

already. I promise you you won't regret giving me a free hand with my directly personal affairs. And now, if you want to hear about the last three years, I'll spin the yarn for you."

Dick Forrest had been right when he told his guardians that his mind was acid and would bite into the books. Never was there such an education, and he directed it himself--but not without advice. He had learned the trick of hiring brains from his father and from John Chisum of the Jingle-bob. He had learned to sit silent and to think while cow men talked long about the campfire and the chuck wagon. And, by virtue of name and place, he sought and obtained interviews with professors and college presidents and practical men of affairs; and he listened to their talk through many hours, scarcely speaking, rarely asking a question, merely listening to the best they had to offer, content to receive from several such hours one idea, one fact, that would help him to decide what sort of an education he would go in for and how.

Then came the engaging of coaches. Never was there such an engaging and discharging, such a hiring and firing. He was not frugal in the matter. For one that he retained a month, or three months, he discharged a dozen on the first day, or the first week. And invariably he paid such dischargees a full month although their attempts to teach him might not have consumed an hour. He did such things fairly and grandly, because he could afford to be fair and grand.

He, who had eaten the leavings from firemen's pails in round-houses and "scoffed" mulligan-stews at water-tanks, had learned thoroughly the worth of money. He bought the best with the sure knowledge that it was the cheapest. A year of high school physics and a year of high school chemistry were necessary to enter the university. When he had crammed his algebra and geometry, he sought out the heads of the physics and chemistry departments in the University of California. Professor Carey laughed at him... at the first.

"My dear boy," Professor Carey began.

Dick waited patiently till he was through. Then Dick began, and concluded.

"I'm not a fool, Professor Carey. High school and academy students are children. They don't know the world. They don't know what they want, or why they want what is ladled out to them. I know the world. I know what I want and why I want it. They do physics for an hour, twice a week, for two terms, which, with two vacations, occupy one year. You are the top teacher on the Pacific Coast in physics. The college year is just ending. In the first week of your vacation, giving every minute of your time to me, I can get the year's physics. What is that week worth to you?"

"You couldn't buy it for a thousand dollars," Professor Carey rejoined, thinking he had settled the matter.

"I know what your salary is--" Dick began.

"What is it?" Professor Carey demanded sharply.

"It's not a thousand a week," Dick retorted as sharply. "It's not five hundred a week, nor two-fifty a week--" He held up his hand to stall off interruption. "You've just told me I couldn't buy a week of your time for a thousand dollars. I'm not going to. But I am going to buy that week for two thousand. Heavens!--I've only got so many years to live--"

"And you can buy years?" Professor Carey queried slyly.

"Sure. That's why I'm here. I buy three years in one, and the week from you is part of the deal."

"But I have not accepted," Professor Carey laughed.

"If the sum is not sufficient," Dick said stiffly, "why name the sum you consider fair."

And Professor Carey surrendered. So did Professor Barsdale, head of the department of chemistry.

Already had Dick taken his coaches in mathematics duck hunting for

weeks in the sloughs of the Sacramento and the San Joaquin. After his bout with physics and chemistry he took his two coaches in literature and history into the Curry County hunting region of southwestern Oregon. He had learned the trick from his father, and he worked, and played, lived in the open air, and did three conventional years of adolescent education in one year without straining himself. He fished, hunted, swam, exercised, and equipped himself for the university at the same time. And he made no mistake. He knew that he did it because his father's twenty millions had invested him with mastery. Money was a tool. He did not over-rate it, nor under-rate it. He used it to buy what he wanted.

"The weirdest form of dissipation I ever heard," said Mr. Crockett, holding up Dick's account for the year. "Sixteen thousand for education, all itemized, including railroad fares, porters' tips, and shot-gun cartridges for his teachers."

"He passed the examinations just the same," quoth Mr. Slocum.

"And in a year," growled Mr. Davidson. "My daughter's boy entered Belmont at the same time, and, if he's lucky, it will be two years yet before he enters the university."

"Well, all I've got to say," proclaimed Mr. Crockett, "is that from now on what that boy says in the matter of spending his money goes."



"And now I'll have a snap," Dick told his guardians. "Here I am, neck and neck again, and years ahead of them in knowledge of the world. Why, I know things, good and bad, big and little, about men and women and life that sometimes I almost doubt myself that they're true. But I know them.

"From now on, I'm not going to rush. I've caught up, and I'm going through regular. All I have to do is to keep the speed of the classes, and I'll be graduated when I'm twenty-one. From now on I'll need less money for education--no more coaches, you know--and more money for a good time."

Mr. Davidson was suspicious.

"What do you mean by a good time?"

"Oh, I'm going in for the frats, for football, hold my own, you know--and I'm interested in gasoline engines. I'm going to build the first ocean-going gasoline yacht in the world--"

"You'll blow yourself up," Mr. Crockett demurred. "It's a fool notion all these cranks are rushing into over gasoline."

"I'll make myself safe," Dick answered, "and that means experimenting, and it means money, so keep me a good drawing account--same old way--all four of us can draw."