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# The OCTOPUS

Frank Norris

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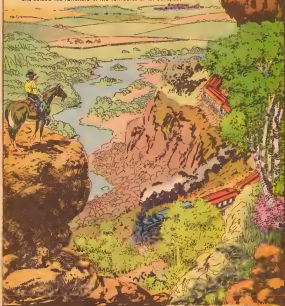
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The

# OCTOPUS

Frank Morris

Into the quiet, wheat-raising community of the San Joaquin Valley in central California came the railroad, a monster of steel and steam which burst into the prosperous valley and seized the ranchers in the tentacles of an octopus.



One day, Presley, a young poet who lived with Magous Derrick and his family on Los Muertos Rancho, was riding his bicycle back from Bannockville where he had gone for the mail.

If I could only put this country into verse—a great song of the West which would embrace a complete era.



He soon came to the ranch house and was met by Harran, Magous Derrick's younger son.

Here's the mail. I think I shall go on.



Recognizing his father's handwriting on one of the envelopes, Harran slit it open and cast his eye rapidly over the pages.

My father is coming home tomorrow morning. We've lost the case.



What case? Oh, in the matter of rates?

The judge ruled that the railroad could not operate at a profit with the new rates for grain. He has put them back up to what they were before the commissioners made the cut.



That's S. Behrman's work again. He and the judge and the Railroad Commission are as thick as thieves. I wonder why they don't hold us up with a gun in our faces and be done with it.



*Presley pushed on in the direction of Guadalajara. Before long, he came to the depot of the Pacific and Southwestern Railroad.*

Hello there, Mr. Presley.

Hello, Dyke. What are you doing about here at this time of day?



I'm on my last run. I'm fired.

Fired! Why, what for, Dyke?



The railroad is cutting wages--mine along with that of any little wiper in the yard. I told them that, in justice to myself, I wouldn't do first-class work for third-class pay.



It's shameful, but that doesn't shut you out from work. There are other railroads in the state not controlled by the P and S.

Name one.



*Presley was silent.*

No, I've decided to go into the hop-raising business. I've saved a good deal in the last ten years, and there ought to be money in hops.

Yes, but be sure you have a clear understanding with the railroad about the shipping rate.



*Presley went on to the Gulen Sabre ranch. He found its owner, Annixter, on the front porch.*

What are you doing up this way?

Just having a look around. I'd like to leave my bicycle here and go on to Los Muertos on foot. The roads are rough.



Take a look at the herd of sheep as you go up. You might write a poem about them. Lamb—ram. Catch on?



*Presley pushed on. When he came to the railroad tracks, he jumped back as a locomotive shot by him with a roar.*



*Then Presley was conscious of a confusion of lamentable sounds. He ran down the track and came upon the sheep. They had been crossing the tracks, and the iron monster had charged full into their midst!*



*Presley turned away, sick at heart!*



The following morning, *Harron Derrick* rode to *Guadalupe* to meet his father.

Harron, those plows look like the ones we are waiting for. Drive over, boy.



*Harron* brought the team up to the siding.

Ah, I was right.

They've come at last, and just in time, too.



Then they become aware of *S. Behrman*, the banker of *Bonaville* and representative of the *R and S W Railroad* in that section.

Good morning. It looks a trifle like rain. I suppose you will want to begin plowing next week, so I'll see that your plows are hurried through for you.



What do you mean? The plows are here. I am going to have my wagons down this afternoon to pick them up.

I'm sorry, but freight coming from eastern points must first go to *San Francisco* and be reshipped from there.



Oh, you're not content with your long-haul rate, you want to get us under your ruinous short-haul rate, too. Isn't it a force! The whole dirty business!



*Magnus Derrick had invited the neighboring ranchers to dinner that night at the Gulen Sage ranch, Anxister was preparing to leave*

Pull my saddle on the buckskin, Billy. I'm going over to Los Muertos.

Sae's not here, Mr Anxister. Delaney took her out.



Who said you could take the buckskin? Fock off! I won't have your kind about the place!



*Anxister ripped out on a colt, ordered the buggy, and drove out into the rain, which had just begun to fall*



*Steadily the rain increased, and he was obliged to raise the top of the buggy. While he was doing this, Delaney came around a bend in the road*

Hello, Mr Anxister. Kind of sort of wet, isn't it?



*Angry beyond the power of rebort, Delaney passed the buggy in a single bound. Anxister drove on. As he came to the railroad track a freight train passed, and on some flat cars near the end Anxister plainly saw Magnus Derrick's plows being carried away at the very time they were most needed*





When Anxiter arrived at Los Muertos, he found a group already assembled. Among them was Gassinger, editor of the principal newspaper in the county:



There's some talk of the railroad selling the ranchers their sections.

What does that mean?

When the railroad was being built, the government granted to the P and S W the odd-numbered sections of land on either side of the proposed route.



The even-numbered sections were sold to us ranchers with the understanding that the railroad would soon sell its sections to us at about two dollars and fifty cents an acre.

But the matter has dragged on from year to year. Meanwhile, the land has quadrupled in value.



You don't suppose the railroad will let the land go for two-fifty an acre, do you?

They've got to stick by their agreement. We've got contracts.



Look to them, then, Mr Anxiter. Be sure that you are protected.



*Carringer departed, leaving the ranchers alone. After dinner, Magnus opened the discussion.*

Well, gentlemen, I have lost my grain-rate case against the railroad. And there are rumors that the rates are going up even more.



S. Bohman manipulated the whole affair. He and his bosses have the Railroad Commission in their pocket!

It is to the Railroad Commission, nevertheless, that the people must look for relief.



*Then Osterman, one of the young ranchers, spoke.*

Why not have a Railroad Commission of our own? Buy delegates!

Are you proposing a scheme of bribery, sir?



Exactly. We've fought and fought, in the courts and out, and S. Bohman socks us every time. This is our chance to get even and save the situation for ourselves.



I can be no party to a scheme of overt bribery and corruption, sir.

If there was one legitimate hope that was left untried, I would try it. But there's not. Grain shipping rates are increasing while the price of wheat is sagging. If we don't do something, we are ruined.



The other ranchers agreed with Osterman. They asked him to look into the political angles. Then they turned their attention to plowing. On one division of Guilan Sobé, thirty-five plows, each drawn by its team of ten, stretched in an interminable line.



Suddenly, there came the shrill trilling of a whistle. At once, the line of plows got slowly under way, the horses straining in their traces.



The plowing commenced. Steadily the hundred iron teeth bit deep into the brown, humid earth.



Everywhere throughout the great San Joaquin, a thousand plows up-stirred the land. Only Los Muertos was idle.

Let us wait one week longer for the plows. Then, if they do not arrive, we'll buy old-style plows in Boneville. We can afford to lose the money better than the season.



*Meanwhile, with money from the ranchers, Osterman bought a politician who could assure the election of a ranchers' candidate to the Railroad Commission. He began to tell Annister about it at a dance Annister was giving to celebrate the completion of his giant new barn.*



I managed--  
I schemed--

Oh, rot your schemes! Come into the harness room. There's a punch there that will make the hair grow on the top of your head.



*The harness room was full of noise and talk. Then Presley came in and drew Annister aside.*

I have just come from Bonreville. I saw Delaney, that hard you find. He's got the buckskin, and he's full of bad whiskey. He says he's coming over here to shoot up the place.



Ah, he is, is he? All right. Don't tell anybody else. You might score the women.



In the barn the dancing was in full swing. Anstree, picking his way across the floor, came upon Hilma Tree, the daughter of the couple who ran his dairy farm.

Having a good time, Miss Hilma?

The best time! It is all so lovely.



Anstree was smiling with uneasiness.

Want to dance?

Oh, yes!



They found themselves on the floor, carelessly jostled, holding closely to each other, when Dalaney arrived.



With a furious stamping of hoofs, he rode the buckskin straight into the middle of the barn.



In a second the dance was a bedlam. The throng of guests bore back against the sides of the barn, leaving Annister and Hilma alone, face to face with Delaney.

Get back! The fool might shoot.

You, too!



For the briefest lapse of time, he and Hilma looked into each other's eyes. Then Annister pushed her from him.

Get back, I tell you!



The cow-puncher, addressing himself to Annister, poured out a torrent of invective.

Well, if it ain't old Annister. Giv' a dance, does he? Well, I come just to show you how Annister can dance all by himself. Turn up, Annister.



Suddenly, Delaney fired, and a little splinter of wood ripped into the air at Annister's feet.



Annister hardly moved. He stood with his hands in his pockets, his eyes glittering.

Hand over that horse, Delaney, and clear out!



What did you say?  
I guess you must  
be looking for  
trouble.

You're wrong, m'son. If  
I were looking for trouble,  
there wouldn't be any  
guesswork about it.



*Abruptly the duel began, report following  
report, spurts of pale blue smoke jutting  
like the doris of short spears between the  
two men.*



*Then there was a great shout,  
and Annister was aware of  
Delaney scrambling off the  
floor, blood on his wrist.*



*Delaney turned, ran toward  
the doorway, and disappeared.*



*Men and women crowded  
around Annister, full of  
praise for his.*

Where did you learn  
to shoot that way?

Oh, don't say anything  
about it. I only did  
what any man would  
have done in my place.



An hour later the dance was progressing as though nothing had occurred. The ranchers had reassembled in the harness room when Anstater became aware of a boy pulling at his sleeve.

Message for you, sir



Anstater tore the stick envelope open. It contained sealed envelopes for Magnus Derrick and the other ranchers. Magnus Derrick was the first to receive his.

Read it, Mr Derrick.



"The value of the railroad land you occupy has been fixed at twenty-seven dollars per acre. The land is now for sale at that price to anyone. S Behrman, Local Agent, P and S W R."



Suddenly the temper burst. A dozen men were on their feet, their faces purple with rage.

The company promised to sell to us of two dollars and fifty cents an acre!

And they said they would sell to us first. Now the land is for sale to anybody!



I'll fight this out till I've spent every cent of my money.

I'll die fighting for my home before I give in to this!





*Suddenly, Osterman leaped to his feet!*

We must stand together. I call for a League, with every one of us here to join it, banded together to death, if need be, for the protection of our rights and homes.



We have a committee of work already. I am a member, and so are Mr. Amster, Mr. Broder-son and Mr. Harlan Derrick. Let this committee be the nucleus of the League. Trust us. We are working for you and with you.



For president of this League there can be but one man to whom we must all look as leader-- Magnus Derrick.



*The name was received with a storm of cheers.*

Gentlemen, to accept control of an organization whose principles are not yet fixed is a heavy responsibility. I shrink from it--



No, no. The League tonight and Derrick for president!

The League first, principles afterward!



We can't wait. Let us draw up a set of resolutions to stand together, and each man present affix his signature thereto.



A set of resolutions was drafted. Anster was the first to sign. Others followed. At length the paper reached Magnus Derrick.

Gentlemen, I beg of you to allow me further consideration.



No, no. Now or never!

Don't leave us. We look to you for help.



The clamor was deafening. The throng of men surrounded Magnus. Then there was a thunder of jubilation. Magnus had signed.



*All through the winter the League was consolidated. Now had the executive committee forgotten its secret scheme of electing a board of railroad commissioners who would favor the ranchers.*

We have one candidate assured. But to have a majority on the commission, we need another.



How about my older brother, Lyman?

Excellent! He's a successful lawyer in San Francisco, keen, clear-headed, and, being Magnus Derrick's son, can be trusted.



*To secure Lyman's election, the committee found it necessary to buy outright the votes of certain delegates.*

Do you think the rest of the League guesses what we are doing?

No. They are only interested in the results.



*Lyman was elected with very little difficulty.*

How could the railroad be fooled so easily? I'm not satisfied. The thing is yellow, I tell you.



We got the commission we wanted, didn't we? You're just being obstinate.

If you got drowned in a river, Annister, you'd float upstream just to be contrary.



Meanwhile, buyers had appeared for the exorbitantly priced sections of railroad land—men obviously acting for the railroad or for S. Behrman. Prominent among them, and bidding for land on Amstar's ranch, was Delaney.

They are dummy-buyers, men without property or money.



The railroad decided these dummy buyers the land and guaranteed them possession. When members of the League refused to allow the dummy buyers to come upon their land, the railroad began suits to evict the ranchers.



Test cases were carried to the United States Circuit Court in San Francisco. Magnus and Harmon Derrick, in San Francisco awaiting the court's decision, stopped in to see Lyman.

So much is involved in this, Lyman—our home, practically our whole fortune. And it's not only us. If this thing goes through, it will absolutely beggar nearly one hundred men.



How we wheat growers are exploited and deceived! Well, one thing at least we can depend on. The commission will cut grain rates, eh, Lyman?



Yes, but don't expect too much at first. The whole schedule of rates has become too confused to adjust quickly.

I know you will be fair, and I respect you for it.



The court handed down its decision--against the ranchers. A few days later, a genial man entered the freight office of the Grand SW Railroad in Bonnaville. He was Dyke, the engineer who, when fired by the railroad, had gone into the hop-raising business.

I'll be wanting some cars from you people before the summer is out.

Oh, you'll get your cars all right. The rate for shipping hops is five cents a pound.



That's where you're wrong, m'son. It's two cents. You told me that yourself last fall.



Sahman came out and shook hands politely with Dyke.

Five cents is right. The rates were changed last June.



You promised me a rate of two cents! I went ahead with my business on that understanding!

Hops have gone up, Mr. Dyke. The freight rate has gone up to meet the price. We charge all the traffic will bear.



Dyke staggered out, crushed, confused. Then bitter, fierce, ambitious, his wrath boiled up in his heart.

By God, that rancher, the railroad, is sucking my blood!



Meanwhile, Hilda Tree and her family had left Anister's ranch and moved to San Francisco. Anister suddenly felt a great tenderness well up in him.



He immediately went to San Francisco and persuaded Hilda to marry him. Two weeks later they were in a Pullman on their way home. At about half-past three in the morning, a hideous rasp was heard.



Emergency brakes. Probably a cow on the track.



With a final shriek, the train came to a definite halt. Then from far out toward the front of the train came the sharp, insistent report of a revolver.

Say, that's shooting. This is a hold-up.



Instantly, a white-hot excitement flared from end to end of the car.

Steady. They can't hurt you. I won't leave you.



A doctor was called for among the passengers. After what seemed to be an hour's delay, he returned.

What happened?

The brakeman is dead. It seems some fellow was on the roof of the express car all the time.



Then he went back and uncoupled the express car. The brakeman guessed something was wrong, so he ran up and took a couple of shots at him.



He jumped down on the coal in the tender, crawled over and held up the man in the cab, and made them stop the train.



This fellow just turned and nailed the brakeman right there.



As soon as the fellow uncoupled the express car, he made the engineer run her up the track to a road crossing, where he had a horse tied.



When he got there, he dynamited the safe and took five thousand dollars in gold coin which was railroad money. Never touched the rest of it.



Then he lit out. The brakeman, before he died, said the fellow was a discharged railroad employee and had a grudge against the road.



Dyke, by the Lord! That's the name.



News of the hold-up was wired an ahead. When the train arrived at Barnsville, the depot was black with people. Genzinger, the newspaper editor, caught Anxister's elbow.

Can I have your version of the affair, Mr. Anxister?

Yes! The railroad drove Dyke from his job because he wouldn't work for starvation wages. Then they raised freight rates on him and robbed him of all he had. They drove him to this

BUN





*Annixter and Hilma drove home. There, they saw a wooden box that stood on the porch.*

Maybe it's a wedding present.



*As the top of the box came away, Annixter tried to restrain Hilma.*

Oh, I know what this is. It isn't anything but some machinery.



*Annixter took it inside and, hammer in hand, attacked it vigorously.*

Oh, what do you think it can be?



*But already she had pulled away the exception. Underneath were two dozen Winchester repeating rifles.*

What—what? Oh, why are you getting these?

Well, it may not come to anything at all, but suppose the railroad tries to jump any of the ranches? We Leaguers have decided we wouldn't let it. That's all.



*Weeks passed. Then Lincoln was called to a special meeting of the executive committee of the League.*

My son Lyman has come down from San Francisco to acquaint us with the new grain rates prepared by the railroad commissioners.



*He gave the men copies of the new rate schedule.*

Why, look here, where is there any reduction in rates in the San Joaquin? The rates have been reduced only where no one ever ships wheat!

Of course, all the points in the state could not be covered at once.



Why, Lyman, you have not cut rates in the San Joaquin at all! We are no better off than we were before we secured your election as commissioner.



*Lyman rose and made a long speech, saying that it would be the work of many years before the desired low rates could be assured.*

The main problem has not been completely solved, but an average ten per cent cut has been made all over the state.



We elected you to reduce the San Joaquin rates. You didn't do it, and I want to know why.

I'll tell you why it's because we've been sold out. It's because our commissioners have betrayed us.



This is a scheme of rates made for the railroad and by the railroad, and you were bought over to put your name to it!



All the men in the room were on their feet!

Answer me! Were you paid by the railroad to leave the San Joaquin rate untouched? I tell you to your face that you were!



You know that all was fair and above board

Liar! Bribe-eater! You were bought and paid for!



Another's arm seemed almost of itself to leap out from his shoulder. The blue suit Lyman staggering backward!

Stop! Not before his father!

I am no father to this man, gentlemen. Now, sit, leave my house



Lyman swung open the door.

Bribe-eater, am I? Is it any worse than giving a bribe? How is it that all of once you're so clean and straight? You weren't so particular when the commissioners had to be elected!



Two or three months went by. One day, Presley was at Annister's ranch when the noise of a galloping horse was heard.

There's somebody in a hurry, for sure



Annister threw open the window.

What is it?

Dyke. It's Dyke!



The next instant Dyke shot into view. He sprang from the saddle as his horse collapsed to the ground.

Annister, give me a horse, quick, do you hear? I'm running for my life. The posse's not ten minutes behind me!



Annister sprang from the window and ran to the stable.

Come on, come on! I'll give you the buckskin



Then followed minutes of furious haste as they darted about the yellow mare, bucking, strapping, ditching.

Now, Dyke, up you go. She'll kill herself running before they can catch you.

God bless you, Annister.



Answering the good of the spur, the buckskin swung into the road, disappearing in a cloud of dust.



A few minutes later five men, their eyes upon their hands, their rifles across their pommels, swept by in a storm of dust, splinting boots and streaming manes.

One of them is Delaney

Another's that chap, Christian, S. Behrman's, cousin. And the one in the white hat is the sheriff



Dyke thundered across the railway tracks at Guadalupe, not five minutes ahead of his pursuers.



His eye fell upon a detached locomotive that lay quietly steaming on the up line. He leaped from the buckskin and sprang toward it.

Out of the cab! Quick, or I'll kill you both!



The two men tumbled from the tender as Dyke swung himself up, reaching with the old instinct for the familiar levers.



The posse swung into view, and a shot shattered the cab windows above the engineer's head.



The engine gathered speed and roared out upon the open track, blotting the sunshine with the belch of its hot, thick smoke.



The posse sprang into the cab of another locomotive, and the engine was soon flying in pursuit of Dyke.



Dyke thundered on. Suddenly, a semaphore rose ahead of him, its arm dropped, showing that the switch was open.



**Dyke** reversed. He released the levers, reacting for his revolver.

There's nothing I can do but go back.



**Roaring, clanging, spitting death, furious, terrible as thunder, the two engines met and passed.**



He's hit! I know I hit him!



**A bullet had grazed Dyke's hip. After riding awhile, he slowed the engine down, jumped to the road and plunged into the wheat.**



**The posse returned to Guadalajara, swung themselves on their horses, and started back along the track. S. Bahman joined them. Soon, the bloodhounds picked up the scent.**

That's him! Got on, boys!



**T**hey dashed forward! Finally, they came to an arroyo. Dyke was there, at bay at last!

Look! There he is! Oh, we've got him now!



**W**ithout warning, pistol shots ripped out! The posse took shelter behind rocks and trees.



**T**hen Dyke's revolver missed fire! The posse rushed in. They swarmed upon him from all sides, striking, clutching, locking.



**S**till Dyke fought, his great fists working the pistols.

By God, he'll get away yet!



**B**ut at length the sheriff was able to strap the handcuffs on, and a rifle was passed around his body.

Well, we got him!



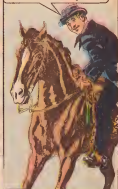


**T**hat summer Osterman cut his wheat before any of the other ranchers. As soon as his harvest was over, he organized a jack-rabbit drive--an event in which the whole countryside would take part. The morning of the day of the drive, Prasley and Harron Derrick saddled their horses before the stables on Los Muertos.

I hear Christian has been off the railroad to put him in possession here on Los Muertos, and Delaney is doing the same for Quien Sabe.



They won't dare move on us yet. Why, the moment they'd try, they would have six hundred rifles croaking at them.



**P**rasley and Harron trotted on along the country road. Like a gigantic carpet, the wheat spread itself as far as the eye could reach.



**A**s they went along, they overtook Heaven, one of Derrick's tenants.

Say, I take some shots at those rabbits, you bet.



*Plesley and Harlan rode on. From all directions horses and buggies could be seen driving across the stubble, converging upon a rendezvous where a vast crowd was already forming.*



*Then a great confused sound rose into the air as the entire line moved slowly across the fields, sending up a cloud of white dust that hung over the scene like smoke.*



*The thousands of conveyances were arranged in a long line shaped like a wide-open crescent.*



*From off the surface of the ground jack-rabbits started up at every moment, as the line went forward.*



*Gradually, the number of rabbits increased. Denser and denser grew the throng. Far off, the corral came into sight.*



*Finally, the line halted while the herd entered the corral.*



*On signal, the killing began as young fellows with clubs leaped over the rails of the corral and struck. Most of the crowd went off to the barbecue.*



*Soon, everyone was eating. Anixster, Harron and Prasley climbed to a hill to lay out courses for games. One of Anixster's own came running up the hill after them.*

Mr. Anixster! Mr. Osterman's looking for you and Mr. Harron. A cowboy has just come from Magna; Derrick with a message.



*They turned back and found Coleman saddling his horse in furious haste.*

What's up?

Read that! The railroad is putting the dummy buyers in possession of the land.



They've been up to your place already, Mr. Arrester. They have put Delaney in possession and have set all your furniture out in the road.



*Arrester turned about, his lips white.*

Get as many of the League as are here together on this spot, understand! I'll be back in a minute. I must tell Hilma this.



*Hilma ran up as Arrester disappeared.*

Say, these fellows come, hey? Ma, I'm all ready.



*Arrester found Hilma and put an arm around her.*

They've jumped the ranch, little girl. They're in our house now. I'm off. Go to Derrick's and wait for me there.



When he got back to Osterman, Annister found the Leaguers assembled

Is this all of us? Where are the six hundred men who were going to rise when this happened?



They had savored, those other Leaguers

They say they're not going to stand up and be shot at. They want to call a committee meeting

Come on, then, boys. We'll meet Magnus Derrick at Hoover's place



They set off, Annister and Osterman setting a terrific pace. At last, Hoover's house came into sight



Magnus Derrick was waiting for them.

I thought you would bring more men with you.

Not the League! It's gone to pot-- want to places at the first touch



We have been taken by surprise, gentlemen, after all. But there are eleven of us. It is enough.



The United States marshal from San Francisco come down early this morning. S. Behrman met him and provided about a dozen deputies. They are putting the dummy buyers in possession. They are armed and coming this way.



Say, we fight them from that irrigation ditch.



Good. It bars the approach to all the ranches except Benford's, which has already been seized.

I believe that we can go through this day without bloodshed. When the marshal realizes we are in earnest, I am convinced he will withdraw.



If this thing can be settled peaceably, I say let's do it, so long as we don't give in. Boys, let's not fire the first shot.



Heaven went out to scout the road. The rest took up their position in the ditch.

Precisely, I forbid you to take any part in this affair.

Yes, this is no business of yours.



*Presley withdrew. Ten minutes passed. The road lay empty, baking and white under the sun. Then Heaven galloped up.*

They're coming!



*A buggy drawn by two horses came into view. Nine riders accompanied it.*



*Magnus Derrick sprang out upon the road, beckoning two of the older ranchers to follow him. They advanced, without arms, to meet the marshal.*

Halt! Where are you are!



*The buggy came to a standstill, and Magnus began to speak. His words could not be made out by the men in the ditch, but they saw that the posse was edging up and surrounding the three ranchers.*

Look here, this won't do.



*Arriester jumped out of the ditch to warn Magnus. The other Leaguers followed him, their weapons in their hands.*



**T**hen one of the ranchers with Magnus was accidentally knocked to the ground by a rearing horse that had rubbed against the buggy.



**T**he incident was misinterpreted. Hoover dropped to one knee and, aiming carefully, fired into the group of men around the buggy.



**I**nstantly, the revolvers and rifles seemed to go off of themselves. Both sides opened fire simultaneously.



**D**elaney, shot through the stomach, slid down from his horse. Another man fell backward from the saddle.



**H**oover rolled forward upon his face. Osterman walked back, blood running from his mouth and nose. Horan Derrick dropped where he stood. Ameliter, instantly killed, fell his length on the ground and lay without movement.





*On their way to the Derrick ranch, Hilma Annister and Mrs. Derrick heard the sounds of distant firing.*



*Because their driver would not go on, Hilma and Mrs. Derrick set off for Hoover's on foot. They found the yard crowded with people.*

Oh, what has happened?

Where's my husband?



*They entered the house. Hilma saw the body of Annister. She said no word. She went to the bed and sat by him, the great tears rolling down her cheeks.*



*The doctor was attending to Horran. All at once the breath ceased. Mrs. Derrick, with a cry that rang all through the house, stretched herself over the body of her son.*

God help me and forgive me!



Seven men were dead. The next day, at a mass meeting of the League in Bonnevile, it was announced that Osterman, too, had died. Then Magnus Derrick stepped to the speaker's place.



But at once, the silence in which Magnus had begun to speak was broken by a shout.

How about the bribery of those two delegates at Sacramento? Tell us about that!



A great confusion broke out.

Before you throw mud at the railroad, let's see if you are clean yourself!



Magnus left the stage. The ranchers found him in a small dressing room.

Those men were paid by the railroad to break up this meeting. Magnus, come out and give those blocklegs the he



The ground crumbled beneath Magnus' feet. He was ruined.

We were obliged to shut our eyes to means. There was no other way.



One by one, the men went out. Magnus Derrick remained, deserted by his friends, his son murdered, his dishonesty known, broken, discredited, discredited, and abandoned.



About a month later, Presley was walking along a street in San Francisco when his eye was caught by a sign.

It is from there that the orders came that brought Dyke to prison, killed Amblett, ruined Magnus, corrupted Lyman.



An ungovernable desire seized upon Presley to see the man whose power was so vast. He entered the building and in a few minutes found himself before Shelgrim, the president of the railroad.



I live, or did I live, on the Las Muertes ranch--Magnus Derrick's ranch.

I suppose you believe that I am a grand old rascal!



Believe that, young man, I count for nothing. Railroads build themselves. Where there is demand, sooner or later there will be a supply. The wheat is one force, the railroad another, and there is the law that governs them--supply and demand. Men have little to do with the whole business.



But you control the railroad.

I cannot control it. It is a force born out of certain conditions. Can your Mr. Derrick stop the wheat growing? No man can stop the railroad.



*Presley regained the street, his brain in a whirl. He decided to go away on a trip to India and returned to Las Muertas to say goodbye. Mrs. Derrick met him in the dining room.*

We, too, are going away. Just Magus and myself -- all there is left of us.



*Presley stepped across the hallway to Magus' office. Magus had the appearance of a man nearer eighty than sixty.*

I'm going away to India for a while, so I've come to say goodbye.

Going away -- yes, why, it's Presley.



*S. Behrman owns Los Muertos now, you know. There is very little money left. Magus is an old man already, and I must take care of him.*



*S. Behrman entered the room. Magus sprang up and stood against the wall. There was the same alertness in his demeanor that one sees in a taxed lion in the presence of its trainer.*

I want my carpenters to begin work here day after tomorrow. You'll be out by then, won't you?

Yes, yes.



*Presley left, unable to witness the death solo which Magnus had fallen. He rode to the hills, where he looked for the last time of the valley unrolled beneath him*



*Several days later, S. Behrman was aboard the bark Swanhilda. A ship-load of his wheat had been purchased by a committee for Indian Famine Relief. The Swanhilda was to take the wheat to India*



How are you getting on?

Very fairly, sir

*He went forward to the hatch that opened down into the vast hold of the ship. A great iron chute connected this hatch with a grain elevator on the dock, and through it was rushing a veritable cataclysm of wheat.*



*No man was in sight. The grain seemed impelled with a force of its own. Cautiously, S. Behrman peered down into the hold.*



*His foot caught in a coil of rope, and he fell.*



*For a moment he was stunned. But by degrees his wits steadied themselves.*

Here's a fix! There must be some exit from here.



*But search as he would, he could find no outlet. He returned laboriously to the space under the open hatchway.*

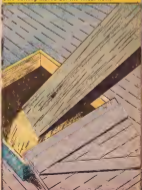
Hello, on deck there, somebody!  
For God's sake!



*The steady metallic roar of the pouring wheat drowned out his voice. The succeeding waves beat him back, and carried him off his feet.*



*Leaping continuously from the chute, the wheat poured around him, covering him, with nothing moved but the wheat itself.*



*The Swastika cast off. She sailed to San Francisco, where Presley boarded her*



*The terrible drama through which he had lived was over now.*

The railroad has prevailed. It killed Harran, Costerman, Annister, beggared Magnus and wrecked his honor, widowed Hilma, hounded Eyle and made him a criminal. Is nothing left?



*And then it came to him. The wheat remained untouched, unassailable, undefiled, the mighty world force, indifferent to the human swarms, moved onward. Through the water of blood of the irrigation ditch, the great harvest of Los Muertos rolled like a flood to feed thousands of starving people on the barren plains of India.*

*Falseness dies, injustice and oppression fade and vanish away. The individual suffers, but the race goes on. The larger view, through all chaos, discovers the truth that will prevail, and all things, surely, inevitably, resistlessly work together for good.*



THE END

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## FRANK NORRIS

**I**N 1899, when Frank Norris' first big novel, *McTeague*, was published, reviewers wrote, "It is about the most unpleasant American story that anybody has ever ventured to write." "We must express regret that he should have followed the fashion set by so many of our younger writers in searching out the degraded side of humanity."

Two years later, when *The Octopus* appeared, these same critics hailed its author as the leading American novelist of the day.

At the turn of the century, American readers were interested only in stories with happy endings, where goodness was rewarded and evil was punished. They did not care that real life is not always that way. When men like Frank Norris wrote angrily of the injustices and poverty to be found in America, readers turned away.

*The Octopus* made them change their minds. The sweep of the novel and the reality of its characters held the imagination. It was so powerful a book that people had to care about the wheat growers, almost against their own wishes.

Frank Norris did not finish what he had to say. *The Octopus* was to be the first of three novels dealing with the production, distribution and consumption of wheat. The second, *The Pit*, was published in 1902. It is about wild speculation on the Chicago stock exchange, where investments in the wheat crop are made. The third novel, *The Wolf*, was to tell of a famine in Europe, where the wheat was to be sold. Norris died before he began writing it.

Frank Norris was born Benjamin Franklin Norris, Jr., in Chicago, Illinois on March 5, 1879. He was one of five children. Only Frank and his younger brother Charles,

who also became a writer, survived.

The Norris family moved to the San Francisco area when Frank was a boy. While he was in high school, he became interested in art, and went to Paris to study. When his father learned that Frank was writing stories and sending them home for Charles to read, he demanded that his son return.

For several years after that, Frank Norris was a student at the University of California, but he left in 1894 without graduating.

That same year, his parents were divorced. Norris discovered that he would have to take care of himself. From 1895 to 1898 he was in South Africa, as a correspondent for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He covered the conflicts between the English and the Boer settlers. The Boers captured him and ordered him out of the country, but he fell ill with an African fever and was forced to remain for several months.

Norris came back to the United States in 1898, but shortly afterward, he went to Cuba to cover the Spanish-American War. Just after the war, he fell ill with another attack of the African fever. He returned to California an invalid.

During the next two years, Norris wrote *The Octopus* and *The Pit*, the first two parts of his epic of wheat. The success of these books made him famous and financially secure. He and his wife and daughter were about to start out on a trip around the world in 1902, to gather material for the third book, *The Wolf*, when he died, a few days after an appendix operation in a San Francisco hospital. He was thirty-two years old.





## AN EARTHLY PARADISE

**F**RANCIS DRAKE called the land New Albion when he reached it in 1579, but the Spaniards who discovered it in 1533 named it after a fabulous island in a Spanish romance. Its author wrote: "At the right of the Indies, there is an island named California very close to the part of the Earthly Paradise which is inhabited only by women. The island is rich everywhere in gold and precious stones."

Both Spain and England thought the land was worthless, but claimed California to keep it from falling to the other. Spain wanted to insure her control over the southern and western coasts of the newly-discovered American continent. England wanted to challenge that control.

Spanish settlements were made on Baja California, a tongue of land which juts out into the Gulf of California. But for hundreds of years after its discovery by Europeans, Alta California, the part of California which is now in the United States, remained the territory of the Indians who had always been there. Only a few exploring parties ever touched the coastline. England established its colonies on the eastern shores of America. Spain extended her colonial empire into Central and South America.

In 1769, six years before the outbreak of the American Revolution in the east, Spain's colonial government in Mexico gave permission for a Spanish colony to be founded in Alta California, more to keep the territory from England and Russia than for any other reason.

The danger was not as great as the Spaniards feared. English trappers of the Hudson's Bay Company explored the Pacific Northwest, but England did not follow up the claims of Sir Francis Drake. The first group of Russian fur trappers did not settle in Sitka, Alaska until thirty years after the Spaniards had claimed California.

A Spanish land-and-sea expedition, consisting of three ships and two overland parties, set out from Baja California and northern Mexico. The first ship, the *San Antonio*, arrived at San Diego after a fifty-nine-day voyage north, fighting the Japanese current all the way. One hundred and ten days after setting out, the second ship, the *San Carlos*, made it to harbor at San Diego. But all but two of its twenty-four-man crew had died of scurvy. The third ship, the *San Jose*, sank at sea with all aboard. The two overland expeditions had so difficult a time crossing the mountains and deserts. Altogether, of the three hundred men who started out, only half that number ever saw San Diego. But the territory was saved for Spain.

In 1812, while James Madison was President of the United States, Russian fur hunters from Alaska set up Fort Ross near the mouth of the Russian River, north of San Francisco. In spite of the protests of the Spanish and United States governments, the Russians did not leave until trapping became unprofitable in 1844—four years before the discovery of gold.

Mexico declared herself independent of Spain in 1821, and California became part of Mexico on April 11, 1822. But the government was very unstable. Between 1829 and 1845, there were at least six revolutions.

During that time, American pioneers began coming into California. By 1845, there were seven hundred Americans in all California. In 1846, the American settlers proclaimed their independence from Mexico. But not until the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ended the Mexican War on February 2, 1848, did California become a United States territory. On September 9, 1850, California was admitted into the Union as the thirty-first state.



## FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY

"OUR children eat every other day."

The president of the Yugoslav town spoke quietly, but his simple statement chilled the relief worker "Every other day." This was happening as emergency food supplies were being rushed into the bombed-out town at the rate of five tons a day. What if there had been no supplies?

After the end of World War I, great waves of famine and disease swept across central Europe, killing hundreds of thousands of people. While World War II was still being fought, representatives from forty-four countries met in Washington, D. C. to figure out how to prevent the same catastrophes from happening again.

The result of their meeting was the organization of UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. The countries that had not been invaded pledged to provide two per cent of their incomes for UNRRA's operation. Aid was to be given to stricken countries and peoples regardless of their race, religion or political beliefs.

An UNRRA observer in Yugoslavia wrote:

"As the first shipment of relief supplies was sighted, people came running from their homes, children were dismissed from school, church bells rang out a greeting of joy. The vessel warped against the docks. As the precious sacks of wheat were carried off, a battalion of girls who had been assigned their tasks by Yugoslav authorities followed behind the sacks, sewing up any holes or tears through which a grain might spill. Behind them came other girls, armed with brooms to sweep up any wheat that had spilled. These sweepings were carefully collected and re-sacked. Not a grain was wasted of this shipment of three thousand tons of food.

"Those who did not need immediate relief gave up some of their ration stamps to those who had nothing.

"The distribution of canned meat and vegetables allowed each person slightly more than one can. Some cans were opened and the contents were portioned out exactly. By exact I mean just that. If the scale wavered slightly, the weighing official took a spoon and removed one beam so that the scales showed the correct portion had been given."

In the three years of UNRRA's existence, over twenty-five million tons of goods were shipped to the war-torn countries of Europe and Asia. Enough grain was sent to make twelve billion one-pound loaves of bread. UNRRA used surplus army food supplies. Other items shipped were oils, fats, peas, beans, sugar, and canned and powdered milk.

More than three hundred thousand farm animals—mules, heifers, bulks, horses, and chicks—went overseas in seventy-two specially outfitted ships. Several thousand United States farm boys and farmers made trips across the oceans as livestock handlers.

UNRRA equipment went into repairing transportation facilities destroyed by the war so that relief could be given wherever there was need. Whole hospitals were shipped. Experts in agriculture, public health, social welfare, engineering, and transportation directed relief operations and advised governments on how to put UNRRA aid to the best possible use.

UNRRA began in 1945 and ended in 1948. When it was disbanded, its operations were turned over to various organizations of the United Nations—the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization and the preparatory commission of the International Refugee Organization.



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