

# McCLURE'S

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Neysa McMein

The American Mind - Is There Something Wrong With It?  
By Harvey O'Higgins

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# McCLURE'S

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by Bruno Lessing

And in addition there will be instalments of two great novels:

### "The Wasted Generation"

by Owen Johnson

### "The Wanderer of the Wasteland"

by Zane Grey

Also "The Life-Story of Clyde Fitch", Herbert Kaufman's Editorials and other features in

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*Love—the Love that Means*

*Salvation—Comes to*

# The Wanderer of the Wasteland by Zane Grey

Illustration by W. Herbert Dunton

**L**EADING a little girl out of the desert was a strange and wonderful adventure for Adam Larey whose lonely wanderings in the wasteland had forced him to kill, had forced him to witness tragedy upon tragedy.

Driven there by a quarrel with a dissolute brother whom he had shot because of a Mexican girl, life had not been easy for Adam. First he would have perished of starvation had not Dismukes, a prospector, appeared in the nick of time; again he would have died but for Indians who rescued him. His wanderings renewed, Adam again met Dismukes, who turned his attention toward Death Valley, starting him on another journey of adventure in search of an unhappy woman whom Dismukes had found there.

He had risked his life in vain to save Magdalene Virey from the death to which a jealousy-crazed husband had condemned her; he had seen her die by an avalanche which Virey knew sooner or later would crush their shack, and he had pursued Virey to his death in a repetition of the ghastly performance.

Next he was able to repay his debt to Dismukes by rescuing him when he had been captured by thieves who were prepared to take his gold and put him to death by slow torture.

And now Dismukes, having garnered the amount of gold that he set out to obtain, was gone—gone into the world to travel and enjoy himself. "Would he find what he sought?" Adam wondered.

Dismukes had been gone only a few hours when Adam came across two men and a burro bearing a young girl. Several incidents aroused his suspicions, so he followed and took the child away after a desperate fight.

On the way back to her mother's camp she told him her pitiful story. Her father had died of consumption two years before, and her mother was ill of the same disease. They had no food.

The mother lingered only a few days after Genie's return. During her last moments she received Adam's promise that he would take care of her child and revealed to him the secret that a fortune in gold was buried beneath their shack.

Then began the struggle to prevent Genie from suc-

cumbing to grief over her mother's death during the wait for her uncle to return and claim her.

Adam forced the child to walk miles every day in the effort to take her mind off her sorrow. He who had spoken to so few men and women in the desert now was inspired by a child.

**T**IME passed. The days slipped by to make weeks, and weeks merged into months. Summer, with its hot midday hours, when man and beast rested or slept, seemed to shorten its season by half.

As time went fleeting by, Adam now and then remembered Dismukes, and these memories, with their speculations, were full of both gladness and pathos. He tried to visualize the old prospector in the new rôle of traveler, absorber of life, spendthrift and idler. But

*"Wanny, you're all eyes," cried Genie. "What's the matter with me? Why do you look so?" She was beautiful. It seemed a simple fact that he had overlooked, yet it distracted him*

Adam's conception was not clear. On the contrary, his memory perfectly pictured Dismukes as he had been that last day, radiating with a white flame of rapture, king of his soul free—free to go forth and reap the long-tilled harvest of life. Nevertheless, Adam could never be sure in his heart that Dismukes would find what he sought.

For the most part of the still, hot, waking hours, Adam, when he was not working or sleeping, devoted himself to Genie. The girl changed every day—how, he was unable to tell. To him she grew to be more of a phenomenon than any of the strange desert creatures.

Every morning at sunrise Genie knelt by her mother's grave with bowed head and clasped hands, and every evening at sunset or in the golden dusk of twilight she again knelt in prayer.

"Genie, why do you kneel there—now?" asked Adam once, unable to contain his curiosity. "You did not always do it. Only the last few weeks or a month."

"I forgot I'd promised mother," she replied. Andreas Canyon was far from the camp under the cottonwoods, but Adam and Genie, having once feasted their eyes upon its wildness and beauty and grandeur, went back again and again, so that presently the distance in the hot sun was no hindrance, and the wide area of white, glistening, terrible cholla cactus was no obstacle.



W. Herbert Dunton



The canyon yawned with wide mouth and huge yellow cliffs. Once inside the portal the illusion of a huge demon of the old mountain snarling down upon the desert was wholly and pleasantly dispelled. On one side were rocky jutting ledges full of caves and cracks and fringed by graceful desert plants; on the other rose a rather steep slope of flat rocks, laid like a mosaic of reds and bronzes, in the crevices of which grew soft, gray sage and pink-topped bisnagi cactus.

Just beyond the mouth of the canyon and across the wide space from cliff to slope bloomed the most verdant and beautiful oasis of that desert region.

Huge gray boulders, clean and old, and russet with lichen, made barricade for a clear stream of green water, as if to protect it from blowing desert sand. Yet there were little beaches of white sand, lined by colored pebbles. Green rushes and flags grew in the water. Beyond the stream on the side of the flat-rocked slope lay a many-acred thicket of mesquite, impenetrable except by birds and beasts. The green of the leaves seemed dominated by colors of the mistletoe. Balls and bunches of this parasite shone in the sunlight, bronze, yellow-green and dull red, with little berries of like color.

"Oh, I love it here!" exclaimed Genie. "Listen to the palms whisper!"

One place in which they always tarried was a sandy glade above the stream, sheltered on the west by a line of palms. They were eight in number and they stood so closely together that they formed a barrier against sun and wind and flying sand and rain. Only tiny streaks of gold sunlight gleamed through. The shade was dark and cool, in fact the most impenetrable and perfect shade Adam had ever seen cast by trees. No grass grew in that shade. The effect was like a blanketing of the sun. This glade, and its environs, appeared to be tenanted only by birds and lizards.

"Genie, your uncle seems a long time coming back for you," remarked Adam.

"I hope he never comes," she replied.

Adam was surprised and somewhat disconcerted at her reply, and yet strangely pleased.

"Why?" he asked.

"Oh, I never liked him and I don't want to go away with him."

"Your mother said he was a good man — that he loved you."

"Uncle Ed was good, and very kind to me. I — I ought to be ashamed," replied Genie. "But he drank, and when he drank he kissed me — he put his hands on me. I hated that."

"Did you ever tell your mother?" inquired Adam.

"Yes. I told her. I asked her why he did that. And she said not to mind — only to keep away from him when he drank."

"Genie, your uncle did wrong, and your mother did wrong not to tell you so," declared Adam, earnestly.

"Wrong? What do you mean — wrong? I only thought I didn't like him."

"Well, I'll tell you some day. . . . But now, to go back to what you said about leaving — you know I'm going with you when your uncle comes."

"Wanny, do you want that time to come soon?" she asked, wistfully.

"Yes, of course, for your sake. You're getting to be a big girl. You must go to school. You must get out to civilization."

"Oh! I'm crazy to go!" she burst out, covering her face. "Yet I've a feeling I'll hate to leave here. . . . I've been so happy lately."

"Genie, it relieves me to hear you're anxious to go. And it pleases me to know you've been happy lately. You see I'm only a — a man, you know. How little I could do for you! I've tried. I've done my best. But at that best I'm only a poor old homeless outcast — a desert wanderer! I'm —"

"Hush up!" she cried, with quick, sweet warmth. Swiftly she enveloped him, hugged him close, and kissed his cheek. "Wanny, you're grand! . . . You're like Taquitch — you're *my* Taquitch with face like the sun! — And I love you — love you as I never loved any one except my mother! — And I hope Uncle Ed never comes so you'll have to take care of me always."

Adam gently disengaged himself from Genie's impulsive arms.

"Genie, let me make sure you understand," he said, gravely. "I love you, too, as if you were my little sister. And if your uncle doesn't come I'll take you somewhere — find you a home. But I never — much as I would like to — never can take care of you always."

"Why?" she flashed, with her terrible directness.

Adam had begun his development of Genie by telling the truth; he had always abided by it; and now, in these awakening days for her, he must never veer from the truth.

"If I tell you why — will you promise never to speak of it — so long as you live?" he asked, solemnly.

"Never! I promise. Never, Wanny!"

"Genie, I am an outcast. I am a hunted man. I can never go back to civilization and stay."

Then he told her the story of the ruin of his life. When he finished she fell weeping upon his shoulder and clung to him. For Adam the moment was sad and sweet.

"But Wanny, you — could — go and — be — punished — and then — come back!" she cried, between sobs. "You'd — never — have to — hide — any more."

Out of her innocence and simplicity she had spoken

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confounding truth. What a terrible truth! Those words of child wisdom sowed in Adam the seed of a terrible revolt. Revolt — yea, revolt against this horrible need to hide — this fear and dread of punishment that always and forever so bitterly mocked his manhood! If he could find the strength to rise to the heights of Genie's wisdom — divine philosophy of a child! — he would no longer hate his shadowed wandering steps down the naked shingles and hidden trails of the lonely desert.

Swifter than the past, another year flew by. Genie's uncle did not come. And Adam began to doubt that he would ever come. And Genie's hope that he never would come, began insidiously to enter into Adam's thought. Again the loneliness, the solitude and silence, and something more he could not name, began to drag Adam from duty, from effort of mind.

IN ALL that time Adam saw but two white men, prospectors passing by, down the sandy trails. Indians came that way but seldom. Across the valley there was an encampment, which he visited occasionally to buy baskets, skins, meat, and to send Indians out after supplies. The great problem was clothes for Genie. It was difficult to get materials, difficult for Genie to make dresses, and impossible to keep her from tearing or wearing or growing out of them. Adam found that Indian moccasins and tough overalls such as prospectors wore, cut down to suit Genie, and woolen blouses she made herself, were the only things for her. Like a road-runner she ran over the rocks and sand! As for a hat, she would not wear one. Adam's responsibility weighed upon him. When he asked Genie what in the world she would wear when he took her out of the desert, to pass through villages and ranches and towns, where people lived, she naively replied: "What I've got on!" And what she wore at the moment was, of course, the boyish garb that was all Adam could keep on her, and which happened just then to be minus the moccasins.

In the early fall — what month it was Adam could not be sure — he crossed the arm of the valley to the encampment of the Coahuillas. The cool nights and tempering days had made him hungry for meat. And as for Genie — when, indeed was she not hungry? Adam often felt the old, keen desire to hunt upon the heights, there once more to match his sure-footedness and sight against those of the wary mountain sheep. But he did not care to leave Genie alone in camp for any length of time.

He found the Indian hunters at home, and, in fact, they had just packed fresh sheep meat down from the

mountain. They were of the same tribe as the old chief Charley Jim who had taught Adam so much of the desert during those early, hard years over in the Chocolates. Adam always asked for news of Charley Jim, usually to be disappointed. He was a nomad, this old chieftain, and his family had his wandering spirit. Nor could Adam ever get any word about the dark-eyed Oella.

Adam shouldered his load of fresh meat and took his way down out of the canyon where the encampment lay, to the well-beaten trail that zigzagged along the irregular base of the mountain. He had several miles to skirt along this wall before he came to the point where he was to cut across the wide arm of the valley, and at that point the trail divided, the main one going straight north toward San Gorgonio Pass. This was the beaten track.

Adam rested at the dividing point of the trails. The meat was heavy, the direct rays of the sun were hot, and the remainder of his journey must be plodded through soft sand. It was early in the day, clear and still. How gray and barren and monotonous the desert! Not a sound, not a movement! All seemed dead.

Suddenly, his quick eye caught sight of something that was moving. It changed the monotonous aspect of the desert. Was it a burro or antelope? Presently he decided the jerky motion belonged to burros. And then he espied a darker moving speck back of them. A prospector with a brace of burros — common sight indeed it was to Adam, though not for the last few years.

The man was coming from the south, but outside of the main trail, for which no doubt he was heading. Adam decided to wait and exchange greetings with him. After watching a while Adam was constrained to mutter: "Well, if that fellow isn't a great walker, my eyes are failing!" That interested him all the more. He watched burros and driver grow larger and clearer. Then they disappeared behind a long, low swell of sand fringed by sage, and dotted by mesquite. They would reappear presently, coming out behind the ridge at a point near Adam.

Some minutes later, while Adam was gazing at the wonderful precipitous wall of San Jacinto, rising almost sheer to its height of over ten thousand feet, he heard a deep voice. It startled him. Wheeling quickly he saw that the burros and driver had not only cleared the end of the ridge but were within a hundred yards of where he sat. The burros were trotting, with packs bobbing up and down. Only the old slouch hat of the prospector showed above the packs. Manifestly he was a short man.

"Say, but he's a walker!" ejaculated Adam.

Suddenly sight of that old slouch hat gave Adam a thrill. Then the man's shoulders appeared. How enormously broad! Then, as the burros veered to one side, the driver's whole stature was disclosed. What a stride he had, for a man so short! He wore old gray, patched clothes that Adam wildly imagined he had seen somewhere.

Suddenly the man yelled at the burros: "Hehaw! Gedap!"

"Dismukes!" shouted Adam, hoarsely.

The prospector halted his long, rolling stride and looked. Then Adam plunged over sand and through sage. He could not believe his eyes. He must get his hands on this man, to prove reality. In a trice the intervening space was covered. Then Adam, breathless and aghast, gazed into a face that he knew, yet which held what he did not know.

"Howdy, Wansfell. Thought I'd meet you sooner or later," said the man.

His voice was unmistakable. He recognized Adam. Beyond any possibility of doubt — Dismukes! In the amaze and gladness of the moment, Adam embraced this old savior and comrade and friend — embraced him as a long-lost brother or as a prodigal son. Then Adam released him, with sudden dawning consciousness that Dismukes seemed to have no feeling whatever about this meeting.

"Dismukes! I had to grab you — just to feel if it was you. I'm knocked clean off my pins," declared Adam, breathing hard.

"Yes, it's me, Wansfell," replied Dismukes. His large, steady eyes, dark brown like those of an ox, held an exceeding and unutterable sadness.

"Back on the desert? You!" exclaimed Adam.

"Dismukes, then you lost your gold — bad luck — something happened — you never went to the great cities — to spend your fortune — to live and live?"

"Yes, friend, I went," replied Dismukes.

A great awe fell upon Adam. His keen gaze, cleared of the mist of amaze, saw [Continued on page 59]



# The Wanderer of the Wasteland

[Continued from page 34]

Dismukes truly. The ox-eyes had the shadow of supreme tragedy. Yet they held peace. The broad face had thinned. Gone was the dark healthy bronze! And the beard that had once been thick and grizzled was now scant and white. The whole face expressed resignation and peace. Those wonderful wide shoulders of Dismukes's appeared just as wide, but they sagged, and the old tremendous brawn was not there. Strangest of all, Dismukes wore the ragged, gray, prospector's garb which had been on his person when Adam saw him last. There!—the yellow stain of Death Valley clay—and darker stains—sight of which made Adam's flesh creep!

"Ah!—so you went, after all," replied Adam, haltingly. "Well! Well! . . . Let's sit down, old comrade. Here on this stone. I confess my legs feel weak. . . . Never expected to see you again in this world!"

"Wansfell, no man can ever tell. It's folly to think an' toil an' hope for the future."

WHAT strong, sad history of life revealed itself in that reply!

"Ah! . . . I—but never mind what I think—Dismukes, you've not been on the desert long."

"About a week. Outfitted at San Diego an' came over the mountain trail through El Campo. Landed in 'Frisco two weeks an' more ago. By ship from Japan."

"Did you have these old clothes hid away somewhere?" inquired Adam.

"No. I packed them wherever I went for the whole three years."

"Three years! Has it been that long?"

"Aye, friend Wansfell, three years."

Adam gazed out across the desert with slowly dimming eyes. The wasteland stretched there, vast and illimitable, the same as all the innumerable times he had gazed. Solemn and gray and old, indifferent to man, yet strengthening through its passionless fidelity to its own task!

"Dismukes, I want you to tell me where you went, what you did, why you came back," said Adam, with earnestness that was entreaty.

Dismukes heaved a long sigh. He wagged the huge, shaggy head that was now gray. But he showed no more indication of emotion. How stolid he seemed—how locked in his aloofness!

"Yes, I'll tell you," he said. "Maybe it'll save you somethin' of what I went through."

Then he became lost in thought, perhaps calling upon memory, raking up the dead leaves of the past. Adam recalled that his own memory of Dismukes and the past brought note of the fact how the old prospector had loved to break his habit of silence, to talk about the desert, and to smoke his black pipe while he discoursed. But now speech did not easily flow and he did not smoke.

"Lookin' back, I seem to see myself as crazy," began Dismukes. "You'll remember how crazy. You'll remember before we parted up there on the Mojave at that borax camp where the young man was—who couldn't drive the mules. . . . Wansfell, from the minute I turned my back on you till now I've never thought of that. Did you drive the ornery mules?"

"Did I?" Adam's query was a grim assertion. "Every day for three months! You remember Old Butch, that gray devil of a mule. Well, Dismukes, the time came when he knew me. If I even picked up the long bull-whip Old Butch would scream and run to lay his head on me."

"An' you saw the young driver through his trouble?"

"That I did. And it was more trouble than he told us then. The boss Carricks had low-down and cunning. He'd got smitten with the lad's wife—a pretty girl, but frail in health. He kept Carricks on jobs away from home. We didn't meet the lad any too soon."

"Humph! That's got a familiar sound to me," declared Dismukes. "Wansfell, what'd you do to that low-down boss?"

"Go on with your story," replied Adam.

"Aha! That's so. I want to make Two Palms Well before dark. . . . Wansfell, like a horned-toad on the desert, I changed my outside at 'Frisco. Alias. I imagined all

within—blood—mind—soul had changed! . . . Went to Denver, St. Louis, an' looked at the sights, not much disappointed, because my time seemed far ahead. Then I went to my old home. There I had my first jar. Folks all dead!—Not a relation livin'. Could not even find my mother's grave. No one remembered me an' I couldn't find any one I ever knew. The village had grown to a town. My old home was gone. The picture of it—the little gray cottage—the vines an' orchard—all lived in my mind. I found the place. All gone! Three new houses there. Forty years is a long time!—I didn't build the church or set out a park for the village of my boyhood. . . . Then I went on to Chicago, Philadelphia, New York. Stayed long in New York. At first it fascinated me. I felt I wanted to see it out of curiosity. I was lookin' for some place, somethin' I expected. But I never saw it. The hotels, theatres, saloons, gamblin'-hells, an' worse—the operas an' parks an' churches—an' the wonderful stores—I saw them all. Men an' women like ants rushin' to an' fro. No rest, no sleep, no quiet, no peace! I met people, a few good, but most bad. An' in some hotels an' places I got to be well known. I got to have a name for throwin' gold around. Men of business sought my acquaintance, took me to dinners an' theatres, made much of me—all to get me to invest in their schemes. Women—Aw! the women were my second disappointment! Wansfell, women are like desert mirages. Beautiful women, in silks an' satins, diamonds blazin' on bare necks an' arms, made eyes at me, talked soft an' sweet, an' flattered me an' praised me an' threw themselves at me—all because they thought I had stacks an' rolls an' bags of gold. Never a woman did I meet who liked me, who had any thought to hear my story, to learn my hope! Never any keen eye that saw through my outside!

"Well, I wasn't seein' an' findin' the life I'd hoped for. That New York is as near hell as I ever got. I saw men with quiet faces an' women who seemed happy. But only in the passin' crowds. I never got to meet any of them. They had their homes an' troubles an' happiness, I figured, an' they were not lookin' for any one to fleece. It was my habit to get into a crowd an' watch, for I come to believe the mass of busy, workin' ordinary people were good. Maybe if I'd somehow made acquaintance with a few of them it'd have been better. But that wasn't seein' life. I thought I knew what I wanted.

"All my yearnin's an' dreams seemed to pall on me. Where was the joy?—Wansfell, the only joy I had was in findin' some poor beggar or bootblack or poor family, an' givin' them gold.

"AT LAST I knew I couldn't find what I wanted in New York, an' I couldn't hunt any longer there. I had to leave. My plans called for goin' abroad. Then came a strange feelin' that I must have had all the time, but didn't realize it. The west called me back; I seemed to want the middle west, where I'd planned to buy the green farm. But you know I'm a man who sticks to his mind, when it's made up. There were London, Paris, Rome I'd dreamed about an' had planned to see. Well, I had a hell of a fight with somethin' in myself before I could get on that ship. Right off then I got seasick! "From Paris I went to Rome, an' there a queer state of mind came to me. I could look at temples an' old ruins without even seein' them—with my mind on my own country. All this travel idea, seein' an' learnin' an' doin', changed so that it was hateful. I cut out Egypt, an' I can't remember much of India an' Japan. But when I got on ship bound for 'Frisco I couldn't see anythin' for a different reason, an' that was tears. I'd come far to find joy of life, an' now I wept tears of joy because I was home-ward bound. It was a great an' splendid feelin'!"

Here Dismukes choked and broke down. The deep rolling voice lost its strength for a moment. He drew a long, long breath that hurt Adam to hear.

"Wansfell, when my feet once more touched land it was as though I'd really found happiness," presently went on Dis-

mukes, clearing his throat of huskiness. "I was in the clouds. I could have kissed the very dirt. My own, my native land! . . . Now for the last leg of the journey—an' the little farm—the home to be—friends to make—pe aaps a sweet-faced woman an' a child!—Oh! it was as glorious as my lost dreams!

"But suddenly somethin' strange an' terrible seized hold of me. A hand as strong as the wind gripped my heart. . . . *The desert called me!* . . . Day an' night I walked the streets. Fierce as the desert itself I fought. Oh, I fought my last an' hardest fight! . . . On one hand was the dream of my life—the hope of a home an' happiness—what I had slaved for. Forty years of toil! On the other hand the call of the desert!—Loneliness, solitude, silence. Ah! The desert was my only home. *I had to go back!* . . . I could live nowhere else. . . . Forty years! My youth—my manhood! . . . I'm old now—old! My dreams are done. . . . Oh, my God! . . . *I had to come back!*"

Adam sat confounded in grief, in shock. His lips were mute. Like a statue he gazed across the wasteland, so terribly magnified, so terribly illumined by the old prospector's revelation. How awful the lonely limitless expanse of sand!

"Comrade, take the story of my life to heart," added Dismukes. "You're a young man still. Think of my forty years of hell, that now have made me a part of the desert. Think of how I set out upon my journey so full of wild, sweet hope! Think of my wonderful journey, through the glitterin' cities, round the world, only to find my hope a delusion! . . . A desert mirage!"

"MAN, I cannot think!" burst out Adam. "I am stunned. . . . Oh, the pity of it—the sickening pitiless fatality! Dismukes, of what use is hope? Oh, why do we fight? Where—where does joy abide for such as you and me?"

The great rolling ox-eyes gleamed upon Adam, strong with the soul of peace, of victory in their depths.

"Wansfell, joy an' happiness, whatever makes life worth livin', is in *you*. No man can go forth to find what he hasn't got within him."

Then he gazed away across the desert, across sand and cactus and mesquite, across the blue-hazed canyon-streaked ranges toward the north.

"I go to Death Valley," he continued slowly, in his deep voice. "I had left enough gold to grub-stake me. An' I go to Death Valley, but not to seek my fortune. It will be quiet and lonely there. An' I can think an' rest an' sleep. Perhaps I'll dig a little of the precious yellow dust, just to throw it away. Gold! . . . The man who loves gold is ruined. Passion makes men mad. . . . An' now I must go."

"Death Valley?—No! No!" whispered Adam.

"Straight for Death Valley! It has called me across half the earth. I remember no desert place so lonely an' silent an' free. So different from the noisy world of men that crowds my mind still! There I shall find peace, perhaps my grave. See! Life is all a hopin' to find! I go on my way. Wansfell, we never know what drives us. But I am happy now. . . . Our trails have crossed for the last time. Good-bye."

He wrung Adam's hand and quickly whirled to his burros.

"He-haw! Gedap!" he shouted, with a smack on their haunches. Adam whispered a farewell he could not speak. Then, motionless, he watched the old prospector face the gray wastes toward the north and the beckoning mountains. Adam had an almost irresistible desire to run after Dismukes, to go with him. But the man wanted to be alone. What a stride he had! The fruitless quest had left him that at least. The same old rolling gait, the same doggedness! Dismukes was a man who could not be halted. Adam watched him—saw him at last merge and disappear in the gray, lonely sage. And then into Adam's strained sight seemed to play a quivering mirage—a vision of Death Valley, ghastly and white and naked, the abode of silence and decay set down under its dark red walls—the end of the desert and the grave of Dismukes.



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The November morning was keen and cold, numbing Genie's fingers and nipping her nose, flushing the gold-brown skin of her face. She glowed with life and vitality. She could not stand still, nor content herself with Adam's stride, quick as that was. No frost had yet fallen so far down on the desert, but the scent and the touch of it was in the keen air from the heights.

Adam and Genie were on their way to spend the day at Andreas Canyon. Adam carried a lunch, a gun and a book. Genie seemed so exuberant with wonderful spirits that she could scarcely keep her little moccasined feet on the sand. Adam had an unconscious joy in the sight of her.

A dim, old Indian trail led up one of the slopes of Andreas Canyon, to which Adam called Genie's attention.

"We'll climb this some day—when it comes time to take you away," said Adam. "It's a hard climb, but the shortest way out. And you'll see the desert from the top of old Jacinto. That will be worth all the climb."

His words made Genie pensive. Of late the girl had become more and more beyond Adam's comprehension—wistful and sad and dreamy by turns, now like a bird and again like a thundercloud, but mostly a dancing, singing creature full of unutterable sweetness of life.

Beyond the oasis, some distance up the canyon, was a dense growth of mesquite and other brush. It surrounded a sandy glade in which bubbled forth a crystal spring of hot water that boiled up in the center like shining bubbles. The bottom was clean and white. Indians in times past had laid stones around the pool. A small, cottonwood tree, on the west side of the glade, had begun to change the green color of the leaves to amber and gold. All around the glade, like a wild untrimmed hedge, the green and brown mesquites stood up, hiding the gray desert, insulating this cool, sandy, beautiful spot, hiding it away from the stern hardness outside.

GENIE had never been here. Quickly, she lost her pensiveness and began to sing like a lark. She kicked one moccasin one way and the other in another direction. Straightway, she was on the stones with her bare, slender brown feet in the water.

"Ooooo! It's hot!" she cried, ecstatically. "But, oh! it's fine!" And she dipped them back.

"Genie, you stay here and amuse yourself," said Adam. "I'm going to climb. Maybe I'll be back soon—maybe not. You play, and read, and eat the lunch when you're hungry."

"All right, Wanny," she replied, gayly. "But I should think you'd rather stay with me."

Adam had to be alone. He needed to be high above the desert where he could look down. Another crisis in his transformation was painfully pending. The meeting with Dismukes had been of profound significance, and its effect was going to be far-reaching.

He climbed up the zigzag, dim trail, rising till the canyon yawned beneath him, and the green thicket, where he had left Genie, was but a dot. Then the way led round the slope of the great foot-hill, where he left the trail and climbed to the craggy summit. It was a round, bare peak of jagged, bronze rock, and from this height half a mile above the desert, the outlook was magnificent. Beyond, and above him, the gray walls and fringed peaks of San Jacinto towered, sculptured and grand against the azure blue.

Finding a comfortable seat with rest for his back, Adam faced the illimitable gulf of color and distance below. Always a height such as this, where like a lonely eagle he could command an unobstructed view, had been a charm, a strange delight of his desert years. Not wholly love of climbing, or to see afar, or to feel alone, or to revel in beauty, had been accountable for this habit.

Adam's first reward for this climb, before he had settled himself to watch the desert, was sight of a condor. Only rarely did Adam ever see this great and loneliest of lonely birds—king of the eagles and of the blue heights. Never had Adam seen one close. A wild, slate-colored bird, huge of build, with grisly neck and wonderful clean-cut head, cruelly beaked! Even as Adam looked the condor pitched off the crag and spread his enormous wings.

A few flaps of those wide wings—then he sailed out over the gulf, and around, rising as he circled. When he started he was below Adam; on the first lap of that circle he rose even with Adam's position; and when he came around again he sailed over Adam, perhaps fifty feet. Adam thrilled at the sight. The condor was peering down with gleaming,

dark, uncanny eyes. He saw Adam. His keen head and great crooked beak moved to and fro; the sun shone on his gray flecked breast; every feather of his immense wings seemed to show, to quiver in the air, and the tip feathers were ragged and separate. He cut the air with a soft swish.

Around he sailed, widening his circle, rising higher, with never a movement of his wings. That fact, assured by Adam's sharp sight, was so marvelous that it fascinated him. What power enabled the condor to rise without propelling himself? No wind stirred down there under the peaks, so he could not lift himself by its aid. He sailed aloft. He came down on one slope of his circle, to rise up on the other, and always he went higher. How easily! How gracefully! He was peering down for sight of prey in which to sink cruel beak and talons. Once he crossed the sun and Adam saw his shadow on the gleaming rocks below. Then his circles widened across the deep canyon, high above the higher foot-hills, until he approached the lofty peak. Higher still, and here the winds of the heights caught him. How he breasted them, sailing on and up soaring toward the blue.

Adam watched the bird with straining eyes that hurt, but never tired. To watch him was one of the things Adam needed. On and ever upward soared the condor. His range had changed with the height. His speed had increased with the wind. His spirit had mounted as he climbed. The craggy gray peak might have harbored his nest and his mate, but he gave no sign. High over the lonely, cold heights he soared. There, far above his domain, he circled level for a while, then swooped down like a falling star, miles across the sky, to sail, to soar, to rise again. Away across the heavens he flew, wide-winged and free, king of the eagles and of the winds, lonely and grand in the blue. Never a movement of his wings! Higher he sailed. Higher he soared until he was a fading speck, until he was gone out of sight to his realm above.

"Gone!" sighed Adam. "He is gone. And for all I know he may be a spirit of the wind. From his invisible abode in the heavens he can see the sheep on the crags—he can see me here—he can see Genie below—he can see the rabbit at his burrow. . . . Nature: Life!—Oh! what use to think? What use to torture myself over mystery I can never solve?—I learn one great truth only to find it involved in greater mystery."

Adam had realized the need of shocks, else the desert influence would insulate him forever in his physical life. The meeting with Dismukes had been one.

Why had Dismukes been compelled to come back to the desert? What was the lure of the silent places? How could men sacrifice friends, people, home, love, civilization for the solitude and loneliness of the wastelands? Where lay the infinite fascination in death and decay and desolation? Who could solve the desert secret?

Like white living flames, Adam's thoughts leaped in his mind.

THESE wanderers of the wasteland, like Dismukes and himself, were not laboring under fancy, or blindness, or ignorance, or imagination, or delusion. They were certainly not actuated by a feeling for some nameless thing. The desert was a fact. The spell it cast was a fact. Also it began to dawn upon Adam that nothing in civilization, among glittering cities and moving people, in palaces or hovels, in wealth or poverty, in fame or ignominy, in any walk of worldly life, could cast a spell of enchantment, could swell women's hearts and claim men's souls like the desert. The secret then had to do with a powerful effect of the desert—that was to say, of lonely and desolate and wild places—upon the minds of human beings.

And now Adam, stirred to his depths by the culminating fatal tragedy of Dismukes' life, and a passionate determination to understand it, delved into his mind to discover forgotten lessons and larger growths.

What had he done, what had gone on in his mind, during all these seemingly useless and wasted hours? Nothing! Merely nothing it seemed to sit for hours, gazing out over the desolate, gray-green, barren desert, to sit listening to the solitude, or the soft wind, or the seep of sand, or perhaps the notes of a lonely bird. Nothing, because most of that time he did not have in his mind the significance of his presence there. He really did not know he was there. This state of apparent unconsciousness had never been known to Adam at all until Magdalene Virey had given him intimation of it. He had felt the thing, but had never thought

about it. But during these three years that he had lived near San Jacinto, it had grown until he gained a strange and fleeting power to exercise it voluntarily.

Adam realized that during these lonely hours he was one instant a primitive man and the next a thinking, or-civilized man. The thinking man he understood; all the difficulty of the problem lay hid in this other side of him. He could watch, he could feel without thinking. That seemed to be the state of the mind of an animal. Only it was a higher state—a state of intense, waiting, watching suspension!

Beyond all comprehension was the marvel of inscrutable nature.

THE sun was westering when he descended the long, zigzag trail. He walked slowly, tired from his mental strain. And when he got down, the sun was just tipping the ramparts above, flooding the canyon with golden haze and ruddy rays. Adam thought that Genie, weary from long waiting, would be asleep on the sand, or at least reading; and that he could slip into the glade to surprise her. They played a game of this sort, and to her had gone most of the victories.

Like a panther he slid through the grasping mesquite boughs, and presently, coming to the denser brush, he stooped low to avoid making a rustle. As he moved along, bending so that he touched the sand with his hands, he came upon two fat beetles wagging and contesting over possession of some little particle. Scooping up a handful of sand he buried them, and then, as they so ludicrously scrambled out he gathered them up, intending, if he could get behind Genie unobserved, to drop them on her book or her bare feet.

Thus it happened that he did not look ahead until after he had straightened up inside the glade. All before him seemed golden gleams and streaks of sunset rose. The air was thick with amber haze. Genie stood naked, ankle-deep in the bubbling spring. Like an opal, her slender white body, caught glimmer and sheen. Wondrously transparent she looked, for the sunlight seemed to shine through her! The red-gold tints of her hair burned like a woven cord of fire in bronze. Glistening crystal drops of water fell from her outstretched hands and her round arms gleamed where the white met the line of tan. The light of the sun shone upon her pensive, beautiful face, as she stood wholly unaware of intrusion. Then she caught the sound of Adam's stifled gasp. She saw him. She burst into a scream of startled, wild laughter that rang with a trill through the dell.

Adam, breaking the spell of that transfixed instant, rushed headlong away.

Gaining the open, Adam strode swiftly down the trail to where the canyon spread wide and ended in the boulder-strewn desert.

The world in which he moved seemed transfigured, radiant with the last glow of dying day, with a glory of golden gleam. His heart pounded, and his blood flooded to and fro, swelling his veins. Life on the earth for him had been shot through and through with celestial fire. His feet were planted on the warm sands, and his hands reached to touch the gray old boulders. He needed these to assure himself that he had not been turned into the soft, cool wind, or the slanting amber rays so thickly glistening with particles of dust, or the great soaring king of the eagles. Adam crushed a bunch of odoriferous sage to his face, smelled it, breathed it, tasted it; and the bitter sweetness thrilled his senses. It was real.

The luminous desert stretched before him. Adam felt himself a part of it all. His ecstasy was that he lived. Nature could not deny him. He stood there, young and strong and vital.

Then he heard Genie calling him. With a start he turned to answer. She was running down the trail. How swift, how lithe, how light! The desert had given her the freedom, the grace, the suppleness of its wild denizens. Like a fawn she bounded over the stones; and her hair caught the last gleams of glowing sunlight. When she neared Adam she checked her flying steps, pattering to a halt, one brown hand over her breast.

"Wheooo!" she burst out, panting. "I—couldn't—find—you. Why'd—you come—so far?"

The something that had come between Adam's sight and the desert now surrounded Genie. Immeasurably she was transformed, and the change seemed a mystery.

"We must hurry back. It'll soon be dark. Come," he replied.

With step as free and swift as his, she kept pace with him.



"Wanny, you stole up on me — tried to scare me while I was bathing," she said, with arch reproach.

"Genie, it was an accident," he returned hurriedly, and how strangely the blood tingled in his face! "I meant to scare you — yes. But I — I never thought — I never dreamed. . . . Genie, I give you my word. . . . Please say you believe me."

"Why, Wanny," she said in surprise, "of course I believe you. It's nothing to mind about. I didn't mind."

"Thank you, I — I'm glad you take it that way," replied Adam. "I'm sorry I was so — so stupid."

"How funny you are!" she exclaimed, and her gay laugh pealed out. "What's there to be sorry about? . . . You see, I forgot it was getting late. . . . Ooooo! how good the water felt! I just couldn't get enough. . . . You did scare me just a little. I heard you — and was scared before I looked. . . . Wanny, I guess I was imagining things — dreaming, you call it. I was all wet and looking at myself in the sunlight. I'd never seen myself like that. I'd read of mermaids with shining scales of gold, and nymphs of the woods catching falling blossoms. And I guess I thought I was them — and everything."

Then Adam scorned the old husk of worldliness that had incased his mind in his boyhood, and had clung around it still. This child of nature had taught him many a thought-provoking lesson, and here was another, somehow elevating and on a level with his mental progress of the day. Genie had never lived in the world, nor had she been taught many of its customs. She was like a shy wild young fawn; she was a dreaming, exuberant girl. Genie had been taught to write and study and read, and was far from being ignorant; but she had not understood the meaning of Adam's apology. What struck Adam so deeply and confounded him again was the fact that her innocent and sweet smile now, as she gazed up at him, was little different from the one upon her face when she saw him staring at her nude. She had been surprised at his concern and had laughed at his contrition. And that low rippling laugh, so full of vital and natural life, seemed to blow, as the desert wind blew worn and withered leaves, all of Adam's recalled sophistications back into the past whence they had come.

Adam and Genie walked hand in hand down the long boulder-strewn slope to the valley floor, where the cholla shone a paling silver in gathering twilight. The lonely November twilight deepened into night. The stars shone brightly. The cool wind blew. The sage rustled.

Sleep did not soon woo Adam's eyelids this night, with the consequence that he awoke a little later than his usual hour. The rose of the dawn had bloomed.

Then Adam, on his knees by the brown, running stream, in the midst of his ablutions, halted to stare at the sunrise. Had it ever before been so strangely beautiful? During his sleep the earth had revolved and lo! here was the sun again. Wonderful and perennial truth! Not only had it revolved, but it had gone on its mysterious journey, hurtling through space at inconceivable rapidity. While he slept! Again he had awakened. A thousand years ago he had awakened just like this, so it seemed, to the sunrise, to the loneliness of lonely places, to the beauty of nature, to the joy of life. He sensed some past state, which, when he thought about it, faded back illu-sively and was gone. But he knew he had lived somewhere before this. All of life was in him. The marvelous spirit he felt now would never die.

There dawned upon Adam a sudden consciousness of Genie's beauty. She was the last realized, and the most beautiful creation of the desert around him.

It came to him as a great surprise. She, too, knelt at the stream, splashing the cool water, bathing her face, wetting the dark, gold-tinted locks and brushing them back. Curiously and absorbingly Adam gazed at her, with eyes from which some blinding shutter had fallen. Yes, she was beautiful. It seemed a simple fact that he had overlooked, yet it was amazing. It distracted him.

"Wanny, you're all eyes," cried Genie, gayly. "What's the matter with me? Why do you look so?"

"Genie, you're growing up," he replied, soberly.

"Well, you'd have known that before if you'd seen me sewing," she said.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Guess I'm nearly seventeen," she said, and the words brought back the dreams.

"Why, you're a young lady!" ejaculated Adam. "And — and —" He had been about to add that she was beautiful, but he held his tongue.

"I guess that, too. . . . Hold out your arm."

Adam complied, and was further amazed to see, as she walked under his outstretched arm, that the glossy, wavy crown of her head almost touched it. She was as tall and slim and graceful as an arrow-wood.

"There! I'll have you know you're a mighty big man," she said. "And if you weren't so big I'd come clear up to your shoulder."

"Genie, don't you want to leave this desert?" he queried, bluntly.

"Oh, no," she replied, instantly. "I love it. And — and — please don't make me think of towns, of lots of people. I want to run wild, like a road-runner — I'd be perfectly happy if I didn't have to spend half the day mending these old clothes. . . . Wanny, if they get any worse they'll fall off me — and then, I'll have to run around like you saw me yesterday. . . . Oh, but for the thorns, that'd be grand!"

Her light rippling laugh rang out sweet and gay.

Adam waited for her later, in the shade of Taquitch Canyon, where, from the topmost of a jumble of boulders, he watched a distant waterfall, white and green as it flashed over a dark cliff.

He watched her coming. Her ragged boy's garb with its patches and rents no longer hid her femininity and her charm from his eyes. He saw anew. The lightness of her, the round and graceful figure, from flying feet to glinting hair, cried aloud to the loneliness of Adam's heart, the truth of her. An enchantment hung upon her very movements. She traveled from rock to rock, poising, balancing, leaping, and her curly hair danced on her head. Quick as those of a wild-cat were her leaps. And her gay, sweet call or cry, bird-like and wild, echoed from the cliffs.

She was coming to Adam across the great jumble of rocks — a girl wonderful as a sprite. And her coming was suddenly realized as the fulfillment of dreams. Adam faced the truth of some facts about his dreaming. Lonely hours on lonely slopes, of waiting and watching, had created the shadow of a woman or a girl gliding in the golden glow of the afternoon sunlight, coming to charm away forever the silence and solitude. So innumerable times he had dreamed, but never realized till now those dreams. She was coming, and the sleepy canyon shade awoke to a gleam and a voice. The lacy waterfall shone white and its murmur seemed music of many streams. A canyon swallow twittered.

Adam thought how passing strange had been the tortures, the awakenings, and changings of his desert experience. And here was a vague dream fulfilled! This realization was unutterably sweet — so sweet because these years had been barren of youth, steeped in unconscious growing worship of beauty, spent alone with pains and toils. He watched her coming. Fresh as the foam of the waterfall, clean as the winds of the heights, wild as the wild young fawn — so she seemed! Youth and gayety — beauty and life!

But, suddenly, Adam seemed struck by an emotion, if not of terror, then of dread at some inconceivable and appalling nature of her presence. That emotion was of the distant past as was the vague peril of her approach. A girl — a woman creature — mystery of the ages — the giver of life as the sun gave heat — had come to him, out of the clouds or the desert sands, and the fatality of her coming was somehow terrible.

Genie reached the huge boulder upon which Adam sat, and like a squirrel she ran up its steep side, to plump herself breathless and panting against his knees.

"Ah! Old Taquitch — here's another — Indian maiden — for you to steal," she said roguishly, remembering an old legend he had once told her. "But before you — carry me up to the clouds — duck me under the waterfall!"

All the accumulated thought and emotion of recent hours concentrated in the gaze he fixed upon her face.

Her thrilling laugh pealed out. She thought he was playing Taquitch, god of the heights. He was teasing her with his piercing eyes.

"Look! Look at me, O Taquitch!" she cried, with deep pretended solemnity. "I am Ula, princess of the Coahuilas. I have

left my father's house. I have seen the sun shining in your face, O, God of the Lightnings! And I love — I love — I love with all the Indian's heart. I will go with you to the peaks. But never — nevermore shall you steal another maiden!"

Adam scarcely heard Genie. He was piercing through eyes and face to the mind and soul and life and meaning of her beauty. Her skin was creamy, golden-brown, transparent, with tiny tracery of veins underneath and faint tints of rose. The low forehead and level brows showed moist and soft and thoughtful under the dark damp curls with their amber glints. A hint of desert leanness hid in the contour of her oval face. Her mouth was strong, with bowed upper lip, the under sensitive and sad — a red, sweet mouth, like a flower. And her eyes, now meeting his so frankly, losing the mock solemnity and the fun, became deep brown crystal gulfs of light and shade, of thought and feeling, beautiful with the beauty of exquisite color, but lovelier for the youth, the joy and wonder of life, the innocence of soul.

"Wanny — are you — playing?" she asked tremulously, and her warm little hand clasped his.

That changed the spell of her. To look at her beauty was nothing comparable to the warm throb of her young pulsing life. Out of Adam's slow and painful and intense thought at last evolved a nucleus of revelation. But those clear eyes strangely checked this growing sense of a truth about to overwhelm him. They made him think, and thought had begun to waver and pale beside some subtler faculty of his being. Thus he realized the slow preponderance of feeling over thought, of body over soul, of physical over spiritual. And in this realization of unequal conflict he divined the meaning of his strange sense of peril in Genie's presence. The peril lay in the sophistication of his mind, not in Genie's beauty. Naturally as the mating of the birds, he wanted her. That was all. It was like her simplicity, inevitable as life itself, and true to nature! But in his thoughts, flashing after comprehension, the simple fact loomed with staggering, overwhelming significance.

Bidding Genie rest or amuse herself, Adam climbed to a ledge above the waterfall, and there with the mighty mass of mountain crowding out the light he threw himself upon the bare stone.

Not long did he torment himself with wonder and fury and bewilderment over an indubitable fact. Almost at once he sank into a self-accusing state which grew from bad to worse, until he was sick, sore, base and malignant in his arraignment of self. Again the old order of mind, the habit of youthful training, the learned precepts and maxims and laws, flooded back to augment his trouble. And when they got their sway, he cursed himself, he hated himself, he beat his breast in the shame of an abasement terribly and inevitably and irretrievably true at that hour.

But this was a short-lived passion. It did not ring true to Adam. It was his youth that suffered shame — the youth trained by his mother — the youth that had fallen upon wild and evil days at old Picacho. His youth flaming up with all its chivalry, its ideals, its sense of honor and modesty, its white-hot shame at even an unconscious wrong to a girl! Not the desert philosophy of manhood that saw nature clearly and saw it whole!

"Peace!" he cried, huskily, as if driving back a ghost of his youth. "I am no beast — no animal!"

Nay, he was a lonely wanderer of the wasteland who many and many a time had dreamed himself sweetheart, lover, husband of all the beautiful women in the world. Ah! it was his love of beauty, of life!

And so in his dreams, nature, like a panther in ambush, had come upon him un-awares to grip him before he knew. Aye — he wanted Genie now — yearned for her with all that intense and longing desire which had falsely seemed love and joy of the whole living world. But it was not what it seemed. All the tenderness of a brother, all the affection of a father Adam had for Genie — emotions that now faded before the master spirit and the imperious flame of life. How little and pitiful arose the memory of Margarita Arralanes — how pale before this blood-fire of his senses! Life had failed him in his youth; life had cheated him. Yet he had risen on stepping-stones of agony to intenser love of that life. He had been faithful while life had mocked him.

There came a knocking at the gate of his mind. The tempter! The voice of the ser-

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pent! Nature or devil, it was all one—a mighty and eloquent and persuasive force. It whispered to Adam that he was alone on the desert. Fate had been cruel. Love had betrayed him. Life had denied him. A criminal, surely not forgotten by justice, he could never leave the lonely wastelands to live. A motherless, fatherless girl, with no kith or kin, had been left in his care and he had saved her, succored her. Care and health and love had made her beautiful. By all the laws of nature she was his, to hold, to cherish, to cheer the lonely gray years. He had but to open his arms and call to her, reveal to her the mystery and glory of life, and she would be his forever. Unconsciously, Genie herself leaned toward this fate, tempting him in all her innocence. She would grow into a glorious woman—the keen, sweet, fierce youth of her answering to the work of the desert.

Were not all desert flowers more rare and vivid—were not all desert creatures more beautiful and strong than their like elsewhere? Genie would be his, as the eagle had its mate, and she would never know any other life. She would be the compensation for his suffering, a companion for his wandering.

Think! the joy of her, the thrill of her! The wonderful fire of her dark eyes and the dance of her curls and the red lips ripe for kisses! No man had any right to deny himself immortality. What was the world and its customs to him? Where was the all-wise and beneficent God who looked after the miserable and forlorn? Life was life, and that was everything. Beauty in life—that was eternal, the meaning of nature, and every man must love it, share it, and mark the image of himself upon the future. Lastly and most potent, the present fleeting hour must soon pass! Let him grasp his precious jewel before it was too late—live in the moment. Life might be eternal, but not for him. Soon the sleeping sand would nestle round his bleached bones and fill the sockets where once his eyes had burned. Genie was a gift of chance. He had wandered down into this valley, and now his life should never be lonely again. Lover of beauty and worshiper of nature, he had but to extend his arms to receive a treasure far greater than the gold of the desert, more beautiful than its flaming flowers, more mysterious than its fierce and inevitable life. A girl whose white body, like a transparent opal, let the

sunshine through! A woman, gift of the ages to man, flame of love and life, most beautiful of all things quick or dead, a mystery for man to cherish, to love, to keep, to bind!

At the instant when Adam's fall was imminent, and catastrophe leaned like the huge overhanging mountain mass, he wrestled up to fling the supremacy of his soul into the teeth of nature.

"No! . . . No!" he gasped, hoarsely. "Not for me! . . . Hell and fire mix in my blood. But my mind, my will is free!"

At the last he saw clearly. The love he had for Genie now proclaimed itself. That other had not been love, whatever its greatness, its importunity, its almost blasting power. He was an outcast, and any day a man or men might seek him out to kill him or be killed.

What madness was this of his to chain a joyous girl to his wandering steps? What but woe to her and remorse to him could ever come of such relation? Genie was so full of life and love that she hated to leave even the loneliness of the desert. To her, in the simplicity and adaptation of her nature, he was all. But she was a child, and the day he

placed her in an environment where youth called to youth, and there was work, play, study, cheer and love, he would become a memory. The kisses of her red lips were not for him. The dance of her glinting curls, the flash of her speaking eyes, the gold-brown flesh of her had been created by nature; and nature must go on with its inscrutable design, its eternal progress, leaving him outside the pale.

The joy he was to feel in Genie must come of memory, when he had gone on down into the lonely wasteland. She would owe life and happiness to him, and though she might not know it, he always would. A child, a girl, a woman—and some day perhaps a wife and mother—some happy man's blessing and joy—and these by the same inevitable nature that had tortured him would reward him in the solemn, white days and the lonely star-lit nights. For he had been and would be the creator of their smiles. How fierce and false had been his struggle, in the light of thought, when the truth was that he would give his life to spare Genie a moment's pain.

[The next instalment of "The Wanderer of the Wasteland" will appear in the April McClure's]

## Between Friends

by Fred C. Kelly

ONE of the laziest men in our town was a lawyer who worked longer hours than anybody.

He was the only lawyer in town who returned to his office after dinner.

Any night one could see the light in his office window, like the beacon of a widow waiting for a wayward son.

He rarely started home until the ten-thirty-five train went through, and he constantly deplored the shiftlessness of the men who quit work at half-past five.

How then, you ask suspiciously, do we figure that the man was lazy? You think there is some catch to it, and that the man was not really lazy at all, but a hard-working citizen setting an example of industry and thrift to one and all.

But you are wrong. The man was lazy; and there are a lot more folks just like him. They have not yet caught up with the fact that long hours and laziness go hand in hand. This lawyer had to return to his office after supper simply because he was too infernally lazy to buckle down and do his work in the regular working hours. He might have stayed home in the evening like other men and become a great pinochle player or learned a new dance step and become a source of pride to his family, but instead he had to return to his musty law books and do things that he could just as well have done in the daytime.

All day long he frittered away his time as carelessly as a dressmaker's husband. The trouble with him was that he was so lazy he had never learned how to work. He devoted hours each day just to thinking up ways to postpone what he had to do. Anybody who dropped into his office found him not too busy to stop and balance his nose glasses on his right index finger and talk about nothing in particular. Sometimes he would talk for a couple of hours, lazily, about how much harder he worked than anybody else in town.

You see, he didn't mind squandering an hour here and there during the day, because he figured that he could dispose of all chores and unfinished business when he returned to the office after dinner. No one could have convinced him that by working systematically, with less dilly-dallying, he could have done all he did in about half the time. By virtue of his lazy habits he had extended his working hours beyond all reason, and then spread his toil thin to cover the extra space.

A lot of men who are invariably too busy to go with you to a ball game or a burlesque show, and look on you as frivolous for not being at work, are really lazy, else they, too, would be through for the day.

The man who likes to fish and who has the energy to fly at his tasks and get through in time to fish two or three hours before dark, is perhaps not nearly so lazy as the fellow who mopes about in his office feeling sorry for himself.

Another of the exploded old myths is that about one's school days being the happiest period of one's busy life.

Go up to almost any man at random—even if he is a man who looks as sad as an old-fashioned church sexton—and ask him if he would like to be switched back to the carefree school days that the poet and the thoughtless sentimentalist like to rave about. It is a little better than an even wager that the man will say he is getting along first rate and has no desire to repeat the petty trials of the rollicking school days.

I make bold to assert that the average man has less to worry about than the average schoolboy. He may have a 60-day note coming due on the morrow, but he at least does not have to worry about the answer to a hare and hound problem. It may be necessary for him to deal with a lot of bores in the course of a business day, but one would look a long way to find as great a bore as the characters one found in the arithmetic—the one, for example, who said to the farmer on the pike; "Good morning, master, with your one hundred fine geese." Or the other man who replied: "I have not one hundred geese, but if the geese I now have were multiplied by two and I were to sell sixty of them, I would then have one hundred geese."

Imagine having to think about people who talk like that!

And your tired business man has no approaching examinations to worry about. It is not necessary for him to recall the location of the Pamir plateau, or the circumstances leading up to the peace of Utrecht. If he desires to write a letter or memorandum, he simply does so, or dictates it to a beautiful stenographer, and there is no one to make him parse his sentences and determine which is the subject and predicate. The business man finishes up his day's work, slams down his desk and goes home, or goes out and antagonizes with a golf ball, but when he was a schoolboy he couldn't go home when the day's work was over. He had to "stay in" and wrinkle his poor, tired little brow over the seemingly footless task of finding certain least common denominators.

Instead of going about depressed and apprehensive of the future because he cannot write as pretty a hand as the teacher, Mister Grownup knows that it is entirely unnecessary to write a good hand. The only persons who write good hands any more are underpaid young shoe salesmen.

Life may be a grim battle and a vale of tears, just as the hymn-writers and other pessimists think, but the most hair-raising engagements do not come after one has grown up. They occur on the way home from school when a squad of the mighty East End Gang jumps on a boy from the West End and beats him up for wearing a clean collar.

Would YOU like to be a schoolboy again? Neither would I.

THIS is not a defense of liars. Yet every once in a while I meet up with some genial offhand liar, loved by all who know him, and I wonder if he would be as popular if he told the truth.

Just the other evening, for example, I sat in a hotel lobby with a lawyer friend whose lying is always marked by much composure and plausibility.

An acquaintance of his came along and said:

"Jack, a small bunch of us are going to hold a little session of poker over in my rooms Thursday night. Want to sit in with us?"

"Sure," says Jack, "where'll I meet you?"

"How'd right here in the hotel do?" suggested the other man.

"Fine," said Jack. "And what time?"

"How'd eight o'clock be?"

"That suits me. Here in this hotel Thursday night at eight o'clock. You can count on me."

It wasn't five minutes until another man came along and inquired of Jack if he had anything on for Thursday evening.

"No, nothing special," replied Jack.

"Why?"

"Oh, some of the boys are getting up a little prize fight to be held out in the country and I thought you might like to take it in."

"I should rather guess I would," Jack responded, enthusiastically. "Where'll I meet you?"

"I might meet you right here around eight o'clock Thursday evening," the man suggested.

"I'll be here," said Jack. "Glad you asked me. I always like to see a nice little boxing bout."

Well, we probably sat there talking for half an hour before the next man came up to invite my popular friend to do something. This one knew a beautiful and talented, young woman visiting in the city, and he thought Jack might enjoy meeting her. It happened that the only night open was Thursday. So it was arranged that they should meet in the hotel lobby, that being as central a point as any, at eight P.M.

After the third man had gone I asked Jack which one of the engagements he intended to keep.

"None of them," he replied with a yawn. "I think I'll go home Thursday night and go to bed early."

"And what was your idea in making so many engagements?"

"Oh, it saved explanation. It would have taken me at least four or five times as long to convince any one of those geeks just why I couldn't go with him, as to say yes and let it go at that."

"And how'll you explain it to them afterward?" I pursued.

"Oh," smiled Jack, in his winning fashion, "I'll lie out of it."

As a matter of fact there are a great many more liars roaming about loose than one has

any idea of. They are not malicious liars. They simply lie to be polite and agreeable.

EVERY man is a hero to himself.

He may be an undersized man with a neck like a picked chicken, a thin, straw-colored, raveled-rope mustache, and watery blue eyes; he may be so quiet and retiring that he never has the moral courage to ask his wife for a second helping of dessert. Nevertheless, I say, he is a hero to himself.

The man may not feel himself qualified to do or die on the battlefield, or to be a fireman—or even a crossing policeman; but in some form or other he is convinced that he is a hero. It may be that he is a hero—according to his own size-up of his character—by virtue of a great power of resourcefulness that enables him to outwit all the other folks in the picture just in the nick of time to save little Ruby. Because he is a hero it does not necessarily follow that he has actually to do something heroic. The point is that he knows he is made of precisely the same stuff that heroes are made of. Simply because he works, let us say, in a men's furnishing store and has little or no opportunity to make a last stand, or fly into a breach, now and then, makes him no less a hero, does it?

You perhaps are sitting back ready to contradict all this and say it is just talk; but people make a great mistake to upset a nice little discussion like this by rude contradiction. Why, you yourself think you are a latent hero! Wait just a minute. You go to the theatre and the hero musses up the schemes of all the villains and adventuresses by being smarter and cleverer than they are. He always has an answer ready for them, and, without necessarily doing anything spectacular, he calmly thinks up a way to upset their plans at every turn. And, all the while the hero is accomplishing these clever things, your subconscious self is saying to you:

"If I'd been there I'd have done exactly as he did."

And you go home not only liking the play, but satisfied that you are just as much a hero, as anybody.

The reason why so many heroes are dressed, by the thoughtful producer, in dark clothes, is because more people wear dark clothes than light clothes; the hero must resemble as large a number as possible. That all helps one to feel certain that he would have behaved just as the hero did.

It's the same way with novels. A debutante likes a love story because she imagines she is the heroine.

In short, our favorite character, whether in fiction, on the stage, or in real life, is ourself. That is why the best way to entertain the average man is to listen to his conversation. He is quite likely to let the talk drift gradually around to matters pertaining more or less to his own doings. He is a hero to himself.