

McCLURE'S

Edited by Herbert Kaufman

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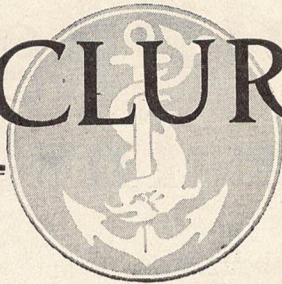
Owen Johnson
Zane Grey
Donn Byrne
Clyde Fitch's
Biography
Bruno Lessing
Samuel Merwin
Harvey O'Higgins
Charles G. D. Roberts

15¢

Painted by
Neysa McMein

McCLURE'S MAGAZINE, INC.

McCLURE'S



Volume 53
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*The Adventurous Career of a Man Who Challenged the
Desert and Conquered*

*The
Wanderer
of the
Wasteland
by Zane Grey*

Illustration by W. Herbert Dunton

WAITING there in the desert for Genie's uncle to return, Adam Larey watched her growing from childhood to young girlhood—more beautiful every day.

"Your uncle should be coming," he said one day. "You should be getting out into the world; you should be going to school."

"Wanny," (for she knew him as Wansfell) "do you want that time to come soon? I love you and I hope uncle never comes so you can take care of me always."

"I love you, too," he said, "I love you as if you were my little sister, and if your uncle doesn't come, I'll take you somewhere, but I can't take care of you always."

"Why?"

The question, shot out like this, was a shock to Adam. He had to say something so he told her the truth—that he was an outcast, that he had come West with a brother with whom he had quarreled and whom he had shot; that he had been a fugitive for years, not knowing what day he would be killed or have to kill.

"But you could go and be punished and then come back," said Genie, going straight to the heart of things.

That simple, direct assertion planted a truth in Adam's mind—a truth that he never forgot.

There followed ages of waiting; the uncle did not come. Adam had plenty of time to ponder. What of Dismukes, the prospector to whom Adam owed his life? Dismukes had extracted his hoard of gold from the desert and had gone out into the world to find life—happiness. Had he found it?

Adam got his answer sooner than he imagined for that man off there making his way along with his burros looked familiar. Yes, he was Dismukes; the prospector had been disillusioned. He had returned to find peace in Death Valley.

More and more a consciousness of Genie's beauty was dawning upon Larey. She was growing up. She was desirable. He felt a strange sense of peril in her presence.

"Do you want to leave this desert," he asked her, thinking of the spell that it had cast upon him and upon Dismukes.

"No, no," she replied; "I love it."

There was danger in women, Adam soliloquized. Experience had taught him that. Nothing but grief had come to him through them. But this was an unusual sense of peril—nothing that had to do with past experiences—that Genie inspired in him. The meaning of it suddenly came to him. He wanted her.



"I'm no boy! I—I'm a—a girl!" declared Genie with angry trembling voice. As she threw off her cap, disclosing curls no boy ever had, she presented a vastly different aspect

seamed with the lines of years, it seemed that a bolt shot back in Adam's heart, opening a long-closed door.

"Charley Jim!" he ejaculated, in startled gladness.

"How, Eagle!" His deep voice, the familiar yet forgotten name, the lean brown hand, confirmed Adam's sight.

"Chief, the white man has not forgotten his Indian friend," replied Adam.

"Eagle no same boy like mescal stalk. Heap big! Many moons! Snows on the mountain!" said Charley Jim, with a gleam of a smile breaking over the bronze face. His fingers touched the white hair over Adam's temples. Pathos and dignity marked the action.

"Boy no more, Charley Jim," returned Adam. "Eagle has his white feathers now. Old as the hills!"

Genie burst into a trill of laughter.

"You funny old people! You make me feel old, too," she protested, and she ran away.

Charley Jim's sombre eyes followed her, then returned to question Adam.

"She same girl here—long time—sick man's girl?" And he made signs to show the height of a child and the weakness of a man's lungs.

"Yes, chief. He her father. Dead. Mother dead, too," replied Adam, and he pointed to the two green graves across the stream.

"Ugh! No live good. No get well. . . . Eagle, sick man have brother—him dead. Jim find 'um.

His fall had been imminent, but he saw clearly now. His hot blood could not be permitted to submerge his mind. He would keep his promise to Genie's mother—that long-suffering mother who had died there in the Wasteland. He would be true to his own mother whose death had sent him West to become a wanderer.

The joy he was to feel in Genie must come from memory. She would owe life and happiness to him and while she might never know, he would.

THAT afternoon when Adam returned to camp sore in body and spent in force, yet with strangely tranquil soul, there was an old Indian waiting for him. Genie had gone back long before Adam, and she sat on the sand, evidently having difficult but enjoyable conversation with the visitor.

At sight of his hard craggy bronze face, serried and

Him dig gold — no water — dead. . . . Jim find 'um heap bones."

It was thus Adam heard the story of the tragedy of Genie's uncle. Charley Jim told it more clearly, though just as briefly, in his own tongue. Moons before he had found a prospector's pack and then a pile of rags and bones half buried in the sand over in a valley beyond the Cottonwood Mountains. He recognized the man's pack as belonging to the brother of the sick man Linwood, both of whom he knew. Adam could trust an Indian's memory. Genie's uncle had come to the not rare end of a wandering prospector's life. The old desert tragedy — thirst! Adam turned to examine the few pack articles Charley Jim had brought for possible identification of the dead. One of these, a silver belt buckle of odd design, oxidized and tarnished, might possibly be remembered by Genie. Adam called her, placed it in her hands.

"Genie, did you ever see that?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied with a start of recognition. "It was my father's. He gave it to my uncle."

Adam nodded to the Indian. "Chief, you were right."

"Oh, Wanny — it means he's found my uncle — dead!" exclaimed Genie, in awe.

"Yes, Genie," replied Adam, with a hand of sympathy upon her shoulder. "We know now. He'll never come back."

With the buckle in her hands the girl slowly walked toward the graves of her parents.

Charley Jim mounted his pony to ride away.

"Chief — tell me of Oella," said Adam.

The Indian gazed down upon Adam with sombre eyes. Then his lean sinewy hand swept up with stately and eloquent gesture to be pressed over his heart.

"Oella dead," he replied, sonorously, and then he looked beyond Adam, out across the lonesome land, beyond the ranges, perhaps to the realm of his red gods. Adam read the Indian gesture. Oella had died of a broken heart.

He stood there at the edge of the oasis, stricken mute, as his old Indian friend turned to go back across the valley to the Coahuila encampment. A broken heart! That superb Indian maiden, so lithe and tall and strong, so tranquil, so sure — serene of soul as the steady light of her midnight eyes — dead of a broken heart! She had loved him — a man alien to her race — a wanderer and a stranger within her gates, and when he had gone away life became unendurable.

Later when he returned to Genie it was to say simply: "My dear, as soon as I can find my burros, we pack for the long trail."

"No!" she exclaimed, with lighting eyes.

"Yes. I shall take you out to find you a home."

"Honest Injun?" she blazed at him, springing erect.

"Genie, I would not tease about that. We know your uncle is dead. The time to go has come. We'll start at sunrise."

Forgotten were Genie's dreams of yesterday! A day at her time of life meant change, growth, oblivion for what had been. With a cry of wondering delight she flung herself upon Adam, leaped and climbed to the great height of his face, and there, like a bird, she pecked at him with cool sweet lips, and clung to him in an ecstasy.

"Don't . . . Still a child, Genie," he said, huskily, as he disengaged himself from her wild embrace. He meant that she was not still a child. It amazed him and hurt him to see her radiance at the thought of leaving the desert oasis which had been home for so long. Fickleness of youth! Yesterday she had wanted to live there forever; to-day the enchantments of new life, people, places, called alluringly. It was what Adam had expected. It was what he wanted for her. How clear had been his vision of the future! How truly, the moment he had fought down his selfish desires, had he read her innocent heart!

Adam's burros had grown gray in their years of idle contented life at the oasis. Like the road-runners, they enjoyed the proximity of camp; and he found them shaggy and fat, half-asleep while they grazed. He drove them back to the shade of the cottonwoods, where Genie, seeing this last and immutable proof of forthcoming departure, began to dance over the sand in wild glee.

"Genie, you'd do well to save some of your nimbleness," admonished Adam. "We'll have a load. You've got to climb the mountain and walk till I can buy another burro."

"Oh, Wanny, I'll fly!" she cried.

"Humph! I rather think you will fly the very first time a young fellow sees you — a big girl in those ragged boy's clothes."

Then Adam thrilled anew with the sweetness, the wonder of her. His cold heart warmed to the core. How he would live in the hope and happiness and love that surely must be awaiting this girl! His mention of a young fellow suddenly rendered Genie amazed, shy, bewildered.

"But — but — Wanny — you — you won't let any yo-young fellow see me *this way!*" she pleaded.

"How can I help it? You just wouldn't sew and make dresses. Now you're in for it. We'll meet a lot of lads. . . . And, Genie, just the other day you didn't care how I saw you."

"Oh, but you're different. You're my Dad, my brother, Old Taquitch, and everything."

"Thank you. That makes me feel a little better."

Suddenly she turned her dark eyes upon him, piercing now and dilating with thought.

"Wanny! Are you *sorry* to leave?"

"Yes," he replied, sadly.

"Then I'll stay, if you want me — ever — always," she said, very low.

"Genie, I'm sorry, but I'm glad, too. What I want

A fairy tale that removes one from the clutter of realities to a world of exquisite romance

Reynardine

by

Donn Byrne

the author of that short story masterpiece

The Keeper of the Bridge

which appears in this issue

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most is to see you settled in a happy home, with a guardian, young friends about you — all you want."

She appeared sober now, and Adam gathered that she had thought more seriously than he had given her credit for.

"Wanny, you're good, and your goodness makes you see all that for me. But a guardian — a happy home — all I want! . . . I'll be poor. I'll have to work for a living. I won't have *you!*"

Then suddenly she seemed about to weep. Her beautiful eyes dimmed. But Adam startled her out of her weakness.

"Poor! Well, Genie Linwood, you've got a surprise in store for you."

Wherewith he led her to the door of the hut, and tearing up the old wagon-boards that had served as a floor, he dug in the sand underneath and dragged forth bag after bag, which he dropped at her feet with sodden heavy thumps.

"**G**OLD, Genie! Gold! Yours! . . . You'll be rich. . . . All this was dug by your father. I don't know how much, but it's a fortune. Now, what do you say?"

The rapture Adam had anticipated did not manifest itself. Genie seemed glad, certainly, but the significance of the gold did not really strike her.

"And you never told me! . . . Well, by the Great Horn Spoon, I'm rich! . . . Wanny, will *you* be my guardian?"

"I will, till I can find you one," he replied, stoutly. "Oh, never look for one — then I *will* have all I want!"

The last sunset, the last starlit night, the last sunrise for Adam and Genie at the oasis, were beautiful memories of the past.

Adam, driving the burros along the dim old Indian trail, meditated on the inevitableness of the end of all things. For nearly three years he had seen that trail every few days and always he had speculated on the distant time when he would climb it with Genie. That hour had struck. Genie, with the light feet of an Indian, was behind him, now chattering like a magpie and then significantly silent. She had her bright face

turned toward the enchanting adventures of the calling future; she was turning her back upon the only home she could remember.

"Look, Genie, how gray and dry the canyon is," said Adam, hoping to divert her. "Just a little water in that white wash, and you know it never reaches the valley. It sinks in the sand. . . . Now look way above you — high over the foothills. See those gleams of white — those streaks of black. . . . Snow, Genie, and the pines and spruces!"

Adam would climb fifty yards or so of easy slope, then halt to let Genie regain her breath, and on steeper zigzag bends he made more frequent stops.

Adam, more and more, called Genie's attention to green banks and wild flowers, as they climbed on up the slowly ascending canyon-bed. The burros pattered over the smooth flat rock and through the sand and water, bobbing their packs, sweating freely from the work they had for so long been unaccustomed to. The canyon banks became canyon walls, gray and stained, with damp streaks at their bases where water oozed, and tiny flowers raised wan faces to the

light. The sand began to give place to gravel, and the water of the stream to increase its volume and force. At length that narrow canyon opened into a mountain valley, walled all around, where green patches of grass began to thrive and shrubs to show dark against the gray of boulders. Here the stream hurried along, no longer forlorn, but babbling, murmuring, singing.

That valley closed at its upper end into another canyon, a dark rugged gash, sombre and gray, where the sun had little chance and green things could not grow. It was a gorge, where the stream ran over bare steps of rock, dashing down with hollow gurgle and silvery tinkle. How gleefully Genie laughed when she had to wade the stream! Desert girl, she loved the pure water like an Indian. Like an Indian, too, she could climb, keeping up with Adam, out of breath at times, but always eager to go on.

At last they emerged into another world. The great peaks still loomed above, but here spread slower-rising slopes. Where below the slopes had been of gray stone spotted by green, here they were green brush spotted by gray.

"Now, Genie," said Adam, when they reached the chaparral, "here's where you go slow. Don't tear your clothes any more. They sure won't stand it. Hang close to me."

Not often did Adam ever climb to an elevation where grew the *manzanita*. It seemed a desert growth, so gnarled and spiked and tough were its smooth red-barked branches, so shiny and stiff and green were its small leaves.

The trail divided, and Adam took to the left, away from the loftiest peak, that still looked high and clear and cold in the intenser blue sky. He headed for a gray-domed spur, fringed by a circle of black. Coveys of mountain-quail whirred up out of the verdant grasses; and on the higher ridges troops of deer watched with long ears erect.

"Genie, we'll have venison steak to-night," declared Adam.

And Genie mouthed her old melodious "ummmmm", and Adam echoed it. Had not they both starved on the desert, he thought, and, if not they, who could appreciate what it was to be hungry?

They camped at the edge of the spruces and pines. How sweet and cool and damp the air to desert dwellers! The wind sang through the trees with different tone. Adam, unpacking the burros, turned them loose, as sure as they were of their delight in the rich green grass. Genie, tired out with the long climb, fell upon one of the open packs to rest.

With his rifle Adam strode away among the scattered pines and clumps of spruces. The smell of this forest almost choked him, yet it seemed he could not smell and breathe enough. The dark green, spear-pointed spruces and the brown-barked pines, so lofty and spreading, intoxicated his desert eyes. To shoot was habit, the result of which was regret. These deer were tame, not like the wary, telescope-eyed mountain-sheep; and Adam, after his first exultant thrill, gazed down with sorrow at the sleek beautiful deer he had slain. What dual character he had — what contrast of thrill and pang, of blood and brain, of desert and civilization, of physical and spiritual, of nature and — but he did not know what!

He laughed later, and Genie laughed, too, at how ravenous he was at supper, how delicious the venison tasted, how good it was to eat.

"I guess I'll have to give myself up as a bad job," he told her. [Continued on page 55]

Ignatz had nothing to say on the subject. He was a man of —
Well, anyway, the next morning Susskind stood in the front of his café, gazing across the street and, ever and anon, rubbing his eyes to make sure that he saw aright. Levine's Café was closed and in the same spot where an invitation to the public to attend the opening night had hung there now rested a placard reading,

TO LET
INQUIRE OF G. GOLDSTEIN
Real Estate
689 Rivington St.

Susskind promptly telephoned to G. Goldstein. He wanted to take no chances. "Levine?" said the real estate agent. "Oh, he busted. The rent is very cheap. What did you say your name was?" "Never mind," said Susskind. "I only wanted to make sure."

He walked around the block twice, whistling all the way. When he returned he went up-stairs and surprised his wife by kissing her.

"Is something the matter?" asked Mrs. Susskind, in alarm. "It is," replied her husband. "You're going back behind the counter to-day."

When Mamie arrived that afternoon, dressed in bewildering finery, she found Mrs. Susskind usurping her place behind the counter. Mamie was not slow to grasp the situation. There was a gleam in Mrs. Susskind's eyes which revealed volumes.

"I came to see if there is any letters for me," said Mamie, sweetly.

"Oh, you don't say," exclaimed Mrs. Susskind with a snort. "Well, there ain't. And what's more, Blondy, you're fired."

Mamie burst into a peal of silvery laughter. "Fired?" said she. "Why, I made up my mind to quit last night. I hope you don't think I'd work in a cheap joint like this. If I did I'd be looking like you after a while."

And as she swept, laughing, out of the café, Mrs. Susskind felt that her victory had been a rather hollow one. Susskind had paid no attention to this interview. He was waiting for the gypsies to arrive. He was also smiling. He had carefully rehearsed his part in the scene which he had planned to ensue upon their arrival. But when, finally, they came lounging into the café he decided to change all his tactics.

"How much do I owe you this week?" he asked of Horwitz. "You and the whole caboodle."

Horwitz named the amount. Susskind carefully counted out the money and placed it in the gypsy's hand. Then, seizing him by the back of his neck, he rushed him the entire length of the café and threw him out of the place.

"Now," he cried, facing the others, "who wants to fight?"

Without uttering a word they picked up their instruments and filed out of the café.

"So!" exclaimed Susskind. "That will show them who's boss in here. This is a café and not a theater!"

"I wonder where Ignatz is," remarked Mrs. Susskind. "He's late."

"So soon as he comes in," said her husband, "he gets a piece of my mind. I don't stand any monkey business from my help no matter how long they have been here."

It was more than an hour past his usual time when Ignatz sauntered slowly into the café. Susskind gazed at him in amazement. Not that there was the slightest change in the coffee-pourer's appearance but something indefinable in his manner which, it seemed to Susskind, he had never observed before. And, instead of hastening to remove his hat and coat, he seated himself leisurely at one of the tables. He beckoned to his employer — Ignatz never spoke unless it was absolutely necessary.

"We got a place picked out in Chicago," he began, abruptly, "but it costs two hundred dollars to move out there. Or, —" he gazed fixedly at Susskind — "we can open up the place across the street."

Susskind sank limply into a chair, facing Ignatz and let his arms fall upon the table.

"We?" he repeated, blankly. "Me and Mamie," said Ignatz, quietly. "We're married. Should we go to Chicago?"

For a full minute Susskind sat staring into the other's face. It seemed to him that he had never really seen Ignatz before. The expression of calm determination, of cunning selfishness, was something new to him. But not for an instant did he fail to grasp the full significance of Ignatz's meaning or fail to appreciate the full force of the threat which hung over his head. Then, slowly, he rose, went to his safe and counted out two hundred dollars. He laid the money on the table.

"Go to Chicago," he said, in a low voice. Ignatz counted the money slowly and carefully and tucked it into his pocket. Then he rose and walked toward the door. At the threshold he paused and turned to smile at Susskind.

"Good-bye!" he said. He was a man of few words. When the door had closed behind him Susskind raised his voice and shouted after him. But the name of the place was not Chicago.

It was two days before Abie Lazinsky put in an appearance again. Susskind's Café looked exactly as it had looked during all those years before Levine had come to disturb its serenity. Mrs. Susskind, in a shabby gown, sat behind the counter and her husband, with his thumbs under his armpits, stood in the front, staring idly into vacancy. Abie looked dejected and crest-fallen.

"What's the trouble?" asked Susskind. "You look like a funeral."

"All I got to say is that Ignatz is a dirty loafer," said Abie.

"Stole Mamie away, hey?" said Susskind, smiling. "Say, Abie, you're one of them fellows what never knows when he's well off."

"It ain't that," explained Abie. "She liked me all right. But he lied to her. Always kept telling her what a lot they could do if they went into business together."

Susskind slowly nodded his head a great many times.

"He got the right idea," he finally said. "You see, Abie, love is one thing but business — ah! — business is business!"

The Wanderer of the Wasteland

[Continued from page 30]

"Wanny, for me you'll always be Taquitch, giant of the desert and god of the clouds."

"Ah! You'll forget me in ten days after you meet him!" replied Adam, somewhat bitterly.

Genie could only stare her amazement.

"Forgive me, child. I don't mean that. I know you'll never forget me. But you've been my little girl so long that it hurts to think of your being some other man's."

Then he was to see the marvel of Genie's first blush.

At sunset hour he took her around through the pines, skirting the rim of the mountain spur, and climbed to its gray craggy summit. The desert lay revealed.

"There! Take your last look!" he exclaimed, solemnly. Indeed the moment was poignant.

Far, far beneath spread out the fan-shaped desert, and the arm of the valley that had been Genie's home was the handle of the fan, and the immense ridged and sunset-colored world was the body, spreading ever wider and farther, on and on, into purple in-

finity. From the heights it seemed a vastly different world. Gone was any possible sense of intimacy with that wilderness of space. Here was what the king of the eagles saw as he soared wide-winged and free. Adam had never stood so high in all his mountain-scaling for sheep and in all his promontory habit of watching and listening.

The pitch was precipitous, almost perpendicular, and even Adam's vision was confounded by depth and distance. But he did not need to know dimensions. Here he seemed an eagle and his eye was supreme. It saw. It grasped more in an instant than the mind could explain in a hundred years. To pick out known objects in order to establish reality was difficult for Adam and surely beyond Genie. Thus little dots of black, seen through golden light of sunset, ruddy-streaked and thick, were truly palm trees in the palm canyons; and tiny traceries of winding white were the wide dry washes. Dark and speckled, the valley of sage and cactus and greasewood, with its aisles of sand, flowed like a widening bay out to meet the sea.

Every man must judge for himself as to whether he can make his old hat do for Spring —



The saving is only a few dollars at most. Hardly worth while if one has to feel just a little shabby all the time.

Stand squarely in front of the mirror, put on your old hat and look at it.

Then drop into the nearest good hatter and try on one of the new Spring Stetson models.

You'll get a sense of fresh crispness in your appearance, of Style, of looking and feeling fit — and better all 'round satisfaction than penny wise economy could ever give you.

Stetson Style
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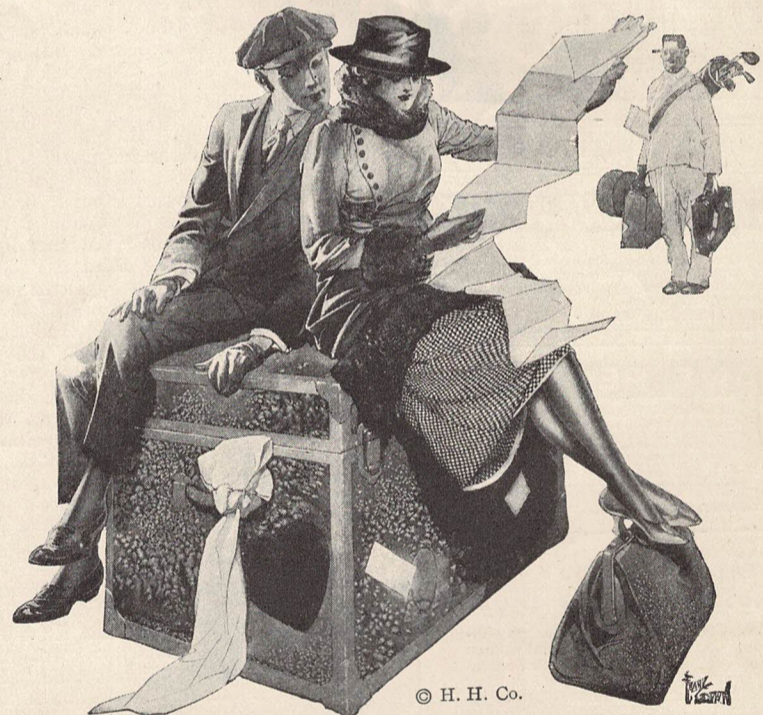
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Then Genie glared at Adam, and she seemed between tears and rage.

"I—I never—never knew—you could be like this."

"Like what? Genie, I'm half ashamed of you. Any one would think the world had come to an end. All because you woke up and found out you had on boy's clothes. You would wear them. You never minded me. You didn't care how I saw you!"

"I don't care how he saw me or sees me, either, so there," declared Genie.

"Oh!—Well, what's wrong then?"

"I—he—it—it was what he called me," replied Genie, confusedly.

"Genie, I've been mostly in fun. Now I'm serious. . . . I want you to be perfectly natural and nice with these Blairs."

Manifestly she took that seriously enough. Without another word she dragged her blankets and canvas away from the firelight, made her bed and crawled into it.

A little while after dark, young Blair presented himself at Adam's fire.

"I suppose you folks are ranching it?" asked Adam.

"It's hardly a ranch, though we have hopes," replied Blair. "Mother and I run the farm. My father's not—he's away."

"Looks like good soil. Plenty of water and fine grass," observed Adam.

"Best farming country all around—these valleys," declared the lad, warming to enthusiasm. "Ranchers taking it all up. Only a few valleys left. There's one just below this—about a hundred acres—if I could only get that! . . . But no such luck for me."

"You can never tell," replied Adam.

"You say ranchers are coming in?"

"Yes. San Diego is growing fast. In a few years any rancher with one of these valleys will be rich. My mother bought this little farm here—ten acres—and the valley, which was about ninety. But my father—we lost the valley. And we manage to live here."

Adam's quick sympathy divined that something pertaining to the lad's father was bitter and unhappy. He questioned further about the farm, what they raised, where they marketed it. In half an hour Adam knew the boy and liked him.

"You're pretty well educated for a farmer boy," remarked Adam.

"I went to school till I was sixteen. We're from Indiana. Vincennes. Father got the gold fever. We came west. Mother and I took to a surer way of living."

"You like ranching, then?"

"Gee! but I'd love to be a real rancher! There's not only money in cattle and horses, on a big scale, but it's such a fine life. Outdoors all the time! . . . And mother and the kids—I'd like to do better by them."

"I saw the youngsters and I'd like to get acquainted. Tell me about them."

"Nothing much to tell. Tommy's three, Betty's four, Hal's five. He's been a baby when we came west. He's been delicate. But he's slowly getting stronger."

"WELL! You've a fine family. How are you going to educate them?"

"That's our problem. Mother and I must do our best—until—maybe we can send them to school at San Diego."

"When your ship comes in?"

"Yes, I'm always hoping for that. But first I'd like my ship to start out, so it can come back loaded."

"Yes, if a man waits for his ship to come in—sometimes it never comes."

"I suppose you'll be on your way to town early?" asked Blair, as he rose.

"Guess I'll not break camp to-morrow. Genie is tired. And I won't mind a little rest. Hope we'll see you again."

"Thank you. Good night."

When he was gone, Adam saw the gleam of Genie's wide-open eyes. She had heard his conversation with young Blair. He felt a great sympathy for Genie. She was face to face with new life, new sensations, poignant and bewildering. How might he best help her?

Next morning, when Adam returned from a look around, he discovered Genie up, putting at the camp-fire. She was making a heroic effort to show that this situation was perfectly natural.

After breakfast Adam asked Genie to accompany him to the farmhouse. She went, but the free lithe step wanted something of its old grace. Adam espied the children in the yard. Tommy was a ragged tousle-headed chubby little rascal, ruddy-cheeked and blue-eyed. Betty resembled the lad Eugene, having his fine dark eyes, and open countenance. Hal was the largest, a freckle-faced imp if a lam ever saw one. Genie approached

them, and offered to swing Betty, who was sitting in a clumsy little hammocklike affair. And Adam, seeing the children's mother at the door, went that way.

"Good morning, Mrs. Blair," he said. "We've come over to chat a bit."

She greeted him smilingly. "Goodness knows we're glad to have you. Genie has gone to work. Won't you sit down?"

Then she espied Genie. "For Land's sake! That your girl in the boy's clothes? Gene told me what a dunce he'd been. . . . Oh, she's pretty! What shiny hair!"

"That's Genie. I want you to meet her—and then, Mrs. Blair, perhaps you can give an old desert codger a little advice."

He called Genie, and she came readily, though not without shyness. Despite her garb and its rents Adam could not but feel proud of her. After a little talk, Adam bade her play with the children.

"No wonder Gene spilled the milk!" ejaculated Mrs. Blair.

"Why?" queried Adam.

"The girl's more than pretty. Never saw such hair. And her eyes! They're not the color of hair and eyes I know."

"THAT'S the desert's work, Mrs. Blair. On the desert nature makes color, as well as life, more vivid, more intense."

"And this Genie—isn't it odd—her name is like my boy Gene's—she's no relation of yours?"

Briefly then Adam related Genie's story. "Laws a-me! Poor child! . . . and now she has no people—no home—not a friend in the world but you?"

"Not one. It's pretty sad, Mrs. Blair."

"Sad? It's worse than that. . . . Mr. Wansfell, you must be family and friends, and all to that girl. . . . And let a mother tell you what a noble thing you've done—to give three years of your life to an orphan!"

"What I did was good for me. Better than anything I ever did before," replied Adam, earnestly. "I'd go on if it were possible. But Genie needs a home, young people, work, to live her life. And I—I must go back to the desert."

"Ah! so that's it," exclaimed the woman, nodding. "My husband took to the desert—sold my farm to get money to work his gold claims. Always he had to go back to the desert. . . . And now he'll never come home again."

"Yes, the desert claims many men. But I would sacrifice whatever the desert means to me, for Genie's sake, if it—if there was not a reason which makes that impossible."

"And now you're hunting a home for her?"

"Yes."

"She's well educated, you said?"

"Her mother was a school-teacher."

"Then she could teach children. . . . Things work out strangely in life, don't they? Any girl may become an orphan."

"Now, Mrs. Blair, will you be so kind as to take Genie, or go with us into town, and help us get some clothes for her? A few simple dresses, and things she needs. I'd be helpless. And Genie knows so little. She ought to have a woman go with her."

"Indeed she shall have," declared Mrs. Blair. "I'll be only too glad to go. I need some things—I've a better idea. My neighbor up the valley—his name is Hunt—he has a granddaughter. They're city folks. This granddaughter is older than Genie and I heard her say only the other day that she brought a lot of outgrown dresses with her—and didn't know what to do with them. All her clothes are fine—not like you buy out here. . . . I'll take Genie over there right this minute!"

Mrs. Blair got up and began to untie her apron. Kindliness beamed upon her countenance.

"You're good indeed," said Adam, gratefully. "I thank you. Genie dreaded this matter of clothes. You can tell Miss Hunt I'd be glad to pay—"

"Shucks! She wouldn't take your money. She's quality. And her name's not Hunt. That's her grandfather's name. I don't know what hers is—except he calls her Ruth."

Ruth! The sudden mention of that name seemed to Adam like a stab. What a queer, inexplicable sensation followed it!

"I'll be right out," declared Mrs. Blair, bustling into the house.

Adam called Genie to him and explained what was to happen. She grew radiant.

"Oh! Wanny, then I won't have to go into a town—to be laughed at—and I can get—get dressed like—like a lady—before he sees me again!" she exclaimed.

"He? Who's that, Genie?" inquired Adam dryly, though he knew very well.

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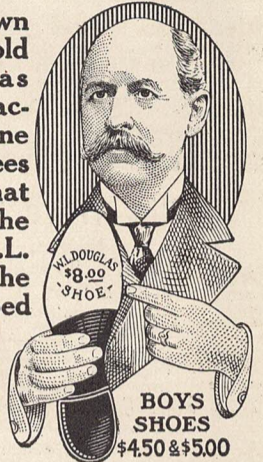
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she was eternally feminine enough to bite her tongue at the slip she had made, and to blush charmingly.

Then Mrs. Blair bustled out again, in sun-bonnet and shawl, and led Genie away toward the other end of the valley.

Adam returned to camp, much relieved and pleased, yet finding suddenly that a grave pondering mood had come upon him. He might have analyzed the vague uneasy sense of foreboding had it not been for Mrs. Blair's children who had followed him. They were still shy, but growing bolder. Adam's overtures seemingly inhibited their growing friendliness, so he let them alone, and made great show of work about camp. Then they distracted him as much as if they had accepted his advances.

"Gee! ain't he a whopper of a man!" declared the red-headed Hal, in a shrill whisper. "I'd be feared to ride on his back 'cause if I'd fall off it'd be wusser'n fallin' off Gene's plow-horse."

"He's Jack, the giant-killer!" declared Betty.

Tommy, however, appeared to have more practical interpretations of Adam, for presently he toddled closer and said: "Has oo dot anything dood to eat?"

And thus, through Tommy's gastronomic instinct, Adam won his confidence, and so had easier access to that of his sister and brother.

In the still noon-hour, Adam would surely have succumbed to drowsiness had he not been vociferously hailed by some one. He sat up to hear his new-made friend Hal repeat: "Say, my Maw wants you to eat with us."

ADAM lumbered up, and trying to accommodate his giant steps to those of the urchin, finally reached the house. Hal led him into a cool, clean, stone-floored dining-room, the table and contents of which looked wonderfully pleasing to Adam. Then something swift and white rushed upon Adam from somewhere.

"Look!" it cried, in ecstatic tones, and pirouetted before his dazzled eyes.

Genie! In a white dress, white slippers; all white, even to the rapt beautiful strangely transformed face! It was a Genie he could not recognize. Yet, however her dark gold-glinting tresses were brushed and arranged he would have known their rare rich color. And the eyes were Genie's—vivid like the heart of a magenta cactus flower, unutterably and terribly expressive of happiness. But all else—the girl's height and form and movement—had acquired something subtly feminine.

"Oh! Wanny! I've a whole bundle of dresses!" she cried, rapturously. "And I put this on to please you."

"Pleased! . . . Dear girl, I'm—I'm—full of joy for you—overcome for myself," exclaimed Adam. How he blessed the nameless spirit which had come to him the day Genie's fate and future hung in the balance! What a victory for him to remember—seen now in the light of Genie's lovely face.

Then Mrs. Blair bustled in. Easy, indeed, was it to see how the happiness of others affected her. "It's good we have dinner at noon, else we'd had to do with little. Sit at table, folks. . . . Children, you must wait. We've company. . . . Gene, son, come to dinner."

Adam found himself opposite Genie who had suddenly seemed to lose her intensity, though not her glow. She had softened. The fierce joy had gone. Adam, watching her, received from her presence a thrill of expectancy. Then Eugene entered. His face shone. He had wet his hair and brushed it and put on a coat. If something new and strange was happening to Genie it had already happened to Eugene Blair.

"Folks, help yourselves and help each other," said Mrs. Blair.

Adam was ready for that. What a happy dinner! He ate with the relish of a desert man, long used to so.rr dough and bacon, but he had keen ears for Mrs. Blair's chatter and eyes for Genie and Eugene. The mother, too, had a thoughtful gaze for the young couple, and her mind was apparently upon weightier matters than her speech indicated.

"Well, folks," said Mrs. Blair, presently, "if you've all had enough, I'll call the children."

Eugene arose with alacrity. "Let's go outdoors," he said, stealing a shy look at Genie. She seemed to move in a trance. Adam went out, too, and found himself under the oaks. The very air was potent with the expectancy that Adam had sensed in the house. Something was about to happen. It puzzled him.

Then Mrs. Blair appeared. She had the

look of a woman to whom decision had come. The hospitality, the kindly interest in Genie, the happiness in seeing others made happy were in abeyance to a strong serious emotion.

"Mr. Wansfell, if you'll consent I'll give Genie a home here with me," she said.

"Consent! . . . I—I'll gladly do that," he replied, with strong agitation. "You are a—a good woman, Mrs. Blair. I am overwhelmed with gladness for Genie. For her luck. It's so sudden, so unexpected."

"Some things happen that way," she replied. "They just come about. I took to Genie right off. So did my boy. I asked him—when we got back from our neighbor's—if it would not be a good idea to keep Genie. We are poor. It's one more to feed and clothe. But she can help. And she'll teach the children. That means a great deal to me and Gene. . . . He would be glad, he said. So I thought it over—and I've decided. We've your consent. . . . Now, Genie, will you stay with us?"

"Oh, I'll—I'll be so happy—I'll try so—so hard!" faltered Genie.

"Then—it's settled. My dear girl, we'll try to make you happy," declared Mrs. Blair, and sitting beside Genie, she embraced her.

Adam's happiness was so acute it seemed pain. But was his feeling all happiness? What had Genie's quick look meant—the intense soul-searching flash she gave him when Mrs. Blair had said it was all settled? One flash of eyes—then she was again lost in this immense and heart-numbing idea of a home. Adam saw Eugene look at her, as his mother enfolded her. And Adam's heart suddenly lifted to exaltation. Youth to youth! The lad's look was soulful, absorbing, full of strange deep melancholy, full of dreamy distant unconscious enchantment. What had seemed mysterious was now as clear as the sunlight. By some happy chance of life, the homeless Genie had been guided to a good woman and a noble lad.

And while Eugene thus gazed at Genie, she lifted her eyelids, so heavy with their dreams, and met his gaze. Suddenly she sweetly, strangely blushed, and looked away, at Adam, through him to the beyond. She seemed full of a vague dreaming sweetness of life; a faint smile played round her lips; her face lost its scarlet wave for pearly whiteness; and tears splashed down upon her listless hands.

The moment, with all it revealed to Adam, swiftly passed.

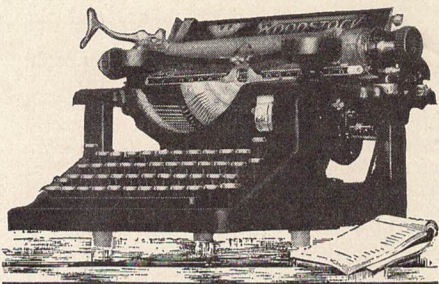
"Gene, take her and show her the horses," said Mrs. Blair. "She said she loved horses. Show her all around. We'll let the work go by to-day."

Mrs. Blair talked a while with Adam, asking to know more about Genie, and confiding her own practical plans. Then she bustled off to look after the children.

Adam was left to the happiest and most grateful reflections of his life. Much good must come to him in his lonely hours, when once more the wasteland claimed him; but that was the only thought he gave himself. Lounging back on the old rustic bench he gave himself up to a growing delight of anticipation. These good Blairs did not dream that in offering Genie a home out of the kindness of their hearts, they had touched prosperity. They were poor. But Genie was rich. They meant to share with the orphan their little; they had no thought of anything Genie might share with them. Adam decided that he would buy the ninety acres and the hundred in the valley beyond it; and horses, cattle, all the stock and implements for a fine ranch. Genie, innocent and bewildered child that she was, had utterly forgotten her bags of gold. On the next day, or soon, Adam meant to borrow Gene's horse and buggy, and drive to Santa Ysabel and then to San Diego. He must find some good investment for the rest of Genie's gold, and a good bank, and some capable and reliable person to look after her affairs. How like a fairy story it would seem to Genie! What amazement and delight it would occasion Mrs. Blair! And as for the lad, no gold could enhance Genie's charm for him. Gene would love Genie! Adam had seen it written in their unconscious eyes. And Gene would have the working of the beautiful ranch his eager heart had longed for. For the first time Adam realized the worth of gold. Here it would be a golden harvest.

Dreaming thus Adam was only faintly aware of voices and footsteps that drew nearer; and suddenly he seemed transfixed, and thrilling, his gaze on a face he knew, the face on the miniature he carried—the lovely face of Ruth Virey.

[The conclusion of "The Wanderer of the Wasteland" will appear in the May McClure's.]



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