

A D D I O

By THOMAS BEER

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWARD L. CHASE

THE red-haired child was male, small, and plainly pretending that he was a ractive horse. He cavorted on all fours ahead of Noel, saying "Yuff!" repeatedly and getting nowhere. Noel slowed, bunched himself with his rifle and fishing rods and entangled in the chain of his terrier. Several men watched his progress down the platform, grinning, and from the rear a woman ordered Bud to get out of the gentleman's road. But Bud galloped on, shedding green candy pellets from some pocket in his faded pink garment, and butted his head on the leg of a young man in a conductor's cap. Then he wept.

Persons in blue shirts leaned from the windows of the blighted coach and spoke kindly to Bud, who howled until a red-haired woman marched up and righted him with two slaps. She had a baby tilted over her shoulder and she told Bud: "You're an awful nuisance. You got a mind to put you on the cars and send you home to your pa's."

"Sure," said the conductor, "I'll fetch him off down to Addio. Go out from under, Bud. Here's somebody trying to get on the train."

Bud made a distinct attempt to follow Noel's dog up the steps of the smoker, but was repressed. The tourist sank into the first dirty plush seat, dropped his burdens and looked through the window at Bud's mother, who was pretty. She was the prettiest woman he'd seen in two hours' stay in the torrid city of Olean. She wore no hat and stood talking in a sweet drawl to the conductor while Bud sniffed, sitting on the platform. Two large men in overalls strode up the aisle and descended to shake hands with her.

She drawled: "Yeh, Mr. Carlson's lots better. But the folks at the hospital say he'd ought to stay here mebbe a week. Hey, Charlie"—she spoke to the conductor—"you tell Addio his pa's gettin' on all right and feelin' good but awful weak. Now, Bud, stop cryin' or I'll send you home to papa right off like a shot."

Bud observed that he wanted to go home to papa. The men laughed and one asked: "Hey, Sally, what's it feel like bein' a millionaire's wife?"

"Get out," said the pretty woman. "Millionaire nothin'. The lawyers write it'll come to 'bout sixty-seven thousand dollars. But it'll be months before we get it. They got to sell off Mr. Moretti's store and all. Hey, Charlie, tell Addio to send up baby's other bottle. He's busted two."

The conductor said "Sure," and halted a move on the part of Bud to crawl under the coach. The engine lampishly whistled.

Bud's mother withdrew her son, wailing, up the platform and called back: "Hey, Charlie, tell Addio I bought him some new und'clothes' mornin'. And you fetch up baby's bottle to mrowin'. I'll come down and get it."

The conductor yelled "Sure," the two men scrambled into the coach and the train left Olean. Noel lit his pipe and patted the terrier, which had assumed the weary superior expression of all West Highland terriers in public.

Noel said, "Bud, we're nearly there, old son," and thought of Bud's mother.

An informal and popular character, certainly. Her family arrangements were too tangled for reduction though, and sweat was trickling from Noel's nose to his pipestem. He wiped his face and pulled out of his cigarette case the chart of this expedition, his friend Sanford Rawling's letter.

He read: "At Olean you hunt up the train to Oily City. But don't go to Oily City. Ask for a ticket to North Juniper. No one announces the stations, so tell the conductor to put you off at North Juniper. Do not be discouraged by the appearance of North Juniper. Telephone me and wait at the station with the stolen *carriage of your* railroad to Olean. Several young fellows in blue



"Get Out From Under, Bud. Here's Somebody Tryin' to Get on the Train"

race until I come for you. The agent at North Juniper is a great friend of mine. If you explain who you are he will give you a drink, perhaps."

Noel returned the letter to his case and beheld the conductor near him. Gathering his energies the explorer beamed and said, offering his ticket: "You'd not mind telling me when we come to North Juniper? I get down there."

"Sure, I'll tell you," the official nodded, taking the ticket; "but what the hell do you want to get off there for?"

"I—I'm visiting a—friend who lives about here."

The conductor said affably, "Oh, yeh, the Rawlin' boys, I guess? They're the only folks live anywhere near Juniper you'd be likely to be visitin'. Yeh, English, isn't you? I never seen a Britisher that was black-headed before. Or dark-completed."

Noel shyly told him, "I'm afraid I'm rather tanned. You're American climate. I've been swimming a lot and —

"Yeh? You folks ain't got much climate in England, by all accounts. Well, it's a hot summer. Got a han'sin' pole in that case? Awful good han'sin' up at the Rawlin' place. Me and my brother work there—in the sawmill. Sawed his lef' thumb off last Tuesday," the conductor reported proudly. "And the Danvershobbs each other. They rawin'. Mr. Rawlin's got near a thousand men on the place."

Pretty lively this summer. Yough ought to have a good time," the man assured him, and passed on down the aisle. Noel heard him exclaiming to men deeper in the coach, "An English kid. He's goin' to Rawlin's Hope to visit. Expect he's somebody Sanford Rawlin' met in France."

A burly man came from the next coach and bawled down the smoker: "Hey, Charlie, warn't that Addio Carlson's wife you was gassin' at, back at the station? Yeh? Well, what's she doin' in Olean?"

The conductor bawled back: "Old Carlson got took with his accomplices last Sunday. He's in hospital. Sally come up to me since him."

The fury being now examined Noel, who was awed, he went on, "How much money's this Addio come into off his uncle?"

A chorus answered, "Sally says it ain't more'n sixty thousand dollars."

"Ain't that enough?" asked the interlocutor. He retired to the forward coach after another stare at Noel. This railroad seemed more sociable than the one which had brought Noel to Olean. Several young fellows in blue

shirts came lounging up to pat Balliol and to compliment the terrier's dignity. Noel smiled and nodded; he was reducing sixty thousand dollars to pounds English in the instant exchange. With such a sum banked, it appeared that Addio Carlson's baby might break endless bottles. Certainly Addio Carlson's pretty wife would get some decent frocks and a smart hat. Who was Addio? Some well-known farmer of this wooded valley, of course.

Addio Carlson's pretty wife would get some decent frocks and a smart hat. Who was Addio? Some well-known farmer of this wooded valley, of course.

There were

stretches of bright farmland among the heavy trees. One of Balliol's admirers dropped from the coach at a tiny station and mounted a thick plow horse hitched to a maple trunk.

"Better not let the pup run 'round too loose up at Rawlin's Hope," a lank boy advised. "The rattlers are changin' their skins. They'll snap at anything. Couple of lumberjacks got bit last week."

"Rattlers? Rattlesnakes? Does one find them so far east?" Pennsylvania? I thought—Texas, or rather farther west."

The lank boy hauled up his shirt and showed a pair of white marks on a freckled rib line. "Ten years back," he said, "'N' pop filled me so full of redeyes I was drunk a week. Yeh, there's plenty rattlers 'round. Addio Carlson was sayin' the woods round Juniper's full of 'em. Says one come in the station and tried to buy a ticket, other day."

An older youth yawned: "Patch of slate right behind the station at Juniper. Rattlers like slate. They lie out on it and get warmed up. Say, is it true they ain't any snakes in Ireland?"

They left the coach at various stations. Other men replaced them. Noel felt himself growing famous. He was an English feller on his way to visit the Rawlin' boys up at Rawlin's Hope. As prospective guest of a lumber magnate he was marked. Balliol had constant callers, and the woods changed to a valley, tortuous, flooded by a shallow pleasure river in which lads were bathing under the atrocious sun of this American noon. Cinders filled Noel's collar. When he wiped his face the handkerchief came away grimy. The train went in jerks about bends and the hills rose ever steeper.

At one o'clock the conductor said: "North Juniper's next stop, friend, where you get off. Be there in a minute."

The train clattered around a sharp curve. Noel climbed down the steps to a barking oblong of planks and saw his truck flop from the baggage car to the end of this tiny platform. The heat seemed to flow like invisible water about him. He gasped, blinking, his eyes bruised by the flung glister of the window, from which a brown fellow jumped into the light.

"Hey, Addio," said the conductor. "Sally was down to the station at Olean. Says you gotta send up the kid's other bottle. Your dad's some better but ain't well yet, and she's bought you some underduds. How y' gettin' on'?"

The brown man drawled: "Fine. Hey, give me a yell in the morning and I'll have the bottle ready. Anybody get off?"

"Yeh, this gentleman's goin' up to the Rawlin's Slong. Ad. Heard any more about your money?"

"Not yet," said Addio, and stepped back as the train rolled off. He stood with his hands jammed into the pockets of soiled yellow canvas breeches and grinned as men haled him from the smoker's windows. He said, "Hey, Sam! How you, Ed? Hear your wife's got a baby, Carl?" and the high drawl lived against the train's jumbled noises.

He looked after it, then turned his tanned face toward Noel, fixing his prodigious brilliant eyes on Noel's feet.

"You goin' up to Rawlin's Hope? That's kind of crazy, unless they promised to give you a job. They're full up. Been turnin' people away for a month."

Noel said: "Oh, I'm merely going to visit. Mr. Sanford Rawlin's—"

Addio cried: "Oh, I getcha. You're that English feller San Rawlin was talkin' about yesterday. Yeh, c'mon inside and sit down. Come ahead."

He shuffled his red carpet slippers across the planks to the sill of a painless door, stumbled on it, said "Hello," and ushered Noel into a cell hotter than open air at dark after the sunlight. Here he picked up a telephone from a table where a telegraphic apparatus chattered and commanded, "Hey, Ginnie, gimme Rawlin's. . . . Set down on the bed or somewhere. There's ice in the box, there, and the hoosh is on the shelf right over That you, Mike? This is Addio. Gimme San Rawlin, will you?"

"Aw, hustlin'!" He stared through a window at the brassy river and told Noel: "San's just as likely to be off fishin' now, but they can send down a car for you. . . . That you, Mike?" This is Addio. Hey, your friend from England's here. . . . Yeh. . . . Sure, I'll give him a drink. . . . C'mon, guy, San wants to talk to you."

From somewhere Sanford Rawling said: "I'll be down as fast as I can get there, Brethereton. It's thirty miles and they've been tearing up the road. Addio can give you a sandwich. His wife's away or you could have a decent meal. I'll be there in an hour. I—"

"It'll take San a hour or some to get here," Addio remarked from the ice chest by a battered oak bedstead. "You better have some chow. M' mother-in-law sends me things."

A round of roast beef and a pat of butter emerged from the ice chest. Balliol set up an optimistic whine.

Addio lowered his astonishing eyes and said: "Hey, pup, who're you? Your dog? . . . West Highland terrier? Never heard of 'em." He stooped and explored Balliol with his nervous long hands. "One of them low-lyin' hounds, huh? Well, pup, how 'bout a dish of milk?"

He spilled milk broadly on the cloicth of the floor, filling a saucer. Balliol, an economist, beat it up before commencing his meal. Addio planted beef, bread and butter on a rickety table at the bedside. A thin erect blue scar between his level black brows stirred as he smiled. He shuffled to the stool where the whisky stood and cracked down a baby's milk bottle which didn't break as it bounced of Balliol's spine. Noel's foot.

Addio commented: "Lucky, huh? I got to send it up to m' wife in the mornin'. She's sunrin' dad up at Olean. He took appendicitis last week. She's got the kids up with her. Hey, there's my call."

He leaned, frowning, on the table by the window and ticked of some response by telegraph. Against the brazen river and the soon his face was sad in profile, but boyish and comely still under the random mop of black hair.

He jerked about his head to ask Noel: "Notice anythin' wrong with the wire while you was talkin' to San Rawlin? Oil City says somethin's wrong up this way."

"Rawling stopped speaking rather suddenly."

Addio said "Humph!" and picked up the telephone. After a useless clicking of the catch he nodded, "Bustin' up, I guess." He tapped off a few words by telephone. His eyes roved and he shrugged, flexing his tough arms. "Wonder where? Well, let's catch some chow."

Noel sat on the bed, as no other seat seemed convenient, and ate sandwiches of cool beef. Addio dilated the woes of linemen in this valley. There were landslides in spring from the steep hills, and forest fire. This spring the wires up to Rawling's Hope had been down for three days and the whole plateau of the vast lumber camp had been cut off.

"Dad used to ride up in m' mother-in-law's flivver with messages. He ain't but one leg and he'd stall the car and have to get out and crank her and his peg get stuck in the mud. 'N' that the bridge busted down—it's down the river a mile—and m' mother-in-law couldn't send

the flivver over—she lives across from here—and there was hell."

"Rather," Noel murmured. The three windows showed no house. He saw a road mounting the slope behind the station. Poles escorted the streak of dusty clay. South, the four rails blazed, curving, and west was the rim of brush that separated the track from the river. He asked, "You've been station master here some time?"

"I'm, it's dad run the station. Yeh. He's been agent here twenty years. Worked at Rawlin's and lost a lot. Tree fell on him. Mr. Rawlin got his job. It's all right, kind of homesick. Be glad to get out. Ain't no one to talk but folks on the cars, and there ain't but four locals a day. Yeh, we'll be glad to move off. Y' see, m' uncle in Phil'delphia died and left me his money. So, soon as I get it I'm goin' to buy out the old guy that runs the store up at Rawlin's. Bud's pretty near old enough to go to school."

"Oh, there's a village on Mr. Rawlin's land?"

"Sure. Five-six hundred people in summer when they're cuttin' trees, and plenty in winter. And there's a movie and a church. Awful civilized." He appropriated a slice of bread for which Noel was reaching, then lifted his head and said, "Somebody whistlin'?"

"I don't hear anything."

Addio closed his eyes and solemnly frowned. Then he nodded. "Yeh. It's m' brother-in-law. Over the river."

Noel saw a figure, a pink point, wading into the shallow opposite the station. He said, "You've awfully good ears."

"I got to have." Addio frowned, hacking beef from the roast. "I bet m' mother-in-law's been tryin' to phone me and couldn't, so she's sent Ed. Funny. In winter, if the river freezes, all they got to do is stand on the other side and say 'Hey, Addio!' just out loud. And I can hear it like they was standin' on the tracks here."

"Isn't Addio the Italian of 'good-by'?"

Addio said, "Yeh. M' mother was Italian. Name of Flora Moretti. Died off when I got born. Dad asked her what to name me. She said 'Addio,' and checked out.

Dad bein' a Swede thought it was some kind of name and named it. Wops are funny. Went down to Phil'delphi to m' uncle's funeral—he run a grocery—and all his wop friends kept talkin' it at me. I can't speak a word of it."

He folded his arms on his ripped blue shirt after tossing Balliol a fragment of beef, and brooded, shutting his eyes once more. Noel finished his iced whisky and timidly noted the tattooed 453 Inf. under crossed rifles of one of the bronze friends.

Addio mused: "Well, it was awfully nice of Uncle Rico to loan me his money. There's Ed."

Ed was a red-haired boy of fifteen or sixteen, bare, wet and annoyed. He leaned through the window from the platform and said: "Hey, Ad, who cut the phone wire? Mamma was tryin' to get you."

"It's busted somewhere."

Ed grunted. "Sure, it's busted. You can see it. Bout fifty yards down the track. Mamma's makin' you a cake and wants you to come over 'n get it."

"Why didn't you fetch it over, Ed?"

"'Cause it ain't done yet. Hey, I pretty near walked on a rattler comin' over."

Addio rose and strolled to the telegraph table. He picked up an envelope and opened it, handing the contents to Ed across the window sill. Balliol went to nose the discarded cover. Ed squinted at the letter and announced: "It's from their lawyers in Phil'delphia. Want me to read it, Ad?"

"Yeh."

The boy perched on the sill and read, singsong: "Dear Mr. Carlson: In reply to your father's letter of July eighth we must inform you that Ottavio Moretti has no claim to any part of your late uncle's estate. He seems to be a remote relative and we are informed by Mr. Casani, a friend of your uncle, that Mr. Moretti once employed Ottavio Moretti in his store. You need pay no attention to threats or requests from Ottavio Moretti. He appears to be a bad character and is known to the police as a drug addict. He was lately discharged from the service of an electrical company. Many drug takers he probably suffers from delusions of grandeur and feels aggrieved. . . . The reader signed: 'Fancy word, hub?'"

"Aggrieved that your uncle left him nothing. His statement to you that he is the rightful heir of your late uncle is man-manifestly absurd. Should Ottavio Moretti visit you again or annoy you in any way please inform us directly and we will take steps to have him restrained. Yours very truly, Acton and Bland, per—" per someone or other. Is that about the feller that came and talked that night and come back to you las' week, Addio?"

"Yeh, that's him," said Addio, taking back the letter. He frowned at the ceiling, then drawled to Noel: "Say, I got to go get this cake. San Rawlin ought to be here pretty quick. You don't mind stayin' alone?"

"Oh, rather not," Noel assured him, and watched Addio climb through the window.

The red slippers shuffled over the four rails and into the low bay speckled with stars of a bluish gray. Addio explained to Ed that he was an English feller going to visit San Rawlin while he shoved a flat-bottomed skiff from the shore. Ed civilly rowed the boat.

Balliol climbed on Noel's suitcase by the window to observe, his paws on the sill. He barked morosely.

Noel said: "Yes, old son, a very decent sort, Addio is. His table manners are a bit slack and he never looks at one for more than a second. Better write the gov'n' about him. Travel does enrich the mind."

Noel wiped his face, took off his coat and adopted a square yellow telegraph blank. He sat at the telegraph table and wrote: "Dear Father: Have just lunched with the son of the station master at Juniper, Pa. He is an Italian-Swedish-American of my age or thereabouts, and appears to be illiterate. However, he has

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Addio Didn't Shoot. Noel Aimed the Revolver and Fired Three Times

ADDIO

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comes into fifteen thousand pounds from the estate of his late uncle, who was a tradesman in Philadelphia. The thermometer stands at 95 degrees and Rawling is comforted 30 miles by the fact that most of the things which were appear probable to you but I am—" Balliol barked three times, although Noel saw nothing of interest outside the window. He continued—"learning a goodish bit about rural America. Informality seems to be the prevalent tone, social intercourse. I have been sent to take care of North Juniper while my host goes to—"

"What's the matter, old son?" Balliol had scrambled from his post and had put his hand on Noel's feet, whispering. After a moment Noel said, "What's frightened you?" Balliol had rested his hand under the sill and tucked his black hand in the seat. The platform bore him, criss-crossed with labels. There was nothing else. Noel murmured, "Absolutely nothing."

A sound retorted. There was something. It was a curious, thin, metallic click like a hammer hitting somewhere at hand. It came from the air track or the red flowers of the nameless bushes beyond the rails. It increased and was an ecstasy of pulsing noise, a furious castanet. It waned and was gone. The dog wailed at Noel's feet. Noel said, "Old! and I'll get you the gun." He had his revolver stiff and straight. They had sat so long in silence that when he found the tube of his gas mask torn, and green vapor rose in beauty from the German lines. He said again "Odd," and threw the match toward the edge of the platform.

A brown flicker passed from the lid of his brown trunk. Something thumped the planks and writhed. Something whirred. Noel slammed down the window. The snake's head rose and dipped over the fallen white of the match like a poised hand. Its dull glow went in lovely curves, the bulbous nose, the four rails, a tail flat, rounded at the bottom, creased its root, passing into the brushwood.

Noel said, "Oh, you filthy brute! You brute!"

He picked up Balliol for company and wrote, "A very large rattlesnake, name unknown, has been hunting him around. He has now gone across the meadows into some bushes. I feel that he is watching me. I shall never be jocose about rattlesnakes again. Any further episodes of this day will be duly reported. Your Lordship's most obedient, etc., etc., your obedient son, say, daddy, etc., etc., who reckons the place is simply swarming with rattlesnakes. Should we never meet again please give Cousin Ursula my second-best gold wrist watch. Inexperienced English tourists in Pennsylvania should wear plate armlets."

His father would believe none of this nonsense, but Noel grinned, folding the paper, over the fancy of travel in steel and scales. Then he drummed the table with pen and hated the snake. A barelegged boy, trotting up from the river, might well wait it. Or Addio, sockless in his coat sleeves, might chewed his pipestem and said "By Jove!"

He opened his suitcase and shook his military revolver from a bag of chamois silk. It balanced splendidly in his palms and pleased him so that he began to hum amateurly. He raised the window sash and heard a small, thin bellringing in the air, a breath and the river. Immediately a yellow-faced man stood up among the bushes six feet beyond the track.

Noel dropped his pipe and cried: "I say!

There's a snake here!"

The revolver issued from Noel's hand. Sockedless, he dashed behind his chair. He screamed: "Mal! occhi!" and fired again. The windowpanes smashed above Noel's head. He fell backward to the floor and lay rubbing his wrist. The whisky bottle, broken, was spilling its scent on the oil-cloth. Glass rattled as Noel crawled before the window sill. Balliol sat gazing at the locality as it spread. Now there was no noise.

Noel crouched under the table and thought. He knew a few words of Italian. "Occhi" meant "eye" or "eyes." That didn't help. Of course this was the unpleasant Ottavio Moretti, Addio's remote relative. A drug addict. Mad. Noel

reached for his pipe, smoldering in the mess of bright glass. He found all this preposterous, and dusted the pipestem on a sleeve of his blazer.

The boy, black hair, tanned face, blue shirt. The swine took him for Addio. He might be killed for Addio.

"By cable, from New York: The Honorable Noel Hugh Vincent Brethereton, only surviving son of Baron Brethereton, of Sholes, was found killed at North Juniper station. He had been shot in the head. There was, as yet, no clue to the identity of Mr. Brethereton's assailant. Mr. Brethereton was twenty-six years old. He was educated at Harrow and served, during the war, as —"

Oh, pull us together! Noel stared at the rear window. No good. The fellow could see him as soon as he started up the road.

Jump through the platform window and pick up the revolver? Make a fight for it? Of course this fellow had cut the telephone wires? Cold murder, planned. The man was made up. Why didn't he come to see the effect of his work? Balliol pattered over and snuffed Noel's hand. The telegraph instrument chattered suddenly. Why the devil didn't they teach one to use the telephone? Noel sighed and plucked a blank from the edge of the table. He wrote "Dear Father": "The man has tried to kill me. I am safe, but— Balliol, an Italian name, Ottavio Moretti, a drug addict who has a grudge against the station-master's son. He seemed rather tall. His face was yellow. He wore a black or dark suit. I have lost my revolver. If he kills me this should help the police. I am afraid he will come again. Rawling may arrive very soon, now. The man may run if he sees a motor coming down the lane from the hill. It is ghastly o—"

Rage made Noel's hand shiver. He glared at the window sill and thought of his revolver. Why not? The man hadn't hit him in two shots at close range. Balliol had a gun, though he had never once. There was no noise of crackling brush.

Noel said, "Here he comes, old son."

The sound wavered and hung in the air. Noel stared at the opening four feet away and crouched. The fellow would peer through. I can jump and get away. He lay low, low, low. Reckoning, of course. Noel patted Balliol to keep the terrier quiet. Coming. A heel struck metal. The man was crossing the rails. And then the man yelled "Ah! Dio!"

He yelled twice, hideously. Then feet rattled on wood and receded. Noel pulled him along the broken window sill. Noel pulled him down. The fellow was running away. Noel said "What the deuce?" and got up. He jumped through the window and stared.

It was true. The man ran south along the rail, nearest the shore. He went in the direction of the station, where he had his trapping black coat spread about the curve. Yet there was no one in sight. Noel peered up the road behind the station and across the river. He looked blankly at Balliol, who had gone to smell the trunk. He picked up his revolver and resented the weight of his shirt and his mouth felt unpleasant. He went back into the station and drank a tumbler of ice water. Then he came out to stare again down the rails, motor car descending the lane from the hill. It did not descend. It stopped at the revolver and still held it when Sanford Rawling halted the car at the end of the platform and swung his lean legs, shod in leather gaiters, over the door.

Noel liked young Rawling because he wasn't talkative at all. He noted the age and said in his level grave voice: "The crazy relation of Addio's been here again!"

"Very much so. Addio's gone all the benefits. He pegged off down that way for some reason or other. I dare say something frightened him." Noel made his pipe stem raw. Rawling rubbed his brown nose with a glove, pondering.

"I hate keeping you here, Brethereton, but we'd best wait until Addio comes back. We're an awfully fond of the boy and this lunatic may come along again. You say the telephone's out of order? I ought to phone the police. Let's see if they've got it fixed."

"Companions? For what?"

"Hadn't you noticed? Oh, that was

why you tried to shake hands with him! I was wondering. He's stone blind, you know. High explosive. The Argonne business. I must tell him you didn't notice. He'll get a laugh out of it, poor kid."

"Car on the tracks."

It was a hand car, pumpled along the inner rails from the south by a single man. It alit to a stop by the platform and the mechanic nodded to Rawling. He said: "Mike, you're here?"

"Over at Mrs. Mourtry's. Why?"

The mechanic sat down on the vehicle and drawled, pointing south: "Why, Mike and me was sent up from the Junction to see where that break in the telephone wires is. There's a guy dead on the tracks, down a piece of road like a dead man. He ain't dead a man, neither. Sunburn bit him in the neck. Leg'ur'vin, I guess. But he's got O. Moretti on a letter in his coat—got a match, sir?—in his coat. We was wonderin' if he's some relation of Addio's. Moretti was Ad's uncle's name that lef' him, I suppose, but—"

Rawling said, "I'd better go look at him. Stay here, Noel. Keep out of this sun."

The hand car rolled off. Noel walked dizzily into the station and dropped into the one chair. Casuall! A man dead of snakebite on a baking track beside a river. That man might have batched him. "Ah! Dio!" The snake, said nothing about the matter. The man had walked on it. It bit. They were changing skins in this terrible season and would snap at anything. "Ah! Dio!" Noel was sick. He put his face in his hands and let Balliol nuzzle his left ear forward. Someone approached, fresh from a visit of death. Noel got up and walked to the window. He was strolling from the river. He carried a huge white cake on a platter before his blue chest and his face was tilted up to the sun carelessly, as if its pounding wouldn't bother him. Below, a brown horse breeches swung through the brush and a small dog appeared on the barren soil by the rails. He called, "Hey, you, still here?"

Noel called "Rather!" Then he screamed, "Look out! Jump!"

Addio stood still between the rails. The snarl of the snake had rolled down the four feet to the left of his bare ankle. The whirring had begun. Addio didn't move or look down. He must be paralyzed. Noel croaked "Right! Jump!" and tore at his pocket. The head waved dizzily above the coil and Addio didn't move. Noel aimed the revolver and fired three times. The coil writhed in mad and yellow. Addio walked from it slowly and came to the platform.

He said: "I guess that did for him. Say, I couldn't make out if you meant I'd better jump right or left! Don't let the pup go near him. I'm a lot obliged." And he smiled.

Noel lurched back to the table and put his face in his hands again.

He lived, for a time, in gray confusions. The hand car rolled up and the Irish man buried the snake's smashed head. Addio was still between the rails. He was a pretty good shot. He was aware that Rawling stood on the platform talking gently to Addio and eating a slice of the preserved white cake. Presently Noel was sitting beside Rawling in the motor and Addio planted Balliol on the floor of the motor car.

He said: "I 'fraid I've been a whole lot of trouble to you. Wan't exactly my fault."

"Oh, that's quite all right." Noel grasped and stretched out his hand. But Addio ignored it. He stood with his hands in his pockets and nodded, grinning handsomely. Rawling drove the car away and Noel said, "You'll come here I know. I had a frightening quiet time."

"You shall. We'll go fishing to-morrow.

Addio used to fish with me a lot before the war. He misses it, poor kid. Well, he's got a good wife and he'll have plenty of money now. And he's learned to get about very well. I suppose those are compensations."

"Companions? For what?"

"Hadn't you noticed? Oh, that was

why you tried to shake hands with him! I was wondering. He's stone blind, you know. High explosive. The Argonne business. I must tell him you didn't notice. He'll get a laugh out of it, poor kid."