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"Nevada"

A Romance of the West

By Zane Grey



Stockton Mulford '26

Hettie found her brother watching California Red, and climbed to a seat beside him. She loved this wonderful horse, for his beauty, his spirit—and for another reason which only Ben would ever have suspected

ILLUSTRATED BY
STOCKTON MULFORD

The Story So Far

AS HIS goaded horse plunged into the road, Nevada looked back over his shoulder. The lane he had plowed through the crowd let him see back into the circle, where three men lay prostrate. The blue smoke from his gun was rising slowly, floating away. The face of Ben Ide, his friend, shone white and convulsed in the sunlight. "So long, Pard," yelled Nevada hoarsely, and stood in his stirrups to wave his sombrero high.

That was Nevada's farewell to the life which had given him a brief glimpse of the beauty of love and friendship and faith. It marked his return to life under his real name, "Jim Lacy"—notorious from Lineville across the desert wastes of Nevada clear to Tombstone.

For the whole of his two years in California he had been known to Ben Ide and his sister Hettie only as "Nevada." They had loved and trusted him; he had been invaluable to Ben in his wild-horse hunting; finally, he had saved the Ides from ruin at the hands of Less Setter and his accomplices by becoming once more Jim Lacy of the deadly marksmanship. And now, as often in the past, he was again a fugitive from the law, with honor and friendship and love behind him.

After a period of hiding in the mountains, he rode once more into Lineville, to take up his abode in the boarding-house of Mrs. Wood, who had "mothered" him in the past. He was resolved to live up to Hettie Ide's ideal of

Nevada, in spite of all the temptations to become Jim Lacy again in spirit, as in name. He had renounced all hope of seeing again Ben and Hettie Ide, whom he loved, because he meant them never to know the secret of his past; but he would always be true to them in his soul.

He resisted all attempts to draw him, as of old, into brawls at the "Gold Mine" (the gambling hell of Lineville); he refused all invitations to drink; he was friendly with Lize Teller, but ignored her overtures leading to any relationship which might give Link Cawthorne, her lover, ground for jealousy. And yet the fate Nevada was trying so hard to avoid came upon him. He had made his plans to go to Arizona with Cash Burridge—who had bought a ranch there and intended to turn from cattle "rustling" to honest cattle raising—and then he came into the Gold Mine one night to find Lize Teller dying at Link Cawthorne's feet, where Link, in his drunken rage, had flung her. In Jim Lacy's code there was only one thing to do. He shot Cawthorne dead. And once more Nevada was a fugitive from justice.

IT WAS springtime in northern California. Old Mount Shasta stood up grandly and took the morning light, his vast snow slopes beginning to be ridged by black. From Tule Lake shores the land waved upward in wide belts, brown and gray, and at last green as emerald.

The broad acres of the Ide ranch,

mostly lake-bottom land that the draining of Tule Lake had made available, spread rich and fertile along the south shore. The squares of brown soil but recently plowed; the fields, beginning to show a touch of green; the pasture lands, running far up on the gray sage slopes; the droves of horses and herds of cattle; the orchards, young and old; the rambling red-roofed barn; and the white house half hidden in a grove of maples and pines—all these amply testified to the prosperity of the Ides.

Hettie Ide had awakened this morning twenty years old. The wild geese that she had loved since childhood had come back from their pilgrimage to the south, and were honking as if they knew it was her birthday, and that on this beautiful May day she must be joyous with young life.

But Hettie had a secret sorrow, which she hid deep in her heart, while she ministered to her ailing mother and shared with her brother Ben the one bitter drop in his cup of happiness.

She knew where to find Ben this early in the morning. Down the hedge-lined lane to the corrals she strolled, her heart full, yet with the old pang keener, listening to the hum of bees and the honk of wild geese, the bawl of calves, and the twittering of the swallows.

Above all these sounds, so sweet to her listening ears, she heard the shrill whistle of Ben's great wild stallion, California Red. He was trooping across the pasture in defiance of Ben, or venting his displeasure at the corral bars.

Hettie found Ben sitting on top of the corral fence. California Red was inside, and he did not like it. Hettie halted to peep through at him. She loved this wonderful horse too, for his beauty, his spirit—and for another reason which only Ben would ever have suspected.

California Red had been in captivity four years. He had been broken, yet never had lost his spirit. It took a halter to make him lower his ears and stop rolling his fine dark eyes. Red was never gentle, but, on the other hand, he had not one mean trait. He shone red, glossy, silken, beautiful, and his long mane was a flame.

High and rangy, with body round as a barrel, a wonderful deep, wide chest, legs powerful, yet not heavy, and an arching neck and noble head, he looked indeed what he had been for years, the wild stallion king of the sage hills of northern California.

Hettie climbed to a seat beside her brother.

"Mawnin', pard," she drawled, mimick-

"Ah, Hettie—I do remember," said Ben.

"Well, Ina and I know what ails you. It's the loss of your pard Nevada!"

"NO, HETTIE dear, it's not just my loss," burst out Ben, passionately. "I'm not so selfish as that. I could stand loss. But what has grieved and shamed me—and, well, broken my heart—is that Nevada saved me, made all my good fortune, my happiness possible, by sacrificing himself. Father forgave me, took me back home to Mother and you. Hart Blaine gave me Ina. Then Father left us this wonderful ranch. Little Blaine came. And Nevada went back to where he came from. Heaven only knows where that is. I've spent a lot of money searching the West

Why didn't he come back? The whole country rose up to bless him for killing Less Setter and his two accomplices. Why didn't he ever write? Just a line—a word to let me know he was alive and hadn't forgotten!"

"Hush—Ben. Don't you understand that the reason he disappeared like that was not because he feared the law might hold him for killing the men who had trapped you. No! But because he was afraid we would find out who he really was. Nevada had been bad. How bad I dare not imagine. . . . Don't you remember that day when he rode so furiously into the crowd to face Setter? How the mere sight of him froze them with terror. . . . Oh, Ben, I'm afraid Ne-



ing the Southern accent of one neither of them ever forgot.

Ben gave a little start. Hettie did not often take such a liberty with her brother. But this was her birthday, and she meant to recall something of the past that might hurt them both.

"Wal, howdy there, old girl," replied Ben, surprising her with his answering drawl. Beneath the humor in his voice lay deep feeling. But as he reached for her with his gloved hand he did not look at her.

"BEN, this is my birthday," she said softly.

"Well, so it is. I plumb forgot. But I reckon I can dig you up a present of some kind."

"Ben," she said, "I don't want any present on my twentieth birthday. But I ask this: I'm old enough now to be listened to. Let me talk to you as I want—as I need to."

"Hettie, I'm sorry you had to ask me that," he returned contritely. "But you hurt so. . . . And I thought you just a sentimental girl—that you'd forget."

"Forget him? Never," she whispered. "Have you forgotten?"

"If I ever do, may God forget me," replied Ben, poignantly.

"Ben, I know your secret, and I think Ina knows too," went on Hettie, earnestly. "We have talked often. You remember when Ina came home from college—when you were a poor wild-horse hunter of the hills, and Father almost hated you—remember how Ina and I plotted for you and Nevada? How we fought for you!"

for a lean-faced rider, who drawled his Texas accent—and answered to the name 'Nevada.' And I can't find him!"

"Some day you will, Ben," she whispered thrillingly.

"I always believed I would. I lived on that hope. But it's four years. Four years. And that Forlorn River ranch of ours is worth a fortune now. Half of that is Nevada's. Half of the Mule Deer Flat ranch is Nevada's. He's worth money. . . .

vada had been some great and terrible gunman."

"Gunman?" queried Ben, almost harshly. "I reckon so. I think I guessed it, he was so strange with guns. He handled a gun so marvelously. But what was that to me? . . . He could be Billy the Kid, or Plummer, or Steve Hardin', or Kingfisher, or Jim Lacy, or any other desperado—and what would I care?"

"BEN dear, you quite overlook something," rejoined Hettie, while she felt the hot blood mount to cheek and temple. "Nevada not only loved you—but me too . . . and I—I loved him!"

"Well now, Hettie," replied Ben, strangely softened. "I reckon that's no news, though you never declared it so—so openly. But even though that was true, why should it make such a difference?"

"The boy came of a good family," replied Hettie. "He had fine instincts. And one of them was an instinct to disappear when there was danger of my learning who he really was. There can be no other reason. He had pride. And he loved me so—so well, he couldn't bear to shame me."

"Hettie, did that son-of-a-gun make love to you?" demanded Ben, struggling with his resentment and remorse.

"Did—he?" murmured she, with a

little broken laugh. "Ben, when he found out I cared—he—he made the most terrible love to me. . . . Oh, I can never forget—never get over it!"

"Well!" ejaculated her brother, amazed out of his own pain. "And he knew you loved him?"

"Yes, Nevada knew," replied Hettie. "He knew he had my faith, too. And, Ben, that is why I've never lost him. I know. It's the way a woman feels. Nevada is not dead. He is not false to me—to what I believed he had become. And somewhere, somehow, he will come back to me—to us!"

"My lord, that's good to hear," exclaimed Ben, with fervent emotion.

"I'm glad. I've wanted to tell you for so long," replied Hettie, simply. "And there's another thing that touches us closely. Mother is failing. Haven't you seen it?"

Ben nodded his head sorrowfully.

"Mother's not old," said Hettie. "She ought to live many years yet. But we must do something to help her. Ben, I suggest you take her to San Francisco. Get the opinion and advice of some up-to-date physician. Take Ina with you. Blaine will be safe with me. I'll run the

as fast as his little legs could carry him.

"Well, good-maw'nin', you-all," said Ina gayly. "You look excited. . . ." Then she kissed Hettie, and continued, "Many happy, happy returns of the day."

Ben snatched the boy up, and holding him on his arm he confronted Ina with a smile that held great portent.

"How soon can you get ready for a trip to San Francisco?"

"What! . . . Oh, I knew something was up," she cried, the color flashing to her beautiful face. "How soon? . . . Fifteen minutes!"

"Ha! Ha! I thought you'd hit the saddle and ride that idea pronto," said Ben happily. "But you needn't be so swift as that."

"Ben, are you really going to take me to Frisco?"

"Yes, it's all settled. But—"

"You darling," she cried, kissing him. "I wanted to go somewhere. The winter has been so long, so confining. Klamath Falls was my hope. But San Francisco! Oh, Ben!"

SO IT came about that Hettie was left alone in the Ide homestead with little Blaine and the two women servants. The running of the ranch had at first thought seemed something that would be pleasure, rather than work. She discovered presently that it was not only

work but also extremely embarrassing and exasperating.

There were eighteen hands employed on the lake ranch, and as many more out in the hills. Most of these employees were young men of the valley, unmarried, and very desirous of changing that state of single blessedness. Some had been schoolmates of Hettie's. And there were several riders, long, lean, rangy fellows from the south, that Hettie grew most annoyed with.

In two weeks' time the whole contingent were in love with Hettie, or trying to make her believe so. And the plowing, the planting, the movement of stock, the hauling of supplies, the herding of cattle—in fact, all tasks

pertaining to the operation of Ben Ide's ranches—had to be talked over elaborately with the temporary mistress.

Hettie had fun out of it, except in the case of the several lean-faced, quiet-eyed riders from the hills. If Nevada had come to mind often in the past, what did he do now but haunt every hour? She saw him in each one of the range riders.

Yet how incomparably he bestrode a horse! Hettie saw his lean, fine, still face, so clean-cut and brown, with the sleepy eyes that yet could wake to flame and also smile with a light she had never seen in any other's. His old black sombrero, with bullet holes in the crown, when laid aside had appeared a disreputable thing, but on his head it had seemed picturesque and beautiful. His old silk scarf with the checks of red, the yellow vest with the string of a little tobacco pouch always hanging out of a pocket, the worn leather wrist bands, the high top-boots with their scalloped edges, and their bright jingling

ranch, never fear for that."

"By George, it's a great idea!" declared Ben, with amazing enthusiasm. He leaped down off the corral fence, then turned to help Hettie. "Let's go tell Ina this minute!"

Ina was in the yard, gathering violets, which certainly matched the blue of her spring dress and the color of her eyes. Little Blaine babbled at sight of his father, and ran to him



Occasionally riders watched the work from a distance, looked long at Ben's fine horses, and especially at California Red, and then rode away, without any pretense of friendliness



Black and sharp stood a stallion on a ridge top, silhouetted against the sky

spurs—how vividly they were limned in the eye of her memory!

Then, as something inevitable at the end of reminiscence, something that seemed an inseparable part of Nevada, she recalled the dark and heavy gun he had always worn. It had bumped against her as she walked beside him. When he took her in his arms—even in the sweet madness of that moment she had felt the gun hard and cold against her.

ONE day several strangers from Klamath Falls called upon Hettie. They were business men, representing an Oregon syndicate, who were buying up land around Tule Lake Valley. There had been considerable speculation in that vicinity since the draining of the lake. The Ides had received offers before, but never anything like the one made by these men. Hettie was shrewd enough to grasp that some situation had arisen, such as the possibility of a railroad from Klamath Falls, to increase the value of the Ide property enormously.

She neither refused nor accepted the offer, saying that control of the ranches was in her brother's hands. Her amazement and gratification, however, lingered after their departure. She scarcely ever thought of herself as sharing equally with Ben the fortune their father had left them.

She happened to be out on the farm somewhere when her family returned; and upon coming back to the house, hot and dusty and weary, what was her surprise and joy to be waylaid in the hall by Ben

and Ina. She found her mother resting in her room. It was plain that the little trip had been happily beneficial to her.

"Well, Hettie, your sending us off on this trip means a great change in our lives," began Ben gravely, when she came back to the sitting-room. "Winter and spring here are too damp and cold for Mother. To keep her here longer will endanger her life."

"Will Mother—be all right in some other climate?"

"She'll get well," answered Ben. "She needs a mild, dry, warm climate in winter and a high, dry, bracing climate in summer."

"That's easy enough," returned Hettie. "I will go with Mother and live with her wherever the climate is right for her."

"Sure, you will. But that doesn't solve the problem. The point is I don't want to be separated from Mother and you. Neither does Ina. That much is settled. We won't be separated. But I'd hate to sacrifice the land just to get a quick sale. And we'll need money, wherever we go."

"Ben, I can sell this lake property of ours for two hundred thousand," declared Hettie.

Her brother stared at her. "Hettie, don't make wild statements like that. It's hard enough on me to make decisions."

"I can sell for that to-morrow," grandly added Hettie, conscious of a sudden tremendous importance.

"Now I know she's crazy!" wailed Ben, turning to his wife.

"She looks pretty sure and sane to me, Bennie boy. You're only a wild-horse

hunter, anyway. Hettie and I have the business brains."

"By George!" cried Ben, leaping up, "you're right! But I can't believe we could sell for that."

"It's true, Ben. Listen," said Hettie; and then briefly told about the offer of the Klamath Falls syndicate.

"HORSES not included in the deal? Not California Red?" queried Ben, beginning to manifest signs of extreme excitement.

"Their offer embraced land and buildings, on this ranch, and all the Ide cattle. But not horses."

"Girls, it's settled. It's done!" cried Ben, giving way to the force of something that had been impelling him. Then he faced them, quite pale, with his dark eyes full of fire.

"Forgive me and try to understand," he said. "There has always been something lacking for me here. This ranch country is too populated. It's too rich. There's not enough hard work for me. The sage hills and the valleys, where the horses used to roam free, are ranches and farms. I'd be happier in a new country, say, in Arizona. I'd do better, working as I used to. That's why I'm glad to sell out here, to take Mother where she'll get strong again, where you'll all be happier because of these things."

"Arizona!" murmured Hettie thoughtfully. "We know so little about Arizona. Isn't it very wild?"

"Wild? I reckon," replied Ben. "Arizona is everything (Continued on page 66)

"Nevada"

(Continued from page 13)

northern California used to be. . . . At that, though, I think I could stand a few wild cowboys. Couldn't you, Hettie?"

Hettie tried to smile, but her effort was a wan one. There had seemed to come a knocking at her heart.

"I'll keep Forlorn River Ranch and Mule Deer Flat," mused Ben, pacing the room. "I'd never part with them. We own them, Nevada and I, share and share alike. . . . Some day I'll come back to see them. And, who knows—?"

Hettie lay sleepless and distracted late into the hours of the night. There was regret, of course, mingled with the emotions roused by the thought of leaving Tule Lake, where she had lived all her life. But it was not regret that threatened to bring the tears. Rather, a joy rising from the depths of her. Over there in wild Arizona she might see Nevada again. Ben would never cease to search for him. Surely he would locate him some day.

BEN was late at breakfast next morning. No one need have told Hettie and Ina that he had been out to the corrals. He strode in more like his old self than for months, keen-eyed, virile, with the spring of a rider in his step.

"Say, girls, what do you think!" he cried, radiantly. "Red came to me this morning. The wild son-of-a-gun! He did, and it sure tickled me. And I said to him, 'Old boy, you're going back to the unfenced ranges.' He understood me too. . . . Oh, Ina—Hettie—I'm another man this mawnin'!"

"You look it, Bennie," replied Ina, with her beautiful eyes warm and glad.

"Blaine, my boy," said Ben, leaning to the child in his high chair, "we're going to Arizona. Are you glad?"

Mrs. Ide came in at the moment to take her place next to Hettie. "What's that I hear about Arizona?"

"Nana, we's doan Ar-zoonie," chirped up little Blaine, with great importance.

Mrs. Ide had not until that moment been given any inkling of the secret.

"Land's sake!" she ejaculated. "So that's the mystery! Ben Ide, you're not going back to chasing wild horses? Your father would turn over in his grave!"

Ben Ide was not noted for deception, or beating around the bush. Despite warning glances from Hettie and Ina he told his mother that he was thinking of selling out and moving to Arizona. Mrs. Ide declared she would never go, or permit Hettie to leave home. Ben tried to expostulate with her, and, failing that, tried to laugh it off. But when his mother asked him a deliberate question he maintained silence. Whereupon she rose from the table and, weeping, left the room.

"Well, I reckon that upsets things," said Ben ruefully.

"It was a shock, Ben," said Ina. "You were so abrupt. But she'll come 'round to it all right."

"Leave Mother to us," added Hettie.

Ben left early the next morning for Klamath, and Hettie had a long and trying hour with her mother, who, of course, could not be told the most important

reason for this breaking of old home ties. But Hettie knew how to handle her mother, and with patience and common sense, and dwelling much on the need of a change for Ben, she at last won the victory.

Ina, however, did not have equal success with her family. She returned with fire in her eyes, and traces of tears on her cheeks.

"Oh, Hettie, they were just horrid!" she said. "Dad was idiot enough to suggest that I come back home to live. Only Marvie. He was adorable. In front of Dad he never batted an eye. Once outside, though, he nearly hugged the breath out of me. 'I'm comin' with you!' he shouted, so loud I was afraid they'd hear. 'Dad can't stop me. Nor ropes, nor jails! I'll ride for Ben, an' chase wild horses, an' hunt an' fish. . . . Who knows, I might see Nevada there!'"

"Bless the boy's heart!" exclaimed Hettie, her eyes filling with tears.

"Strange how Ben and Marvie loved Nevada," mused Ina.

"Strange?" queried Hettie, smiling through her tears.

"No. I don't mean that . . . I think I loved him too."

THREE days later the Ides stood on their front porch, and watched a buckboard drawn by a spirited team of horses rapidly passing down the lane toward the main road. This vehicle contained Ben's lawyer and a representative of the Oregon syndicate. Ben held a certified check in his hand, for which he had signed away the fertile acres of Tule Lake Ranch.

"I stopped over in Hammell on my way back from Oregon," said Ben. "You remember Sheriff Strobel. He always was a friend of mine, even in those outcast days when I was suspected of being a rustler. Strobel knows a good deal about Arizona. I asked him to come out this afternoon. I'll sure take what he says pretty serious."

They sat out on the shady porch that afternoon and while little Blaine played on the grass, they explained to Ben's old friend the exigencies of the case.

"What I want help in," concluded Ben, "is where to strike for."

"Reckon I don't know enough about Arizona to tell you that," said Strobel. "I'm able, though, to give you some hunches about where *not* to go. Southern Arizona is too hot, an' in the north it's too cold. On the other hand, you want to steer clear of the Tonto Basin, the Sierra Ancas, the Mongollons, the Little Colorado country. Anyone goin' into the cattle game on a big scale, as of course you will, don't want to get too far from the railroad. I'd say a hundred miles should be the limit, an' that's too far, in Arizona. Roughest, wildest country on earth, I reckon."

"Now, Ben, the only advice I'll presume to give you is this: Have a winter home in San Diego, California. That's the place for your mother, an' for all of you. San Diego is not so far from southern and central Arizona. By doin' so, you can pick the best range land in Arizona, an'

needn't worry so much about winter climate. Some of them high plateaus get plumb cold in winter, but are grand all the rest of the year."

"**S**HERIFF, you sure have given me a hunch," declared Ben. "Now, about my horses. You know I'd never go anywhere without Red, and some of the others. But why not take the best of my stock?"

"Wal, by all means take 'em," replied the sheriff. "That's a hoss country, an' also a hoss-thief country. I'd send 'em overland by easy stages in care of some reliable men. Send a chuck wagon, an' also another wagon, so they can haul out-fits an' plenty of grain. An', Ben, I'd start 'em soon as possible. They'll need time. They got to cross Nevada, an' most or all of Utah. That depends on the best route, which they'll have to find."

"Exactly. The main thing, though, is an objective point. Where shall my men go in Arizona?"

"Wal, that is a stumper," replied the other. "Here it's well along in May now. You said you'd agreed to vacate this range in three months."

"Yes; but, come to think of it, that's just prolonging the agony. . . . Girls, how about it? Couldn't you get out of here in three weeks?"

"Yes, Ben, we could. The sooner the better," replied Ina, wide-eyed with the seriousness of this decision.

"Good!" ejaculated Ben. "Then I'll go with the horses. You can pack what you want to take, and send it to Klamath to be freighted. Then you and Hettie can fetch Blaine and Mother by way of 'Frisco."

"And be landed somewhere in wild Arizona to wait weeks for you!" said Ina.

"Ben, if you go overland I'm going with you," added Hettie.

"We'll *all* go with you," asserted Ina, a spot of red showing in each cheek.

"Aw, girls, that'll never do," expostulated Ben. "It's—it's a crazy idea! You girls might do it, but think of Blaine and Mother."

"Mother would not only like it but she could go through with it," said Hettie, jumping up. "I'll ask her."

She ran in to lay the point before her mother.

"Well, daughter," came the reply, with unusual animation, "reckon that's the first sensible idea Ben has thought of. It'd do me good. Work and living outdoors is what I need."

Hettie rushed outside triumphantly to announce her mother's opinion, at which Ben threw up his hands.

"Well, I'll see what we can do about it," he said.

"Oh, what will Marvie say to this!" cried Hettie, with shining eyes. "I know he'll want to go with us!"

AT DAYLIGHT on the third morning after their talk, Ben pounded on Hettie's door.

"Wake up!" he shouted, gayly. "You'll make a fine wife for a pioneer!"

"Oh, Ben! What's the matter?" cried Hettie, sitting up in alarm.

"Roll out. There's work to do, young lady. We leave June first!"

"Overland?"

"Sure. And Marvie goes with us. Ina's father was pretty decent, for him."

"Oh, I'm glad. Ina loves him best of all her family. . . . Ben, then we're really going?"

"You bet, unless you girls four-flush on me!" rejoined Ben.

That dawn was the beginning of excited, full, strenuous days. Hettie did not know where the hours flew. If anything inspired her more than her own secret longing that she might meet Nevada out in Arizona, it was the interest and enthusiasm shown by her mother.

Ben bought several new, large, deep-bodied wagons, which he had covered with canvas stretched over high hoops. One for Hettie and her mother, and another for himself, Ina and Blaine, he had fitted out so that they made comfortable little rooms. What tingling pleasure Hettie derived from climbing into the wagon that must be her home for weeks, possibly months! It was almost like playing at keeping house when she had been a little girl.

THE morning of departure was like a nightmare for Hettie. But after she had passed through Hammell, which passing was in the nature of a parade, she began to recover. Her mother lay quietly on her cot, wearied, but not manifesting any signs of deep grief. Hettie parted the front curtains and got out on the high seat with the driver, one of the older men, who had worked for the Ides as long as Hettie could remember. She did not want to cry, and thought that outside she might better keep from it.

A string of horses, mostly bays and blacks, among which California Red shone like fire in the sun, led the cavalcade up the long hill road. They were in charge of three of Ben's best riders. Next came the chuck wagon, and after it the extra supply wagon, each of which was drawn by four horses. Ben's wagon came third, Hettie's last.

She had a powerful impulse to look back, but she resisted it until the top of the hill had been reached. After they passed over the hill, Tule Lake Valley would be lost to sight. When at last Hettie turned to look her eyes were so wet that she had to wipe them so she could see. How far they had already come! The cluster of houses that constituted the village of Hammell lay at the foot of the long hill. Beyond widened the green valley, for miles and miles, with its threads of bright water and its shining remnant of lake, and the great squares of grain waving in the wind.

She located the Ide ranch, the fields, the barns, the dark patch of maples, the white house. Home! She was leaving it, surely forever. Yet she whispered to herself that she was glad to go. Her heart had almost broken there; she would never return unless—unless—

There followed days that held increasing interest for Hettie. Once off the main road, swift progress would have been impossible, even had Ben desired it. The road was not merely rough but also narrow and dangerous.

They expected to reach Lineville, the first town on their route, in time to pitch

camp early on the fourth day, but sunset had come and gone before they rode into a wide street, lined by strange old houses. Hettie would have been more curious had she been less fatigued. As it was, the place gave her a queer sensation, and she would far rather have gone on, to camp in the open.

The wagon halted, and presently Ben poked his head between the curtains. "There's a hotel here; but I reckon we'll dodge it. It's called the Gold Mine. Raidy said it was a terrible dive once, an' it's pretty raw yet. But there's a woman named Mrs. Wood has a nice place near the edge of town. We can drive in her yard and get our supper there."

Hettie peeped out to take a look at the Gold Mine. It was a drab, low building, with vacant, eye-like windows, the blinds of which seemed to hide secrets. Dark faces peered from a wide doorway.

"Ben, I'd rather not stay in this town," said Hettie.

"Reckon I'm not keen on that myself," replied Ben, with a laugh. "After supper we'll drive on to where the boys make camp."

Hettie did not look out again. The driver called, "Ged-dap," to his tired horses, and the wagon rolled on. It relieved Hettie that some distance was traveled before another halt was made.

Darkness had fallen when Ben called them to supper. He led the way around to the side of a house, and they were ushered into a clean, warm kitchen. Hettie saw a stout, ruddy-faced woman, who appeared most agreeable and kind. She had keen eyes that did not miss anything. Hettie liked her, particularly her solicitude for the weary little Blaine.

Hettie sat at the table, aware of the ample and appetizing supper, and hungry enough to do justice to it, but she did not. She attributed her inhibition to a nervousness roused on the entrance into this border town. Yet she was seldom nervous.

BEN and Ina enjoyed the meal, and were not in the least affected by any unaccountable "something" in Lineville. Ben particularly found the woman interesting.

"How long have you lived here?" he asked.

"Nigh on to six years now."

"Then you must have seen Lineville in its heyday. Raidy, one of my men, tells me life used to be pretty uncertain here, not so long ago."

"Well, that depends upon experience," replied the woman. "Your man never seen any real frontier towns, such as old Dodge, an' Cimmaron, or Lincoln, or a hundred others. Not that there wasn't some real killers droppin' in Lineville now and then, years back. McPherson, a gambler an' a gunman, which was unusual for gamblers. An' Sandy Hall. He killed four men here once in a shootin' row. An' a miner named Hendricks. He was no slouch with a gun, either. Reckon, though, Jim Lacy was the most dangerous man ever struck Lineville."

"Jim Lacy?" said Ben, with interest. "I've heard of him at least. What was he like? Did you ever see him?"

"See Jim Lacy! Why, he lived with me two winters," replied Mrs. Wood. "He used to set right there behind my stove

an' talk for hours. Jim was only a boy. Somethin' like Billy the Kid, who I knew well. But Jim wasn't mean. He was just the quietest, nice, soft-speakin' feller. But he was terrible when he got riled. Jim killed several men here.

"The last one was a loud-yappin' coyote named Cawthorne. Link Cawthorne. He was a cheap, notoriety-seekin', braggin' gun-fighter. An' he was always tryin' to force Jim Lacy into a fight. Everybody knew Link'd get killed. But the fool himself couldn't see it. He beat a girl to death. Then Jim called him out an' shot him. After that Jim left for Arizona. I've never heard of him since."

"Arizona? That's where we are bound for," replied Ben, smiling. "We hoped to find the climate there beneficial. But if Arizona is full of Jim Lacys it might not be so healthy."

"Arizona or any other territory would only be the better for men like Jim Lacy," returned the woman, rather brusquely.

"Reckon so; I was only joking," said Ben, as he arose. "We must be going. Thanks for a capital supper."

She received the money Ben proffered and led the way to the door.

"Good luck to you, sir," she said. "It's a glorious country you're goin' to. But you'll lose this big-eyed sister of yours over there. . . . Good-by, little boy. You'll grow up on a horse in Arizona. Good-by, lady, an' you, miss."

THE days multiplied until Hettie could no longer keep account of them. Endless leagues of Nevada, wastes of barren ground, plains of green, valleys between bleak ranges, ridge and upland ever heaving higher, lay back along the winding, rolling road.

From every elevation, the defiance of far-flung distances seemed to greet the travelers. Away to the east and south stretched the lonely desert solitude, day by day, changing by almost imperceptible degrees, gathering color and force, calling and beckoning toward some unseen yet promised infinitude.

Hettie Ide had come to touch happiness again, strangely, fearfully, as if these June days were dreams. The action and incident and life of such travel, day after day, with every mile bringing new scenes, with the future there beyond the purple ranges, satisfied a longing she had scarcely known she possessed.

And in watching for and sighting the bands of wild horses, she came at last to understand her brother Ben. His passion for wild horses that had almost been his ruin! But such conviction, so long her father's, and therefore accepted by family and friends, had begun to lose its hold on Hettie. Might not such love of horses and the open range, solitude, freedom, the hard fare and toil, the kinship with nature—might not these develop character to noble ends?

She saw the clouds of dust, way out on the desert, under which dark moving bands of horses, with long manes and tails streaming in the wind, swept onward, so wild and wonderful, to be swallowed by the gray obscurity. Black and sharp stood a stallion on a ridge top, silhouetted against the sky, to leap away and down, wildly instinct with freedom. On the cedar slopes, where the gnarled and stunted trees grew wide apart, and the

bleached dead grass waved over the outcropping green, wild horses grazed—to start erect, lean heads high, ears and tail up; to stand like statues an instant, then suddenly to bound into action and speed away.

At times on level plains or down long slopes Hettie could see how Ben and the riders had almost to fight off wild stallions. How California Red glistened in the sunlight! He was in his element, with that wild scent of his kind in his nostrils.

More wild-horse days, as Ben called them, passed and were added to the weeks. Then the colored rock walls of Utah rose above the long slopes of sage and greasewood.

Marysville was their second stop. The Mormon town, far over the border into Utah, had been a Mecca for the riders. Here, on the outskirts, the horses were rested, wagons were repaired, supplies were bought, and much needed information secured.

Then on again, rolling down-grade over a hard desert road, eating up the miles, the Ide caravan traveled, down league-long slopes of red earth and green growths, with the red cliff walls keeping pace with them, and ever rising higher, as they wandered on down into the dim-hazed, marvelous region of canyons.

ARIZONA at last! Early one morning Hettie heard that pealing slogan from Ben's lusty throat. What magic in a name! But as she gazed down the green-red hollow, thirty miles that looked like only three, up the purpling slope to the black fringe of Buckskin Plateau, where it flowed like a river of trees that emptied into a lake of forests, and on to the grandly-looming Vermilion Cliffs, she marveled no more at the enchantment of that name. One long, breathless look won Hettie Ide forever.

At sunset, the riders halted to camp in the edge of the pines, far above the valley, which had taken all day to cross. Hettie stood under the last pines, and faced the West. She could not tell what it was that she saw: A glory of gold and purple cloud overhung a region of red rock, distant, broken, carved, where a lilac haze in transparent veils and rays spread from the sinking sun. She looked through that haze into an obscurity baffling and compelling, where shadows might be mountains, and the purple depths beyond conception.

Then, as the pageant failed and faded, leaving her with a pang of regret, as if she had suffered actual loss, she turned to the forest and the camp. After so many camps on the desert, wide and open and windy, where camp fires were meager, and there was neither friendliness nor intimacy, how wonderful this temporary night-stand in the forest! Hettie had difficulty drawing her breath, and the tang of pine seemed to clog her nostrils. Ben whistled as he brushed and combed his horse; the riders sang as they came in with bridles and nose bags on their arms; little Blaine, now like an Indian, gambled about, chattering to his mother, and Mrs. Ide, as always, was bustling happily around the camp fire.

Hettie imagined she had prepared herself for Arizona. But next day when, riding horseback for a change, she emerged from the pines to the edge of the plateau

she was unable even to give an echo of Ben's stentorian long-drawn: "*Whoopee!*"

Wild, beautiful, majestic, zigzagged the Vermilion Cliffs, towering over another and vastly greater valley, softly, deeply purple, and sweeping away, widening like a colossal fan, out to the desert, where a ragged rent in the earth, tremendous and awe-inspiring, told Hettie she was gazing at the Grand Canyon.

From that moment time seemed to cease for Hettie Ide. She let her horse follow the leaders, and rode down and down, where neither dust nor heat meant aught to her. The purple valley yawned and seemed to swallow her. Lost was the sweep of the range, and that fascinating rent in the desert. In their places uplifted the red wall on the left, and on the right mounted the gray-sloped, black-fringed plateau.

On the second day up out of the valley they climbed, like snails, and toiled on ever nearer and nearer the grand jutting corner of the red cliff that hid the desert beyond.

But at last they rode around under this colossal wall, and Hettie Ide gasped. Dissolution and ruin of earth seemed flung in her face. Splintered and tumbled wall of red wound down to a notch, where the sinister red river broke through; and on the other side, another wall as red and ghastly, lifting its rent and riven front high to serrated crags, formed the far side of that great Y-shaped pocket of the desert.

But before the afternoon light failed, the travelers rounded the last corner of the wall; and Hettie opened her eyes upon a scene that seemed one of enchantment.

A rich, dark green and beautiful oasis lay deep down under lofty, precipitous walls. On three sides these sky-high walls enclosed the oval acres of green, and on the other, the sullen river swept by, as sinister as its surrounding confines, and slid swiftly on into the dark boxlike canyon-head, whence floated a bellowing roar of waters.

"Lees Ferry," announced Raidy, to the speechless onlookers. "An' the river's low. I was afeard of meltin' snow up in the mountains. There's the old scow we cross in. Wal, wal, if luck ain't settin' right in the saddle of this Ide outfit!"

IT WAS late July, and the long wagon-train journey had ended. The Ides were comfortably camped on a running brook in a grove of cottonwoods outside the little Arizona hamlet of Sunshine, forty miles from the larger town of Winthrop. Ben had secured a grazing permit for his horses on a ranch near by; and while his family rested he scoured the ranges 'round about in search of a new home.

After an absence of three days he returned on the train late one afternoon, to descend upon his camp like a whirlwind. They ran out to find him surrounded by his men, from whom, as Ina eagerly called, he broke away.

"I've bought my ranch," he said with solemn finality, eying them.

"Where?" asked Ina, slowly sinking on her knees in front of him.

"Sixty miles from Winthrop, and about a hundred from here."

"How much land?"

"A thousand acres. Fine grazing all around. No other ranches near. Ten

thousand head of cattle. Forty thousand dollars! Isn't that a bargain?"

"Ben, I hope your ranch isn't out there—toward those Mongollons," said Hettie, pointing across the purple-hazed desert to the strange, dark uplands.

"By George, Hettie, it *is*! It's right under the brakes of the Mongollons. But such a beautiful wild country. I couldn't resist it!"

"Didn't you remember what your friend the sheriff said about the Mongollons?"

"I did, honest I did, Hettie," replied Ben hastily. "But, listen! I'll tell you all about it. . . . Day before yesterday I rode back to Winthrop, after a hard and disappointing trip to half a dozen ranches. I was pretty discouraged and was coming back here pronto. Some horsemen rode up to the hotel where I was sitting out in front. I've got used to seeing these Arizonians. They're sure a rangy, hard-looking lot. But this outfit struck me as one to look twice at. Several of them packed two guns. They had fine horses and saddles. When they went in to drink I asked a cattle man sitting near me who and what they were. 'Wal,' he said, 'it ain't done in these parts—talkin' about your neighbors. Sort of onhealthy.' . . .

"PRESENTLY someone touched me on the shoulder. I turned around to see one of the riders, a tall fellow, blond and good-looking, not so young, but not old, either. He had eyes that looked right through you; but his manner was easy, friendly. 'Excuse me, sir,' he said. 'Are you the Californian who's lookin' for a ranch?'

"Yes, sir. My name's Ide," I replied, 'and I'm not having much luck.'

"They tell me you're hard to please. But I'm makin' bold to ask you personally just what kind of ranch you want to buy?"

"So I up and told him just what I was looking for. Then he laughed, sort of amused, and said, 'My name's Burrige. I've got exactly what you want. It suits me to sell for cash. That's what they call me—Cash Burrige. Suppose you get a lawyer, an' come over to the city hall an' see my title. Then, if it strikes you right, I'll take you out to my ranch.'

"Well," went on Ben, reflectively, "Mr. Cash Burrige hit me about right. I consulted a lawyer recommended by the hotel man, and we met Burrige at the town hall. The title was clean. So I told Burrige I'd like a look at his property. We started right out in a buckboard behind a team of fast horses, and reached his ranch before sunset. I'm only going to tell you that it was the most beautiful and the wildest place I ever saw in my life. But the cabins were filthy, tumble-down huts. I slept out under the pines. This morning I was up before sunrise, and if I ever fell in love with anything it's that place. Right there I asked Burrige how much he wanted. He said fifty thousand. I offered forty. He thought it over, and took me up. We went back to Winthrop and closed the deal, at noon to-day.

"I'm going to make that the finest ranch in Arizona! We'll go out there at once and camp, and start building. If I don't miss my guess you'll all fall in love with it as quickly as I did."

"I have already, Ben," was Ina's reply. "What you love, I love. Your home is my home."

"Ben, am I in on this ranch deal with you?" asked Hettie gravely.

"That's for you to say," replied Ben. "But I believe I'd rather you didn't come in, because it's a risk."

"Then, if Ina has no objection, I'll take the risk."

"So will I. We'll share the risk, and together make a grand success of it," said Ina, happily.

Ben hired a guide from Winthrop to lead his horses and riders across country to the ranch. On the second day the wagons made Winthrop, where Burridge failed to meet them, as agreed. Ben said this was strange, as Burridge was due to take his outfit over the better road, and to make a count of the cattle. But it was not so strange, nor half so illuminating, as the glances Ben encountered when he mentioned Burridge casually to bystanders in Winthrop.

Whereupon Ben procured another guide, a Mexican sheep herder, who guaranteed to pilot the heavily-laden wagons safely to their destination.

The four-horse teams made good time over the open desert road, reaching the brakes, some thirty miles out, by sundown. But the next day tedious travel began into an ever-increasingly wild and wonderful woodland. The air grew clearer, less oppressive, and the heat no longer made the shade desirable. Massed foliage, like green lace, dark brown, seamed boles of pines, patches of sunlight on the white grass, the red of a tufted flower, like a stiff brush dipped in paint, and golden aisles of needles up and down the forest, held for Hettie a never-failing delight.

And about the middle of the second afternoon the travelers rode to the edge of open, light forest.

"We're here," shouted Ben, leaping down. "California to Arizona! . . . Ina—Mother—Blaine—Hettie, get down and come in, as these Arizonians say!"

HETTIE sat under a great spreading pine on the edge of one of the level benches which sloped down into the open sage and cedar country. She had tramped around until she was exhausted, and at last had found herself on the edge of this bench, with fascinated gaze riveted upon the view that Ben had raved about.

"No wonder," whispered Hettie. "If there were nothing else—that would be enough!"

Her position was on the edge of the irregular timber line which stretched on each side of her, with fringes of the forest—here running down to end in straggling, lonesome pines, and there skirting the edge of the steep benches, as if the greatest of landscape gardeners had planted them there. And so He had, Hettie thought. What majestic pines! How the summer wind roared above and back of her, now low, now high, deepening upward with the denser growth of forest!

But it was the desert that enchanted Hettie. For she doubted not that the edge of the bench where she sat was the edge of the desert. How soft, how marvelously purple and gray, how grandly the slope fell for league on league, widening, rolling, lengthening, descending down to the blazing abyss of sand and rock and canyon.

Sage and grass in the foreground gave that vast valley its softest beauty, its

infinite charm, its mistiness and brilliance, as if drenched with dew. How like troops of great beasts the isolated green cedars and the lonely jutting rocks, some gray, others red! This valley was a portal down to the dim unknown. On each side it swelled to ranges of foothills, themselves like trains of colossal camels trooping down to drink. They were rounded, soft as clouds, gray and pink and faintly green, without a tree, a rock to mar their exquisite gracefulness.

Every time Hettie moved her absorbed gaze from one far point to another, the outlines, the colors, the distances, the lines of lonely cedars, the winding black threads of gullies—all seemed to change, to magnify in her sight, to draw upon her emotions, and command her to set her eyes upon that sublime distance, that ethereal blending of hues and forms, that stunning mystery of the desert—of the magnificent arid zone which gave this country its name.

"I can only look—and learn to worship," whispered Hettie, in a rapture. "What little I have seen and known! . . . Oh, lonely wild land! Oh, Arizona! If you shelter *him* my prayer is answered, my cup is full!"

THE Ides, imbued with Ben's spirit, set earnestly to work to wrest a beautiful home from this wilderness.

Two gangs of Mexican laborers were put to work clearing and grading a road, felling and hauling timber. Teamsters from Winthrop made a trip out every other day, bringing materials for building. Carpenters began to erect Ben's house, which was to be a long one-story structure, with log walls, high peaked roofs, wide porches.

Those were busy days. Occasionally riders on high-gaited horses rode in, watched the work from a distance, looked long at Ben's fine horses, and especially at California Red, and then rode away, without any pretense of friendliness. Old Raidy shook his head dubiously at sight of these dark mounted men. Apparently, they caused no concern to Ben Ide.

Hettie imagined that she alone divined what was going on in her brother's mind. She believed that Ben had deliberately chosen this wild spot in a wild range, to develop a famous ranch which would become a lodestone for cowboys, ranchers, cattle men of all types, sheep men, rustlers, outlaws, gunmen—through one of whom he might locate his lost friend Nevada. Hettie was convinced of this, and it thrilled her very soul.

But though many came to look, the ranchers along the three hundred miles of the Mongollon Plateau were slow to call. Nor did Cash Burridge come to count the cattle he had sold Ben. This omission caused Raidy and the riders from California much concern. They began to make dark hints round the camp fire, and were not particular about who heard them.

One hot midday, during the noon rest hour, while Ben and his family were having lunch in the shade of the pines, a rider appeared on the road. Arriving at the camp quarters, he dismounted and hailed the riders in a booming voice:

"I'm Tom Day, an' I'm wantin' to meet Mr. Ide!"

Raidy led him up to Ben, who rose expectantly, a smile on his sunburnt face.

"I'm your nearest neighbor," said Day. "My ranch is over heah, ten miles or so. Reckon I'm a little late in callin'."

"Better late than never," returned Ben, with his frank smile. "Meet my family, Mr. Day. . . . This is Ina, my wife, and this my mother. . . . Hettie, my sister; and this is my son, Blaine, who's destined to be an Arizona rancher."

"Wal now, I'm shore glad to meet you-all," drawled the visitor, with an accent so surely Texan that it made Hettie's heart leap. He greeted them all with a quaint courtliness that became him well, despite his rough, soiled rider's garb. He made much of little Blaine, whom evidently he had won at first sight.

"Reckon I'd like you to show me aboot," said Day to Ben, waving his hand toward the benches.

"I'll be glad to; and I'd like your opinion on some of my new-fangled ideas," replied Ben.

They strolled away in earnest conversation, and did not return until the expiration of an hour. Whereupon, Hettie set lunch for them on the table under the fly, after which she repaired to her wagon-tent close by.

"Ide, the good looks of that sister of yours has spread over the range," said Day. "Shore, she's a lovely lass, and girls are scarce in Arizona. She'll shore have these long-legged punchers comin' around moon-eyed!"

"If they don't, they're not like my California riders," laughed Ben.

"Wal, I'll say if them riders of yours are as good at makin' love as they are at gossipin', our Arizona lads won't have much chance."

"I'm afraid my men do talk too much," observed Ben seriously. "They brag. And I don't believe bragging will get very far in Arizona."

"Wal, only so far as makin' brag good," drawled Day. "Ide, I reckon I've taken a shine to you. It ain't Arizona ways, but somebody ought to give you some hunches. Reckon I never had such idee when I rode over heah. I was downright curious, but I reckon I expected to find you-all different."

"Mr. Day, I take that as a compliment, and an offer of friendship," returned Ben heartily. "I was told in Winthrop to try to make friends with you. Lord knows, I'm going to need a friend out here."

WAL, heah's my hand," said Day; "an' I'm shore seein' you're not such a durned fool as is bein' gossiped over the range."

"Maybe I *am* a fool, Day," returned Ben grimly. "But at least I know what I'm going to do in the long run."

"All right. Thet's good talk to me. Fust off, you are goin' in for big cattle-raisin'?"

"Yes. And horses, too."

"Ahuh. You shore have some fine stock. Thet Red hoss! Say, he's grand. Reckon you'll have to keep him close, or he'll be stolen."

"That's bad news. But you encourage me to ask questions. Can you put me onto some crack Arizona cowboys? I'll keep Raidy, my foreman, and perhaps another of my riders, and send the others home. But how am I to know riders who are honest, not to mention other qualifications?"



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"Son, you're shore askin' me a question that even Franklidge, the boss rancher of this country, cain't answer. The honest truth is this: Nobody heah knows who's a rustler, an' who's not!"

"Good heavens, Day, you don't mean that!" cried Ben, shocked.

"Wal, I shore do. I know for a fact I'm a square cattle man. But there are ranchers heah who suspect me, same as I suspect them. For this reason: Rustlin' cattle is a mighty big business along the three hundred miles of Mongollon Range. The country grazes hundreds of thousands of haid. Wal, it's great pickin' fer the rustlers. There's the Hash Knife Gang, heah fer many years. There's the Pine Tree Outfit, which is newer, and wuss. An' no honest rancher can name the leader of thet outfit. He's shore some one of us ranchers, shore as torment. Then there's a lot of smaller rustlers, clear down to the cowboy who's startin' a herd of his own. . . . Thet, Ide, is the country you've come to ranch in."

"Well, I'm a son-of-a-gun!" ejaculated Ben.

"Shore, you are. I wish I could have met you before you laid out so much money heah. How many cattle did Burrige sell you?"

"TEN thousand head," replied Ben. "I took his word. But at the same time I figured if he was a thousand head or so shy, I'd be satisfied."

"Wal, you figgered good, but not good enough," said Day gruffly. "Burrige now has half a dozen brands, but he never had no ten thousand, nor eight thousand, nor— Nobody could ever tell how many haid he ran. He was always sellin' cattle."

"What do you think of Burrige failing to make a count for me? He promised to do so at once."

"Wal, I don't like to say what I think. But if Burrige shows up soon an' makes a count, it'll be a good deal more than I have any idee he'll do."

"He'll not come," said Ben decidedly. "Day, there's no doubt in my mind, Burrige has cheated me."

"Wal, don't you say thet to anyone else around heah," warned Day. "Be careful what you say, Ide. An' make your men keep their mouths shut. I'll let you have two of my boys, an' I can get you another."

"That's good of you, Day," responded Ben, with gratitude. "I sure appreciate it. I may be able to do you a favor now and then, since we're neighbors."

"I'm wonderin' about somethin', yet there ain't any sense in me doin' it."

"What?" asked Ben.

"Shore Burrige didn't tell you thet I had a four-thousand-dollar lien on his cattle?"

"No, he sure didn't," returned Ben, shortly.

"Wal, I have. Soon after he come heah, let's see—about four years ago, I lent him the money. He paid interest for a while, then he quit. An' I was after him pretty hard when he sold out to you."

"That's pretty bad, Day," said Ben soberly.

"Wal, I reckon; but don't let it worry you none, so far as I'm concerned. But there's wuss. The Hatts have a lien on Burrige's stock too."

FACTS ABOUT A FAMOUS FAMILY

WORLD-WIDE sales of quality cars and trucks

General Motors cars and trucks are sold and serviced in 104 countries. The export shipments in 1925 amounted to 119,632 motor vehicles; and the overseas assembly plants and warehouses of General Motors now number 19. This vigorous development of the world-wide market for a complete line of quality cars is important to the car buyer. It is not only a contribution to international prosperity and progress, but it also helps to maintain the continuous production program at the factories, on which low prices depend.

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FRIGIDAIRE—The Electric Refrigerator

"Well, this is getting thick. Who are the Hatts?"

"Father an' three sons. There's a girl too, pretty young lass, the only decent one of a bad lot. They're backwoodsmen, an' live back in the brakes. Fact is, all the rustlers an' outlaws hole up in these brakes, which are rough canyons runnin' down from the Mongollons. Rough they are, the hardest goin' in Arizona. It used to be Apache country."

"SO BURRIDGE palmed his debts off on me? What's the law in such cases?"

"Wal, I've knowed it to come up in court more'n once. An' the buyer had to settle. You see, Burridge's property wasn't really his to sell."

"I appreciate that. I should have taken time to inquire. But he struck me right."

"Shore. He did the same to me, an' I'm an old-timer."

"What in thunder will I do, Day? I don't mean about the liens. I'll have to settle them, soon as they are proven. But this deal shows up more complicated every day. How many cattle do I actually own? Where are they? How shall I go about safeguarding what I do own?"

"Son, the Lord himself couldn't answer them questions," replied the rancher, with his booming laugh. "But I reckon the case ain't so bad that we'll have to take to drink about it. I'll ride over with these boys I'm gettin' you, say, week to-day. Meanwhile, I'll do a lot of thinkin'. Probably by thet time Elam Hatt will have seen you. I heerd he was comin', so look out fer him. There'll be ranchers callin' on you, too, an' some of them will talk deals. Go slow. Don't offend, but don't go in anythin' without consultin' me. And my advice is, don't tell your wimmin-folks."

"But I should tell you my sister Hettie is in on this deal with me—"

"Thet big-eyed lass! Wal, wall! Thet lass—handsome an' rich! Golly, some cow-puncher is shore goin' to fall into heaven. I wish I was a youngster! Reckon as it is, I'll have to pick out the best feller heahaboos fer her."

"I'm advising you now," laughed Ben. "Don't try that with Hettie, if you want her to like you. But there's one more thing I—I nearly forgot," he added, with hesitation and change of tone. "You must know everybody in Arizona?"

"Lord no, son. Why, Arizona is 'most as big as the rest of the United States. But I'm well acquainted all through heah."

"Did you ever know or hear of a— a fellow who—who went by the name of— Nevada?"

Ben's voice shook a little, and that tremor was communicated poignantly to Hettie, who sat listening in her tent.

"Nevada?" queried Day thoughtfully. "Yes, Nevada. It was a nickname, of course. I never knew his—this fellow's other name."

"Humph. Somebody who did you a bad turn?"

"No, indeed. I—reckon it was the other way."

"Wal, I'm sorry. Nevada? No, I never heerd thet handle on a feller in my life. I've a good memory fer names. I've knowed a heap of Arizonies in my time, an' Texas Jacks, and Colorado some-thin's or other. But no Nevada!"

(To be continued)