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Edited by Herbert Kaufman

OCTOBER
1920

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Zane Grey's

Serial Now at Its Peak

The Wanderer of the Wasteland

Illustrations by W. Herbert Dunton

ADAM LAREY was learning the terrible lesson of the desert—the desert on which is staged the ordeal from which man emerges either man or weakling. There is no middle ground out there. After shooting his brother Guerd, in a quarrel over a Mexican girl, Adam plunged into the wilderness in search of death. Made delirious by hunger and thirst he was nearing the end when Dismukes, a gold miner, found him—the good Dismukes who came to the desert to find the gold that would carry him around the world, but who had found other things besides gold, as Adam had good reason to know.

Dismukes brought him back to life, restored his faith, started him on the way to find God, left him rations and a burro; then Dismukes went his way in quest of gold. Acting upon directions from Dismukes Adam was trying to find an Indian camp when the burro disappeared and with it most of the unfortunate wanderer's rations.

The tortures of hunger returned. For a time Adam was saved by his boyhood training; he made a sling-shot and killed birds and squirrels but after awhile the supply gave out and he began eating snakes, anything he could find to kill. He grew weaker and weaker. The desert had locked him in.

At last, driven to desperation, he battled with a huge rattlesnake; the smell of the blood from its wounds made him wilder and wilder but he was still too weak to strike the fatal blow. The reptile struck him in the face "with the stinging blow of a red hot iron. Then Adam fainted."

WHEN Adam recovered consciousness he imagined he was in a dream.

But a dragging, throbbing pain in his face seemed actually enough to discredit any illusions of slumber. It was shady where he lay or else his eyes were dimmed. Presently he made out that he reclined under one of the palm-thatched roofs.

"I've been moved!" he cried with a start. And that start, so full of pain and queer dragging sensations as of a weighted body, brought back memory to him. His mind whirled and darkened.

"I've—been—saved!" whispered Adam, and he grew dizzy. His eyes closed. Dim shapes seemed to float over the surface of his mind; and there were other strange answerings of his being to this singular deliverance.

Then he heard voices—some low, and others deep and guttural. Voices of Indians! All his wasted body quivered in the ecstasy of the truth of his salvation.

How strong the spirit of life in him! "I—I wasn't ready—to die," he whispered. Gleams of sunlight low down, slanting on the palm-leaves, turning them to gold, gave him the idea that the time was near sunset. In the corner of the hut stood jars and bags which had not been there before, and on the ground lay an Indian blanket.

A shadow crossed the sunlit gleams. An Indian girl entered. She had very dark skin and straight hair as black as night. Upon seeing Adam staring at her with wide-open eyes, she uttered a cry and ran out. A hubbub of low voices sounded outside the shack. Then a tall figure entered; it was that of an Indian, dressed in the ragged clothes of a white man. He was old, his dark bronze face like a hard wrinkled mask.

"Oella, I would marry you, cherish you as a white man cherishes his wife, but I have blood on my hands. I can only remember and love you always"

"How?" he asked, gruffly, as he bent over Adam. He had piercing black eyes.

"All right—good," replied Adam, trying to smile. He sensed kindness in this old Indian.

"White boy want dig gold—get lost—no grub—heap sick belly?" queried the Indian, putting a hand on Adam's flat abdomen.

"Yes—you bet," replied Adam.

"Hahh! Me Charley Jim—heap big medicine man. Me fix um. Snake bite no hurt. White boy sick bad—no heap grub—long time."

"All right—Charley Jim," replied Adam.

"Hahh!" Evidently this exclamation was Charley Jim's expression for good. He arose and backed away to the opening that appeared blocked by dark-skinned,



black-haired Indians. Then he pointed to one of them. Adam saw that he indicated the girl who had first come to him. She appeared very shy. The other Indians laughed at her. Adam gathered the impression that she had been the one who had saved him. This was something he wanted to be sure of.

"Charley Jim, who found me — who saved me from that rattlesnake?"

The old Indian understood Adam well enough. He grinned and pointed at the young girl, and pronounced a name that sounded to Adam like: "Oella."

"When? How long ago? How many days?" asked Adam.

Charley Jim held up three fingers, and with that he waved the other Indians from the opening and went out himself.

Adam was left to the bewildered thoughts of a tired and hazy mind. He had no strength at all, and the brief interview with its excitement, and exercise of voice, brought him near the verge of unconsciousness. He wavered amid dim shadows of ideas and thoughts.

When that condition passed, he awoke to dull leaden pain in his head.

The sunlit gleams vanished and the shades of evening made gloom around him. He smelled fragrant wood smoke, and some other odor, long unfamiliar, that brought a watery flow to his mouth and a prickling as of many needles. Then in the semi-darkness, one of the Indians entered and knelt beside him. Adam distinguished the face of the girl, Oella. She covered him with a blanket. Very gently she lifted his head, and moved her body so that it would support him. The lifting hurt Adam; he seemed to reel and sway, and a blackness covered his sight. The girl held him and put something warm and wet between his lips. She was trying to feed him with a stick or a wooden spoon. What a slow process! Adam rather repelled than assisted his nurse, but his antagonism was purely physical and involuntary. Whatever the food was it had no taste to him. The heat of it, however, and the soft wet sensation grew pleasant.

Then the girl laid him back, spread the blanket high, and left him.

Another day awakened Adam to the torture of reviving hunger and its gnawing pains, so severe that life seemed unwelcome. The hours were weary and endless. But next day was not so severe, and thereafter gradually he grew better, and was on the road to a slow recovery.

The Indians that had befriended Adam were of a family belonging to the Coahuilla tribe. Charley Jim appeared to be a chief of some degree, friendly toward the whites, and nomadic in spirit, as he wandered from oasis to oasis. He knew Dismukes, and told Adam that the prospector and he had found gold up this canyon. Charley Jim's family consisted of several squaws, some young men, two girls, of whom Oella was the younger, and a troop of tousle-haired children, wild as desert rats.

Adam learned from Charley Jim that the head of this canyon contained a thicket of mesquite trees, the beans of which the Indians prized as food. Also there were abundant willows and arrowweed, with which wood the Indians constructed their huge round basket-granaries. The women of the family pounded mesquite beans into meal or flour, which was dampened and put away for use.

Adam was so long weak, and dependent upon Oella, that when he did grow strong enough to help himself, the Indian girl's habit of waiting upon him and caring for him was hard to break. She seemed to take it for granted that she was to go on looking after him; and the fineness and sensitiveness of her, with the strong sense of her delight in serving him, made it impossible for Adam to offend her. This Indian girl was a revelation. She

was shy and reserved, seldom spoke, and always maintained before him a simplicity, almost a humility, as of servant to master. With acquaintance, too, the still, dark, impassive face of her had become attractive to look at, especially her large black inscrutable eyes, soft as desert midnight. They watched Adam at times when she imagined he was unaware of her scrutiny, and the light of them then pleased Adam, and perturbed him also, reminding him of what an old aunt had told him once: "Adam, my boy, women will always love you!"

He began to teach Oella his language and to learn hers. The girl was quick to learn, and could twist her tongue round his words better than he could round hers. Moreover she learned quickly anything he cared to teach her; and naturally even in the desert there were customs into which Adam preferred to introduce something of the white man's way. Indians were slovenly and dirty, and Adam changed this in Oella's case.

One day, when the summer was waning, and Adam was getting about on his feet, still a gaunt and stalking shadow of his former self, but gaining faster, the old Indian chief said:

"White man heap strong — ride — go away soon?"

"No, Charley Jim, I want stay here," replied Adam.

"Hahh!" replied the Indian, nodding.

"Me live here — work with Indian. White man no home — no people. He like Indian. He work — hunt meat for Indian."

"Heap sheep," replied Charley Jim, with a slow expressive wave of his hand toward the mountain peaks. His eyes lighted up with evident satisfaction at the possibilities of Adam's proposal.

"Charley Jim take white man's money — send to freight post for gun, shells, clothes, flour, bacon — many things white man need?"

The Indian took the money with grave comprehension, and also shook the hand Adam offered. It seemed settled that Adam had found a refuge and a home in the desert.

The Indian boys who rode away to the freighting post on the river were two weeks in returning. Adam guessed the nature of the trip from the appearance of the burros and packs. Nothing was missing, however, from the articles and supplies that Adam had ordered. This was remarkable in two ways — that the Indians should remember all he had designated, and that they should pack it all without touching any of the food. Thus Adam had his first proof of Indian honesty. To celebrate the return of the boys Adam suggested a feast, and that he would bake the bread and cook the bacon. Feast indeed it was. Oella took as by right the seat of honor next to him. On this occasion Adam finally got the wild little half-naked dusky children to come to him. They could not resist sweets, and so through their animal instincts Adam won what he had been unable to win by kindness and interest.

A shining new rifle, a Winchester .44, was the cynosure of all eyes in that Indian encampment. When Adam took it out to practise, the whole family crowded around to watch, with the intense interest of primitive people who marvelled at the white man's weapon. Only the little children ran from the sharp reports of the rifle, but they soon lost their fear. Whenever Adam made a good shot it was Oella who showed pride where the others indicated only their wonder.

Thus the days of simplicity slipped by, every one of which now added to Adam's fast returning strength. Flour and bacon quickly built up his reduced weight; and as for rice and dried fruits — they were so delicious to Adam that he feared it would not be a great while before he must needs send for more.

The hot summer became a season of the past. The withering winds ceased to blow. In the early autumn days Adam began his hunting. One gray dawn, the chief and Adam rode out on the desert to go to a place where game abounded. They rode till sunrise, and halted at a point opposite a canyon north of the oasis, and one which, from the green thickets, Adam judged must contain water. Here they dismounted and tied their mustangs.

Charley Jim led the way, keeping behind a fringe of mesquite, out to a gray expanse of desert, billowy and beautiful in the ruddy sunlight. They crawled through sage to the height of a low ridge, and from here the chief espied game. He pointed down a long gray slope, but Adam could see only a

monotonous beauty, spotted by large tufts of sage and here and there a cactus. Then the Indian took Adam's sombrero, and the two scarfs he had, one red and one blue, and tied them round the hat, which he elevated upon a stick. After that he bent his falcon gaze on the slope. Adam likewise gazed, with infinite curiosity, thrill, and expectation.

"Hahh!" grunted Charley Jim, presently, and his sinewy dark hand clutched Adam. Far down vague gray spots seemed to move. Adam strained his eyes. Animals of some kind were moving slowly in his direction. It seemed a long time till they approached close enough to distinguish their species. "Antelope, by jiminy!" ejaculated Adam, in excitement.

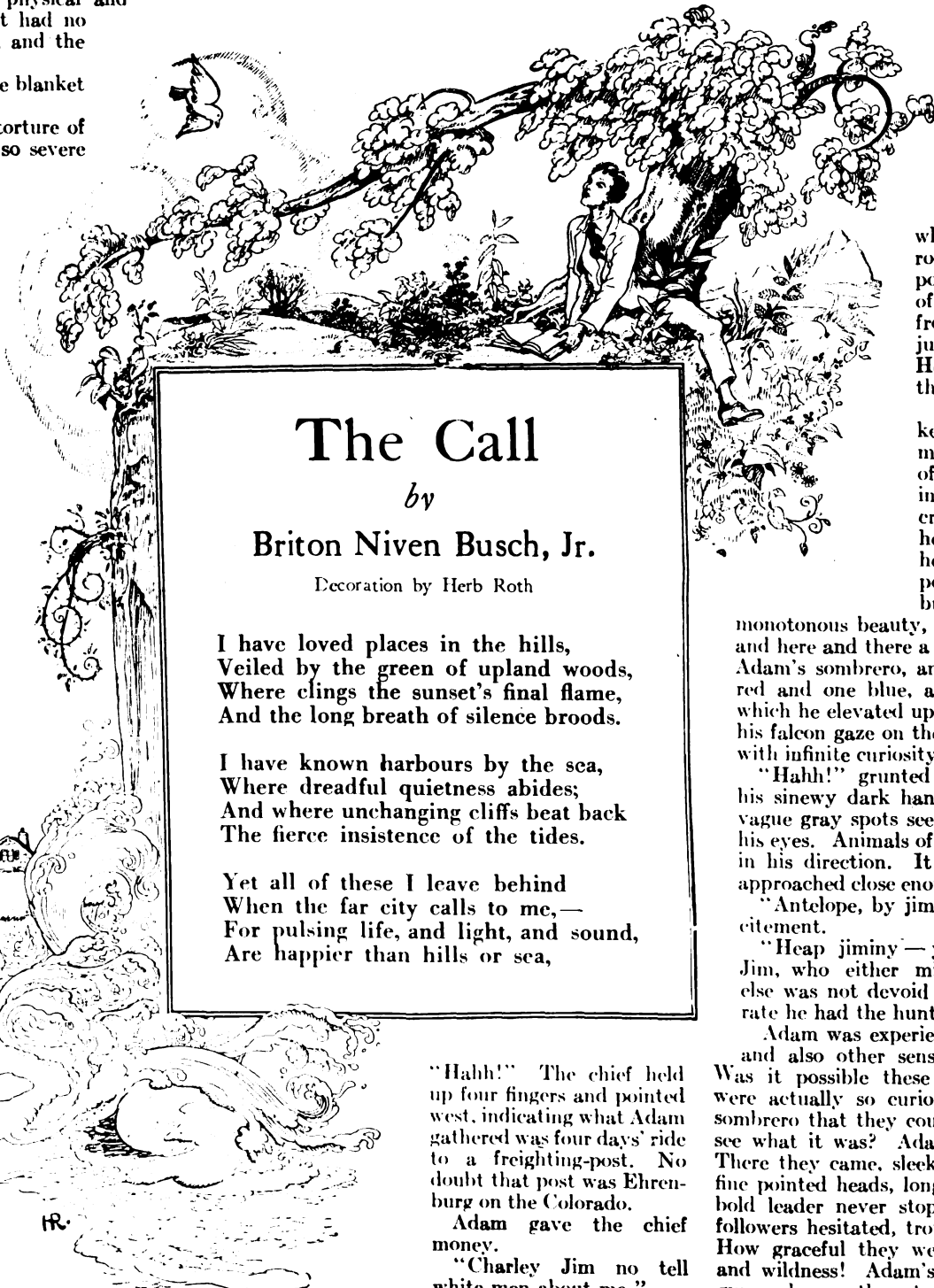
"Heap jiminy — you bet!" responded Charley Jim, who either misinterpreted Adam's words or else was not devoid of a sense of humor. At any rate he had the hunter's keen delight.

Adam was experiencing that thrill to its utmost, and also other sensations of wonder and amazement. Was it possible these wild-looking desert creatures were actually so curious about the brightly decked sombrero that they could not resist approaching it to see what it was? Adam could not doubt the truth. There they came, sleek, alert, deer-like animals, with fine pointed heads, long ears, and white rumps. The bold leader never stopped at all. But some of his followers hesitated, trotted to and fro, then came on. How graceful they were! How suggestive of speed and wildness! Adam's finger itched to shoot off the gun and scare them to safety. "Fine hunter, I am!"

"Hahh!" The chief held up four fingers and pointed west, indicating what Adam gathered was four days' ride to a freighting-post. No doubt that post was Ehrenburg on the Colorado.

Adam gave the chief money.

"Charley Jim no tell white men about me."



The Call

by

Briton Niven Busch, Jr.

Decoration by Herb Roth

I have loved places in the hills,
Veiled by the green of upland woods,
Where clings the sunset's final flame,
And the long breath of silence broods.

I have known harbours by the sea,
Where dreadful quietness abides;
And where unchanging cliffs beat back
The fierce insistence of the tides.

Yet all of these I leave behind
When the far city calls to me,—
For pulsing life, and light, and sound,
Are happier than hills or sea,

he muttered. "This is murder. . . . Why on earth does a man have to eat meat!"

Soon, however, all of Adam's sensations were blended in a thrilling warmth of excitement. The antelope were already within range, and had it not been for Charley Jim's warning hand Adam would not have been able to resist the temptation to fire. Perhaps he would have missed then, for he certainly shook in every muscle, as a man with the ague. Adam forced himself to get the better of this spell of nerves.

"Heap soon!" whispered Charley Jim, relaxing the pressure of his hand on Adam. The leader approached to within fifty feet, with several other antelope close behind, when the Indian whistled. Like statues they became. Then Adam fired.

The leader fell, and also one of those behind him. The others flashed into gray speeding shapes, with rumps darting white; and Adam could only stare in admiring wonder at their incomparable swiftness.

"Hah-h!" ejaculated the chief, in admiration. "White man heap hunter — one shoot — two bucks. Him eye like eagle!"

Thus did a lucky shot by Adam, killing two antelope when he had aimed at only one, initiate him into his hunting on the desert, and win for him the Indian sobriquet of Eagle.

And so began Adam's desert education. He had keen appreciation of his good fortune in his teacher. The Coahuilla chief had been born on that desert and he must have been nearly sixty years old. As a hunter he had the eye of a mountain sheep, the ear of a deer, the nose of a wolf. He had been raised upon meat. He loved the stalking of game. Thus Adam, through this old Indian's senses, and long experience, and savage skill, began to see the life of the desert.

In those wonderful autumn days Adam learned that the antelope could go long without water, that nature had endowed him with great speed to escape the wolves and cats of the desert, that from his prominent eyes he could see in any direction, that his coloring was the protective gray of the sage plains.

He learned that the lizard could change its color like the chameleon, adapting itself to the color of the rock upon which it basked in the sun.

He learned that the gray desert wolf was a king of wolves, living high in the mountains, and coming down to the flats; and there, by reason of his wonderfully developed strength and speed, chasing and killing his prey in the open.

He learned that the coyote was an eater of carrion, of rabbits and rats, of bird's eggs, of mesquite beans, of anything that happened to come its way — a gray, skulking, cunning beast, cowardly as the wolf was brave, able like the antelope and the jack-rabbit to live without water, and best adapted of all beasts to the desert.

Adam learned about the desert ants, the kangaroo rats, the trade-rats, the horned toads, the lizards, the snakes, the spiders, the bees, the wasps — the way they lived and what they lived upon and what lived upon them. How marvelously nature adapted them to their desert environment, each perfect, each in his place, each fierce and self-sufficient, each fulfilling his mysterious destiny of sacrificing his individual life to the survival of his species!

The days passed, with ruddy sunrises, white glaring solemn noons, and golden sunsets. The simplicity and violence of life on the desert passed into Adam's

being. The greatness of stalking game came to him when the Indian chief took him to the heights after bighorn sheep; but it was not the hunting and killing of this wariest and finest of wild beasts, wonderful as it was, that constituted for Adam something great. It was the glory of the mountain heights. All his life he had dreamed of high places, those to which he could climb physically, and those that he aspired to spiritually. Lost indeed were hopes of the latter, but of the former he had all-satisfying need of fulfilment. Adam dated his changed soul from the day he first conquered the heights. There, on top of the Chocolate Range, his keen sight, guided by the desert eyes of the old Indian, ranged afar over the gray valleys and red

ranges to the Rio Colorado, down the dim wandering line of which he gazed, to see at last Picacho, a dark, purple mass above the horizon. From the moment Adam espied this mountain, he suffered a return of memory, and a sleepless and eternal remorse. The terrible past came back to him; never again, he divined, to fade while life lasted.

The days passed into months. Far to the north the dominating peaks of San Jacinto and San Geronio took on the pure white caps of snow, that slowly spread as the days passed, down the rugged slopes. Winter abided up there. But on the tops of the Chocolate and Chuck-Walla ranges no snow fell, although the winter wind sometimes blew cold and bleak. Adam loved the wind of the heights. How cold and pure, untainted by dust or life or use! He grew to have the stride of a mountaineer. And the days passed until that one came in which the old Indian chief let Adam hunt alone. "Go, Eagle!" he said, with sorrow for his years and pride in the youth of his white friend. "Go!" And the slow gestures of his long arms were as the sailing movement of the wings of an eagle.

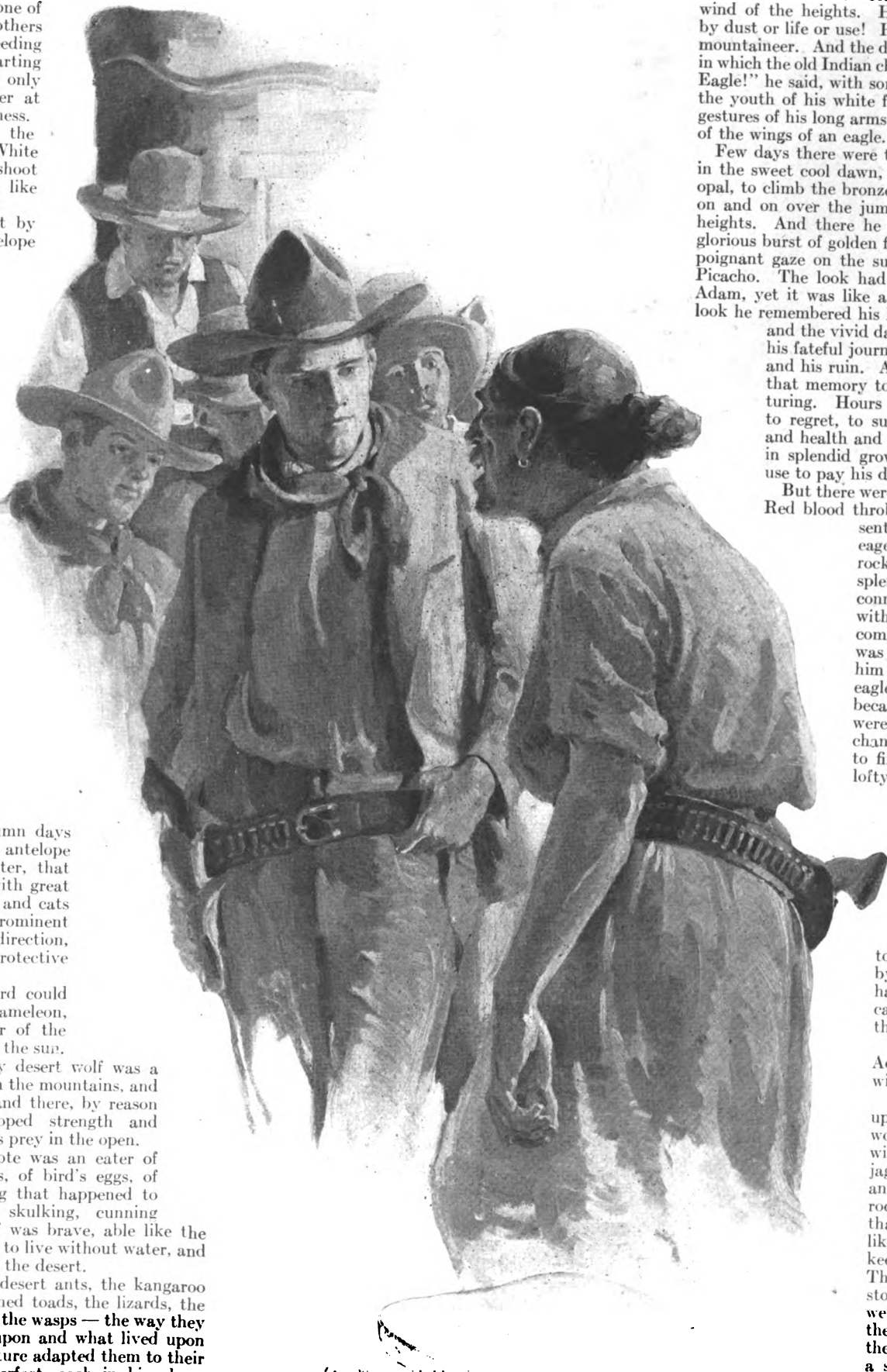
Few days there were that did not see Adam go out in the sweet cool dawn, when the east glowed like an opal, to climb the bronze slope, sure-footed as a goat, on and on over the jumble of weathered rock to the heights. And there he would face the east with its glorious burst of golden fire, and spend the last of that poignant gaze on the sunrise — crowned glory of old Picacho. The look had the meaning of a prayer to Adam, yet it was like a blade in his heart. In that look he remembered his home, his mother, his brother and the vivid days of play and love and hope, his fateful journey west, his fall and his crime and his ruin. Alone on the heights he forced that memory to be ever more vivid and torturing. Hours he concentrated to remorse, to regret, to suffering, to punishment. Life and health and strength had returned to him in splendid growing measure which he must use to pay his debt.

But there were other hours. He was young. Red blood throbbed in his veins, and action sent that blood in a flame over his eager body. To stride along the rocky heights was something splendid. How free — alone! It connected Adam's present hour with a remote past he could not comprehend. He loved it. He was proud that the Indians called him Eagle. For to watch the eagles in their magnificent flights became a passion with him. There were moments when he longed to change his life to that of an eagle, to find a mate and a nest on a lofty crag.

Here on the heights Adam was again visited by that strange sensation, inexplicable and illusive and fast-fleeting, which had been born in him one lonely hour in the desert below. Dismukes had told him how men were lured by the desert and how they all had their convictions as to its cause, and how they missed the infinite truth.

"It will come to me!" cried Adam, as he face the cool winds.

Stalking mountain sheep upon the mighty slopes was work to make a man. It was a wild and perilous region of jagged ridges and bare slants and loose slopes of weathered rocks. The eyes of the sheep stood out on the head as if it were the half of a pear, so that there was hardly an angle of the compass toward which a sheep could not see. Like the antelope, mountain sheep were curious and could be lured by a bright color and thereby killed. But Adam learned to abhor this method. He pitted his sight and his strength (Continued on page 43)



Adam stared into a big red eye that seemed a window of hell. Where the other eye should have been showed a hideous hole. "Are you a woman or a man?" queried Adam, with cool deliberation

how Angela Quayle had come by her name. Was it a stage name only?

Well, her real name was Angela Priestly, but Quayle was her mother's maiden name.

Where had they come from?

Her mother had come from England, but she had married in this country.

He began to show some excitement. "Isn't she Manx? Didn't she come from the Isle of Man?"

"Why?"

"Well," Bob said, "if she did, I'll bet you're relatives of ours."

She smiled. "It wouldn't do me any good if we were, would it?"

"Yes," he answered unexpectedly. "It might. Find out for me, will you? I mean it."

"Oh, very well," she said.

She made no more of it than that, and I did not hear Bob refer to the matter again; but when we had taken the girls to their addresses and were driving home together in a hansom—which was Bob's constant ideal of bachelor luxury—I asked him whether he really thought she might be a relative, and he said: "I don't know. I hope so. I like her, don't you?"

I liked her well enough.

"Rotten shame," he said. "A girl like that working in the chorus. I'll bet she's had a tough time."

I regretted he'd told her I was a playwright.

"Why?"

"Why! Because she's been as silent about it as if you'd told her—I don't know what!"

Bob laughed. "She was probably afraid you'd pull a manuscript out of your pocket and try to read her a first act."

It seemed to him a good joke. When he saw that I was really surly about it, he promised: "The next time I see her, I'll tell her the truth."

That incident had its consequences also.

He did not see her again during my visit, and he said nothing about her when he rejoined me in our classes at the university. If I knew that he was corresponding with her, it made so little impression on me that I have forgotten it. I was busy trying to prepare myself for the approaching doomsday of examinations. He announced suddenly that he was done with exams, with college, with the whole silly cram that was called education. I did not connect her with his decision. I supposed that it was simply the revolt of the idle rich against intellectual labor. He was more than usually restless, impatient, contemptuous and unhappy. He came to me in the library one sunny morning. "Good-bye," he said. "I'm going. I'm packed." And he said it loudly, so as to show his scorn for the regulations that required silence in the reading-room.

Several students near us turned and hissed "Ssh!" angrily. He invited them to mind their own driving business, in a voice

that was audible to the whole world. All the free spirits in the neighborhood accepted that as a challenge to an interchange of insults. An indignant hubbub arose. The desk-clerk rapped in vain for order. I hurried Bob out to the hall, through a small riot of cat-calls and hisses, to which he kept replying in spite of my attempts to hush him as he went. We were overtaken at the door by an angry attendant with a summons to the librarian's office. Bob replied that the librarian could go to bottomless perdition, as far as he was concerned—and walked out. It was not so simple a situation for me. I had an uncomfortable half-hour trying to clear myself somewhat without putting all the blame on Bob. I escaped with a week's suspension from the privileges of the library, and hurried off to Bob's room.

He had gone.

He wrote apologetically from the train and again when he reached New York, but I was too busy to reply, and I was also glad to have him off my mind. When the exams were over, I had problems of my own to face. In the silence that came between us, I got no hint of the events that were preparing.

THEN he wrote reminding me of our conversations about the impossibility of making a living as a writer in Canada, and inviting me to try a preliminary attack on New York from the hospitality of his rooms. "Have something important to tell you," he explained. "Very important. Need your advice." New York, however, had frightened me; and even when his mother wrote, obviously at his instigation, I shivered in reluctant refusal, and hung back.

There was another long silence. I spent part of it day-dreaming scenes in which I bluffed a Park Row editor into giving me a summer try-out in his city-room. I did not succeed in making the scenes quite credible. Bob wrote that he was in trouble and needed my aid. That settled it. I decided that I would not go; that I had troubles enough where I was. And had triumphed over temptation in this decision—and convinced myself of my essential strength of character—when Mrs. Quayle wired, "Please come. He needs you." Naturally I packed my trunk and went at once.

Bob met me in the ferry-house at Twenty-third Street. In the cab he told me that he intended to marry Angela Quayle. And while I was still in a confusion of doubtful congratulations, he announced that P. Q.'s father, who had died at sea, and Angela's grandmother, who had been abandoned on the Isle of Man, were husband and wife. And when I objected that he could hardly marry his father's niece, he said coldly: "I'm not his son. I've known it for years." (The conclusion of "Peter Quayle" will appear in McClure's for November.)

The Wanderer of the Wasteland

[Continued from page 29]

and endurance against those of the sheep. In this way he magnified the game of hunting. His exhaustion and pain and peril he welcomed as lessons to the end that his knowledge and achievement must be in a measure what Dismukes might have respected. Failure to Adam was nothing but a spur to renewed endeavor.

The days passed into months. Summer came again. Time did not mean anything to the desert, though it worked so patiently and ceaselessly in its infinite details. The desert might have worked for eternity.

And there came a time when the Indian showed his real nature. Two years and more the old chief had taught Adam, had studied him with desert eyes. Then, in the spring, Charley Jim packed a couple of burros, and bidding Adam follow with his rifle he led the way out upon what Adam felt was a mysterious journey. The chief wound up the canyon to its source, climbed over the rugged pass down into another desert valley, and into the wild recesses of the Chuck-Wallas. He penetrated the heart of this rough range, to a canyon that had no outlet. It was a walled valley, difficult of access, with an oasis at the head, and a long meandering line of greenbrush down the middle.

Adam gathered that the Indian had

brought Dismukes here. "White man gold-mad," said the chief. "No happy, little gold. Want dig all—heap hog—damn fool!"

So Charley Jim characterized Dismukes. Evidently there had been some just cause, which he did not explain, for his bringing Dismukes into this hidden canyon. And also there was some significance in his bringing Adam there. Many had been the rewards of Charley Jim and his family for saving and succoring Adam. They had lived upon meat and flour and bacon; they had been given many utensils and weapons that, from time to time, Adam had ordered from the freighting-posts.

"Indian show Eagle heap gold," said Charley Jim. In the dry sand and gravel of this wash Adam found gold. The discovery gave him a wonderful thrill. But it did not drive him mad. Adam divined in the dark impassive face of his guide something of the Indian's contempt for a white man's frenzy over gold. The Indians knew where to find gold, yet seldom did they dig it, and when they did, they took only a little to the freighting-posts with which to buy necessities. Adam wondered at this.

"Charley Jim, why you no dig heap gold?" he asked.

The Indian's slow reply embodied two reasons; one that he did not need gold, and another that if the Indians were to take



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large quantities of it to the posts they would be followed by white men, and soon the desert would no longer be home.

Adam had learned from the Mexicans at Picacho how to dry wash for gold. This was hard tedious work and not to Adam's liking. But he persisted and toiled at it long enough to get a small bagful and to know that whenever he needed gold he could, like an Indian, come there to get it. Prospecting for gold, washing for gold, anything concerning gold brought gloomily back to Adam the memory of how he had happened to come west.

It developed that this mountain-shadowed valley held something of keener interest for Adam than the glittering sands. And this was the pair of camels Dismukes had talked about. At first sight of the huge shaggy tawny hump-backed beasts of burden Adam could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes. The Indian showed no surprise. When Adam approached the camels they moved away, but they did not appear wild. He conceived the idea of remaining there in the valley for a while to see if it was possible to carry out the plans Dismukes had declared feasible.

HE succeeded. These great beasts had been born in captivity. The Indian found no difficulty in approaching them, and perhaps this was owing to his dark skin, like that of an Arab. Then when the camels learned that Adam meant them no harm, they evinced no more fear of him. Adam taught himself to ride them, which achievement he considered equal to packing a sheep down the mountain-side.

When the day came to leave, Adam relinquished any idea he might have had of taking the camels to the Indian encampment. Such a trip would be hard on them, and at that time, of no especial good to him. They were safe here in this lonely valley, and probably would never leave it of their own accord. If he ever found strange and urgent need of them, he would no doubt find them here years hence.

Oella had grown into a tall handsome young woman, a fact that the braves of the Coahuilla tribe were not slow to appreciate. They paid court to Oella. But she would have none of their attentions. Charley Jim was a chief who exacted obedience from his family, but, though he seemed concerned as to Oella's prospects, and favorably inclined toward several of the young braves, he did not force her against her will.

These developments worried Adam more than they did any one else. Oella had no eyes for any man but him. She seemed more reserved than when she was a young girl; still Adam sensed her preference. She had never ceased to serve him. At this time Adam, concerning himself about Oella's future, and fearful lest he unwittingly might stand in her light, undertook to talk to her about her suitors, especially one well-favored young brave who appeared honest and industrious. Adam could converse now with Oella in the language that she had taught him; and he told her what he considered best for her happiness and the duty she owed her people. What a strange, proud, inscrutable glance she gave him from her great black eyes!

"Oella will never be the wife of an Indian." "Why—Why?" stammered Adam, amazed and aghast at her answer.

But she dropped her head and took refuge in the silence of her race. Adam did not need her spoken answer. It showed all too clearly in the sad dignity and aloofness of her bowed head. He left her and went out to be alone, distressed in mind. It must be on his account that Oella said she would never marry one of her race. He well knew how dark-skinned Mexican and Indian women conceived strange passions for white men; but there had never been anything on Oella's part to indicate such a catastrophe. He had been kind, generous, grateful. But still, on her side, as shy, silent, aloof as she had always been, there remained in mute strong evidence to sting Adam's conscience the fact that she had saved his life, nursed him back to health, and served him with singular unselfish loyalty for three years. He could never pay his debt.

Charley Jim did not abide long with his people after Oella's refusal of some of the best young men of the tribe. Once more he led his family out upon the trails, this time crossing the back-bone of San Jacinto Mountain; then traveling on to the Cottonwood Mountains, where Adam and the sons put in a hard month hunting.

No time so swiftly fleeting as days and

nights out in new and strange places of the desert! Adam kept track of time by the coming and going of the white crowns of snow on the peaks.

Like coming home was it to get back to the oasis in the canyon of the Chocolate Range. Adam loved the scene of his torture. Every stone, every tree, was a familiar friend, and seemed to whisper welcome to him. Here also had passed the long, long months of mental anguish.

Best of all, out there reached the gray endless expanse of desert; and there loomed the lofty bare heights of rock which, when he scaled them, seemed to welcome him with sweet cold winds in his face.

Somewhere in the shadow of that domed and turreted peak lay the grave of his brother Guerd.

"I'll go back some day!" whispered Adam, and the spoken words seemed the birth of a long-germinating idea. Picacho haunted him. It called him. It was the place that had given the gray color and life to his destiny. And suddenly into his memory flashed an image of Margarita. Poor frail dusky-eyed girl! She had been but the instrument of his doom. Long ago he had forgiven her. But memory of her hurt.

At sunset the old chief came to Adam, sombre and grave, but with kindness tempering the seriousness of his aspect.

"White man, you are of the brood of the eagle. Your heart is the heart of an Indian. Take my daughter Oella as your wife."

Long had Adam feared this blow, and now it had fallen.

"No, chief, the white man cannot marry Oella. He has blood upon his hands—a price on his head. Some day—he might have to hang for his crime. He cannot be dishonest with the Indian girl who saved him."

Perhaps the chief had expected that reply, but his inscrutable face showed no feeling. He made one of his slow impressive gestures—a wave of his hand; and it meant that Adam was to go.

Adam dropped his head. That decree was irrevocable, and he knew it was just. While he packed for a long journey, twilight stole down upon the Indian encampment. Adam knew, when he faced Oella in the shadow of the palms, that she had been told. Was this the Indian maiden who had been so shy, so strange? No—this seemed a woman of full heaving breast, whose strong dark face grew strained, whose magnificent eyes, level and piercing, searched his soul. How blind he had been! All about her seemed eloquent of woman's love. His heart beat with quick heavy throbs.

"Oella, your father has ordered me away," said Adam. "I would marry you—cherish you as a white man cherishes his wife—but I am an outcast. I am hunted. If I made you my wife it might be to your shame."

"Stay. Oella is not afraid. We will hide in the canyons," she said.

"No. I have sinned. I have blood on my hands. But, Oella, I am not dishonorable. I will not cheat you. . . . I can only remember and love you always."

"Take me," she cried, and the soft dejected passionate voice shook Adam's heart. She would share his wanderings.

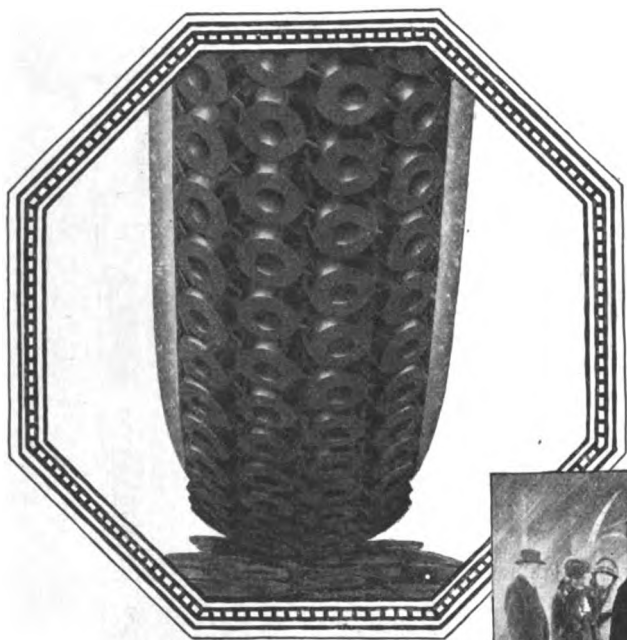
"Good-bye, Oella," he said, huskily. And he strode north to drive his burro out into the lonely melancholy desert night.

THE second meeting between Adam and Dismukes occurred at Tecopah, a mining camp in the Mojave Desert.

The Great American Desert comprises more than one-fifth of the southwestern United States, a vast arid country bounded on the west by the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains, on the south by Mexico, and on the north by a rugged line extending from Salt Lake clear round and down to the mouth of the Pecos River.

In California the southern part of this immense wasteland was called the Colorado Desert, because its boundary was the great mysterious desert river; and in the northern part the Mojave Desert extended as far as Death Valley, that most barren and ghastly place known to men.

Adam had wandered up across the Mojave to Tecopah, which desert-camp at that time was in its heyday of toil and rage and blood and gold. The mining-camp lay in a picturesque valley. It resembled a Mexican pueblo in its adobe huts so squat and square with their flat roofs and vacant eye-holes in the windows. The big smelter stood down in the creek bottom. A lack of regularity in the construction of this camp was one feature of its picturesqueness. It did not have any streets. Some buildings were up on the benches and others below; and they



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looked as if they had just happened to be there, and as if they knew that the life and glory of Tecopah would not endure.

It was in March that Adam arrived at Tecopah to halt on a grassy bench at the outskirts of the camp.

The tell-tale ears of Adam's burros advised him of the approach of some one; and he looked up from his camp tasks to find a familiar figure approaching him. He rubbed his eyes. Was that strange figure the same one so vividly limned on his memory? Squat, huge, grotesque, the man coming toward him was Dismukes! His patched garb, his old slouch hat, his boots yellow with clay and alkali, appeared the same he had worn on the memorable day Adam's eyes had unclosed to see them. How wonderfully Adam remembered!

Dismukes drove his burros up to the edge of the bench, evidently having in mind the camp-site Adam occupied. When he espied Adam he hesitated and, gruffly calling to the burros, he turned away.

"Hello, Dismukes," called Adam. "Come on. Plenty of room to camp here."

The prospector halted stolidly and slowly turned back.

"You've got the best of me," said Dismukes, shaking hands. He did not seem a day older, but perhaps there was a little more gray in the scant beard.

"Look close. See if you can recognize a man you befriended once," returned Adam.

The moment was fraught with keen pain and a melancholy assurance of the changes time had made. Strong emotion of gladness, too, was stirring deep in him. This was the man who had saved him and who had put into his mind the inspiration and passion to conquer the desert.

Dismukes was perplexed, and a little ashamed. His piercing gaze was that of one who had befriended many men, and could not remember. He shook his head.

"Stranger, I give it up. I don't know you. I never saw you in my life. If I had seen such a man as you—I'd never forget."

He spoke with absolute conviction, and his glance and his words seemed a compliment to the magnificent stature of this stranger who claimed he should remember.

"Wansfell," said Adam, his voice full.

Dismukes stared. His expression changed, but it was not with recognition.

"Wansfell! Wansfell!" he ejaculated. "I know that name. . . Hell, yes, I've heard of you all over the Mojave! . . . I'm sure glad to meet you. My kind of a man, from what I hear! . . . But say, you're wrong about me—I never met you before—I never befriended you."

The poignancy of that meeting for Adam reached a climax in the absolute failure of Dismukes to recognize him. Last and certain proof of change! The desert years had transformed Adam Larey, the youth, into the man, Wansfell. For the first moment in all that time did Adam feel an absolute sense of safety. He would never be recognized.

"Dismukes, how near are you to getting all your five hundred thousand?" queried Adam, with a smile.

"By Gad! how'd you know about that?" exclaimed Dismukes.

"You told me."

"SAY, Wansfell! Am I drunk or are you a mind-reader?" demanded the prospector, bewildered. "Comin' along here I was thinkin' about that five hundred thousand. But I never told any one—except a boy once—an' he's dead."

"How about your white-faced burro Jinny—the one that used to steal things out of your pack?" asked Adam, slowly.

"Jinny! Jinny!" ejaculated Dismukes, with a start. His great ox eyes dilated, and something of shock ran through his huge frame. "That burro I never forgot. I gave her away to a boy who starved on the desert. She came back to me. Tracked me to Yuma. An' you—you—how'd you know Jinny? . . . Man, who are you?"

"Dismukes, I was the boy you saved—down under the Chocolates. Remember . . . it was Jinny saw me wandering in a circle—mad with thirst. You saved me—gave me Jinny and a pack—told me how to learn the desert—sent me to the Indians . . . Dismukes, I was that boy. I am now—Wansfell."

The prospector seemed to expand with the increased strain of his gaze higher and closer into Adam's eyes, until the instant of recognition, when he was shot through and through with a strange radiance.

"By God, I know you now!" he boomed, and locked his horny hands on Adam, in a gladness that was beyond the moment, and

had to do, perhaps, with a far past faith in things. "I thought you died on the desert. Jinny's comin' back seemed proof of that. . . But you lived! You—that boy, tall as a mesquite plant—with eyes of agony . . . I never forgot . . . An' now you're Wansfell!"

"Yes, my friend. Life is strange on the desert," replied Adam. "And now unpack your burros. Make camp with me here. We'll eat and talk together."

A sunset rare on the Mojave, glowed over the simple camp tasks of these men who, in their wanderings, had met again.

While they ate their frugal repast they talked, each gradually growing used to a situation that broke the desert habit of silence. There was an unconscious deference in each man toward the other—Wansfell seeing in Dismukes the savior of his life and a teacher who had inspired him to scale the heights of human toil and strife—Dismukes finding in Wansfell a development of his idea, the divine spirit of man rising above the great primal beasts of the desert, self-preservation and ferocity.

"Wansfell, have you kept track of time?" asked Dismukes, reflectively.

"No. Days and weeks glide into years—that's all I can keep track of," replied Adam.

"I NEVER could, either. What is time on the desert? Nothin'. It must be years since I met you first down there in the Colorado. Let's see. Three times I went to Yuma—once to Riverside—and twice to San Diego. Six trips inside. That's all I've made to bank money since I met you. Six years. But say, I missed a year or so."

"Dismukes, I've seen the snows white on the peaks eight times. Eight years, my friend, since Jinny cocked her ears that day, and saved me!"

"Eight years!" echoed Dismukes, and wagged his huge shaggy head. "Wansfell, you're a young man though I see gray over your temples. And you can't have any more fear because of that—that crime you confessed to me. Lord, man, no one would ever know you as that boy!"

"No fear that way any more. But fear of myself, Dismukes. If I went back to the haunts of men I would forget."

"Ah, yes, yes!" sighed Dismukes. "I understand. I wonder how it'll be with me when my hour comes to leave the desert."

"Will that be long?"

"You can never tell. I might strike it rich to-morrow. Always I dream I'm going to. It's the dream that keeps a prospector nailed to the lonely wastes."

Indeed this strange man was a dreamer of dreams. Adam understood him now, all except that obsession for just so much gold. It seemed the only flaw in a great character.

"Dismukes, you had a third of your stake when we met years ago. How much now?"

"More than half, Wansfell, safe in banks, an' some hid away," came the answer, rolling and strong.

"A quarter of a million! My friend, it's enough. Take it and go—fulfill your cherished dream. See the world. Travel and live. You have more than enough. And Dismukes, you're not young any more. Go before it's too late."

Adam had spoken with deep feeling. He divined a far future tragedy here—he felt the shadow of that precious and perhaps unattainable gold.

"I've thought of that. Many times when I was sick an' worn out I've tempted myself with what you said. An' then—were hours of hell . . . But no. I'll never do that. It's the same now as if I had no money at all."

"Take care, Dismukes," warned Adam. "It's the gaining of gold—not what it might bring—that drives you."

"How'd you happen along here?" queried Dismukes, presently.

"Tecopah was just a water-hole for me," replied Adam.

"Me, too. An' I'm sure sayin' that I like to fill my canteens here. Last year I camped here. Found some gold trace up to the Kingston Range, but my supplies ran low, an' I had to give up. My plan now is to go in there, an' then on to the Funeral Mountains. They're full of mineral. But dry hard poison country for a prospector. Do you know that country?"

"I've been on this side of the range. . . Bad enough, but the other side of the Funeral is Death Valley. That gash summer is a blasting roarin' hell. Now but madmen ever tackle Death Valley. July, in the middle of the day, I've seen the mercury go to 140 degrees. . . strange to say, Wansfell, the fascination



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the desert is stronger in Death Valley than at any other place."

"Yes, I can appreciate that," replied Adam thoughtfully. "It must be the sublimity of death and desolation—the terrible loneliness and awfulness of the stark naked earth. I am going there."

"So I reckoned. An' see here, Wansfell, I'll get out my pencil an' draw you a little map of the valley, showin' my trails an' water-holes. I know that country better than any white man. The lower slope of the Funerals is all clay, borax, soda, alkali, salt, nitre, an' when the weather's hot an' that stuff blows on the hot winds—my God, it's a horror! But you'll want to go through it all, an' you'll go back again."

"Where do you advise me to go in?"
"Well, I'd follow the Amargosa. It's a windin' stream an' long, but safe. An' there's fire-wood an' a little grass. Now when you get across the valley you'll run into prospectors an' miners an' wanderers at the water-holes. An' like as not you'll meet some of the claim-jumpers an' robbers that live in the Paramints. From what I hear about you, I reckon a meetin' with them would be a bad hour for them, an' somethin' of good fortune to honest miners."

"Dismukes, I don't run from men of that stripe," replied Adam, grimly.

"A HUH! I reckon not," said Dismukes, just as grimly. "Well, last time I was over here—let's see, it was in September, hotter'n hell—I run across two queer people up in a canyon I'd never prospected before. Didn't see any sign of any other prospectors ever bein' in there. Two queer people—a man an' a woman livin' in a shack they'd built right under the damndest roughest slope of weathered rock you ever saw in your life. Why, it was a plain case of suicide, an' so I tried to show them. Every hour you could hear the crack of a rollin' boulder or the graty slip of an avalanche, gettin' uneasy an' wantin' to slide. But the woman was deathly afraid of her husband an' he was a skunk an' a wolf rolled into a man, if I ever saw one. I couldn't do anythin' for the poor woman, an' I couldn't learn any more than I'm tellin' you. But, Wansfell, she wasn't a common sort. She'd been beautiful once. She had the saddest face I ever saw. I'd like to have you go see that couple. He chose a hidden spot, an' he has Shoshone Indians pack his supplies in from the other side of the Paramints. A queer deal, horrible for that poor woman, an' I've been haunted by her face ever since. I'd like you to go there."

"I'll go. But why do you say that, Dismukes?" asked Adam, curiously.

"Well—you ought to know what your name means to desert men," replied Dismukes, constrainedly, and he looked down at the camp-fire.

"No, I never heard," said Adam. "I've lived almost always alone. Of course I've had to go to freighting-posts and camps. I've worked in gold diggings. I've guided wagon-trains across the Mojave. Naturally I've been among men. But I never heard that my name meant anything."

"Wansfell! I've heard your name for years. Strange how I never remembered it. I remember now that you called yourself Wansfell. But I paid no heed then because I knew it was not your real name. Since then, of late years, I've heard that name. Some of your doings, Wansfell, have made camp-fire stories—the kind we wonder about an' ask each other if they're true. Your doings, Wansfell, have been wondered at, but never doubted—an' they're what have made dishonest men of the desert fear you. I—I—see here, Wansfell, you can't take offense at me. I was your friend—I hope I can be still."

"No offense, friend Dismukes," replied Adam, strangely affected. Here was news that forced him to think of himself as a man somehow related to and responsible to his kind. He had gone to and fro over the desert, and many adventures had befallen him. How good to learn that strange men spoke his name with wonder and respect!

"Wansfell, you see—you're somethin' of the man I might have been," said Dismukes, hesitatingly, yet encouraged.

"Oh, no, Dismukes," protested Adam.

"You are a prospector, honest and industrious, and wealthy now, almost ready to enjoy the fruits of your long labors. Your life has a great object. . . . But I—I am only a wanderer of the wasteland."

"Aye, an' therein lies your greatness!" boomed the prospector. "I am a selfish pig—a digger in the dirt for gold. My passion has made me pass by men, an' women, too,

who needed help. But you—you Wansfell—cut there in the loneliness an' silence of the wasteland—you have found God!"

"No, no," replied Adam. "You're wrong. I don't think I've found God. Not yet!"

"You have but you don't know it," responded Dismukes, with more composure, and he began to refill a neglected pipe. "Well, I didn't mean to fetch up such talk as that."

"You've tried for gold here?" queried Adam.

"No. I was here first just after the strike, an' often since. Water's all that ever drew me. I'd starve before I'd dig for gold among a pack of beasts. I may be a desert wolf, but I'm a lone one."

"They're coyotes and you're the gray wolf. I liken most every man I meet to some beast or creature of the desert."

"Aye, you're right. The desert stamps a man. An' Wansfell, it's stamped you with the look of a desert eagle. Well, well, there's no understandin' the work of the desert. The way it develops the livin' creaturs! They all have to be perfect machines for destruction. Each seems so swift that he gets away, yet each is also so fierce an' sure that he catches his prey. They live on each other, but the species doesn't die out—that's what stumps me about the desert. Take the human creatures. They grow fiercer than animals. Maybe that's because nature did not intend man to live on the desert."

"How about the Indians who lived on the desert for hundreds of years?" asked Adam.

"What's a handful of Indians? An' what's a few years out of the millions of years that the desert's been here, just as it is now? Nothin' at all! Only a man who has lived with the desert much of his life can know. A hundred an' a thousand years might pass with fruitfulness still in the control of men. But all that is only a few grains of time in all the endless sands of eternity. What can avail against the desert winds? Men will die an' the places that knew them will know them no more. An' the desert will come back to its own. That is well, for it is what God intended."

"God and nature then, with you, are one and the same?" queried Adam.

"Yes. Twenty years sleepin' on the sand have taught me that."

"No wonder you say the desert stamps a man!"

"Aye! An' woman, too!" answered Dismukes. "Take this she-devil who runs a place here in Tecopah—Mojave Jo is the name she bears. Have you seen her?"

"No, but I've heard of how a miner, Clark, was killed and robbed in this Mojave Jo's place."

"Never heard of Clark," said Dismukes. "But I don't doubt the story. It's common enough. There's a gang over in the Paramints who lives on miners. An' as for Mojave Jo, she's as much worse than any dirty coyote of a man I ever met on the desert as a Gila monster is worse than a butterfly. She's been prospector, miner, everything a man ever was out here. Half the time she wears pants. She cures, she drinks, gambles—an' fight!—why, I've

her knock a Mexican senseless with her fist. She's big as a horse, strong as a bull, ugly as a monstrosity! She's got only one eye, but that one is a flame of hell."

"I'm curious to see Mojave Jo," said Adam, with something of a grim desire.

"Well, I'd be curious to see you see her," declared Dismukes. "An' speakin' of this one-eyed harridan reminds me of a man I met last trip across the Salton flats, down on the Colorado. Met him at Walters—a post on the stage-line from Yuma to Bannock."

He had only one eye, too. There was a terrible scar where his eye—the right one—had been. He was one of these Texans who're lookin' for a man. He sort of scrapes, who's a fussy fellow, on the acquaintance with me—a possibility of scent. There seems to be possibilities of railroad openin' up that part of the desert. An' this fellow quizzed me about water-holes. Well, he had an awful face. He would make a good side-partner for Mojave Jo. He's been a sheriff in Texas, some one said, later at Ehrenberg. Hell on hagin' me."

"Of course I never asked him how he lost his eye. But he told me. He was always had affected his mind. He was always lookin' for the fellow who'd knocked out his eye. To kill him!"

"Do you—recall his name?" asked Adam, his voice halting. The past seemed yesterday.

"Never was much on rememberin' names," responded Dismukes, scratching his shirt.

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head. "Let's see—why, yes, he called himself Collis—Collishaw. That's it—Collishaw. But as a man he struck me as easy to remember, just like Mojave Jo. Well, friend Wansfell, I've had enough talkin' to do me for a spell. I'm goin' to bed."

While Adam sat beside the fire, pondering with slow amaze over what he had heard, Dismukes prepared for his night's rest.

Adam felt tempted to pack and move on to a quiet and lonely place off in the desert, where he could think without annoyance. It had been the blow Adam had dealt—the savage fling of his gun in Collishaw's face that had destroyed an eye and caused a hideous disfigurement. And the Texan, with that fatality characteristic of his kind, was ever on the lookout for the man who had ruined his eyesight. Perhaps that was only one reason for his thirst for revenge. Guerd! Had Collishaw not sworn to hang Adam? "You'll swing for this!" he had yelled in his cold ringing voice of passion. And so Adam lived over again the old agony. "We'll meet some day," soliloquized Adam. "But he would never recognize me."

The comfort of that fact did not long abide in Adam's troubled mind. He would recognize Collishaw. And that seemed to hold something fatalistic and inevitable. "When I meet Collishaw I'll tell him who I am—and I'll kill him!" That fierce whisper was the desert voice in Adam—the desert spirit.

He rolled in his blankets and stretched his long body to the composure of rest. Sleep did not drop with soft swiftness upon his eyes, as it had upon those of Dismukes. He had walked far, but he was not tired. And for long he lay awake, listening to the deep breathing of his companion, and the howl of the coyotes, and the sounds of Tecopah, so unnatural in the quiet of the desert.

The long night wore on with the heavens star-fired by its golden train, and the sounds at last yielding to the desert silence.

When Adam awoke he saw that Dismukes had breakfast steaming on the fire.

"I'm on my way to-day," announced the prospector. "What'll you do?"

"Well, I'll hang around Tecopah as long as I can stand it," replied Adam.

"Humph! That won't be long, unless you got in mind somethin' like you did at the Donner Placers down in Providence Mountains."

"Friend, what do you know about that?" queried Adam.

"Nothin'. I only heard about it . . . Wansfell, do you pan any gold?"

"When I happen to run across it," replied Adam, "but that isn't often."

"Do you work?"

"Yes, I've worked a good deal, taking it altogether. In the mines, on the river at Needles, driving mule-teams and guiding wagon-trains. Never got paid much, though."

"How do you live?" asked Dismukes, evidently curious.

"Oh, I fare well enough to keep flesh on my bones."

"You've got flesh—or I reckon it's muscle. Wansfell, you're the best built man I ever saw on the desert. Most men dry up an' blow away . . . Will you let me give you—lend you some money?"

"Money! So that's why you're so curious?" responded Adam. "Thanks, my friend. I don't need money. I had some, you know, when you ran across me down in the Chocولاتes. I used about a thousand dollars while I lived with the Coahuilla Indians. And I've got nine thousand left."

"SAY, you don't pack all that money along with you?"

"Yes. Where else would I keep it?"

"Wansfell, some of these robbers will murder you."

"Not if I see them first. My friend, don't be concerned. Surely, I don't look sick."

"Humph! Well, just the same, I advise you to be careful. I've been held up an' robbed three times."

"Didn't you make a fight for your gold?" asked Adam.

"No chance. I was waylaid—had to hrow up my hands . . . They tell me you're swift with a gun, Wansfell?"

"Dismukes, you seem to have heard much about me. Yes, I am pretty swift with a gun."

"But you didn't throw a gun on Baldy McKue," said Dismukes, with a dark flare from his rolling eyes.

"No—I did not," replied Adam.

"You killed McKue with your bare hands," flashed Dismukes. A red stain

appeared to come up under his leathery skin. "Will you tell me about that?"

"I'd rather not, Dismukes. There are some things I forget. Killing McKue meant no more to me than kicking a coyote-bitten skunk out of camp."

"Well, it meant a good deal to me," replied Dismukes. "McKue did me dirt. He jumped claims of mine down here near Soda Sink. An' he threatened to kill me—swore the claims were his—drove me off. Wansfell, I befriended you once. An' if you did that to McKue you've squared accounts. I—I wanted to talk to you about this last night, but somehow I couldn't. Is it true?"

"Yes."

"What'd you kill him for?"

"Because he'd have killed me."

"Didn't you look him up on purpose to kill him?"

"No. I meant to accuse him before the crowd—make him an outcast from decent men . . . A year before that time I went to Goffs. Some one took me into an old tent where a woman lay dying. She denounced McKue—she blamed him that she lay there—about to die. She did die and I buried her. Then I kept an eye open for McKue."

"I WONDERED—I wondered," said Dismukes. "It struck me deep. Lord knows fights are common out here. An' death—why, on the desert every way you turn you see death. But the way this was told me struck deep. It was what I'd like to have done myself. Wansfell, think of the wonderful meetin' of men on the desert—an', aye, meetin' of men with women, too! They happen different out here. Think of the first time we met! An' this time!—Wansfell, we'll meet again."

"Dismukes, the desert is vast. Sometimes you will not meet a man in months of travel—and not in years will you meet a woman. But when you do meet them life seems intensified. The desert magnifies."

"Wansfell, I want you to go across into Death Valley," declared Dismukes. "That woman in the shack! Her eyes haunt me. Somethin' terrible wrong!—That man who keeps her there—if he's not crazy, he's worse than a gorilla. For a gorilla kills a woman quick. . . . By God, Wansfell, I'd give you all the gold I've got to see you handle this man like you handled McKue!"

"Quien sabe!" replied Adam. "Draw that map of your trails in Death Valley. I've got a little book here, and a pencil."

It was singular to see the gold digger labor with his great stumpy calloused fingers. He took long to draw a few lines, and make a few marks, and write a few names in the little book. But when he came to talk of distance and direction, of trails and springs, of flat valley and mountain range—then how swift and fluent he was!

It seemed settled then that Adam and Dismukes were to meet in some vague place at some vague time.

While Dismukes strode out to drive in his burros, Adam did the camp chores. In a short time his companion appeared with the burros trotting ahead of him. Adam helped him pack.

"Wansfell, may we meet again," said Dismukes, as they shook hands. After striding a few yards down the rocky bench he turned, his dark face shining in the sun. "Look out for Mojave Jo!"

Adam was left to his own devices. He walked down to the creek bottom where the smelter was in operation. He was offered work. He said he would consider it. But unless there turned out to be some definite object to keep him in Tecopah, Adam would not have bartered his freedom to the dust-clouded mill for all the gold it mined.

He went to the store to make purchases for his camp outfit. It appeared to be a congregating place for idlers and other men with the stamp of a gold diggings upon them. Then he walked across the creek bottom to the house some miner had pointed out to him as the place where Mojave Jo held forth.

It was a large adobe structure, low and flat-topped, with crumbling walls. Adam had to bend to enter. The room was large, dirt-floored, and full of men. They lounged at a bar of planking, or played games around crude tables. Mexicans, Indians, miners, gamblers, dark-faced, shifty-eyed, they presented an evil-looking crew. The place was squalid and damp. When Adam entered the room most of the occupants glanced up and stared. These were coyotes on the scent. Adam caught a glimpse of the dark face of a hideously ugly woman with only one eye. He looked away. That one glimpse had sent a jerk through his frame, a kind of shock accompanied by heat of blood.



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"B'gorra, look ut thot giant of a mon!" exclaimed some one, manifestly Irish.

Adam veered his glance to see a red, sun-dried and bristly-bearded face that seemed to unlock another door in his memory. He crossed over nearer to where this little weazened Irishman sat at a table. Half-drunk, bleary-eyed, burnt out by rum and desert sun, years older, there sat the loquacious Regan of Picacho days. It did not seem strange to meet him. The words of Dismukes had presaged events for Adam.

"Howdy, Regan!" said Adam, offering his hand.

"I'll be dommed!" ejaculated Regan, with a puzzled grin, as he shook hands. "Me big frind, where'n hell did Oi iver see yez?"

"Don't you remember me? Wansfell."

The Irishman had no real recollection of Adam or the name. "Wonsfell! Sure an' I rimember yez now. It was in ole England we met. An' thot's a long time ago. . . . Let's hev a dhrink." And he began to search in his ragged clothes for a coin that manifestly was not there.

"I don't drink any more, thanks."

"Huh! Don't dhrink any more? It's a dom foine idee," said Regan, and he grasped Adam's coat sleeve to lead him away from the table. "Bend down, yez giant-killer!" And as Adam complied Regan whispered in his ear, "Frind, I'm clean busted. I made a stake an' was doin' foine. But I got to dhrinkin an' gamblin' here. An' they robbed me — frind — they robbed me. I've been layin' round to git even with this hell-cat. . . . Frind, will yez grub-stake me?"

"Yes, Regan. Come with me over to my camp," replied Adam.

Just then a rude hand caught Adam's arm.

"Stranger, if ye're goin' to grub-stake yer pardner, ye kin pay his debts first."

As the rude hand had clutched with the grip of a man, so the voice was loud, husky, masculine. But it appeared to be a woman Adam saw — the owner of that ugly face back of the bar — Mojave Jo. Ugly was too beautiful a word to apply to the visage up-turned to Adam's. First he stared into a big red eye that seemed a window of hell. Where her other eye should have been showed a hideous hole. It was a broad swarthy visage, greasy and repulsive, with folds of fat down the cheeks and terrible lines of rage and baseness, a huge mouth bristling with coarse hair and yellow protruding teeth. The figure was tall, heavy, raw-boned, garbed in a man's flannel shirt and a woman's skirt. She wore a man's belt, containing a gun.

"Are you a woman or a man?" queried Adam, with slow cool deliberation.

A loud gasp escaped her and she seemed stupefied with amaze. Purple beads and patches thickened upon her face. With gathering might, with clumsy movement, she swung her arm, aiming a blow at Adam.

But like a flash his hand caught her wrist and clutched it. His grip was one that bent bones.

"Aaagggrrr!" The sound issuing from her distended lips was neither yell nor scream nor bawl. But it was an expression of pain to which no man had ever given vent. Adam studied her convulsed visage as he might have a writhing tarantula. Her record stood out upon her features. As he released her wrist she fumbled with numb and strengthless hand at the gun she wore. But she could not grip it. Pain seemed to merge into bewilderment and then her coarse lips spread, apparently thick with curses.

"Mojave Jo, don't try to draw on me," called Adam, with a loud voice that stilled the murmuring watchers. . . . "Don't open your mouth to curse me!"

"Who're you?" she panted, hoarsely.

"I'm the wrong man for you, Mojave Jo."

Her broad breast heaved.

"Who's thet man?" she demanded. The fierceness which had seemed like the physical rising of hair, ears, bristles, subsided with the fading purple patches.

"Wansfell!" some miner called out.

"Wansfell!" she echoed.

"Jo, it's him who did fer Baldy McKue," spoke up the miner.

"Wansfell, did you jest drop in or hev you a bone to pick with Mojave Jo?" she demanded in awakening aggressiveness.

Adam gazed at the woman in loathing. She represented to him the malignant growth of the desert — a human being upon whom the wild and the raw elements had grafted a simian nature. He sensed the fear in her, instinctive recognition of a natural foe. He took a giant stride and towered over her, suddenly menacing.

"You had something to do with the murder of Clark," he shouted, piercingly.

A fleeting instant her mind showed naked through that one terrible eye! Adam read her guilt.

"No, I didn't. Haw! Haw! So thet's why Mister Wansfell called on Mojave Jo? . . . See hyar, you long-jawed, hawk-faced — you — I had nothin' to do with the killin' of thet miner Clark. He was drunk an' some greaser or road-agent bumped him on the head when I was asleep. . . . Do ye hear me — You —!"

Adam thundered a command. And that, with the quivering spread of his great hand thrust out, enjoined silence. The leaping instincts in him just barely kept in abeyance in consideration of her sex. If she represented the hard beastliness of the desert, he likewise represented a violence and ruthlessness not long to be controlled. Justice seemed to be the reins of his instincts and if he yielded to them he would teach this sexless wretch a terrible lesson. But he did not yield.

"Come, Regan," he said to the gaping Irishman, "let's go to my camp."

[To be continued]

The Ladies and Joe O'Brien

[Continued from page 13]

"He ain't boosted sales much," commented Arnstein. Then quickly, "What do you think of him, Florrie?"

"Certainly Tom didn't exaggerate his grin," said the tactful Florrie.

"You're very observing," said O'Neill. "Did you notice the freckles on the back of his neck?"

"I couldn't, Tom. He had his face turned to me all the time."

"Oh, he did, eh?" O'Neill commented. "Well, he'd better keep his face turned to those women out there and leave you out of it."

"Married two years and still jealous," laughed Arnstein.

"Cynic and philanderer," sneered O'Neill humorously. Then, "It ain't that, Army, but I brought young O'Brien here to concentrate on our customers and I don't want Florrie divertin' him."

"Notice any difference in sales in the millinery yet, Tom?" said Arnstein at the end of the second day.

"Keep your shirt on, Army. They're just gettin' acquainted."

The ladies of Big Falls did come to O'Neill & Arnstein's to see Joe O'Brien as the senior partner had predicted, and they all fell under the spell of Joe's wonderful grin and his genial ways. And they all came again just

to see Joe O'Brien and, for an excuse, most of them bought hats. This accounts for the fact that on the third day business began to look up surprisingly in the millinery department of O'Neill & Arnstein's.

Came along the evening of the fourth day of the advent of Joe O'Brien. A little bewildered and bespectacled man entered the private office of the firm and laid a paper on the senior's desk. "Report of the sales of the millinery department for to-day, Mr. O'Neill, as you instructed. Figures for yesterday opposite."

The little man retired. O'Neill scanned the figures and tossed the paper across to Arnstein. "There, look at that, you doubting Army."

"By jinks," said Arnstein after a moment.

"That tells the story," said O'Neill.

"By jinks," Arnstein commented again.

O'Neill's private office was located so as to command a view of the main entrance and show-windows of the Wilton & Clark emporium. From his desk-chair the senior could observe what was going on over at his rival's. Two things O'Neill did observe with great satisfaction. The one was that presently it became quite as much a fad for the ladies of Big Falls to drop in to have a talk with Joe O'Brien and look at the hats as it had been to drop in on one

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