

McCLURE'S

Edited by Herbert Kaufman

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1921



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Owen Johnson
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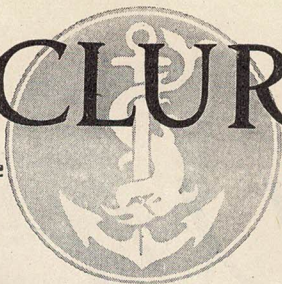


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June-July McClure's on Sale June 10th

The reorganization of McClure's Magazine during a period of printing and railroad strikes, transportation muddles and general industrial confusion, has hitherto rendered it impossible to maintain a fixed publication date.

After a year of gradual improvements in the quality and character of the book, which has resulted, despite the handicap of irregular issue, in a steady increase in newsstand sales, McClure's will henceforth be simultaneously on sale throughout the United States on the 10th day of the month preceding its dating.

To effect and maintain this policy it is necessary to combine the June and July issues, which will be on the newsstands on the 10th of June.

"THE BREAKING POINT" BY MARY ROBERTS RINEHART,

a tremendous story and a year-length novel starts with the June-July number. This gripping mystery romance by America's foremost novelist is the premier fiction event of 1921. "The Breaking Point" is a fabric of constant unexpectedness, shot with color, rich in characterization, through whose baffling plot move the most vivid company that McClure's has probably ever presented to its readers.

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Tell your newsdealer to reserve a copy—*now!*

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The Wanderer of the Wasteland

*Adam Larey's quest for Redemption and the
Finding of the One Woman*

by Zane Grey

Illustration by W. Herbert Dunton

THE foxes have holes — the birds of the air have nests!" cried Adam.

Was it he who lay there with aching heart and burning eyes? Ah! Again the lonely wasteland claimed him. That illimitable desert was home. Whose face was that limned on the clouds, and set into the beaten bossy mosaic of the sands, and sculptured in the contour of the dim colored ranges?

His burros nipped the sage behind him as he lay back against a stone, on the lofty height of the Sierra Madre divide, gazing down into that boundless void. What was it that had happened? Ah! he had fled! And he lived over again, for the thousandth time, that week — that fleeting week of transport with its endless regrets — in which he had found Genie a home, in which the daughter of Magdalene Virey had stormed his soul.

Vague and happy those first days, when he bought the valley lands, and flooded them with cattle — vague because of the slow gathering of insupportable and unconscious love — happy because he lived with Genie's rapture and her romance. Vivid were some of the memories — when he placed in Genie's little brown hands papers and deeds, and bank-books, and by a gesture, as if by magic, proclaimed to her wondering senses the truth of a tale of Aladdin — when, to the serious-faced mother of Eugene, pondering the costs, he announced her once more owner of the long-regretted land — when, to a fire-eyed lad, he had drawn aside the veil of the future.

But vague, mystic as a troubled dream, the inception of a love that rose like the blaze of the sun — vague as the opaque dawn of the desert! Whenever he looked up, by night or day, at task or idleness, there shone the lovely face, pale as a dawn-hazed star, a face like Magdalene Virey's, with all of its beauty, but naught of its passion, with all its charm, yet none of its havoc. With youth and bloom, and wide-open purple eyes, dark as midnight, staring at fate. And a voice like the voice of her mother, sweet but not mocking, haunted the dreams of the man, and lived in the winds.

"And you are a desert man," she had said.

"Yes — a desert man," he had replied.

"There's a place I want to go some day — when I am twenty-one . . . Death Valley! Do you know it? My grandfather says I'm mad."

"Death Valley! For such as you? Stay — never go near that awful hell!"

The ghastly white pit and its naked red walls, the midnight furnace winds with their wailing roar, the long, long slopes to the avalanche graves! Ah! the torment of his heart, the tragedy he would hide, and the secret he must keep, and the miniature that burned in its place — they drew her with the invisible cords of life and fate. What he would spare her surged in the air that she breathed.

She had come to him under the oaks, and yet again, quitting her friends, drawn to the lonely desert man.

"They told me Genie's story," she said, and her eyes spoke eloquent praise her lips denied. "And so — her mother and father died on the desert. . . . Tell me, Desert Man, what does Death Valley look like?"

"It is night, it is hell — death and desolation — the grave of the desert, yellow and red and gray — lonely, lonely, lonely silent land!"

"But you love it! . . . Genie says the Indians call you Eagle — because you have the eye of the eagle. . . . Tell me . . . tell me. . . ."

And she made him talk, and she came again. Vague, sweet first hours they were, with their drawing pain. Was it well to wake in the night, with eyes darker than the darkness peering into his soul? Her mother's eyes — with all the glory and none of the shame! She had come another day and then the next, while time stood still with its mocking wait.

Now vaguely came a scene: "I will tell you of the desert," and a part of his story followed, brief and hard.

"Ah! I would be a man," she said. "I would never run. I would never hide."

Mocking words from a tongue too sweet to mock! She had her mother's spirit. And Adam groped in the gloom, to the glee of his devils of scorn. The grass by day and the grass by night felt the impress of his face. Then love — first real love of youth, and noble passion of man — blazed as the sun in his face. From that revelation all was clear in the bursting light of calamity.

Ruth was coming under the oaks. She liked the cool shade and hated the glare. She was nineteen, with a woman's form, and her mother's eyes — proud, sweet, aloof.

"DESERT Man, I am lonesome," she said. "My grandfather has gone again. He is chasing some new will-o'-the-wisp. Gold and mines, cattle and land — and now it's water. He has an ear for every man." "Lonesome? You! What do you know of loneliness?" asked Adam.

"There's a loneliness of soul."

"Ah! but you are young. Go help Genie plan her home."

"Genie and Gene! Two people with but one voice! They cannot hear or see any one but themselves. It's a pity to invade their paradise. I will not . . . And oh! how beautiful the world must be to them!"

"Ruth, is it not so to you?"

"Beautiful lands and greens and waters!" she exclaimed, in restless discontent. "But I cannot live on scenery. There is joy here, but none for me . . . I lost my mother and I can't forget. She had to leave me and go with him — my father. My father who loved me as a child and hated me as a girl. Oh, it's all a mystery. She went with him to the desert. Gold mad — she said he was. She had her debt to pay. And I could not be taken to Death Valley."

"You have never heard from her since the parting?"

"Never . . . And I am a woman now. Some day I will go to Death Valley."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because they went there."

"But no one lives long in that valley of death."

"Then I will find their graves," she said.

"Ruth, you must not. What good can come of your traveling there? I've told you of its desolate and forbidding nature. You are all wrong. Wait! Perhaps

your mother will — perhaps you will hear of her some day."

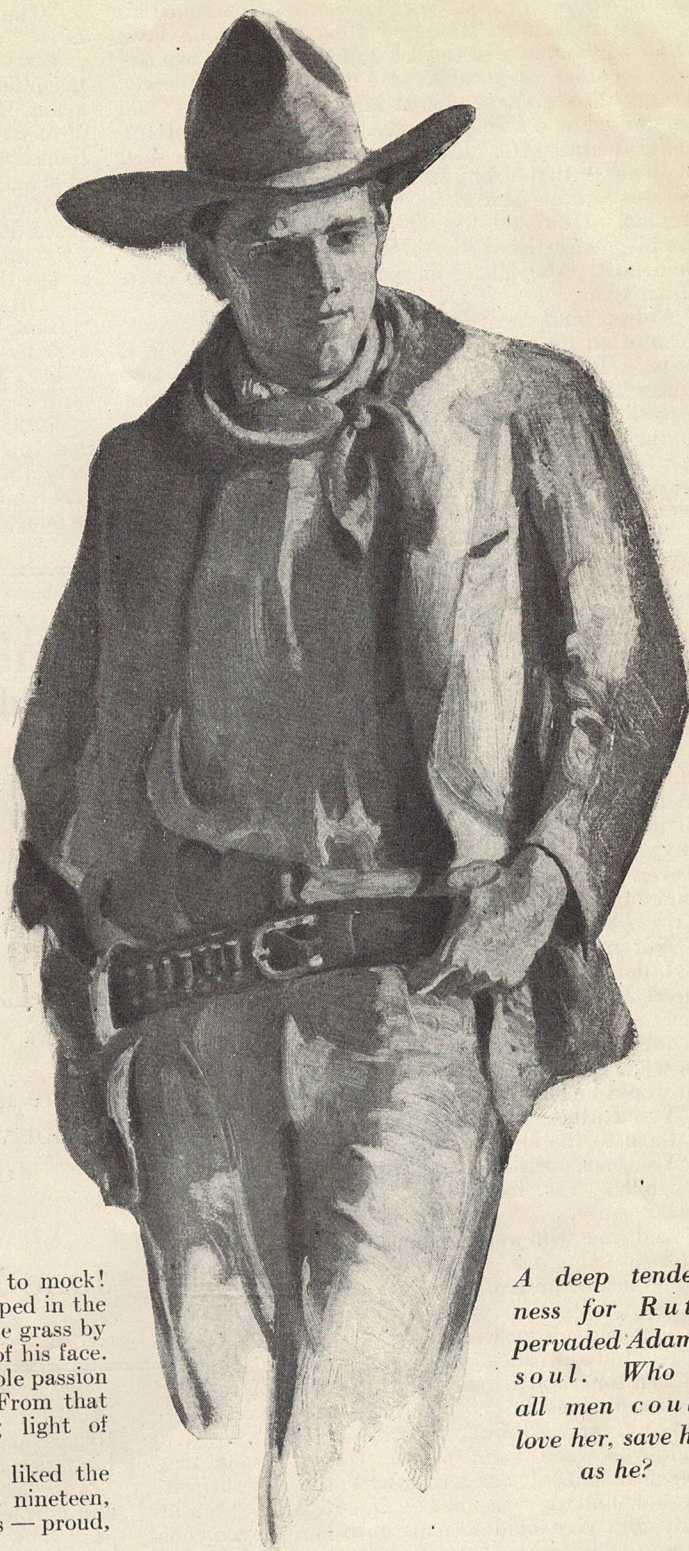
"Oh, Desert Man, I was a child when we parted. I'm a woman now, I want to know. The mystery haunts me. She loved me — Ah! so well! . . . Sometimes I cannot bear to live. My grandfather hides me in lonely places. We meet but few people and those he repels. It is because of me . . . Desert Man, I am lonelier than was Genie."

Brooding purple eyes of trouble, of longing, of discontent, of fire for life! The heart and soul of Ruth Virey — the heritage of need and unrest — shone from her eyes. All unconsciously she longed to be loved. She stood on the threshold of womanhood like a leaf in a storm.

"Talk with me, walk with me, Desert Man," she said, wistfully. "You were Taquitch for Genie. Be Eagle for me. Your eyes know the desert where my mother sleeps — where perhaps her spirit wanders. You soothe my troubled heart. Oh, I can feel myself with you, for you understand."

Thus Adam's soul was stormed. Magdalene Virey had presaged the future. In the dark stillness of the night, sleepless, haunted, tossed by torment, it was revealed to him that Magdalene Virey had risen out of the depths through noble love for him, and through that love she had seen with mystic eyes into the future. She had projected that love into the spirit of the desert, and it had guided Adam's wandering steps to her daughter Ruth. Was this only a wanderer's dream as he lay on the hills?

The one great love of his years possessed him, fierce



A deep tenderness for Ruth pervaded Adam's soul. Who of all men could love her, save her as he?

and restless on its march to his defeat. It mocked his ordeal. It flaunted a banner in his face — noble love, noble passion, love of the soul, all that revered woman, wife, mother and babe. He had found his mate. Strange how he remembered Margarita Arallanes, and the wild boy's love of a day. Poor, pale, wasteful, sinful, lustful little gleam! And he recalled the spell of Genie — that strong call of nature in the wilderness. Above both he had risen. But Ruth Virey was the woman. He could win her. The truth beat at his temples, constricted his throat. And life was not to be denied. Magdalene Virey had given him this child of her agony.

A deep tenderness for Ruth pervaded Adam's soul. Who of all men could love her, save her, content her as he? It was not thought of her kisses, of her embraces that plucked at the roots of his will. Like a passing wave the thrill of such bliss went out to the might of a nobler tide. To save Ruth from the fate of her mother, from the peril of her own heart! And in the saving, a home — happiness — the tender smile of a mother — and the kiss of a child!

"But I am a criminal! I am a murderer! Any day I might be hanged before her very eyes!" he whispered, with his face in the grass, his fingers digging the turf. "Still — no one would ever recognize me now. . . . Ah! but *he* — that human wolf — would not he know me? . . . Oh, if there be God — help me in my extremity!"

Once again he met her. As he rode up the valley at sunset she came out of the oak grove.

"I've been with Genie. Oh, Desert Man, her happiness frightens me. Oh, I love her! — You tell me of your hard lonely terrible desert life. Why, your ears should ring with bells of joy forever. It is *you* who have built her castle. What other deeds, like that, have you done — in these bitter years you tell of?"

"Not many, Ruth — perhaps not one."

"I don't believe you. I am learning you, Desert Man. And oh! I wish you knew how it swells my heart to hear Genie tell of what you did for her. Every day she tells me something new . . . Ah! and more — for to-day she said you would be leaving soon."

"Yes, Ruth — soon," he said.

"Back to the lonely land?"

"Yes, back to the sage and sand, and the big dark hills. Yes, it will be a lonely land," he replied, sadly.

"And you will wander down the trails until you meet some one — some woman or child or man — sick or miserable or lost — and then you will stop."

Adam had no answer.

"The Indians called you Eagle," she went on, and her tone startled him with its hint of remembered mockery. "You have the desert eye — you see so far . . . But you don't see *here*! . . . Why should you waste your splendid strength, your magnificent manhood, wandering over the desert if it's only for unhappy people? — Desert Man, you are great. But you could do more good here — you could find more misery here . . . I know one whose heart is breaking. And you've never *seen*, for all your eagle eye!"

"Listen, you morbid girl," he returned, stung as with fire. "I am not great. I am lost. I go to the desert because it is home . . . Don't think of me! But look to yourself. Look into your heart. Fear it, Ruth Virey. You are a spoiled dreamful passionate child. But you have a mind, and you have a will. You can conquer your unrest, your discontent. Reverse the memory of your mother, but grieve no more. The past is dead. Learn to fight. You are no fighter. You are weak. You give in to loneliness, sadness, longing. Resolve to be a woman! You must live your life. Make it worth while. Every man, every woman has a burden. Lift yours cheerfully, and begin to climb . . . Work for your grandfather. He needs your help. Love those with whom fate has placed you. And fight — fight the dark moods, the selfish thoughts, the hateful memories! Love the animals, the birds — and learn from them — love all nature, so that when you meet a man some day, *the* man, you can love him. That is what it means to be a woman. You are a beautiful, sweet, useless and petulant girl. But be so no more. Be a woman!"

Pale and shocked, with brimming eyes and tremulous lips, she replied:

"Stay — stay, Desert Man, and make me a woman!"

And those sad dark eyes and those sweet murmured words had made him flee — flee like a craven in the night. Yes, for Ruth's sake he had fled. Not a farewell to Genie — not a wave of his hand, but gone in the night — gone forever out of their lives!

"The foxes have holes — the birds of the air have nests!" cried Adam, to the listening silence.

Was it he who lay there with broken heart and magnified sight? Yes, wanderer of the wasteland again. Back to the lonely land! That limitless expanse of rock and sand was home. Was not that Ruth's face limned on the clouds? Did not her sad reproachful eyes haunt him in the dim purple distances?

From the lofty divide of the Sierra Madre Adam gazed down into the void he called home. Beyond the gray sands and far beyond the red reaches he saw across the California Desert into Arizona, and down into Mexico, and to the dim blue Gulf.

Home! All the years of Adam's desert experience were needed to grasp the meaning of the stupendous scene. The eye of the eagle, the sight of the condor, supreme over the desert, most marvelous and delicate work of nature, could only behold, could only range that sun-blasted burned-out empire of the wastelands. Only the mind of man, the thought of man, could understand it. And for Adam it was home, and to his piercing eyes a thing, a place, a world, terribly true and

winding palely green, with a line following its center, where the Rio Colorado meandered in its course to the blue waters of the Gulf.

"And that is my home!" Adam cried to the winds. Slow tears bathed his eyes, and closing them, he rested his strained sight. A strange peace seemed to have stolen over him with his vision and grasp of the desert. A low soft moan of wind in the crevices of rocks lulled his senses for the revel that was to come. He heard his burros nipping at the brush behind his back. From the heights an eagle shrilled its wild whistle of freedom and of solitude. One of the burros brayed, loud and bawling, a jarring note in the silence.

When he opened his eyes the desert under him and the infinity over him had been transfigured.

Only the full blaze of the sun! But a glory dwelt in the clouds, and in the wide blue expanse of heaven. Silver-edged rents, purple ships in a golden sky, the long fan-shaped rays of the sun, white rainbows of haze — these extended from the north across the arch to the open — a great peacefulness of light, deep and tender and blue.

Going down into the desert Adam found that his steps were no longer wandering and aimless. And the nearer he got to the canyon-pass in the Chocolates, the stronger grew his strange eagerness.

For years memory of that camp where he had fought starvation had drawn him like a magnet. He was weary with delving into the gulf of himself, trying to know his nature and heart and soul. No sooner was one mystery solved than another deeper one presented itself. He only knew the old camp called him resistlessly. Something would come to him there.

Travel and tasks of morn and eve were so habitual with him that they made little break in his thought. And that thought, like his desert steps, had traveled in a circle. He was nearing the places where he had begun his fight with physical forces.

He crossed the sandy basin from the Sierra Madre to the Chocolates in four days, two of his camps being dry. And on the fifth, in the afternoon when the long shadows had begun to creep out from the mountains across sand and sage, he climbed the swelling well-remembered slope where Charley Jim had lured the antelope, and gazed down into the oasis where he had all but starved to death, and where Oella had saved his life.

What struck him with gladness was to find the gray-green lonely scene identical with the picture in his memory. How well he remembered! And it was twelve years — thirteen — fourteen years! Yet time had made little or no change in the oasis. Nature worked slowly in the desert.

His burros scented the water and trotted down the sage-bank, bobbing their packs, kicking up little puffs of odorous dust. Adam stood still and gazed long. He seemed to be almost ready to draw a deep full breath of melancholy joy. Then he descended to the sandy, rock-studded floor of the canyon. How strange that he should fall into the exact course where once he had worn a trail! The flat stones upon which he stepped were as familiar as if he had trod them yesterday.

Leisurely he pitched camp, working with a sense of comfort and pleasure, at the anticipation of a permanent, or, at least, an indefinite stay there. Of all his lonely camps on the desert, this had been the loneliest. He called it Lost Oasis.

AFTER his work and meal were finished, and sunset was coloring the sky, Adam wandered around through the willows and along the stream. He stood for some time looking down upon the sandy bar where he had stumbled in pursuit of the rattlesnake, and it had bitten him in the face. And then he went from one familiar place to another, sitting at last in the twilight, under the palms where Oella had nursed and fed him back to life and strength. Where was she now — that tranquil sombre-eyed Indian maiden who had refused to wed one of her race, and who had died of a broken heart?

Next day he climbed to the heights where he had learned to hunt mountain sheep — where he had learned the watching, listening, primitive joy of the Indian. He thrilled in the climb, he breathed deep of the keen cold wind, he gazed afar with piercing eyes. Hours, like those of a lonely eagle on a crag, Adam spent there, and he wooed back to him the watching, listening power with its reward of sweet wild elation. But as the westering sun sent him down the mountain, he felt a vague regret. The indefinable something eluded him.

In the dusk Adam walked along the rim of the slope above the oasis. He had watched the sunset fade over the desert, and the shading of twilight, and the gathering of dusk.

[Continued on page 36]

Harvey O'Higgins and Edward H. Reede, M.D.,

have gone on a search for

The Kink in the American Mind

And in their next article they take

Lincoln as Exhibit B

There is a lot within you and there was a
lot within your ancestors that you
don't know about—See the

June-July McClure's 15 Cents

beautiful and comforting, upon which he seemed driven to gaze and gaze, so that forever it must be limned on his vision and his memory.

The day was one of sunlight and storm, of blue sky and purple clouds and fleecy white, of palls of swirling gray snow and dark veils of rain. The Sierra Madre rolled away on either side, range on range, rising to the north in the night of slow league-long mountain swell after swell, until far against the stormy sky stood the old white-capped heave of San Geronio; and to the south, like the wavy undulations of a calming sea, sinking in long low lines to the Gulf, and the arid arm of the desert land.

Beneath Adam piled the foothills, round and old and gray, sage-gray, lavender-gray, lilac-gray, all so strangely gray — upheaved hills of aged earth and dust and stone. Hill by hill they lowered with glaring gorges between, solitary hills and winding ranges and clustered domes, split by canyons and clept by brushy ravines.

Away and away flowed the gray Sahara with its specks of sage, ribbed by its ridges of dunes. Immense and unbounded it swept to its center, bowl of the desert, the Salton Sink, a great lake of colored silt, a ghastly glaring stain on the earth, over which the storm-clouds trailed their veils of rain. Away to the southward it flowed, level and shining, at last to rise and meet the blue sky in lucent spurs of gold and white.

But these foothills and sand-plains were only the edge of the desert. Beyond marched the mountain ranges. Vast upheaved crinkled crust of the naked earth, scored by fire, scarred by age, cracked by earthquake, and stained in the rusty reds and colored chocolates of the iron rocks!

Beyond gleamed the Chocolate Mountains, sharp in the sunshine, canyoned and blue. And still beyond them, over the valley and far, rose the myriad mountains of Arizona, dim-hazed land, mystic land, like a country of desert dreams. In the distant south, around the blunt end of the Chocolates, came a valley

The Wanderer of the Wasteland

Continued from page 34

He wondered what it would mean to him now to be lost without water or food down there in the wasteland. Would panic seize him? He imagined it would be only as long as he was not sure of death. When he realized that, he would find strength and peace to meet his doom. Adam paced to and fro in a sandy glade of the oasis. All the immensity of desert and infinity of sky seemed to be at work to overwhelm him. The stars—so white, wonderful, watching, eyes of heaven, remorseless and wise! Not a sigh of wind stirred under the palms—not a quiver of a leaf. Nature seemed so strange, beautiful, waiting. All waited! Was it for him?

SOMETHING was charging the air around Adam—something was surging deep in his soul. Suddenly a faint coldness, not of wind nor of chill air, but of something intangible, stole over Adam. He shivered. He had felt it before, though never so strong. And his sense of loneliness vanished. He was not alone!—All around he peered, not frightened, nor aghast, but uncertain, vaguely conscious of a sense that seemed unnatural. The shadow of his lofty form showed dark on the sand. It walked with him as he walked. Was there a spirit in keeping with his steps?

Disturbed in mind, Adam went to bed. When he awoke there had come to him in the night, in his sleep or in his dreams, whispered words from Genie's mother, ringing words from Ruth Virey. "I will come to you out on the desert."—Mrs. Linwood had meant that to be proof of the immortal life of the soul—of God. And Ruth had flung at him: "I would be a man. I would never run. I would never hide!"

Then the still small voice of conscience became a clarion. Torment seized Adam. Like a wild and hunted creature he roamed the mountain top, halting at the old resting places, there to sit like a stone, to lie on his face, to writhe and fight and cry in his torment. At sunset he staggered down the trail, spent and haggard, to take up useless tasks, to find food tasteless and sleep impossible. Thus passed the next day and yet another, before there came a break in his passion and his strength.

A perfect white night came, in which Adam felt that the oasis and its environment presented a soul-quieting scene. A spirit was out there in the gloom—a spirit from the illimitable star-studded infinite above. And it was this spirit that came, at rare intervals, and whispered to Adam's consciousness. Madman or knave, he was being conquered. "I would never hide!" Ruth Virey had said in passionate scorn.

She was like her mother, wonderful as steel in her will. Yet these women seemed all heart. They transcended men in love, in sacrifice, in that living flame of soul, turbulent and unquenchable as the fire of the sun.

"I'll hide no more!" burst from Adam, and the whisper startled him, like those soundless whispers in the shadows.

The darkness of his mind, the blackness of the abyss of his soul seemed about to be illumined. But the truth held aloof. Yet could he not see what constituted greatness in any man? What was it to be great? The beasts of the desert and the birds recognized it—strength—speed—ferocity—tenacity of life. The Indians worshiped greatness so that they looked up and prayed to their gods. They worshiped stature, and power and skill of hand, and fleetness of foot, and above all—endurance. More, they endowed their great chieftains with wisdom. But above all—to endure pain, heat, shock, hardships, all of the agonies of life—to endure—that was their symbol of greatness.

Adam asked no other for himself or for any man. To endure and to surmount the ills of life! Any man could be great. He had his choice.

At midnight Adam paced under the palms. All seemed dim, gray, cool, spectral, rustling, whispering. The old familiar sounds were there, only rendered different by his mood. Midnight was haunting. Somehow the desert with its mustering shadows, dark and vast and strange, resembled his soul and his destiny and the mystery of himself. How sweet the loneliness and solitude of the oasis! There under the palms he could walk and be himself, with only the eye of nature and of spirit on him in this final hour of his extremity.

Adam divined that he did not belong to

himself. What he wanted for himself, selfishly, was not commensurable with the need of others in this life. He was concerned here with many ideals, the highest of which was sacrifice, that the evil of him should not go on. Since he had loved Ruth Virey the whole value of life had shifted. Life was sweet, but no longer if he had to hide under the ban of crime. The stain must be washed away. He had deceived himself by love of life. But the truth in him was the truth of the immortality of his soul, just as it was truth that he inherited instincts of the savage. Life was renewal. Every base selfish man held back its spirituality.

"No more! No more!" cried Adam, looking up. "I will give my life for my brother's," he said. "I will offer myself in punishment for my crime. I will pay with my body that I may save my soul!"

Adam lingered in his travel through the beautiful Palo Verde Valley, and at last reached the long swell of desert slope that led down to the Rio Colorado.

All day he strode behind his faithful burros, here high on the river bank where he could see the sombre flood rolling to the south, and there low in the willow-shaded trail.

The miles slipped by under his tireless stride. Hour by hour he had quickened his pace. And when sunset caught him with its call to camp, he could see the grand purple bulk of old Picacho looming in the sky. Twilight and dusk and night, and the lonely campfire! He heard the sullen gurgle of the river in the weeds and he saw the trains of stars reflected along its swirling surface. The wind stirred in the leaves, gently and low, and fanned the glowing embers, and bore the white ashes away into the darkness. Adam watched the gleaming river rolling on to its grave in the Gulf. Like all things it died, was dispersed, and had rebirth in other climes. Then he watched the blazing stars.

ON THE afternoon of the third day, he turned under the red bluff into the basin of Picacho. Long the trail had been overgrown and dim, and cattle-tracks were scarce. The wide willow and mesquite flat, with its groves of cottonwoods, had grown denser, wilder, no more criss-crossed by trails. Adam had slowed down now, and he skirted the edge of the thicket till he reached the bank of bronze rock that had flowed down from the peaks in ages past. The *ocotillas*, so pearly gray and softly green and vividly scarlet, grew there just the same as long ago when he had plucked a flower for the dusky hair of Margarita.

And here, side by side, stood the crucifixion tree and the *palo verde* under which Margarita had told him their legends. The years had made no change that Adam could discern.

Adam tarried here. His wandering steps were nearing their end. And he gazed across the river at the wilderness of Arizona peaks. It seemed he knew every one. Had he seen them yesterday or long ago?

The sculptured turrets of Picacho were taking on crowns of gold, and from the sheer ragged bluffs of the purple mass, shadows and hazes and rays were streaming down into the valley. One golden streak slanted from the wind-worn hole in the rim. Solemn and noble the castled mountain towered in the sky. In its lonely grandeur there was strength.

One moment longer Adam watched and listened, absorbing the color and glory and wildness, stung to the depths of his heart by his farewell to loneliness. He retrograded one last instant to the savage who sensed but did not think. He thrilled to the old mysterious fading instinct. Then, as in answer to a sonorous call in his ear, he measured slow and laboring strides through the aisles to the river.

His burros scratched their packs on the thorny *mesquites* to get down to the arrowweed and willow. Where once had been open bank, now all was green, except for a narrow sandy aisle. The dock was gone. A sunken barge lay on a bar and moored to its end were two leaky skiffs. Traffic and trade had departed from the river landing. Adam remembered a prospector had told him that the mill had been moved from the river up to the mine under the peak. So now, he thought, supplies and traffic must come and go by way of Yuma.

He went on. The house of Arallanes was a roofless ruin, the vacant windows and doors staring darkly, the walls crumbling to the sands. The shed where Adam had slept was now half hidden by mesquites. The *ocotilla* poles were bleached and rotten and the brush was gone from the roof; but the sandy floor looked as clean and white as the day Adam had spread his blankets there. Fourteen years! Silent he stood, and the low mournful wind was a knell. The past could never be undone.

He went back to the lane and to the open. Old stone-walls were all that appeared left of houses he expected to see. Over the trees, far up the slope, he espied the ruins of the dismantled mill. Unreal it looked there, out of place, marring the majestic sweep of the slope.

His keen desert nostrils detected smoke before he saw blue columns rising through the green. He passed a plot of sand-mounded graves. Had they been there? How fierce a pang pierced his heart! Rude stones marked the graves, and on one a wooden cross, crude and weathered, slanted away. Adam peered at the lettering. "M. A."—And swiftly he swung erect.

There was a cluster of houses farther on, low and squat, a few of them new, but most of them Adam remembered. A post-office sign marked this village of Picacho. The stone-fronted store looked just the same, and the loungers there might never have moved from their tracks in fourteen years. But the faces were strange.

A lean old man, gray and wrinkled, detached himself from the group, and tottered toward Adam with his cane in the sand.

"Wal, stranger, howdy? You down from up river?"

His voice twanged a chord of memory. Merryvale! Slowly the tide of emotion rose in Adam's breast. He peered down into the gray old face, with its narrow half-shut eyes, and its sunken cheeks. Yes, it was Merryvale.

"Howdy, friend," replied Adam. "Yes, I come from up the river."

"Stranger in these parts, I reckon?"

"Yes. But I—I was here years ago."

"Wal, I knowed you was strange because you come in by the river. Travelers nowadays go round the mountain. Prospectors never come any more. The glory of Picacho has faded."

"Aren't they working the mill?" queried Adam.

"Haw! Haw! The mill will never grind with ore that is gone! No work these last five years. The mill has rusted out—fallen to ruin. And the gold of Old Picacho is gone. But, stranger, she hummed while she lasted. Millions in gold—millions in gold!"

"I knew a man here once by the name of Arallanes. What has become of him?"

"Arallanes? Wal, I do recollect him. I was watchman at the mill an' he was boss of the gang. His daughter was knifed by a greaser named Felix. . . . Arallanes left here these ten years ago an' he's never been back."

"His—daughter! . . . Is that her grave back there—the sunken mound of sand—with the wooden cross?"

"I reckon that's Margarita's grave. She was a pretty wench—mad about men—an' there's some who said she got her just deserts."

THE BROAD river gleamed yellow through the breaks in the mesquites. Ponderous and swirling, it glided on round the bend. Adam's gaze then sought the peak.

Somewhere near, hidden by the trees, a Mexican broke the stillness with song—wild sensuous Spanish love in its haunting melody.

"I knew another man here," began Adam, with the words a sonorous knell in his ear. "His name was Collishaw. . . . What's become of him?"

"Collishaw?—Never will fergit him!" declared the old man, grimly. "Last I heard he was cheatin' Injuns out of water-rights—an' still lookin' fer somebody to hang. . . . Haw! Haw! Thet Collishaw was a Texas sheriff."

Suddenly Adam bent lower, so that his face was on a level with Merryvale's.

"Don't you recognize me?"

"Wal, I shore don't, stranger," declared the other. "I've been nigh fifty years in the west an' never seen your like yet. If I had, I'd never forgot."

"Merryvale, do you remember a lad who shot off your fishing line one day? Do you remember how you took interest in him—told him of western ways—that he must be a man?"

"Shore I remember that lad!" exclaimed Merryvale. He was old, but he was still keen. "How'd you know about him?"

"I am Adam Larey!"

The old man's eyes grew piercing. Intensely he gazed, bending closer, strong and thrilling now, with the zest of earlier experience sharp in his expression.

"I know you now. It's Adam. I'd knowed them eyes among a thousand, if I'd only looked. Eagle's eyes, Adam, once seen never forgot! . . . An' look at the giant of him!—Wal, you make me feel young again. . . . Adam, lad, I ain't never forgot ye—never! Shake hands with old Merryvale, who's soon fer the divide!"

Agitated, with tremulous voice, and shaking hands, he grasped Adam, almost embracing him, his gray old face alight with gladness.

"It's good to see you, Merryvale—to learn you've not forgotten me after all these years."

"Lad, you was like my own! . . . But who'd ever know you now? You've white hair, Adam, an'—Ah! I see the desert in your face."

"OLD FRIEND, did you ever hear of Wansfell?"

"Wansfell? You mean thet wanderer the prospectors tell about? . . . Shore, I've been hearin' tales of him these many years."

"I am Wansfell," replied Adam.

"So help me God! . . . Wansfell? . . . You, Adam, the kindly lad! . . . Didn't I tell you what a hell of a man you'd be when you grew up?"

Adam drew Merryvale aside from the curiously gathering loungers.

"Old friend, you are responsible for Wansfell. . . . And now, before we tell—before I go—I want you to take me to—to—my—my brother's grave?"

Merryvale stared.

"What?" he ejaculated, and again his keen old eyes searched Adam's.

"Yes. The grave—of my brother—Guerd," whispered Adam.

"Say, man! . . . You think Guerd Larey's buried here? . . . That's why you come back?"

Astonishment seemed to dominate Merryvale, to hold in check other emotions.

"My friend," replied Adam, "I came to see his grave—to make my peace with him and God—and to give myself up to the law."

"Give yourself—up—to the law!" gasped Merryvale. "Have you gone desert mad?"

"No. I'm right in my mind," returned Adam, patiently. "I owe it to my conscience, Merryvale. . . . Fourteen years of torture! Any punishment I may suffer here, compared to those long years, will be as nothing. . . . It will be happiness to give myself up."

Merryvale's lean jaw quivered as the astonishment and concern left his face. A light of divination began to dawn there.

"But what do you want to give yourself up for?" he demanded.

"I told you. My conscience. My need to stand right with myself. To pay!"

"I mean—what'd you do. . . . what for?"

"Old friend, you've grown thick of wits," rejoined Adam. "Because of my crime."

"An' what was thet, Adam Larey?" queried Merryvale, sharply.

"The crime of Cain," replied Adam, sadly. "Come, friend—take me to my brother's grave."

Merryvale seemed galvanized from age to youth.

"Your brother's grave! . . . Guerd Larey's grave?—By heaven, I wish I could take you to it! . . . Adam, you're out of your head. You are desert mad. . . . Bless you, lad, you've made a terrible mistake. You're not what you think you are. You've hid in the desert fourteen years—you've gone through hell—you've become Wansfell—all for nothin'. . . . My God, to think of thet! . . . Adam, you're no murderer. Your brother is not dead. He wasn't even bad hurt. No—no—Guerd Larey's alive—alive—alive!"

(The End)