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The Shepherd of Guadalupe

By Zane Grey

The Story Thus Far:

THE Forrests and Lundeens have always been enemies. The Lundeens, formerly very poor, are now very rich. Mr. Lundeen having, by various crooked methods, succeeded in getting Mr. Forrest's wealth and home, Cottonwoods, away from him.

Young Clifton Forrest, back very ill from the war, and Virginia Lundeen, not at all in sympathy with her father, are fast falling in love with each other though Cliff will not admit it. Clifton has been told by his doctors that he has only a month to live and he is now fighting for life against the odds of poverty and his parents' broken hearts. He is doing his best to manage a supply store for the natives around their little home in New Mexico.

Virginia's father is determined to have her marry Malpass, a half-breed, who seems to have control over Mr. Lundeen's property.

Mrs. Forrest is very fond of Virginia and willing to admit it. Mr. Forrest is bitter against her and her family. She is very kind to Cliff and tries to make the Forrests accept her income in partial payment of the money won unfairly from the Forrests by her father. Mr. Forrest refuses haughtily.

Virginia tells Cliff of her father's plans and he suggests that marrying someone else immediately would be a way out. She tells him that he is the only man she would be willing to marry. He is horrified at the idea of her throwing herself away on a shell of a man like him.

IV

BY JUNE the hideous ordeals Clifton had to invite and endure daily began appreciably to change. He discovered that by imperceptible degrees he had passed the climax of his trial for life.

June brought summer to Cottonwood Valley, and that meant it was hot in the sun, cool in the shade. He was alone one Sunday in the corner by the wall where Virginia had found him that unforgettable day, when he reached the definite conclusion that he would recover. He slipped away from the open, into a shady nook, where vines and brush grew thick under a giant cottonwood, and here he lay down hidden even from the eyes of birds.

The sunny, drowsy hours of that golden summer day passed by unnoticed. Like an Indian he communed with the visible things about him. There were intervals when the stream of his consciousness seemed suspended, and he had no thought at all. He felt, he heard, he saw, he smelled the physical objects of nature about him. The warm brown earth throbbed against his palms, the wind sang softly in the cottonwoods, the white clouds sailed across the azure sky, tipping the gray peaks, the sweet breath of sage filled the air.

That was the spell of enchantment which had transfixed him when intelligence, and not spirit, told him that he had not to bid farewell to the earth. The ghastly cold, mocking thing that had haunted him sleeping and waking folded its gray mantle and stole away. He was not to give up the sweetness of life, the beauty of nature, the strife with obstacles. The joy of nesting birds, the return of the swallows, the swoop of the eagle, the looming, calling mountains, the wind-swept range were still to be part of his experience.

But that night, in the dark little room, when the ecstasy of his soul became subdued by thought and reason, he confessed that he had thrown off his burden only to take on another. Virginia Lundeen had won him to hate hate and to love love. It had not been joy nor hope, but an unabatable fuel that had kept burning the fire of his wasted spirit.

One by one returned the Indians and

Mexicans who had visited Clifton's store during the past weeks to get the fair sale for some commodity and the small gift he never failed to hand out. There was no profit in the low price, to say nothing of an additional gift, but Clifton was gaining the confidence of the natives. He would never make a success as a trader, from the point of view of business. They had been cheated long enough. His generosity was not unmixed with the desire to prove the difference between a Forrest and a Lundeen. Every native on the range hated Lundeen for the tight rein he had held on them. Malpass, though he was employing many, was earning a harder repute. Little by little Clifton won his way into the hearts of these simple people.

It was from a vaquero who rode for Malpass that Clifton learned of the arrival of Virginia Lundeen's guests from the East. A fiesta was held to welcome them, the lights burned at Cottonwoods half the night, and strains of music floated down the valley on the soft night wind.

Clifton, thereafter going to and from his work, now happily without resting every few rods, did not want to see yet could not help seeing the visitors who regaled themselves upon Virginia's bounty.

The huge cars hummed by across the valley, down the road to Las Vegas, or back again, swiftly running from the dust they raised. Horseback riding appeared to be the chief delight, which was no wonder, considering the magnificent mounts of the Lundeen stables and the beautiful beckoning range with endless levels and vistas.

SEVERAL times each day a party of riders, never less than three couples, passed by Clifton's store, to peer curiously from their saddles. He always contrived to be inside and busy when they rode by. Once he saw Ethel, who waved a gay hand at him; and again he caught a glimpse of Virginia, superb on her shining black. And she looked straight ahead, with clear-cut, cold profile, as if the trading post of San Luis had ceased to exist.

Clifton knew intuitively that these merry visitors, keen to absorb all the West possible, would call at his store some day.

But he was wholly unprepared one morning to hear the blowing of bugles and to look out to see a tallyho rolling down the road. It appeared to be loaded with a crowd sportive in both dress and spirit.

"I'm in for it," muttered Clifton soberly. "But if they want to buy I'll slap the old prices on the goods. I'm no good Samaritan for that outfit."

He hoped the coach would pass by, but it halted opposite the store, and a gay company of young people poured out.

The first to enter was Ethel Wayne, very pleasing to the eye in her gay and colorful costume. She tripped in hurriedly, with anxious look, which changed to a bright smile of glad recognition.

"Clifton, I'm just delighted," she said. "You look, oh, so much better."

"Howdy, Ethel?" drawled Clifton, as

he took her proffered hand. "I'd sure been glad to see you—if you'd come alone."

She giggled and squeezed his hand, whispering: "Don't mind. Virginia and I framed this on our Eastern friends. So stick them good. They've got money to burn."

Then the little store became flooded with pretty girls in the latest of sport clothes and clean-faced young men in golf suits or white flannels. One of the latter said to Clifton, "We want a lot of souvenirs and a wagonload of truck to take on a camping trip."

"Help yourselves," replied Clifton, spreading his hands.

It was pleasant to watch them. Gaily they quarreled over Indian baskets, blankets, beadwork and silver ornaments. There were eight young women, not including Ethel and Virginia, who, if she had come with them, was still outside. Ethel was the only girl to notice Clifton, much to his relief; and every little while she would give him a bright look and a wink. It became manifest to Clifton that these Easterners had not been informed about him. The young men, except one, paid no attention to him; and presently this one, a rather pale, blond fellow of twenty-five, approached Clifton to offer a hand.

"How are you, Clifton Forrest?" he said. "Miss Lundeen told me to introduce myself. My name is Andrews."

CLIFTON did not need to be told that this man had been in the service, to his great detriment. Clifton greeted him. With a look and a handclasp they understood each other.

"I'm here on a visit for a few weeks," continued Andrews. "Then I'm going to Tucson. I'm not so well. The doctors want me to try a dry, warm climate."

"Gassed?" queried Clifton.

"Influenza. Then I had blood poisoning from shrapnel."

"You'll come around all right out here," said Clifton reassuringly. "The climate is wonderful."

"Do you know Arizona?"

"I used to. Same as here, only mor-

so. . . . Suppose you ride down alone some day and we'll have a chat."

"Thanks. I'd like to."

"Is Miss Lundeen with you?"

"Yes. She drove us down. Maybe she can't handle the reins! Say, Forrest, do you know this man Malpass? He was on the seat with her."

"Sure, I know Malpass. He used to be a vaquero here in San Luis."

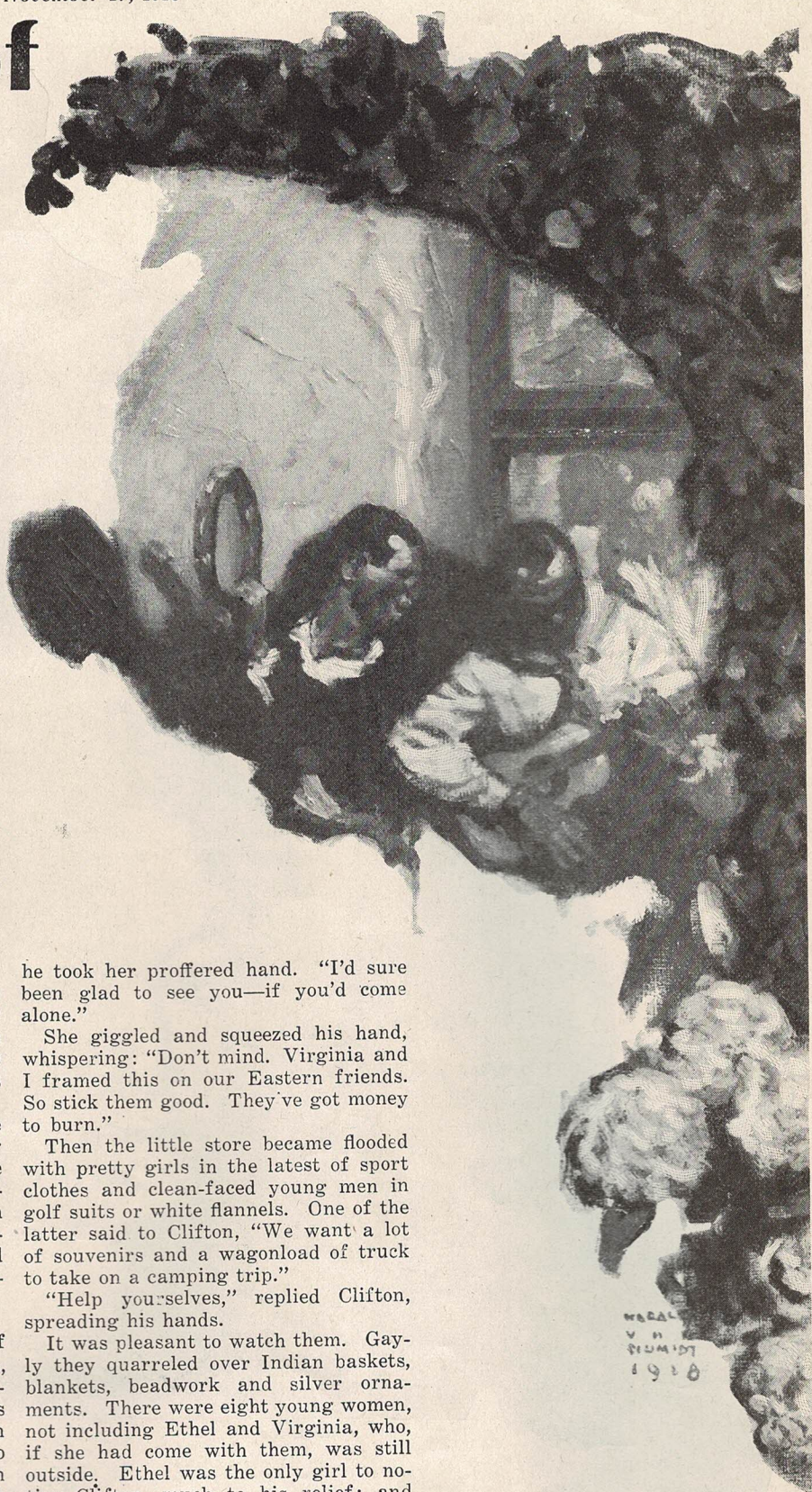
"Vaquero. What's that?"

"He was a Mexican cowboy."

"Is he part Mexican?" asked Andrews, quite surprised.

"It has always been rumored."

"Well! And now he's Mr. Lundeen's partner and a very evident choice for Virginia's hand. . . . I'll tell you, Forrest, that's a funny situation up there. But I don't want to gossip about my hostess. I don't know her, except as a charming, beautiful girl who went to school with my sister. By the way, I must introduce you to Helen. She's the tall blonde there, squabbling over that junk."





A fiesta was held to welcome them and all night long strains of music floated down the air

"She's sure stunning," returned Forrest admiringly.

"Virginia didn't say so, but I gathered somehow she and you were good friends."

"That was nice of her."

"But evidently Malpass does not share her friendship for you. I heard him objecting to our tallyho trip down here, and Mr. Lundeen sided with him. They had quite a little argument, aside, and to be frank, Virginia just about told them to go where it was hot."

Clifton laughed. "I wouldn't put it beyond her."

ANDREWS, evidently having caught his sister's eye, beckoned to her, and as she detached herself from the crowd and came forward expectantly, he said to Clifton in lower tone, "Don't spoil this now."

"Helen," he said, as she reached them, a warm-faced, blue-eyed young goddess, "I want you to meet a buddy of mine in France. Clifton Forrest! For-

rest, allow me to present my sister. You will observe she is one of the reasons why we went 'over there.'"

"Oh, Jack—how perfectly lovely! You didn't tell me. Virginia didn't either. . . . Mr. Forrest, I am most happy to meet you."

No doubt of the open sesame to her regard! Clifton could not restrain embarrassment, but it was certain he thrilled under the clasp of her hand. And just then Virginia entered to approach them and slip a gloved hand inside Miss Andrews' arm.

"Howdy, Cliff?" she drawled at Clifton, with the self-possession of intimacy.

"Howdy, Virginia?" returned Clifton, forced to play up to this subterfuge, or whatever was her bent. She seemed unfamiliar, though not in person. It was not the Virginia who had found him exhausted and helpless inside the wall that day. Bright color milled in her cheeks, and her eyes burned, which indications of anger were at strange vari-

ance with her cool manner and speech.

"Cliff, I thought I'd come in and give you a hunch," she said. "I might have known Helen would try to annex you. Beware of this blond creature, Cliff. She is sure death to convalescent soldiers."

"Virginia, what a thing to say!" expostulated Helen, blushing and reproachful. "Mr. Forrest, pray don't believe her. The truth is that soldiers, especially those who returned ill or injured, have been sure death to me."

Clifton laughed and said, "You look like beautiful life itself."

"Virginia, I've a notion that at the bottom of your wise crack there's a desire to annex Mr. Forrest yourself," returned Helen, with loving, shrewd satire, arch eyes keen on Virginia.

"Sure. I'm brazen about it."

"Well, you've got in ahead of me, but I'll give you a race, anyway," challenged Miss Andrews, with a sweet, speculative glance at Clifton. "You see, he was my brother's buddy in France."

"Helen! You don't say!" exclaimed Virginia, suddenly her sincere self again. "Clifton, is it true? You were friends over there? . . . Why, how splendid to meet out here!"

"Virginia, I—I don't quite remember Jack," replied Clifton, trying to lie to save Andrews. "But he says so. You know I lost my memory for nine months. And I guess it's not all come back yet."

"You didn't remember *me* on the ship. Or on the train," said Virginia, in a tone that might have meant anything.

"Then perhaps Jack is right. I had a lot of buddies—and some never came back," returned Clifton, dropping his head.

"Girls, you're getting in bad with me too," interposed Andrews.

"Jack, it might be idle chatter, and then again it mightn't," replied Virginia, enigmatically. "But, to be serious, I'd like you to see something of Clifton while you're visiting me. Will you?"

"Delighted. We've already spoken of it."

"And you too, Helen. But it's only square to warn you. In spite of college and France, Clifton is Western. You remember what you said when you saw my mountains and desert—my cottonwoods?"

"Assuredly I remember. I said, 'I love them.'"

"Very well. That is some evidence that you still possess a heart."

"And you don't want me to lose it?" queried Helen.

"On the contrary, I wish you would—to me, to my horses and cottonwoods: to everything Western, especially Clifton. . . . He and I too some day may need your friendship."

"Virginia, your devout wish is almost consummated," replied Helen, with a bewildering smile that included Clifton.

THEY were interrupted by a small whirlwind in the shape of Ethel Wayne.

"Help! Help! These Monday bargain shoppers are robbing me," she cried. "I had a lot of stuff laid out. And they're swiping it. Clifton, have you got a big Indian policeman round here?"

"No, but if you can't get your stuff back I've got some more under the counter," rejoined Clifton.

"I had some laid out too," added Helen. "Come, Jack, help me rescue it. I wouldn't be surprised if Calamity Jane and Deadwood Dick here would like to be alone a little."

The laughing trio moved away toward the mêlée.

"Clifton, is this offensive to you?" asked Virginia, almost timidly resting a gauntleted hand on his knee as he sat upon the counter looking down at her.

"Hardly, Virginia, I'm not exactly a—a boob," protested Clifton.

"But it's so easy to hurt you. Ethel and I put up this job. We're going to clean out your old store. But I didn't intend to come in. Not until I saw Helen Andrews beaming upon you. That wasn't in my program."

"I guess I'm far from being hurt. You're very kind. And they—"

"Clifton, isn't she just lovely?" interrupted Virginia. "Pure blond. You don't see one often that is natural. Men fall for her like—like a lot of tenpins."

"Small wonder."

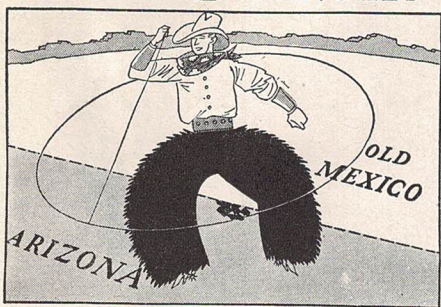
"Would you?" she flashed jealously.

"Gee, I did, pronto."

"Don't talk nonsense," rejoined Virginia sharply. "Suppose *she* fell in love with you. . . . Cliff, she's modern, but clean, fine, unspoiled. I'm crazy about her. And rich! Why, her father could buy mine out and call it street-car fare. Besides, some relative left her millions. . . . Suppose *she* were to fall in love with you?" (Continued on page 60)

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Shepherd of Guadaloupe

Continued from page 17

"Virginia, you're talking nonsense," said Clifton, amazed at her. "You say the queerest things."

"They wouldn't be queer to anyone but a—blockhead."

"Humph. I daresay. Well, since you insist on such a ridiculous presumption—if Miss Andrews were to fall in love with me, I'd return the compliment most darned pronto. I've been most gratefully content just to live. But in that event I'd pray to grow well and strong again, and handsome, if it were possible, and able to ride a horse like I used to, and everything."

"Clifton Forrest, pretty soon you will tumble off my pedestal," she warned him dubiously.

"Virginia, please don't torment me with your childishness," he said sadly. "There's no girl like her or you for Clifton Forrest."

"I'm not so sure about that," she retorted, subtly relaxing. "But—how glad I am you're better!"

JUST then Malpass entered, carefully groomed and immaculate as a riding master. Clifton guessed that he had been watching through the door. He had sloe-black, glittering eyes, a thin, lined face expressive of restrained power.

"Virginia, we are wasting time here," he said.

"You might be. We are not," replied Virginia.

"But if we are to go in to town we can't spend hours in this dump."

Apparently Clifton's presence was included in this comprehensive statement; certainly Malpass' gesture with his ivory-handled riding whip was all-embracing.

"I informed you one of the objects of this ride was to buy souvenirs and provisions," said Virginia curtly, the red spots dancing back in her cheeks.

"You did. I inform you in turn that better souvenirs can be found at Watrous or Las Vegas. As for provisions—I'll order them in town."

"We prefer to buy them here."

"We? You mean you. And your object is merely to help this poor beggar of a Forrest."

"Whatever my object it's none of your business," retorted Virginia, and now the red spots faded.

"Anything you want to do is my business," he replied, showing his white teeth.

"That's what you think. My father has got you walking in your sleep. You'll wake up presently."

Whereupon Virginia, with a light pressure of her hand, that still rested on Clifton's knee, vaulted up on the counter, and flipped her skirts comfortably if not modestly. Her action, if not her words, penetrated Malpass' courteous impatience, and black lightning leaped from his eyes. But he had control over tremendous passions.

"Virginia, it will be better for you if I continue to slumber," he said, and even his mockery was menace. "But about the provisions. As you persist, and time is precious, I'll buy this rather dingy stock and have it hauled up to the house. What is not fit we can throw to the chickens."

He surveyed the shelves, that indeed were not inspiring to a would-be purchaser. Then he fastened those glittering eyes upon Clifton.

"How much for this stock?"

Clifton stared coolly at Malpass. Dealing with men was something that held no confusion of mind for him.

"Well, señor—"

"Don't call me that," interrupted Malpass, with a flash of passion that showed where he was vulnerable. "You address me as Mr. Malpass."

"Is that so? I'm likely to call you something else pronto."

Clifton felt a slight pressure of Virginia's arm against his, and it had the effect for which it was probably intended.

"How much?" demanded Malpass, his skin turning ruddy.

"One thousand dollars—to you," returned Clifton, cool and quick.

Malpass produced new bills, that had seen but little handling, and, counting out a number, laid them on the counter. "I'll have this stuff hauled away at once. . . . Virginia, drag your friends out of here before I insult them."

"You couldn't insult my friends," rejoined Virginia, with incredible softness.

Malpass strode out, switching his whip.

"Cliff, isn't he the limit?" queried Virginia, turning.

"He's sure a high-class greaser," responded Clifton in disgust. "Maybe not so high, at that."

"But—I'm tickled pink. We put it over on Mr. Señor Malpass. . . . Say, didn't he flare up at that señor? . . . Clifton, we made him pay for the camp grub. That's just fine. Don't you dare say you won't take it."

"Take it? I should smile, I will. Why, it's a godsend. We're getting poorer—" Here he hastily checked himself to go on: "But I'm afraid I cheated him. This supply isn't worth half that much."

Ethel presented herself before them, packing an armful of beaded ornaments and a basketful of belts, buckles, silver buttons.

"How much, Mr. Storekeeper?" she asked, pretending to be a child.

"Nothing to you, Ethel."

"But, see here. I want to pay for these."

"Very well. They will cost you a kiss."

"I'll throw that in, after I pay for them," she retorted.

"It's a bargain," replied Clifton, in excitement that was not feigned. He produced a pencil and began to enumerate on a paper bag the prices of the different articles.

"Ethel, did you see Malpass bullying me?" asked Virginia.

"You bet I did. But for once he didn't seem to crush you."

"I COULD have boxed his sleek ears. . . . Ethel, don't you think it horrid and—cowardly of Clifton to let me be thrown away upon that man?"

"It's a crime. . . . Clifton, you won't stand for that, will you? When you're 'Ginia's only friend?'"

"You girls upset my figuring," replied Clifton imperturbably.

"Isn't he the cold-blooded brute?" queried Ethel, in good-humored awe.

"But I think I see through him."

"Thirty-six dollars and two bits," summed up Clifton, at last.

"Oh, so cheap! But what's the two bits?"

"Twenty-five cents."

"Here you are," counted out the girl blithely.

Clifton did not speak of what she had agreed to throw in.

"Help me up. 'Ginia's so long-legged she could step right up on this awful counter. . . . Aren't we having a jolly time? My kid sister and brother will be tickled with these presents, if I can part with them."



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"Ethel, we've bought Clifton's stock of provisions. Never had to pay a dollar!" said Virginia.

"How come? I hope you didn't let him give it to us."

"Malpass bought it. I drove him to it."

"Perfectly grand," cried Ethel, in ecstasy.

"Ethel, I dare you to call him Señor Malpass when he comes back."

"You're on. Never took a dare in my life. And that reminds me." She peered round in front of Clifton, mischievous and daring, to see if the others were watching. They were engrossed in the selection and rejection of souvenirs.

"Coast's clear." And she raised herself swiftly to kiss Clifton plump on the cheek. "There, my debt is paid. . . . You needn't blush. I don't do that, as a general thing."

Virginia bent a little to peer up into Clifton's face.

"Cliff, if I pick out a lot of these souvenirs will you let me pay you *all* in Ethel's good measure?" she asked, alluringly. "You see, I'm about broke. And it would enable me to get a lot of things I really can't afford in cash."

"I will not," declared Clifton dubiously.

Whereupon Virginia and Ethel left him, with intimate laughter and mysterious backward glances.

The upshot of this visit from Virginia and her friends was that Clifton was cleaned out of all his stores except tobacco and a few odd utensils and harness. In exchange he had a sum approaching \$2,000, a really staggering amount, considering that of late he had been grateful even for Mexican pennies. His mother would regard it as manna from heaven, and love Virginia Lundeen as the angel giver. Clifton wished they would hurry away so he could collect his wits.

AT LAST they had everything carried out, and were vacating to give room to the several Mexican laborers who had arrived. Malpass' familiarity with Spanish became evident. Miss Andrews, her lovely face flushed with the excitement and fun, tripped in evidently to say good-by. Virginia's impulse to follow manifestly had been prompted by her friend's action.

"Good-by, Mr. Forrest," said Helen, offering her hand. "It has been a pleasure to meet a comrade of Jack's—a real Westerner. He has promised that we shall see more of you."

"It would please me," replied Clifton heartily.

"We have played havoc with your store. You must load up again for another raid. . . . Good-by."

"Good-by, Helen of Troy. I hope you come back," replied Clifton, as much moved by Virginia's disturbing presence as Helen's graciousness.

Helen went out glowing.

"Cliff," spoke up Virginia, just as if she had not had a chance before, "you'd never see me if that girl was around."

"Of course I would, Virginia. I did."

"I believe you learned to flirt in France."

THE advent of Malpass saved Clifton a rather tantalizing retort, which was just as well not expressed. He saw at a glance that Malpass' suavity and coolness were only skin deep so far as anything relative to Virginia Lundeen was concerned.

"Go on out, Virginia. Your friends are in the coach, ready to leave. I'll follow, after I've made sure this store-keeper hands over all the goods I paid for."

"Just what do you mean by that?" asked Clifton.

"Take it any way you like," snapped Malpass.

"Well, I'm sorry, but I'm not quite up to lifting down that heavy canned fruit," returned Forrest, slowly feeling his way.

"You're thick-headed, Forrest," sneered Malpass. "You heard what I said. But if you take it that way, why, get a move on and help down with the goods."

"I'm not a peon," retorted Clifton hotly.

"You're a clerk, and a poor one at that."

"Señor, we understand each other. You *think* I'm a peon and I *know* you're a greaser."

"Clifton! Mr. Malpass!" cried Virginia, stepping between them.

Malpass swung the riding whip over her shoulder, staggering Clifton with a smart cut across the face, which brought blood. Then thrusting Virginia aside he struck Clifton, and following up an advantage so surprisingly easy he knocked Clifton down.

Virginia, in a swift frenzy that was partly fright, gave Malpass a stinging slap across the mouth.

"You yellow dog! To strike a crip-

(Continued on page 62)

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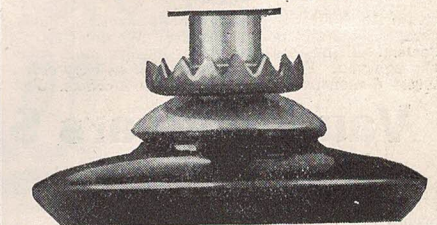
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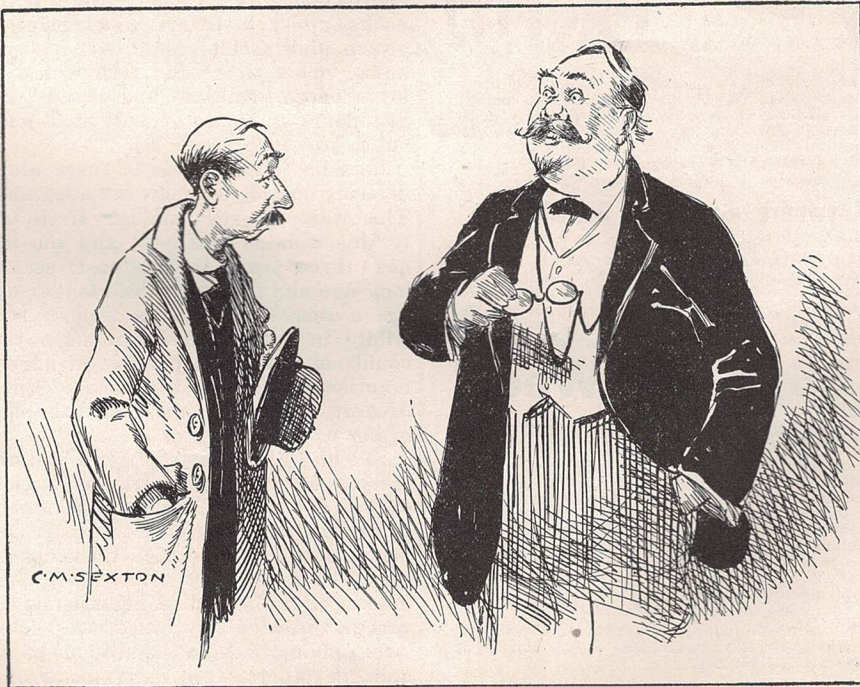
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every child



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"Perhaps I'm old-fashioned," she'll say to the doctor who pronounces her child physically 100% at a baby show, "but this health certificate means more to me than all the stock certificates in the world. If my baby grows up strong and well, I'm willing to leave it to him to make a career and fortune for himself.

"Already I'm teaching him the value of regular habits. Regular sleep, regular meals, regular functions. He's never once been off schedule, not even when he was cutting teeth or traveling to the country. I make sure of that by giving him Nujol regularly. He has his own bottle in the nursery.

"Nujol works so easily and naturally that it won't upset a baby under any conditions. It keeps everything functioning properly. It not only prevents any excess of body poisons (we all have them) from forming but aids in their removal. It is safe and sure. Just try Nujol for your baby. Give it to him regularly for the next three months. See if it doesn't make things much easier for both of you. See if he doesn't thrive on this new schedule (children themselves much prefer living by regular routine).

"A bottle of Nujol costs you no more than pink ribbons on the baby's bonnet. And

it's worth lots more to him. Try it. Certainly it could do no harm—for Nujol contains no drugs or medicine. Your drug-gist carries it."

If you're like other modern young mothers, you'll want to buy the large hospital size can of Nujol. And keep it right on the nursery table, along with the soap and cotton and other bath paraphernalia.

Here's another thing. Nurses are advising mothers to give their babies an oil rub with Nujol after the daily bath, instead of using powder. Just saturate some cotton with Nujol and rub it gently all over your baby's body. It keeps him from getting chapped and chafed. And leaves his skin as soft and smooth as velvet.

Use it when you change his clothes. When you bring him in from outdoors. Whenever his skin has been exposed to irritation.

Nujol was perfected by the Nujol Laboratories, 26 Broadway, New York. It is the best oil for external use because it never becomes rancid or makes clothes greasy. Sold in sealed packages only.

Shepherd of Guadalupe

Continued from page 61

pled soldier! Oh, how I despise you!" Clifton got up, though it was all he could do. "Malpass," he almost whispered, "beat it before I go for my gun."

The threat had the desired effect. Malpass, recovering from his ungovernable rage, leaped the counter and went out the back way.

"Go, Virginia, before Miss Williams or somebody comes back after you," whispered Clifton.

"He hurt—you," she returned, with quivering lips, and wiped the blood from the welt on his cheek.

"Not much. I'm all right—only excited and mad. Please go before—"

"Do you suppose I care what they see or think? . . . You're lying to me, Cliff. You're white—you're shaking."

"Well, I reckon that's natural," replied Forrest, pulling himself together. He had been laboring under half a fear that Malpass might return with a gun. More than one shooting scrape had been attributed to this fortune-elevated vaquero.

"Cliff, I'll go, but I must see you soon."

She was clinging to him.

"Virginia, you've lost your head. They'll see you! . . . There, Miss Andrews is at the door."

"I'm glad she saw, anyhow," replied Virginia, releasing her hold on him and stepping back. "Cliff, you're a wonderful fellow, but the biggest dunce I ever knew."

VIRGINIA was in camp with her friends, high up in a sylvan glade under the dome of old Baldy, and for the first time in weeks dared to approach happiness.

It was along toward the end of June and for that high altitude rather early in the season. The cold nights and frosty mornings, however, made the time ideal for camping.

At the lower end of the lake the outlet glided swiftly between brown banks, to glance over a fall and tumble with a roar into a purple gorge. Here the mountain slopes sheered away, showing the desert five thousand feet below on the other side of the range.

Of all Western views that Virginia treasured, here was her favorite. To attain it one had to climb to a ledge above the gorge. There were shady nooks under a dwarf pine, mats of brown pine needles and silver-flowered amber moss, a scene from which no lover of the solitude and beauty and grandeur of nature could turn without regret.

Selfishly Virginia went there alone, desiring humbly to renew her allegiance. This was, she recalled, her sixth trip to this isolated fastness; and the last one, three years in the past, seemed long ago and far away. No longer was she a school girl, but a woman now, wildly in love, with an abandon that could not have been possible in her romantic teens. Yet the hero of those dreamy, girlish years was still the hero of her womanhood.

She had slipped away from Ethel and Helen, who were the only friends close enough to think of her intimately. Ethel knew her secret, and Helen suspected it. Virginia loved them dearly, but she wanted to be alone, here, of all places. For the rest of her friends she was not particularly concerned. Some were exhausted from the arduous climb, and the others were in ecstasies over this ideal spot. Jake and Con, her own cowboys, were in charge, and they had efficient help.

Malpass had been left behind. Vir-

ginia had not spoken to him since his attack upon Clifton. She absolutely would not consider him in any capacity. A furious quarrel between her and her father, with Malpass present, had ended in the establishment of an armistice until such time as Virginia's guests, all except Ethel, would leave. So this camping trip, planned as a climax in the entertainment of Eastern friends she probably would never see again, bade fair to be a great success.

Virginia was tired, not so much physically as mentally. She threw herself down in the old, comfortable, mossy spot, that had not changed, and invited the spell of loneliness, of a murmuring melodious stream, of the purple depths, and lastly the vast, silent and illimitable desert far below.

HOW she had ached to be alone! And here she was far from camp, the white tents only specks above the shining lake, under the spread of the blue heavens. But it was the desert, on which at last she spent her reluctant gaze, that forced her into slow-realizing reverence. For she had grown in mind since she had watched there. She had seen great cities, states of endless farms, the gloomy, restless Atlantic, and the plains and mountains of foreign lands. Nothing like this!

She had come home—home, and she did not see where education and travel had been worth the labor, unless to prepare her the better for appreciation of the West.

It was not, then, that her favorite Western scene had changed, but that she, bringing incalculably more to it after years of absence, seemed changed herself, a throbbing, aching, dreaming, loving, fighting woman who must find herein the strength and endurance of nature, or perish in all that she held sacred to womanhood.

Virginia knew her father had sunk to the level of a common thief, in her eyes as culpable as the rustlers who used to be hanged on the cottonwoods. Silver mines and lands and mansions did not absolve a thief from the baseness accorded the cattle stealer. But money had power and it sanctioned crime. Jed Lundeen had more than ruined the Forrests; he had debased their fair repute. Not only had he stolen their property but also their good name!

Virginia's early training had been one of simple religion. For perhaps ten years back her mother had leaned more and more to her father's path, which, as he prospered by means that would not bear the white light of day, had been away from the church. Virginia's years at school had not been prolific of religious stabilizing, but on the other hand, she had not been greatly influenced by the modern atheism so prevalent in college. What faith she had went into abeyance, through disuse, and now in her extremity she felt the need of it.

So, through the purple depths and the colorful desert, and the infinite nothing of distance, she peered into her own soul. Long she gazed, with wide eyes, and then with eyes tight shut. She saw the same with both. She was now a woman of twenty-two, older really than her exact age in years. She wanted to live her own life, not because of selfishness or egotism but because of what she regarded as right. She wanted love and children, and if these meant happiness, as well as the nobler state for woman, she wanted that too.

She could not become the wife of August Malpass, not because she could

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not sacrifice herself for her father, to save him from the net in which he had entrapped himself, but because such marriage would be a sin. Likewise it would be dishonest if not actually sinful for her to shield her father and Malpass, should tangible evidences of their guilt accrue. Lastly, with all her heart and soul, with a growth from childhood, she loved Clifton Forrest, and only through him could the fulfillment of life come to her.

"He doesn't see it," she mused feeling a satisfaction in breathing her secret to the solitude. "He wouldn't believe it . . . yet how true it is!"

She had the illusion that her brooding, passionate gaze magnified all in its scope. And she saw the desert through her love, her strife with her father, the ordeal of her spirit, all inextricably involved in the single and paramount necessity of finding and adhering to the truth—which was the good, the right, and the faithful.

IT WAS afternoon when Virginia descended the trail, to skirt the lake and make her way back through the pines to camp.

She found Ethel lolling in a hammock, wrapped in a blanket.

"Oh," she gasped, starting up at sight of Virginia, her pretty eyes expanding, "you look strange; you're ripping! . . . You're the loveliest creature on earth. . . . You've got Helen beat there and back!"

"Why this extravagant mess of words?" inquired Virginia, smiling down upon this volatile bit of femininity.

"Ginia, there's a light on your face—what does the poet say?—'Never seen on land or sea.'"

"I've been over to a shrine. Tomorrow I shall take you there. Then you will not wonder. . . . Ethel, I have recovered something that I lost long ago."

"Now—you want to make me sad," responded Ethel plaintively. "But you can't. I just swear I'll revel in this lovely place. Didn't I use to rave about Colorado? But never again. This beats anything I ever saw, and, mind you, honey, I'm no tenderfoot from Noo Yawk. This is heaven. Paradise! . . . If Jack Andrews, or one of his friends—if any man made love to me here, even an Indian or a Mexican—I'd fall like a chunk of lead and be false to the nicest little sweetie in Denver."

"Well, I'm ashamed to hear you confess it. What's happened to you, anyway? . . . Why, you're barefooted. No stockings! . . . Ethel, what would your nice Denver sweetie say to this?"

"He'd be tickled pink," replied Ethel with a giggle. Then she grew suddenly

grave. "What happened to me? I'll tell you, old girl, I darn near drowned. I fell in the lake. Wow! Over my head! And I just froze. Cold? That water was like the way you treat Malpass. Con heard me yell and fished me out. In the nick of time, believe me. My clothes are drying over there by the camp fire. . . . Oh, you needn't look so horrified. I've got on my dressing gown. And I think you should show some distress."

"Well," ejaculated Virginia, sitting down, "I really want to laugh. You, Ethel Wayne, whom I boasted of as an old stager on the trail. What's become of my other tenderfeet?"

"The men are fishing, sure Mike—a lot we'll see of them!—but the girls are lolling around, just too happy for words. Virginia, the consensus of opinion, as I've snookily got it, is that you're the last thing in peaches. Sure, I always knew it, but I'm tipping off the Eastern angle. This is a swell outfit you've sprung on me, honey, but I must say they've got something on us Westerners. I like that Jack Andrews, and if I wasn't—There I go. Unstable as water, thou shalt not be true! . . . And I just love Helen Andrews."

"So I have observed."

"Goodness, 'Ginia, you're not jealous?"

"A little, on your account. A lot on Clifton's. . . . I'm a jealous cat, of Ethel."

"Say, why this humility all of a sudden? To stop kidding, I'll say you need never be jealous on my account. I adore you. I'm yours forever. . . . But in the case of Cliff I'm not so darn sure. You're carrying that Lundeen handicap. And, believe me, it's something to stagger under."

"MISS WAYNE, I am quite aware of that," replied Virginia, in mock hauteur.

"Helen Andrews likes Cliff," returned Ethel seriously, her brows knitted. "We oughtn't wonder at that. He's the most lovable chap, the handsomest, the greatest hero the war sent back to us. You know they've got his number in town now. They've found out what he did. . . . Well, it's quite natural for this rich and lovely lady to fall in love with him—good night!"

"Ethel, you mean I wouldn't have a show on earth?" asked Virginia tragically.

"No, nor in heaven either," sighed Ethel sacrilegiously.

"I hope I'm not so—so little that I couldn't be—glad for Cliff's sake," replied Virginia, a little tremulously. This matter-of-fact, down-to-earth talk of Ethel's was rather disconcerting, com-

(Continued on page 64)

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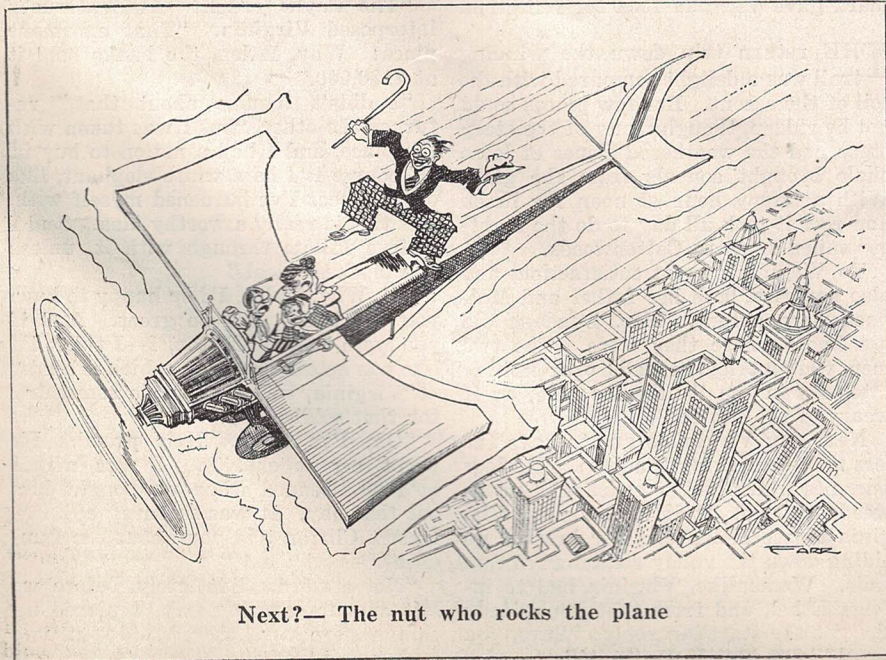
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Shepherd of Guadalupe

Continued from page 63

ing so suddenly after Virginia's vigil at her shrine on the heights.

"Maybe we're borrowing trouble," said Ethel. "Lord knows that's the way of lovers. Don't I know? . . . Helen has seen Cliff three times I know of since we bought out his store."

"Three times? I thought only two." "Reckon you missed the last, and I sure didn't have the nerve to tell you then. What with your father and that white-toothed Spanish galoot who's crazy about you I thought you had enough to worry along on. . . . Virginia, our fair Helen rode off alone Sunday afternoon. Down the valley! You can bet she went to see Cliff. They had a date. She didn't stay long, though it was sunset when she came back. . . . Now, sister, what you've got to grasp to your poor shuddering heart is this: Any man, much less our unfortunate soldier friend, would soon fall in love with Helen Andrews. Furthermore, she's just as likely to fall in love with him. The woods are full of such pretty happenings."

"Ethel darling, I—I could bear it because I want Clifton to have some reward for his sacrifices."

"Sure, you could. And you're a game sport. But that is only if it comes to the worst. Helen is no flirt. And Clifton is slow to like anybody. I'm sure we're safe yet. They're all leaving on July 1st. So it'd be just as well not to break camp here till June 29th. Perfectly skunky trick, but all's fair—you know. . . . And while we're up here we'd better plan how to throw a monkey wrench into that Malpass threshing machine."

"Ethel, you're a conscienceless, unscrupulous, terrible young woman. But oh, what would I do without you?"

Virginia spent seven idle dreaming days at Emerald Lake. Her friends, for the most part, were exceedingly active, appearing never to get enough of the wonderful sport the camp afforded. So for them the time fled by.

For Virginia, however, the days spread out long. Yet she was grateful for it. Affairs at Cottonwoods were so near a crisis that she was loath to return. Ethel's determination to find some loophole for Virginia was hopeful in itself, but so far nothing had come of it.

The twenty-ninth of June arrived all too soon for Virginia's guests. Many and wild were their encomiums. "I'll own this place if I have to buy the whole National Forest," declared Helen Andrews magnificently. Somehow this remark gave Virginia food for reflection.

THE return trip down the winding trail was a delight compared with the toil of the ascent. But few places could not be ridden, though many of the steep steps and the weathered slopes of loose shale brought squeals from the girls. With a happy hour at noon for lunch and rest it took all day to do the eighteen miles down to Cottonwoods.

To Virginia's great satisfaction, and also surprise, both her father and Malpass were absent. Mrs. Lundeen did not know where they were. The two men were at loggerheads over mining interests in the South, she said, as if weary of the subject.

Next day Virginia's guests gave far less time to packing than to the outdoor pursuits which had so endeared Cottonwoods to them. It did not surprise Virginia to see Helen and her brother going riding down the valley road toward San Luis. Womanlike, Virginia had to inform Ethel, and from that young lady she got the startling reply: "Sure, you should have beat Helen to it!"

It was still early in the afternoon when Virginia, opening her door in response to a tap, found herself confronted by Helen in riding habit, manifestly just from the saddle. A flush like an opal glow showed under her golden tan. Virginia caught her breath at the girl's blond loveliness.

"Hello, old dear, may I come in? I've something to tell you," said Helen.

"Of course. . . . Helen, you look serious."

"It is serious, though not for us. Are you alone? Where's Ethel?"

"She's in the library."

"VIRGINIA, I've some bad news. It has really distressed me," went on Helen, as Virginia led her to the window seat. "Jack and I rode down to see your friend Clifton. We found his store burned down. The interior was gutted and only a few crumbling walls left standing. We couldn't learn anything at San Luis, so we hurried back to Clifton's home. We went in and found him on the porch with his mother. She's a charming, gracious old lady. . . . Well, Clifton told us that he had restocked his store, spending nearly \$2,000, I think it was, for the supplies. That very night someone set fire to the building from the inside. Everything was destroyed."

"Oh, how unfortunate, and worse if someone did it!" burst out Virginia.

"Clifton is sure it could not have been accidental. There was nothing to catch fire inside. . . . Virginia, hasn't he enemies here?"

"I'm afraid he has," replied Virginia bitterly.

"You'll forgive me, old dear, won't you, for appearing inquisitive? I like this Clifton Forrest. Naturally, when I thought he'd been a buddy of Jack's in France, I was interested in him. But now I must confess that even though he and Jack have had no previous acquaintance I'm still keen about him. Surely I don't need to eulogize Clifton to you, but I want you to know that I think him one of the finest chaps I've ever met. . . . Jack offered to lend him money enough to rebuild and restock the little store, which we've learned the Forrests depend on for a living. But Clifton thanked Jack and said he couldn't accept it, because he could never pay it back. Then I made a suggestion. I asked Clifton if he would run the Payne ranch for me if I bought it. He—"

"The Payne ranch! At Watrous?" interposed Virginia. "That enormous place! Why, Helen, the banks hold it at \$180,000."

"I didn't inquire about that," returned the other, "but I was taken with the place, and I had a notion to buy it. Of course it'd be a white elephant, like other places I've burdened myself with. But this is really a worthy idea. And I believe I'll go through with it, unless you block the deal."

"I! Why, Helen, I'd be happy to have you out here. It'd be great. And if you were to help Clifton, I—I think I'd like you better than I do, which is a lot."

"Virginia, we've got to do something for that soldier boy."

"Oh, I've tried. He's proud. He won't accept charity. I was afraid he'd be offended when we bought him out that day. It was so barefaced. . . . Hasn't Clifton told you about the Lundeen-Forrest feud?"

"Not a word. But lately, before we left on our camping trip, I picked up things here and there, and put two and two together. Your father and

(To be continued next week)

EDITORIALS Page 66

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