

— How Brings Happiness —

A solitary oil derrick of the standard type, and the soft chug-chugging of the engines as ~~the~~ ^{they} lifted the standard bit and allowed it to fall back into the bowels of the earth, slowly driving it into the mysteries of the lower stratas of the earth's crust; far from any human habitation, in the wilds of Seminole County, Oklahoma, Derr Hankins and Bill Teller, driller and tool-dresser, respectively, were indolently going about their respective duties. Spring was in the April air, a soft southeasterly wind, with a touch of rain in it, was gently ^{ly} whispering in the surrounding post oak trees and the quiet of utter solitude was only disturbed by the constant, rhythmic throb of the oil well machinery and now and then the querulous murmur of a flock of small birds, protesting the encroachment on their erstwhile abode and sanctuary. Teller was lazily dressing a tool at a near by furnace and Hankins the driller was arranging on the testing board some recent cuttings from the depths of the well and had just picked up his magnifying glass to more closely examine the last sample of sand, when a pungent odor of gas assailed his nostrils. Instantly he ~~was~~ turned and cast a furtive glance at the top of the hole, where the drill line was playing up and down. A faint misty smoke was lazily curling up from the mouth of the hole.

Instantly all that had been indolence vanished; squirting a stream of Beechnut saliva from his huge mouth, ~~Derr~~ Hankins went into action. With a shout to the tool-dresser to extinguish the fires, he sprang to the controls and throwing the clutch into place began the withdrawal of the tools from the hole with what remained of the steam pressure so soon as the fires in the boiler could be extinguished. The furnace was extinguished, the tools withdrawn and every precaution taken to avoid the ignition of the flowing gas. What had been idle routine but a moment before now became feverish activity. Soon the soft afternoon quiet was only disturbed by the low hissing of steam from the dying boiler. Bill ~~and~~ Teller was sent to the nearest phone to notify the main officials at Tulsa and request the immediate provision of thirty one hundred feet of six inch casing as there was four hundred feet of open hole. Hankins went about his work of precaution and preparation systematically, knowing what the morrow would bring, for another wildcat was showing. Soon his chores were finished and he perched himself upon the end of the slanting walking beam and filled his capacious mouth with an ample helping of Beechnut.

Derr Hankins was at peace with the world. Recognized as one of the most capable and fortunate wildcatters in the mid-continent fields his experience told him what the morrow would bring, and perhaps the late afternoon, for he had seen these strikes before. And he was not mistaken. Two hours had not passed before the Scouts began to gather in. Where they came from, or how they received the information is always a question. But come they did like vultures from the air swooping down upon a dead carcass. By nightfall scores of them were on hand, with their plat books and maps. The night would bring others and the next morning would see the dance hall operators, the cafe owners and the cothouse proprietors, seeking locations. The hammer and the saw would be heard on every hand and soon scores of other rigs would be going up, and the mad race for the flowing gold would be on. Derr Hankins had seen it all before, he knew what would follow in detail. He was a wildcat driller, liked the solitude and quiet of secluded, far away places. A dozen times had he seen this same thing happen, and then he would pull up stakes and leave seeking again the solitude of the wildcat driller. But now he realized he was getting on in life, a family should be provided for against old age. Never before had such thoughts crossed his mind. Always he had just drifted away and sought another contract on a wildcat. Now other thoughts assailed him, perhaps he was getting ambitious for the wealth he had made for so many. Perhaps age was bring its sobering influences, at least as he sat there on the slanting end of the walking beam his thoughts drifted to a twenty acre track near by that could be had by the expenditure of practically all his savings from years of toil. Should he take the chance? He was still comparatively young and his experience and ability as a driller was in demand. His health was excellent and many years of his accustomed hardships were left in his sturdy frame. Why not take the chance? Drilling was plentiful, wages good, employment sure. No one ever succeeds who does not take a chance. Other men had grown rich by his exertions, why should not he covet the wealth? So reasoned Kerr Hankins as he sat there meditating on the end of the walking beam. He needed that money to finish his daughter's schooling and finish the son in the course of geology, but with the added wealth he could provide them more handsomely. And then he could be at home and have a little

garden and be home with his wife and family. The picture drew him onward and he decided to take the "flyer".

Leaving the rig in charge of the tool dresser with specific instructions he went into the little board sided tent, that had been home for many months, and procured his check book. Striking out across the wooded hills in a long, distance consuming, stride he made his way to the hut of a Seminole freedman who owned the twenty acre tract. Here he was successful in making a trade for the twenty and parted with the most of his earnings, in fact but a few hundred were left when the check was drawn and the papers exchanged.

The wildcat was a success, the country side flourished with a new oil field town- blare of radios and phonographs on every side- the night brought bright lights in the dancehalls and shouts of laughter, mingled now and then with drunken oaths. Roads were built, scores of new rigs mounted toward the sky, and soon the mighty roar of the great rotary machinery was heard on every side, and still Derr lingered because at last he ~~had~~ caught in the drift and was personally interested in acreage of his own. At times he would regret his actions and then would come the warnings about the heart that comes with newly acquired wealth in large quantities. Still he was not entirely satisfied, the hustle and the bustle pœved him, the anxiety about his own tract's productiveness made him restless. A dozen times a day he would walk over and watch the progress on his own holdings, well knowing that nothing could be developing as yet- he didnt sleep so well, thoughts of big strikes and some times a dry hole would come to devil his slumbers. He, Beechnut did'ent seem to have the same flavor as of old- meals were never as satisfying even though he dodged off and cooked his own food ever once in a while. Big offers were made to him and refused, and then in the wee hours of the night he would wake up and regret. Determine to hunt up the fellows next day and take them up, and then with the coming of the spring time sun he would change his mind. Doubts assailed him on every side. He was ~~not~~ happy. Thoughts of what he would do with "big money" would come and following these visions of a dry hole would bring their punishment. As the big drills sunk deeper into the earth his restless became more pronounced; he became feverish on occasions

loss of appetite was more apparent together with loss of weight. He began taking long strolls during the night to weary himself down to where he could sleep. Pictures of the boy and girl being withdrawn from school and allowed or compelled to work for small wages crept into his thoughts. Maybe the comfortable home swept away by debt and the family forced to ~~live~~ in rented property, denied the accustomed conveniences and comforts- such reflections came to him more and more often. And then the sunshine and the fervid hopes it brings would bolster him up during the day and he would make constant pilgrimages to the twenty acre tract. But he was nervous and distraught- he was ^{now} the same Derr Hankins who had so complacently followed the wildcat game. Gone was his peace of mind, gone the smiling assurance of former days. Derr was the victim of money lust; of doubts and fears and morbid dread. He had never drunk intoxicants except occasionally, but he found himself purchasing a jug and resorting to it more and more often. He began to get quarrelsome with his friends and resort to rough language toward old acquaintances; he who had been renowned for his equitable temper in the old days. His friends began to shun him, he was not the hale fellow well met as of old. And then he began visiting the dance halls and soon was taking a part. Quarrels and fights ensued; friends began to wonder and give advice. He would cut them short and tell them to attend to their own business; and still he was losing weight. His sleep was more restless and disturbed. He began to dream, a thing he had never done before. Derr Hankins was a sink man. And then one night a dream that brought him out of his bed covered with sweat and the visions of a dry hole, an impoverished family, a broken old man.

The next day he hunted up the would be purchasers of his twenty acre tract and sold out to them for a handsome sum and beat it for home. He was wealthy, no more demands for his services as a wildcatter- who would want to wildcat with money in the bank? He sought contracts and was only met with astonishment, but no employment. He began to vision the loss of his wealth and then the dirth of lucrative employment to follow. Frequent quarrels with his wife, a thing that had never happened before. Dissatisfaction with the conduct of the children grew and grew on him. He became miserable, for always the anxiety about lossing his money assailed him. Then a chance acquaintance

told him about the money to be made in stocks. How great fortunes were being piled up every day by operations on the Stock Exchange. He made some small purchases and turned them for profit. He began to make larger ones and more profits and he had visions of a vast fortune beyond the ^{chance} and fear of ever spending and losing it all. But he was never satisfied, never contented; the wealth was never sufficient, the profits never enough. Always was he assailed by doubts and misgivings, the constant urge of more wealth was ever present. He ceased to buy the dividend producing stocks and dealt in those that fluctuated for the quicker, bigger profits. And this brought more doubts and more fears. The satisfied point was never reached; the amount of his fortune was never sufficient- he kept on trying for more- always more and more. And then came the stock break and Derr woke up one morning to find his hitherto vast holdings wiped out. He could cash in for just about what he had paid for his twenty acre lease, a few thousand more. Derr Hankins was prostrated, a nervous wreck. The next day came a letter in the mail demanding his services ~~on~~ on a wildcat well in southwestern Seminole county. A new light came into his eyes, the old urge for the solitude and the loneliness came back. He cashed out his holdings and placed them on time deposit in the bank. Immediately wired acceptance of the employment. He hunted up his old work clothes, purchased a great supply of Beechnut and struck out.

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A lonely and desolate location- a wildcat drilling well in the remote forest- the hiss of the steam boiler and the swish of the drill line as it plunged down in the well- a driller sitting on top of a two story stool patiently testing the line as it plunged upward and downward- a healthy quid of Beechnut in a capacious jaw- a low humed tune and a contented slump of the shoulders. Derr Hankins is happy once more- he is back at work.

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