

The Wife of Chino

Frank Norris

I. CHINO'S WIFE

On the back porch of the "office," young Lockwood--his boots, stained with the mud of the mines and with candle-drippings, on the rail--sat smoking his pipe and looking off down the canon.

It was early in the evening. Lockwood, because he had heard the laughter and horseplay of the men of the night shift as they went down the canon from the bunk-house to the tunnel-mouth, knew that it was a little after seven. It would not be necessary to go indoors and begin work on the columns of figures of his pay-roll for another hour yet. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, refilled and lighted it--stoppering with his match-box--and shot a wavering blue wreath out over the porch railing. Then he resettled himself in his tilted chair, hooked his thumbs into his belt, and fetched a long breath.

For the last few moments he had been considering, in that comfortable spirit of relaxed attention that comes with the after-dinner tobacco, two subjects: first, the beauty of the evening; second, the temperament, character, and appearance of Felice Zavalla.

As for the evening, there could be no two opinions about that. It was charming. The Hand-over-fist Gravel Mine, though not in the higher Sierras, was sufficiently above the level of the mere foot-hills to be in the sphere of influence of the greater mountains. Also, it was remote, difficult of access. Iowa Hill, the nearest post-office, was a good eight miles distant, by trail, across the Indian River. It was sixteen miles by stage from Iowa Hill to Colfax, on the line of the Overland Railroad, and all of a hundred miles from Colfax to San Francisco.

To Lockwood's mind this isolation was in itself an attraction. Tucked away in this fold of the Sierras, forgotten, remote, the little community of a hundred souls that comprised the personnel of the Hand-over-fist lived

out its life with the completeness of an independent State, having its own government, its own institutions and customs. Besides all this, it had its own dramas as well--little complications that developed with the swiftness of whirlpools, and that trended toward culmination with true Western directness. Lockwood, college-bred--he was a graduate of the Columbia School of Mines--found the life interesting.

On this particular evening he sat over his pipe rather longer than usual, seduced by the beauty of the scene and the moment. It was very quiet. The prolonged rumble of the mine's stamp-mill came to his ears in a ceaseless diapason, but the sound was so much a matter of course that Lockwood no longer heard it. The millions of pines and redwoods that covered the flanks of the mountains were absolutely still. No wind was stirring in their needles. But the chorus of tree-toads, dry, staccato, was as incessant as the pounding of the mill. Far-off--thousands of miles, it seemed--an owl was hooting, three velvet-soft notes at exact intervals. A cow in the stable near at hand lay down with a long breath, while from the back veranda of Chino Zavalla's cabin came the clear voice of Felice singing "The Spanish Cavalier" while she washed the dishes.

The twilight was fading; the glory that had blazed in cloudless vermilion and gold over the divide was dying down like receding music. The mountains were purple-black. From the canon rose the night mist, pale blue, while above it stood the smoke from the mill, a motionless plume of sable, shot through by the last ruddiness of the afterglow.

The air was full of pleasant odours--the smell of wood fires from the cabins of the married men and from the ovens of the cookhouse, the ammoniacal whiffs from the stables, the smell of ripening apples from "Boston's" orchard--while over all and through all came the perfume of the witch-hazel and tar-weed from the forests and mountain sides, as pungent as myrrh, as aromatic as aloes.

"And if I should fall,
In vain I would call,"

sang Felice.

Lockwood took his pipe from his teeth and put back his head to listen. Felice had as good a voice as so pretty a young woman should have had. She was twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, and was incontestably the beauty of the camp. She was Mexican-Spanish, tall and very slender, black-haired, as lithe as a cat, with a cat's green eyes and with all of a cat's purring, ingratiating insinuation.

Lockwood could not have told exactly just how the first familiarity between him and Felice had arisen. It had grown by almost imperceptible degrees up to a certain point; now it was a chance meeting on the trail between the office and the mill, now a fragment of conversation apropos of a letter to be mailed, now a question as to some regulation of the camp, now a detail of repairs done to the cabin wherein Felice lived. As said above, up to a certain point the process of "getting acquainted" had been gradual, and on Lockwood's part unconscious; but beyond that point affairs had progressed rapidly.

At first Felice had been, for Lockwood, a pretty woman, neither more nor less; but by degrees she emerged from this vague classification: she became a very pretty woman. Then she became a personality; she occupied a place within the circle which Lockwood called his world, his life. For the past months this place had, perforce, to be enlarged. Lockwood allowed it to expand. To make room for Felice, he thrust aside, or allowed the idea of Felice to thrust aside, other objects which long had sat secure. The invasion of the woman into the sphere of his existence developed at the end into a thing veritably headlong. Deep-seated convictions, old-established beliefs and ideals, even the two landmarks right and wrong, were hustled and shouldered about as the invasion widened and penetrated. This state of affairs was further complicated by the fact that Felice was the wife of Chino Zavalla, shift-boss of No. 4 gang in the new workings.

II. MADNESS

It was quite possible that, though Lockwood could not have told when and how the acquaintance between him and Felice began and progressed, the young woman herself could. But this is guesswork. Felice being a woman, and part Spanish at that, was vastly more self-conscious, more disingenuous, than the man, the Anglo-Saxon. Also she had that fearlessness that very pretty women have. In her more refined and city-bred sisters this fearlessness would be called poise, or, at the most, "cheek."

And she was quite capable of making young Lockwood, the superintendent, her employer, and nominally the ruler of her little world, fall in love with her. It is only fair to Felice to say that she would not do this deliberately. She would be more conscious of the business than the man, than Lockwood; but in affairs such as this, involving women like Felice, there is a distinction between deliberately doing a thing and consciously doing it.

Admittedly this is complicated, but it must be understood that Felice herself was complex, and she could no more help attracting men to her than the magnet the steel filings. It made no difference whether the man was the "breed" boy who split logging down by the engine-house or the young superintendent with his college education, his white hands and dominating position; over each and all who came within range of her influence Felice, with her black hair and green eyes, her slim figure and her certain indefinite "cheek"--which must not by any manner of means be considered as "boldness"--cast the weird of her kind.

If one understood her kind, knew how to make allowances, knew just how seriously to take her eyes and her "cheek," no great harm was done. Otherwise, consequences were very apt to follow.

Hicks was one of those who from the very first had understood. Hicks was the manager of the mine, and Lockwood's chief--in a word, the boss. He was younger even than Lockwood, a boy virtually, but a wonderful boy--a boy such as only America, western America at that, could produce, masterful, self-controlled, incredibly capable, as taciturn as a sphinx, strong of mind and of muscle, and possessed of a cold gray eye that was as penetrating as chilled steel.

To this person, impersonal as force itself, Felice had once, by some mysterious feminine art, addressed, in all innocence, her little maneuver of fascination. One lift of the steady eyelid, one quiet glint of that terrible cold gray eye, that poniarded her every tissue of complexity, inconsistency, and coquetry, had been enough. Felice had fled the field from this young fellow, so much her junior, and then afterward, in a tremor of discomfiture and distress, had kept her distance.

Hicks understood Felice. Also the great majority of the miners--shift-bosses, chuck-tenders, bed-rock cleaners, and the like--understood. Lockwood did not.

It may appear difficult of belief that the men, the crude, simple workmen, knew how to take Felice Zavalla, while Lockwood, with all his education and superior intelligence, failed in his estimate of her. The explanation lies no doubt in the fact that in these man-and-woman affairs instinct is a surer guide than education and intelligence, unless, indeed, the intelligence is preternaturally keen. Lockwood's student life had benumbed the elemental instinct, which in the miners, the "men," yet remained vigorous and unblunted, and by means of which they assessed Felice and her harmless blandishments at their true worth. For all Lockwood's culture, his own chuck-tenders, unlettered fellows, cumbersome, slow-witted, "knew women"--at least, women of their own world, like Felice--better than he. On the other hand, his intelligence was no such perfected instrument as Hicks's, as exact as logarithms, as penetrating as a scalpel, as uncoloured by emotions as a steel trap.

Lockwood's life had been a narrow one. He had studied too hard at Columbia to see much of the outside world, and he had come straight from his graduation to take his first position. Since then his life had been spent virtually in the wilderness, now in Utah, now in Arizona, now in British Columbia, and now, at last, in Placer County, California. His lot was the common lot of young mining engineers. It might lead one day to great wealth, but meanwhile it was terribly isolated.

Living thus apart from the world, Lockwood very easily allowed his judgment to get, as it were, out of perspective. Class distinctions lost

their sharpness, and one woman--as, for instance, Felice--was very like another--as, for instance, the girls his sisters knew "back home" in New York.

As a last result, the passions were strong.

Things were done "for all they were worth" in Placer County, California. When a man worked, he worked hard; when he slept, he slept soundly; when he hated, he hated with primeval intensity; and when he loved he grew reckless.

It was all one that Felice was Chino's wife. Lockwood swore between his teeth that she should be his wife. He had arrived at this conclusion on the night that he sat on the back porch of his office and watched the moon coming up over the Hog Back. He stood up at length and thrust his pipe into his pocket, and putting an arm across the porch pillar, leaned his forehead against it and looked out far in the purple shadows.

"It's madness," he muttered; "yet, I know it--sheer madness; but, by the Lord! I am mad--and I don't care."

III. CHINO GOES TO TOWN

As time went on the matter became more involved. Hicks was away. Chino Zavalla, stolid, easy-going, came and went about his work on the night shift, always touching his cap to Lockwood when the two crossed each other's paths, always good-natured, always respectful, seeing nothing but his work.

Every evening, when not otherwise engaged, Lockwood threw a saddle over one of the horses and rode in to Iowa Hill for the mail, returning to the mine between ten and eleven. On one of these occasions, as he drew near to Chino's cabin, a slim figure came toward him down the road and paused at his horse's head. Then he was surprised to hear Felice's voice asking, "Ave you a letter for me, then, Meester Lockwude?"

Felice made an excuse of asking thus for her mail each night that Lockwood came from town, and for a month they kept up appearances; but after that they dropped even that pretense, and as often as he met her Lockwood dismounted and walked by her side till the light in the cabin came into view through the chaparral.

At length Lockwood made a mighty effort. He knew how very far he had gone beyond the point where between the two landmarks called right and wrong a line is drawn. He contrived to keep away from Felice. He sent one of the men into town for the mail, and he found reasons to be in the mine itself whole half-days at a time. Whenever a moment's leisure impended, he took his shotgun and tramped the mine ditch for leagues, looking for quail and gray squirrels. For three weeks he so managed that he never once caught sight of Felice's black hair and green eyes, never once heard the sound of her singing.

But the madness was upon him none the less, and it rode and roweled him like a hag from dawn to dark and from dark to dawn again, till in his complete loneliness, in the isolation of that simple, primitive life, where no congenial mind relieved the monotony by so much as a word, morbid, hounded, tortured, the man grew desperate--was ready for anything that would solve the situation.

Once every two weeks Lockwood "cleaned up and amalgamated"--that is to say, the mill was stopped and the "ripples" where the gold was caught were scraped clean. Then the ore was sifted out, melted down, and poured into the mould, whence it emerged as the "brick," a dun-coloured rectangle, rough-edged, immensely heavy, which represented anywhere from two to six thousand dollars. This was sent down by express to the smelting-house.

But it was necessary to take the brick from the mine to the express office at Iowa Hill.

This duty devolved upon Lockwood and Chino Zavalla. Hicks had from the very first ordered that the Spaniard should accompany the superintendent upon this mission. Zavalla was absolutely trustworthy, as honest as the daylight, strong physically, cool-headed, discreet, and--to Hicks's mind a

crowning recommendation--close-mouthed. For about the mine it was never known when the brick went to town or who took it. Hicks had impressed this fact upon Zavalla. He was to tell nobody that he was delegated to this duty. "Not even"--Hicks had leveled a forefinger at Chino, and the cold eyes drove home the injunction as the steam-hammer drives the rivet--"not even your wife." And Zavalla had promised. He would have trifled with dynamite sooner than with one of Hicks's orders.

So the fortnightly trips to town in company with Lockwood were explained in various fashions to Felice. She never knew that the mail-bag strapped to her husband's shoulders on those occasions carried some five thousand dollars' worth of bullion.

On a certain Friday in early June Lockwood had amalgamated, and the brick, duly stamped, lay in the safe in the office. The following night he and Chino, who was relieved from mine duty on these occasions, were to take it in to Iowa Hill.

Late Saturday afternoon, however, the engineer's boy brought word to Chino that the superintendent wanted him at once. Chino found Lockwood lying upon the old lounge in the middle room of the office, his foot in bandages.

"Here's luck, Chino," he exclaimed, as the Mexican paused on the threshold. "Come in and--shut the door," he added in a lower voice.

"_Dios!_" murmured Chino. "An accident?"

"Rather," growled Lockwood. "That fool boy, Davis's kid--the car-boy, you know--ran me down in the mine. I yelled at him. Somehow he couldn't stop. Two wheels went over my foot--and the car loaded, too."

Chino shuddered politely.

"Now here's the point," continued Lockwood. "Um--there's nobody round outside there? Take a look, Chino, by the window there. All clear, eh? Well, here's the point. That brick ought to go in to-night just the same, hey?"

"Oh--of a surety, of a surety." Chino spoke in Spanish.

"Now I don't want to let any one else take my place--you never can tell--the beggars will talk. Not all like you, Chino."

"_Gracias, signor_. It is an honour."

"Do you think you can manage alone? I guess you can, hey? No reason why you couldn't."

Chino shut his eyes tight and put up a palm. "Rest assured of that, Signor Lockwude. Rest assured of that."

"Well, get around here about nine."

"It is understood, signor."

Lockwood, who had a passable knowledge of telegraphy, had wired to the Hill for the doctor. About suppertime one appeared, and Lockwood bore the pain of the setting with such fortitude as he could command. He had his supper served in the office. The doctor shared it with him and kept him company.

During the early hours of the evening Lockwood lay on the sofa trying to forget the pain. There was no easier way of doing this than by thinking of Felice. Inevitably his thoughts reverted to her. Now that he was helpless, he could secure no diversion by plunging into the tunnel, giving up his mind to his work. He could not now take down his gun and tramp the ditch. Now he was supine, and the longing to break through the mesh, wrestle free from the complication, gripped him and racked him with all its old-time force.

Promptly at nine o'clock the faithful Chino presented himself at the office. He had one of the two horses that were used by Lockwood as saddle animals, and as he entered he opened his coat and tapped the hilt of a pistol showing from his trousers pocket, with a wink and a grin. Lockwood took the brick from the safe, strapped it into the mail-bag, and Chino,

swinging it across his shoulders, was gone, leaving Lockwood to hop back to the sofa, there to throw himself down and face once more his trouble.

IV. A DESPATCH FROM THE EXPRESS MESSENGER

What made it harder for Lockwood just now was that even on that very day, in spite of all precaution, in spite of all good resolutions, he had at last seen Felice. Doubtless the young woman herself had contrived it; but, be that as it may, Lockwood, returning from a tour of inspection along the ditch, came upon her not far from camp, but in a remote corner, and she had of course demanded why he kept away from her. What Lockwood said in response he could not now remember; nor, for that matter, was any part of the conversation very clear to his memory. The reason for this was that, just as he was leaving her, something of more importance than conversation had happened. Felice had looked at him.

And she had so timed her look, had so insinuated it into the little, brief, significant silences between their words, that its meaning had been very clear. Lockwood had left her with his brain dizzy, his teeth set, his feet stumbling and fumbling down the trail, for now he knew that Felice wanted him to know that she regretted the circumstance of her marriage to Chino Zavalla; he knew that she wanted him to know that the situation was as intolerable for her as for him.

All the rest of the day, even at this moment, in fact, this new phase of the affair intruded its pregnant suggestions upon his mind, to the exclusion of everything else. He felt the drift strong around him; he knew that in the end he would resign himself to it. At the same time he sensed the abyss, felt the nearness of some dreadful, nameless cataclysm, a thing of black shadow, bottomless, terrifying.

"Lord!" he murmured, as he drew his hand across his forehead, "Lord! I wonder where this thing is going to fetch up."

As he spoke, the telegraph key on his desk, near at hand, began all at once to click off his call. Groaning and grumbling, Lockwood heaved

himself up, and, with his right leg bent, hobbled from chair-back to chair-back over to the desk. He rested his right knee on his desk chair, reached for his key, opened the circuit, and answered. There was an instant's pause, then the instrument began to click again. The message was from the express messenger at Iowa Hill.

Word by word Lockwood took it off as follows:

"Reno--Kid--will--attempt--hold-up--of--
brick--on--trail-to-night--do--not--send--
till--advised--at--this--end." _

Lockwood let go the key and jumped back from the desk, lips compressed, eyes alight, his fists clenched till the knuckles grew white. The whole figure of him stiffened as tense as drawn wire, braced rigid like a finely bred hound "making game."

Chino was already half an hour gone by the trail, and the Reno Kid was a desperado of the deadliest breed known to the West. How he came to turn up here there was no time to inquire. He was on hand, that was the point; and Reno Kid always "shot to kill." This would be no mere hold-up; it would be murder.

Just then, as Lockwood snatched open a certain drawer of his desk where he kept his revolver, he heard from down the road, in the direction of Chino's cabin, Felice's voice singing:

"To the war I must go,
To fight for my country and you, dear."

Lockwood stopped short, his arm at full stretch, still gripping tight the revolver that he had half pulled from the drawer--stopped short and listened.

The solution of everything had come.

He saw it in a flash. The knife hung poised over the knot--even at that moment was falling. Nothing was asked of him--nothing but inertia.

For an instant, alone there in that isolated mining-camp, high above the world, lost and forgotten in the gloom of the canons and redwoods, Lockwood heard the crisis of his life come crashing through the air upon him like the onslaught of a whirlwind. For an instant, and no more, he considered. Then he cried aloud:

"No, no; I can't, I _can't_--not this way!" And with the words he threw the belt of the revolver about his hips and limped and scampered from the room, drawing the buckle close.

How he gained the stable he never knew, nor how he backed the horse from the building, nor how, hopping on one leg, he got the headstall on and drew the cinches tight.

But the wrench of pain in his foot as, swinging up at last, he tried to catch his off stirrup was reality enough to clear any confusion of spirit. Hanging on as best he might with his knees and one foot, Lockwood, threshing the horse's flanks with the stinging quirt that tapered from the reins of the bridle, shot from the camp in a swirl of clattering hoofs, flying pebbles and blinding clouds of dust.

V. THE TRAIL

The night was black dark under the redwoods, so impenetrable that he could not see his horse's head, and braced even as he was for greater perils it required all his courage to ride top-speed at this vast slab of black that like a wall he seemed to charge head down with every leap of his bronco's hoofs.

For the first half-hour the trail mounted steadily, then, by the old gravel-pits, it topped the divide and swung down over more open slopes,

covered only with chaparral and second growths. Here it was lighter, and Lockwood uttered a fervent "Thank God!" when, a few moments later, the moon shouldered over the mountain crests ahead of him and melted the black shadows to silver-gray. Beyond the gravel-pits the trail turned and followed the flank of the slope, level here for nearly a mile. Lockwood set his teeth against the agony of his foot and gave the bronco the quirt with all his strength.

In another half-hour he had passed Cold Canon, and twenty minutes after that had begun the descent into Indian River. He forded the river at a gallop, and, with the water dripping from his very hat-brim, drove labouring under the farther slope.

Then he drew rein with a cry of bewilderment and apprehension. The lights of Iowa Hill were not two hundred yards distant. He had covered the whole distance from the mine, and where was Chino?

There was but one answer: back there along the trail somewhere, at some point by which Lockwood had galloped headlong and unheeding, lying up there in the chaparral with Reno's bullets in his body.

There was no time now to go on to the Hill. Chino, if he was not past help, needed it without an instant's loss of time. Lockwood spun the horse about. Once more the ford, once more the canon slopes, once more the sharp turn by Cold Canon, once more the thick darkness under the redwoods. Steadily he galloped on, searching the roadside.

Then all at once he reined in sharply, bringing the horse to a standstill, one ear turned down the wind. The night's silence was broken by a multitude of sounds--the laboured breathing of the spent bronco, the saddle creaking as the dripping flanks rose and fell, the touch of wind in the tree-tops and the chorusing of the myriad tree-toads. But through all these, distinct, as precise as a clock-tick, Lockwood had heard, and yet distinguished, the click of a horse's hoof drawing near, and the horse was at a gallop: Reno at last.

Lockwood drew his pistol. He stood in thick shadow. Only some twenty yards in front of him was there any faintest break in the darkness; but at

that point the blurred moonlight made a grayness across the trail, just a tone less deep than the redwoods' shadows.

With his revolver cocked and trained upon this patch of grayness, Lockwood waited, holding his breath.

The gallop came blundering on, sounding in the night's silence as loud as the passage of an express train; and the echo of it, flung back from the canon side, confused it and distorted it till, to Lockwood's morbid alertness, it seemed fraught with all the madness of flight, all the hurry of desperation.

Then the hoof-beats rose to a roar, and a shadow just darker than the darkness heaved against the grayness that Lockwood held covered with his pistol. Instantly he shouted aloud:

"Halt! Throw up your hands!"

His answer was a pistol shot.

He dug his heels to his horse, firing as the animal leaped forward. The horses crashed together, rearing, plunging, and Lockwood, as he felt the body of a man crush by him on the trail, clutched into the clothes of him, and, with the pistol pressed against the very flesh, fired again, crying out as he did so:

"Drop your gun, Reno! I know you. I'll kill you if you move again!"

And then it was that a wail rose into the night, a wail of agony and mortal apprehension:

"Signor Lockwude, Signor Lockwude, for the love of God, don't shoot! 'Tis I--Chino Zavalla."

VI. THE DISCOVERY OF FELICE

An hour later, Felice, roused from her sleep by loud knocking upon her door, threw a blanket about her slim body, serape fashion, and opened the cabin to two gaunt scarecrows, who, the one, half supported by the other, himself far spent and all but swooning, lurched by her across the threshold and brought up wavering and bloody in the midst of the cabin floor.

"_Por Dios! Por Dios!_" cried Felice. "Ah, love of God! what misfortune has befallen Chino!" Then in English, and with a swift leap of surprise and dismay: "Ah, Meester Lockwude, air you hurt? Eh, tell me-a! Ah, it is too draidful!"

"No, no," gasped Lockwood, as he dragged Chino's unconscious body to the bed Felice had just left. "No; I--I've shot him. We met--there on the trail." Then the nerves that had stood strain already surprisingly long snapped and crisped back upon themselves like broken harp-strings.

"_I've shot him! I've shot him!_" he cried. "Shot him, do you understand? Killed him, it may be. Get the doctor, quick! He's at the office. I passed Chino on the trail over to the Hill. He'd hid in the bushes as he heard me coming from behind, then when I came back I took him. Oh, I'll explain later. Get the doctor, quick."

Felice threw on such clothes as came to her hand and ran over to the office, returning with the doctor, half dressed and blinking in the lantern-light. He went in to the wounded man at once, and Lockwood, at the end of all strength, dropped into the hammock on the porch, stretching out his leg to ease the anguish of his broken foot. He leaned back and closed his eyes wearily, aware only of a hideous swirl of pain, of intolerable anxiety as to Chino's wound, and, most of all, of a mere blur of confusion wherein the sights and sounds of the last few hours tore through his brain with the plunge of a wild galloping such as seemed to have been in his ears for years and years.

But as he lay thus he heard a step at his side. Then came the touch of Felice's long brown hand upon his face. He sat up, opening his eyes.

"You aisk me-a," she said, "eef I do onderstaind, eh? Yais, I onderstaind. You--" her voice was a whisper--"you shoot Chino, eh? I know. You do those thing' for me-a. I am note angri, no-a. You ver' sharp man, eh? All for love oaf Felice, eh? Now we be happi, maybe; now we git married soam day byne-by, eh? Ah, you one brave man, Signor Lockwude!"

She would have taken his hand, but Lockwood, the pain all forgot, the confusion all vanishing, was on his feet. It was as though a curtain that for months had hung between him and the blessed light of clear understanding had suddenly been rent in twain by her words. The woman stood revealed. All the baseness of her tribe, all the degraded savagery of a degenerate race, all the capabilities for wrong, for sordid treachery, that lay dormant in her, leaped to life at this unguarded moment, and in that new light, that now at last she had herself let in, stood pitilessly revealed, a loathsome thing, hateful as malevolence itself.

"What," shouted Lockwood, "you think--think that I--that I _could_--oh-h, it's monstrous--_you_----" He could find no words to voice his loathing. Swiftly he turned away from her, the last spark of an evil love dying down forever in his breast.

It was a transformation, a thing as sudden as a miracle, as conclusive as a miracle, and with all a miracle's sense of uplift and power. In a second of time the scales seemed to fall from the man's eyes, fetters from his limbs; he saw, and he was free.

At the door Lockwood met the doctor:

"Well?"

"He's all right; only a superficial wound. He'll recover. But you--how about you? All right? Well, that is a good hearing. You've had a lucky escape, my boy."

"I _have_ had a lucky escape," shouted Lockwood. "You don't know just how lucky it was."