THE TOUR CONTINUED

BY DANIEL GARRISON

I

I do not like to beg.

"Hark! hark! the dogs do bark;
The beggars are coming to town."

"Lady, have you got something you can give a hungry man to eat?" And then the lady went back in the house and in a few minutes returned with a brown paper sack of food. How easy. Why, there was nothing to it! Bob and I laughing left the streets where what he terms "Hoover's unemployed children" may sleep for a night or many nights without taking to themselves a religion, having their pasts and pedigrees authenticated, or being made to feel that their benefactor must indeed be generous to treat them with ordinary kindness.

We stayed in Denver a week and then were down in the freight yard waiting again for a train. It was dark and the train came slowly out of the yard. We squatted in the grass, letting the coal cars go by. On the loaded cars were men rolling the coal over the side to be picked up and taken away before daylight.

Then the boxcars and tankers began coming by. There would be the quick patter of shod feet in the cinders and gravel, silence a moment and then the muted thud of a body against the boxcar's wall, and a silhouette of greater density than the dark, going hand over hand towards the top. Behind and ahead there were other shortly terminated patters of feet and flesh-softened thuds—the mystery and poetry of action—and the clacking of the wheels came steadily faster and metallically irate. There were no open boxcars and we caught a tanker rather than ride the top.

And then as if to purge our minds of pleasure at the shallow drama of men taking trains out in the dark for unknown places, it began to get cold. The track was on a gradual up grade going towards Cheyenne. As we went steadily higher into the Rockies it became as steadily colder. First we shivered with the cold but after two hours we became numb and apathetic. Our eyelids were heavy but there was no sleep. Feeling went out of hands and feet and we stood on the narrow runway with arms hooked over the hand bars. The train went on, never stopping and there would be the sense of gliding earth beneath you and time beating monotonously on your brain. We shouted until we were hoarse, stamping dead feet. It was a relief, the sense of action in your mind.

The lights from the houses, porous and yellow in the dark, came to seem like minute summaries of all the warmth and melancholy of life and death to us on that tank car, and the light struck you like a shaft of lost sunlight and left you shivering in the static cold after it was gone.

The freight stopped in Cheyenne shortly after daylight. In the jungle there was a fire to warm by.