

THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL



*The
Sea Maid*

*Painted for
The Ladies' Home Journal
By Harold Copping*

APRIL, 1923

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(Continued from Page 237)

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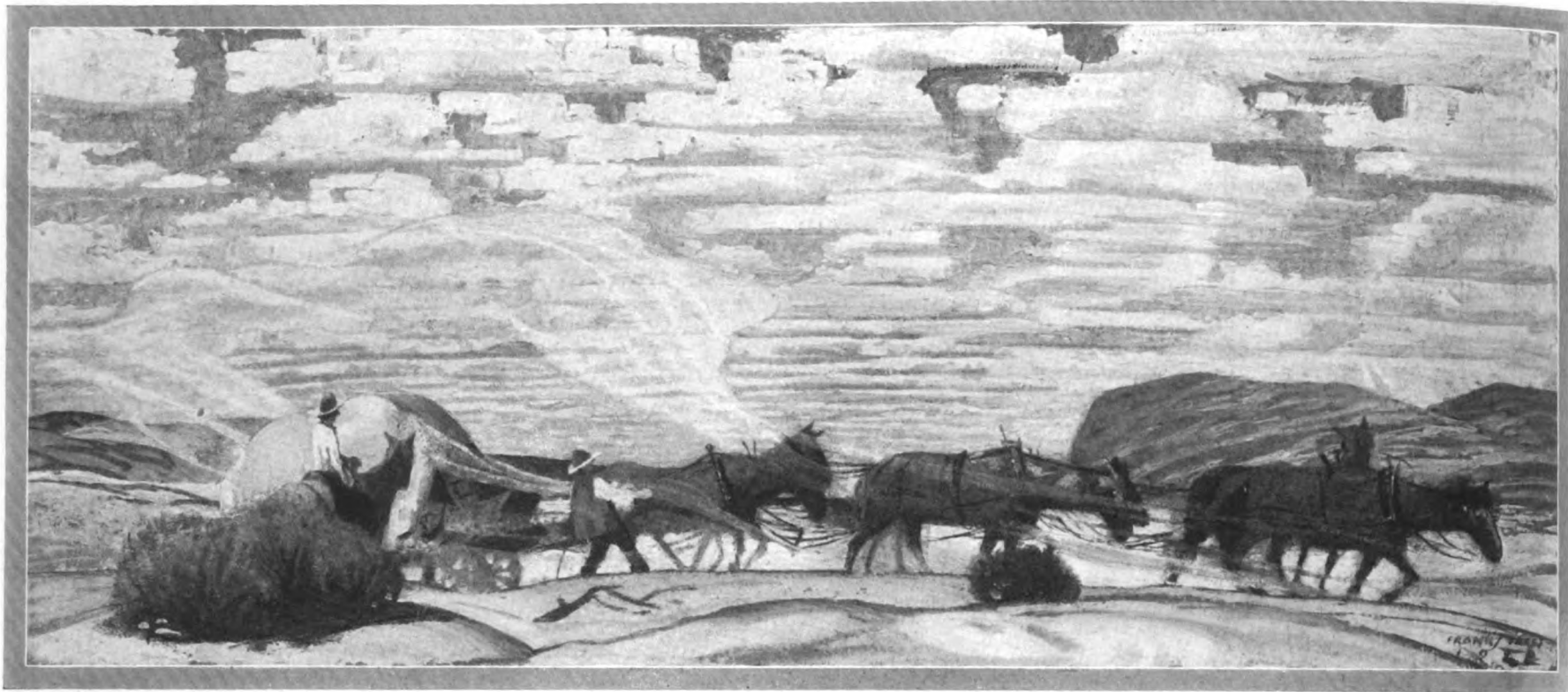
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THE YOUNG NOKIS HAD WALKED THE WHOLE DISTANCE OF NEAR EIGHTY MILES, TO SPARE THEIR TEAMS

The Vanishing American

By ZANE GREY

Illustrations by Frank Street

XVII

AFTER Nophaie's departure Marian felt as if the end of all had come. She had not looked beyond this last meeting. And now with the poignant and stinging experience in the past, she seemed lost and broken-hearted. She fell into a terrible depression out of which she struggled with difficulty. The desert called her; the promise to Nophaie was a sacred obligation; but she could not at once return to her work among the Indians. She decided to go back East for a while.

The hour she arrived in Philadelphia she realized that outside of her need of change and the pleasure of old associations, there was other cause for her to be glad she had returned. Philadelphia, like other great cities, was in the throes of preparing for war. The fever of the war emotion had seized everyone. The equilibrium of the staid and tranquil City of Brotherly Love had been upset.

Marian found her relatives as changed as if many years had intervened between her departure and return. They had forgotten her. Each was obsessed by his or her peculiar relation to the war. The draft of a son or brother or nephew, the seeking of war offices, the shifting of trade to meet the exigencies of war demands—all these attitudes seemed personal and self-seeking. Many of Marian's acquaintances, young men under thirty-one, in one way or another evaded the clutch of the service. Conduct such as this was thrown into relief by the eagerness with which others enlisted before the draft.

YOUNG women were finding the world changed for them. Every opportunity appeared thrust upon them, even to the extreme of donning khaki trousers and driving ambulances in France. Marian could have found a hundred positions, all more remunerative than any she had ever had. It was a time of stress. It was a time of intense emotional strain. It was a time when the nobility and selfishness of human nature were enhanced.

Marian had her own reasons for being personally and tremendously stirred by the war. That made her charitable and generous in her judgments of others. But the wildness and unrestraint she could not condone. She could not blame any girl for heedlessly rushing into marriage with a soldier, for she had yearned to marry Nophaie; but she was affronted and disgusted by the abandon she saw in so many young people. The war had given them a headlong impetus toward she knew not what.

Yet Marian felt this strange and terrible thing herself. Why did her heart swell when she saw a soldier? Why did her eyes dim when she saw from her window a trainload of soldiers speeding towards New York? She had as much reason as any woman, except the mother of a soldier, to be terribly drawn into the chaos of wartimes. Whenever she thought of Nophaie a shuddering possessed her internal body and she was sick. Yet there was a pride in him that was growing infinite.

Marian did her bit in the way of buying and selling bonds, and in Y.M.C.A. and Red Cross work. But for her promise to Nophaie to return to the reservation she would have gone, like so many young women, to extremes of war enthusiasm. The urge to go to France was something hard to resist.

Nophaie's letters were few and far between, and not what they had been out in the desert, but upon them Marian lived and sustained her hope. In September she went to the seashore to get away from the humidity and tainted air of the city, which, since her sojourn in the West, she could hardly endure. And she needed rest. She went to Cape May and haunted the places on the beach where she had been with Nophaie.

The restless, bright Atlantic! Marian bathed in the surf and spent long hours upon the sand. This period was restful, yet it was singularly acute and living. The grand roll of the breakers, the thunder and boom, the white of foam and the flying spindrift, the green heaving sea far out—these elements seemed to be understood better and appreciated more through her memory of the desert. But she loved the desert most; and every day the call of the wide colored wastes, the loneliness, and something she could not define, rang more insistently in her ears.

So time flew by, and autumn began to decline into winter. It took time for Marian to dispose of the little property she had; and following that came a letter from Nophaie telling her he was soon to sail from New York for France. Marian went to New York in a vain hope of seeing him. But all she had of him was the sound of his voice over the telephone. For this she was unutterably grateful. The instant she had answered his "Hello," he had called: "Benow di Cleash?" Then shaking all over, there in the little booth, she had listened to his brief words of love and farewell.

SHE was one of the throng of thousands of women on the Hoboken docks when the huge liner left her moorings. Thousands of faces of soldiers blurred in Marian's sight. Perhaps one of them was Nophaie. She waved to them and to him. She was only one of these thousands of women left behind to suffer and endure. This was harder for Marian than the farewell in Flagerstown.

White, fluttering sea of waving handkerchiefs! Flash of ruddy boyish faces! These meant so much. They were so infinitely more than just incidents of life.

The keen, bright winter sun shone down on the dock of weeping women, on the huge liner with its tan-colored fringe of human freight, on the choppy, green-waved Hudson River, and the glitter of the towering city beyond.

Marian returned to Philadelphia with her spirit at lowest ebb and for once in her life fell prey to an apparently endless dejection. Besides,

the cold, wet climate had a bad effect upon her after the dry, bracing desert. She suffered a spell of illness, and when she recovered from that, she deemed it best to wait for spring before starting West. Meanwhile she went into war work. All of her notes on the reservation and the Indian School remained untouched. She had not the heart to rewrite them for publication. She read newspapers and periodicals upon the war until her mind was in a chaotic state. Once at least she was stung into specific realization and an agony of suspense.

A newspaper printed a report of French operations along a river at the Front. For some reason not stated it was important that observations be kept from the end of a certain bridge, long under German gunfire. For three days a soldier had stood motionless, whitewashed to resemble a post, at the exposed end of that bridge. He was successful in his observations and had not drawn the gunfire of the enemy. But he died from the strain and the coatings of whitewash. This scout was an American Indian.

"He—he might have been Nophaie," whispered Marian in torture.

In the spring Marian received a reply to a letter she had written Mrs. Wolterson.

Dear Marian: I am long indeed in replying to your most welcome and interesting letter. But you will forgive me, for my excuse is work, work, work. Imagine! Out of six white people and thirty little Indian children, I was the only one not down with influenza.

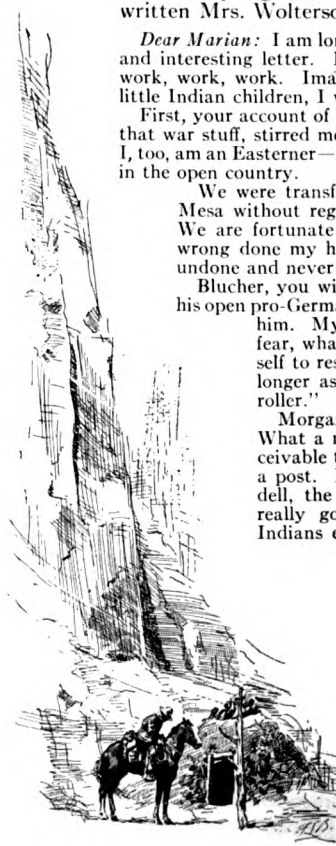
First, your account of the goings-on of people in the East, and all that war stuff, stirred me to thrills, made me long to be home—for I, too, am an Easterner—and yet caused me to be thankful I am out in the open country.

We were transferred here, as you already know, and left Mesa without regret, except for our few true friends there. We are fortunate to be retained in the service at all. The wrong done my husband by Blucher and Morgan was not undone and never will be.

Blucher, you will be glad to hear, had a sudden check to his open pro-Germanism. Something or somebody frightened him. My friends write me that his reaction to this fear, whatever it was, resulted in his applying himself to reservation work. But he will not last much longer as superintendent. He will get the "steam roller."

Morgan, however, goes on his triumphant way. What a monster that man is! It is utterly inconceivable that such a fanatical devil could have such a post. His latest stunt will interest you. Ramsdell, the cowboy missionary, was one of the few really good and helpful missionaries whom the Indians ever recognized. You will remember that Ramsdell's way of work did not appeal to Morgan and his cronies. I suspect they feared Ramsdell was really acquiring influence. Robert, my husband, many a time came across Ramsdell helping the Indians. He worked with them, digging ditches, plowing, planting and building. Ramsdell was a good mechanic and he tried to teach things to the Indians. He was a rough diamond, a hard-riding parson, but as Robert says, "Shore the real thing."

Well, Morgan called one of his investigations, his tribunals. They brought Ramsdell to their court and



accused him of being a leader in heathenism. This charge was based on the fact that he dressed in Indian costume for the entertainment of Indian children. Another charge was that he was too friendly with the traders. He was dismissed.

Here is a bit of news that comes closer to us. Gekin Yashi has again disappeared. The report went out from headquarters that she had again run off. But my correspondent in Mesa does not believe it. No attempt was made to trace her. If she had run off she would have been tracked. Neither Ruhr nor any of the policemen have left Mesa.

I know what I think and so does Robert. But it seems best not to trust my suspicions to a letter. Some day the truth will come out. Alas for the Little Beauty of the Nopahs!

When I think of her, and the child prodigy, Evangeline, and noble Nophaie, I am sore at heart.

KING POINT is not at all like Mesa. I loved Mesa, despite what I suffered there. This place is high up on the desert, over seven thousand feet above sea level. It is bleak, barren, bitter cold, and the winds are terrible. The snow last winter blew level with the sand. It did not fall! But yet there is beauty here. Great red bluffs covered with cedars, and sand dunes forever changing with the wind, and yellow mesas, and long white slopes of valley. But the solitude, the cold and the mournful winds are dreadful. Influenza swooped down on us late in winter, a very fortunate circumstance. Had spring not come I believe the whole population of thirty-six would have been wiped out.

As it was everybody but myself fell sick. Can you imagine my labors? I had them all to myself before a doctor came, and then after he was gone. The poor little Indian children—they were so sick! I hardly had time to eat, let alone sleep. And when relief came it was none too soon for me.

I have no direct information regarding influenza ravages at other points on the reservation. But I understood it hit the Nopahs pretty hard. I never saw any disease like this. I dread the return of winter. Warm weather kills the germ or whatever spreads this sickness. If it should come early in winter I shudder to think what might happen out here on the reservation.

You wrote in your letter of returning. We are glad to hear this news. Mrs. Withers wrote me that she had received a letter from Nophaie from France, and that he said he had seen you on the pier at Hoboken just before his ship sailed. But you did not see him!

How strangely things happen! I have two brothers at the Front in France. When I think of them I think of Nophaie.

All good wishes to you, Marian, and let us hear from you.
Sincerely,
BEATRICE WOLTERSON.

Marian went back to the Indian country prepared to work independently for the welfare of the Nopahs. It had been her good fortune to meet a philanthropic woman who was at that time sending money to Morgan. She told the generous woman that she did not believe a single dollar of her donations ever reached the Indians. The wealthy philanthropist opened her eyes wide at Marian's revelations. She had influence. Marian interested her to the extent of getting her support in securing permission to pursue her work on the reservation, independent of the agent there.

At Flagerstown, Marian rented a little cottage out near the pines, from which she could see the green slopes and gray peaks of the mountains. This time, with knowledge and means to set about her task, she provided a comfortable place to live in during her absences from the desert.

Marian's first trip on the desert took her to King Point, where she spent a profitable day with the Woltersons. King Point was as cool and pleasant in summer as Flagerstown. Marian found instant antagonism in the head of the Indian school there, making any project of hers rather out of the question. Besides there was no place to stay. The school was a small branch of the main system, and no Indians lived in the near vicinity.

To Marian's regret she found matters not happy for the Woltersons. Blucher's enmity had a long arm. Wolterson had encountered the same underhand tactics that had been operative at Mesa. Moreover, the altitude and the cold, and the poor quarters had not improved his health. Marian advised him to leave the Indian service.

"Shore, I've got to," he drawled, "but I hate to quit just now. Looks like I'd be driven out."

Before Marian left she received a suggestion from Wolterson that made her thoughtful. He told her about the little

settlement of Nokis at Copenwashie, how they were growing poorer in water and land and had a hard winter ahead of them.

"Shore, they'll not be able to feed their stock," said Wolterson.

"Why?" inquired Marian.

"Because they have less land than formerly and very little water. They can't raise enough alfalfa."

"Why less land than formerly?"

"Friel and Leamon have gotten most of the Indians' land."

"Oh, I remember! But how can they do that? It seems absolutely unbelievable to me."

"Listen, and I will tell you," replied Wolterson. "First, the man selects the particular piece of ground he wants. Then he gets the superintendent to report to Washington that this land is not needed by the Indians. It is always the best piece of ground. The Government grants the use of a little tract. Soon it is further reported that this is not sufficient. Another tract is available and this is also turned over. After a time the white man applies for a patent to this land. Friel has got his patent. Leamon is pretty close to getting his. Others are pending."

"With the land he gets a supply of water for irrigating, and often in addition he gets a good spring, and this much water is simply taken from the Indians. Water on the desert is limited. Last year was dry. This one may be drier. And there you are."

MARIAN had planned to go next to Kaidab, but influenced by the incentive of Wolterson's suggestion, and a dread of seeing just yet the beautiful sage uplands beloved by Nophaie, she decided first to look over the field at Copenwashie. The Paxtons at Mesa gave her a warm welcome, and between them, for the sake of a subterfuge that might be wise, they arranged a basket-and-blanket-buying job for her.

(Continued on Page 222)



THE STORM SWEEPED ON, WREATHING THE RIMS AND FILLING THE NARROW CAÑON BEHIND

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The Vanishing American

(Continued from Page 33)

Copenwashie lay down on the edge of the mesa two miles or more from the government post. At any time it was a barren, desolate outlook, and in summer under the leaden haze of heat it was surely mercilessly inhospitable to a white person.

The Nokis were agricultural in their pursuits, not nomads like the Nopahs. The two tribes had long been inimical to each other.

Marian went from door to door of their little low houses and asked for baskets. She saw stoves, beds, sewing machines common to white households. The rooms she got a peep into were whitewashed and clean. The Nokis were short in stature, broad-faced, resembling a Japanese more than a Nopah, and the women all appeared to be heavy. They spoke a little English, but they were reserved and shy. Marian was hard to please in style of baskets, but she paid the price asked without haggling. Thus she carefully felt her way along the line of procedure she had adopted. When she left the village and ascended the slope to the level of the mesa, she looked back.

The place seemed a jumble of little rock and mud huts perched on the very edge of a precipice. Below lay a wide green valley with Indian laborers at work and threads of water running to and fro. Across the valley rose a red-and-yellow bluff, rimming out on the ghastly desert. To the right of where Marian stood loomed an imposing structure of stone, built by masons, two stories high and with a tower. This was the home of white men. Somehow Marian resented its presence there.

PAXTON had driven her down to Copenwashie, and said he did not consider it safe for her to walk to the village unattended. Opportunity to ride was infrequent, so Marian adjusted herself to a slow progress of passing the time and winning the confidence of the Nokis. But there were other demands upon her time—study, reading, writing letters, keeping in touch with all pertaining to the war. The heat of midday was, after all, not unendurable, and she got used to it, though she endeavored to stay indoors during those hours. She hired the Indian mail carrier, who remembered her, to carry her letters to Flagerstown and to do her errands. Three or four times a week she visited the Noki village. On each trip she bought baskets, and left candy and dolls and musical toys with the children.

She anticipated embarrassing situations and prepared for them. Jay Smith sat on the trading-post steps during the summer evenings. Morgan had asked somebody what that "white-faced cat" was doing back on the reservation? Friel had learned of her presence. But so far Marian had been clever and fortunate enough to avoid meeting either of them face to face. She did not care, however, when that might happen.

If happiness could have been hers, it might have come to her here on the desert that had somehow changed her, and in the work she had chosen. But she could not be really happy.

NOPHAIE wrote but seldom. He was "somewhere in France." His letters were censored, and he wrote so little of himself. Marian lived in constant dread that she would never hear from him again, that he would be killed. It did not torture her that he might be injured. For she knew he was an Indian to whom injuries were nothing.

Even the tranquillity of the desert, its wonderful power to soothe, did not help her with this war emotion. Life did not stand still, but her heart seemed to.

With the end of summer there seemed to be an end to the uneventful waiting monotony of her life. Withers called for her one day and packed her off in his car to Kaidab.

The last day of Marian's stay at Kaidab she prevailed upon Miss Withers to ride out and climb the highest point available. Withers sent one of his Indian riders with them. They had a long, hard and glorious ride. From the brow of a great divide Marian saw the whole vast reach of the Valley of Gods, the red sentinels of the desert lonely and grand against the haze of distance. She saw the dark, organ-shaped mesa under the shadow of which Nophaie had been born. Then far to the westward, up and over the giant steps, she caught a glimpse of green-cedared and purple-saged uplands, and above them the huge bulk and dark dome of Nothis Ahn.

WITHERS was waiting at the gate for the riders when they returned. His face wore an excited, eager and happy expression, such as Marian had never before seen there. What could have broken this intrepid Westerner's reserve? Marian experienced a sensation of weakness.

"Get down and come in," he called.

"Come a-rustlin' now. I've got news."

Marian tumbled off some way and ran at the heels of Withers' daughter, who was crying: "Oh! Dad's got a letter from Ted."

So indeed it turned out to be. Mrs. Withers had been crying, but was now radiant. The trader fumbled over many sheets of paper, closely covered with writing.

"Sis, you can read all of this afterward," he was saying. "Ted's all right. Fussin' because he won't see any real fight. He says what I told you all, the Huns are licked. Whoopee! You know I wrote Ted months ago and asked him to find out about our Indians. I'd given up hoping. But he's found out a lot, and I'll read it. Marian, your Nophaie has got the D. S. medal! What do you know about that?"

Marian could not have spoken then to save her life. She seemed locked in sensation, mute in the sweetest, richest, fullest most agonizing moment of her life.

THE trader fumbled over the sheets of paper. His fingers were not wholly steady.

"Here," he began, "this letter seems less cut up than any we've had. Ted writes: 'I had some luck. Happened to run across a soldier who'd been in the thick of the front-line battles with some of our Indians. What he had to say about them was plenty. He knew Lo Blandy when he played college football. So it's a good guess Lo Blandy is our Nophaie. I got thick pronto with this soldier. His name is Munson. He hails from Vermont. He'd not only been in the front-line trenches with our Indians but in the hospital with some of them. I've forgotten names and places. This French lingo is sure hard for me. Munson said an officer told him there were thousands of American Indians in the service. That's news to me. It sure tickled me. 'A good many Indians have been killed. Whether or not any of them were Nopahs I can't say. But the Indian who pulled the bear-trap stunt is our own nutty Shoie, the spellbinder. Munson said they called him that, and he answered exactly to the description I gave. Now it appears that every night or so Shoie would pull a crippled German into the trenches. These German soldiers would have either an arm or leg broken



ESTHER ALTHEA RICHARDS

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The Vanishing American

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and terribly lacerated. Shoie never had much to say over here. You know the Indian. But like all the other redskins he was a wonderful scout, and therefore had something more of freedom than the white boys. These Indians were no more afraid of No Man's Land than of crossing the desert at night. Shoie was watched. And it was discovered that he pulled these crippled Germans into the trenches in a Number Four bear trap attached to a long wire. Shoie would crawl out in the darkness—they said he always picked the places where German soldiers were sneaking—and set the bear trap. Then he'd slip back to the trench to wait.

"When he got one, everybody along that line sure knew of it. For the Germans hollered like all get-out. At that, to crawl into a Number Four bear trap would make any man holler. All Shoie said was: 'Me catch-um whole German Army!' I guess maybe the buddies didn't hand it to this Indian.

"Well, there's more about Lo Blandy. Munson lay in the hospital with him, and found out he had been wounded four times, the last time seriously. But he seemed nearly well then. That was three weeks ago. Blandy—or Nophaie—was to be discharged and sent home as an invalid, incapacitated for further service. He had been in everything the war afforded except actual death. That seemed to miss him. Munson said Nophaie was indifferent to danger and pain. Shell shock had affected him somewhat, and gassed lungs made him a probable consumptive. But to Munson he was certainly far from a physical wreck. I think Munson said Nophaie got into the great Chatoo-Therry (how'd you spell that?) mix-up, and that an officer gave him the D. S. right off his own breast. Sure some stunt for an officer, believe me.

"Anyway Nophaie, along with other Indians, must be on the way home by now. I'm sure glad. I can't remember ever caring a whoop about the Nopahs. But I've a hunch that a lot of Americans, including myself, haven't ever appreciated the red man. "My chance of plugging a Fritz has become slim indeed, and for that reason I'm sure homesick for you all, and the smell of cedar smoke and sheep wool."

XVIII

NEWS of the Armistice did not reach Mesa until late in the afternoon of that memorable November day. It came from the lips of the mail carrier. He was not credited. Paxton rushed to the telephone to call up Flagerstown, only to find the wire down. A crowd of Indians collected around the mail carrier, and they all believed him. Only the whites were skeptical. But a little later Paxton's clerk came running in. "War over!" he cried. "Friel brought news, he and Leamon. They just got in from town. Everybody gone crazy."

Marian and Mrs. Paxton indulged in a few moments of heartfelt felicitations, not unmingled with tears. And these few simple reactions appeared to be the forerunners of an hour of mounting excitement. Supper was not thought of. Outside in front of the trading post the crowd grew apace, and now white faces began to mingle with the dark ones. Friel's car came humming along, and it contained three other white men and several Indians. The latter leaped off as Friel drove on. He saw Marian standing on the steps, and waving his hand he yelled: "War over!" Marian waved back, and this was the only time she had ever been glad to see him. He was a bearer of blessed news. He drove on, manifestly in a hurry to get to headquarters.

The November air was raw and cold. It chilled Marian through. She went into the Paxtons' sitting room, where she sat by the window. The trader came through and opened the window. "Don't miss anything.

There'll be trouble. Blucher has arrested some Nopahs. And I'll bet they never go to jail."

Marian was now all eyes and ears. The trader kept running to and fro with his wife at his heels. She was trying to make him stay in the house. Nothing unusual, however, occurred outside for a while. The crowd swelled to upwards of a hundred Indians, a motley dark assemblage, divided into several groups, each of which undoubtedly surrounded an Indian with a bottle. The white men had drawn apart.

It had been rather an overcast day, with clouds massing in the west. The time was perhaps an hour before sunset. Marian saw an Indian running down the avenue between the poplars. Some of the watching Indians shouted. This Noki evidently was frightened, for he looked back and then darted in among his fellows.

Friel's car appeared, still containing the same number. Marian recognized two of them. He

drove to the steps, where he stopped the car and got out. Manifestly he was starting for the window to speak to Marian when one of the other men called out, "Hold on, Friel."

HALTED by the peremptory call, he impatiently turned back. The Indians were looking now up the avenue. Marian heard another car coming. Before it came in range of her sight, four white men came hurrying along. Ruhr, the policeman, was the foremost, and the last two were Glendon and Naylor. Marian did not recognize the second man. They had the mien of angry, excited men, yet not overbold. Then the second car hove in sight. Sam Ween, the interpreter, was driving it. Morgan stood on the running board and Blucher stood up inside. It was not a difficult matter for Marian to perceive the state of their minds.

When the car stopped Morgan dropped off and Blucher piled out. "Arrest that Indian!" he yelled.

Ruhr apparently had the least reluctance to penetrate the suddenly silent crowd of Indians, and one of his deputies, the stranger Marian did not recognize, rather haltingly followed him. Glendon and Naylor hung back, a fact that added to Blucher's exasperation. Morgan, too, edged away from the ominous-looking front line of Indians. Presently that line was broken to emit Ruhr dragging an Indian behind him, the Noki that had hidden. Blucher ran in and shackled him.

"What'd you put irons on him for, you blockhead?" called Morgan. "Indians hate irons. And I told you they were in bad mood. Some of them drunk!"

"Who's doing this?" hoarsely called the agent.

The younger and probably more intoxicated Indians suddenly appeared to move in unison and to spread round Blucher and his men. They closed in, shouting.

"Let that Indian go!" yelled Morgan with all his might.

BLUCHER shouted a profane refusal. Then the crowd became noisy, violent and decidedly threatening. Marian lost sight of the white men in the mêlée. She felt her pulses beat in excitement and fear. Surely the Indians were in no mood to trifle. How dark and wild their upturned faces! They surged into a knot. That, too, broke as before, only more rudely; and it let out the white men, disheveled, pale and thoroughly frightened. The Indians had forced Blucher to unshackle the Noki he had arrested. They jeered at him.

Bottles flashed aloft, held by dark sinewy hands. Blucher was forced back toward the side of the trading post, as it chanced near the window where Marian crouched.

(Continued on Page 226)

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The Vanishing American

(Continued from Page 225)

"Skin stretched over stick!" yelled a Noki who could speak good English. Then both Nokis and Nopahs took up that slogan, each in his own tongue.

But older, sober Indians in the crowd dragged the violent ones back and away from the trading post. Still, plainly it was no easy task. Cooler heads prevailed, however, and it seemed that Blucher and Morgan had narrowly escaped violence.

"What'd I tell you?" shouted Morgan hoarsely.

Blucher vouchsafed no reply. His pale face seemed to have fixed in an expression of furious trance. Marian had a good look at him as he passed the window to go to his car. He might have been walking in a nightmare. Indians were naught to him. His strident orders and violent movements had been merely the explosion of an unabatable and terrible passion. Stolid, heavy, immovable German that he was, he had heard news to unseat his reason for this hour.

Likewise Marian had a fleeting glimpse of Morgan's face. Did she catch a lurking sardonic gleam, a malignant flash of eyes? Or had her sensitive imagination conjured up illusive justifications of her opinion of this man? She marveled at him. As a woman she seemed to shrink from her enormous conception of him. Was she right or wrong? She would have wagered her all that his mind was a dark abyss and that his soul was a wilderness.

THEN these two men, at once so infinitesimally little in her conception of life and so monstrously powerful to rouse the drumbeat of her passions, slowly passed out of her sight.

December came, bleak and raw, but holding off on the inclement weather that made the desert an inhospitable place for white people. Influenza was reported by the authorities on widely separated parts of the desert. No effort was made to check the disease or to minister to any Indians except the school children. But it was not considered serious.

Marian awoke one day to a realization that she had found favor with the Nokis. Long before she expected it she was welcome in the secluded homes of these strange desert people. After all they were very human, very susceptible to kindness and goodness. They would accept charity and presents, but a material gift was no sure way to their hearts. Marian really did not discover this until after she had won them.

Then it became clear to her that she had been under as intelligent and careful a scrutiny as she had bent upon them. She was judged by what she said and did, and by developments that verified the appearance of her actions.

AFTER Marian had acquainted herself with the actual conditions of these Indians she set to work in her own way to help them. There were babies and old men going blind from trachoma; there were children with congenital hip disease; there were always injured horsemen and sick housekeepers; last of all, the whole village was poor and growing poorer.

The war might be over, but its aftermath had just begun. There were signs that more than warranted the gloomy forebodings of Withers.

Marian never saw the school doctor waste a ride down to Copenwashie. She brought a physician from Flagerstown. And his several visits, followed by her own ministrations, alleviated considerable distress. When the skeptical Nokis saw there was no aftermath from this, no obligation, nothing but the kindness of Benow di Cleash, they subtly and almost imperceptibly changed. The old

Nokis learned to relax their somber faces in a slight smile; the children grew glad to see Marian, more for her presence than for gifts.

It was very hard for her to remain even half an hour inside the little houses because of the acrid smoke from the open fires. This severely affected her eyes and even her throat. When she got out into the cold, cutting, desert wind she was always relieved. So she did the best that she could, grateful indeed that her efforts were not futile.

Paxton went out of his routine to help her. Eckersall, in his rough, uncouth way, left no stone unturned in her behalf. Between the two of them Marian seldom had to walk the windswept two-mile stretch up the mesa. She did not come into contact with Blucher or Morgan and, so far as she could tell, they were not paying any attention to her affairs. This apparent fact, however, did not blind Marian to their possibilities. They were like moles, burrowing in the dark.

FRIEL had again pressed his amatory advances, which Marian had met with some rather blunt speech: "Mr. Friel, you may blind yourself with egotistic convictions. There's no limit to mental aberration. But I think you are a liar. And I'm not exactly flattered with your presumption that I'd marry you and live on the land you stole from the Indians."

Friel never again made fun of her or attempted to make love to her.

Naturally Marian's increasingly close relation to some of the Nokis resulted in their confidences. By the middle of December most of the little tribe who owned horses or cattle, and especially all of the freighters, were hard pressed for feed for their stock. Marian lent money to some of the neediest. But the situation was not to be met by the little money she could spare. So she took up the matter with Eckersall.

"Reckon I seen it comin' all along," was Eckersall's reply. "The Nokis are in for a bad winter, miss. I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll go to the agent an' make a strong talk for the Nokis."

"Thank you, Eckersall. That's good of you. Maybe we can do something."

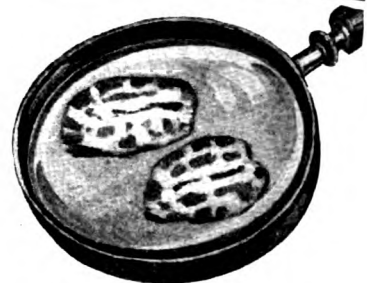
Several days elapsed before Marian again saw Eckersall. "Wal, me an' you are on the wrong side of the fence," he complained ruefully, in reply to her eager query.

"How so?"

"We have a hankerin' for these poor Indians. Miss, I went to our German agent an' I made the speech of my life. I painted the woe of the Nokis an' the sufferin' of the horses as it was never done before. I told him that he made the Nokis freight supplies from town; that he didn't pay them enough; that these freighters had no other way to make a livin'. He said he hadn't any hay to spare at twenty dollars the ton. Wal, I went to Friel an' talked with him. An' he said forty dollars a ton! The Nokis can't pay that. So I went back to Blucher an' railed at him again. He snapped at me: 'If the white men want forty dollars a ton for their hay, then the Indians will have to pay forty dollars.'"

NOT long after that Marian met one of the freight wagons at the foot of the mesa grade. The wagon was packed full of boxes and bales, making a prodigious load to haul through sand and up the desert hills. Three teams of mustangs were hitched to it. Six little horses! They were skin and bones. How dejected and weary and hungry they appeared! Their ribs showed like fence pickets. Raw sores had been worn by the makeshift harness.

(Continued on Page 227)



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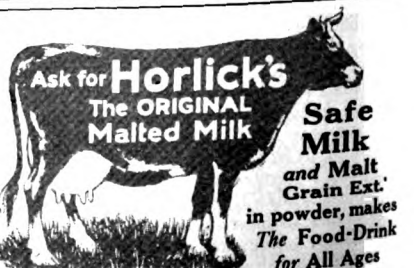
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The Vanishing American

(Continued from Page 226)

The drivers, both young Nokis, were walking. One held the long reins; the other led at the head of the first team. They were as tired as their horses. They had walked from Flagerstown, the whole distance of near eighty miles, to spare their teams. Marian questioned them, and though they grinned, their replies were significant of depression.

Winter came at last, biting, icy, and the desert became an open waste to dread. Day after day dark clouds rose, threatening storm. Privation followed hard on the cold heels of winter, and many of the Noki families began to suffer. What with lack of food for man and beast the outlook was discouraging indeed. Marian bought stores of supplies from Paxton, who charged exactly what they had cost him, but these did not go far nor long.



THEN came the incident that heaped fuel on the fires of Noki resentment: Leamon had made a hurried trip to Flagerstown, where he learned that flour had gone up two dollars a hundredweight. It so happened that on his return trip he passed several Noki wagons going into Copenwashie to buy flour. Therefore, in possession of this information, he hurriedly drove to the trading posts at Copenwashie and Mesa and bought all the flour the traders had, some two thousand pounds, at the old price.

Leamon, before this incident, had won a universal dislike for himself. It then fell out that he was to go beyond the endurance of even these stoical Nokis.

He got permission from the agent to address the school children after they had assembled in the schoolroom each day. So he chose the first hour of the morning session. The Nokis objected to Leamon's taking the time from the school work, and they complained to the agent. Nothing was done. The Nokis grew more resentful. They roused dissension. Their activities caused reports to be made to the Government, and an inspector was sent out. He ruled that Leamon's activities be discontinued. But after he had gone, Leamon was seen to get audience with Morgan and Blucher, with the result that he went on as before.

The Nokis held a council over this turn of affairs and absolute usurpation of their rights. The chief himself came to Marian and asked her to read to him the ruling of the inspector. She did so, in Nopah and in English, both of which languages he understood. "Benow di Cleash, don't you think we ought to kill him?" asked the Noki.

Marian was shocked and told him with all the force she could command that murder would only add to their troubles.

"DON'T you think we ought to kill him?" the chief kept repeating to everything Marian said.

"No, no, you must not," she protested. "Try sending a delegation to face Leamon. Show him the inspector's ruling and tell him you have had white people read it."

"Don't you think we ought to kill him?" was all the chief said.

But the next day, while Leamon was in the school, this delegation suggested by Marian assembled in front of the village.

It was a cold, lowering day with wind sweeping down across the desert. The village had been swept clear of snow, except in the protected corners of stone walls. Marian had anticipated some untoward event, and she had borrowed a horse to ride down early. That trip had required something of fortitude. When she neared the village she saw Nokis riding in from the Red Sandy trail. And when she reached the dip of mesa rim she had further cause for excitement.

The delegation contained all the male Nokis, and some of the other sex, with a

plentiful addition of Nopahs. Marian's eyes gladdened at sight of the tall, graceful, picturesque Nopah riders, blanketed as they were. Manifestly there was something in the wind. The crowd was walking and riding toward the school. Marian followed. It was some distance, and all the way new riders fell

in with the delegation. What surprised Marian and added to her excitement was the apparent fact that the Nopahs were going to take part in this protest. But to Marian it looked more ominous than a formal stating of objections. The Nokis meant to stop the preaching that they considered an imposition on the time and attention of the

school children. "Leamon, come out!" shouted a clear voice in good English.

It rang in Marian's ears. Unmistakably Indian; but was it Noki? Marian had to restrain a strange agitation. She convinced herself she was nervous and overinclined to imaginings. But she felt that she could trust to her eyes, and she rode farther, to within one hundred feet of the school.

Leamon did not appear promptly enough to please the Nokis. They began to shout. Someone pounded on the door. Then again the clear, high Indian voice pealed above the others, silencing them.

"LEAMON, come out or we'll come in."

The door opened and Leamon appeared. His face was red. His figure, which resembled Morgan's, seemed instinct with intolerant authority. Yet in spite of this he was not at ease. "What do you want?" he demanded.

"Get out!" replied the leader, and from the crowd came shouts confirming his order. "I won't!" yelled Leamon furiously.

"Blucher gave me permission."

"Read the order from Washington."

Leamon waved aside the paper held out to him. It appeared to be in the hands of a short Noki beside whom stood a tall Nopah. He wore a wide sombrero pulled down over his face. The crowd of Indians rode and pressed closer. A low hubbub of voices began to rise.

"Come. Go to Blucher. Let us hear what he says. Let us have understanding."

"No," exclaimed Leamon hotly; "I won't go to Blucher."

One of the mounted Nokis cast a lasso, the noose of which circled Leamon's neck. The crowd shouted wildly.

"Haul him out," called the leader.

Then the mounted Noki rode away from the school, drawing the lasso taut, and dragging Leamon out through the crowd. His face was not now red. Both his hands clutched at the noose round his neck. Manifestly the intention had been merely to rope him and drag him into the presence of the agent. But a wild young Noki, mounted on a spirited horse, pulled it up until its front hoofs pawed the air.

"Hang him!" this Indian yelled in Noki.

A ROAR broke from the crowd. In a twinkling the somber spirit broke to let out the devil. The time was evil. Long had the war oppression and passion been dammed in the breasts of these Indians. Their wrongs burned for revenge. But one of this crowd recognized the peril to Leamon and chose to divert it. He shouted piercingly and split the cordon of Indians closing around the man.

That piercing cry not only silenced the angry Nokis; it gave Marian the most startling shock of her life. She recognized that voice.

The tall Nopah reached Leamon's side and his long arms grasped the taut lasso. With one powerful lunge he jerked the Noki from his horse.

(Continued on Page 228)



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The Vanishing American

(Continued from Page 227)

That tall form! That action! Marian thought she had lost her mind. Then the Nopah, in recovering from his exertion, rose to expose his face.

Nophaie! Marian tried to scream the name, but no sound left her lips. She reeled in her saddle. She clutched the pommel. A terrible uplift of her heart seemed to end in bursting gush of blood all over her.

One sweep of long arms sent the noose flying from Leamon's neck. How ghastly and livid his face! He fell against the Indian, either in collapse or feigning faint. The Indian braced Leamon, shook him hard, hauled and pushed him through the crowd, and released him at the door of the school. Leamon staggered in out of sight. When the Indian turned to face the crowd, tall, lithe, with singularly free stride, Marian assuredly recognized Nophaie. He began to push back members of that mob, once again pressing toward the schoolhouse. Other Indians, guided by his example, fell in line to avert further violence, and at length the whole mass, sullen and gesticulating, was forced back into the village.

It was afternoon and Marian waited in Paxton's sitting room for Nophaie.

SHE had met Withers at the post. He had come to Mesa with Nophaie to take her back to Kaidab. They needed her there. Outside, the dark day had grown colder and grayer. A snow flurry whitened the ground. The wind mourned. Withers had said Nophaie looked well enough. No one could tell. He had reached the reservation from a point on the railroad east of Flagerstown. Two whole days—forty-eight hours—he had been on the desert without her knowledge!

Would Nophaie never come? Withers had gone to fetch him back. But Marian could not wait. If she could only see him, feel him, make sure this was not the madness of a dream, then she could be calm, unutterably thankful, strong to stand any shock.

Suddenly she heard a step—the soft, quick, padded sound of an Indian moccasin. Her heart almost stopped beating.

Nophaie entered. "Benow di Cleash," he said in a voice that was rich and happy.

She raised both arms and lips before strength left her. Then as he enveloped her she needed nothing but to feel. One woman's flash of sight—the keen, dark Indian face, thinner, finer, softening in its bronze; then she could see no more. But she felt rippling of muscles that clasped and set round her like iron bands. Pressed against his wide breast she felt its heave and pound. And his lips!

"Oh, you seem well! Are you well?" Marian was saying later, for what seemed the hundredth time.

"Well, yes; but I'll never again climb the north wall of Nothis Ahn," he replied with a sad smile.

"Nophaie! Oh, I am not quite myself," she whispered. "You feel strong; you look the same. No, there's a strange change. Your eyes! Nophaie, your mouth! They twitch."

"That's only shell-shock," he said. "It will pass away. Really I am pretty well, considering. The gas left me liable to consumption, but I haven't it yet. And my old sage uplands will cure me."

MARIAN could scarcely believe her eyes. She had expected to see him maimed, broken, aged, wrecked, but he was none of these. Slowly she realized. Then she espied a medal on the dark velveteen shirt he wore. His D. S.! How did he win that? Was she not a woman?

"Benow di Cleash, my dearest, I've not been to pink teas, like the ones you used to drag me to at Cape May," he replied with a laugh that signalized the acuteness of her joy.

"You fought! Oh, I've heard," she cried out. "The Withers boy wrote home. He had met a soldier who knew you—told him all about you—Munson."

"Yes. We met over there. But soldiers are apt to be quiet about themselves and to praise the other fellow."

"Nophaie, forgive me—something in me demands to know," she said, unable to repress her strange emotion. "I—I think loving you and living out here has made

me—a little more American than I was—more Indian! Did you play football with any Germans?"

He laughed, but not the same way. For an instant he seemed no longer Nophaie. "Benow di Cleash, I did—yes. I got into a field of Germans—scattered, running like the old football players—only I had a bayonet."

XIX

AMODERATION of the severe January weather attended Marian's arrival at Kaidab.

Withers had said to her: "We're a pretty discouraged outfit, and we need a little of your sunshine. We all had the flu except Colman. Mrs. Withers isn't her old self yet. That's the worst of this queer sickness. It leaves half its victims with some infirmity. We're going to need you, and I reckon you'll be better off and shore happier at Kaidab. And if it's work you're looking for among these poor Indians—ha! I reckon you'll have enough, for this winter has started in a way to scare us."

The son was still in France, safe now, at least from the Germans.

Nophaie had no home now, except the open, and Withers forced him to accept room and board in his house. Marian was sure that one of the trader's needs of her was to help him keep Nophaie from going back to the hogans of his people, to do which in midwinter would be fatal for him.

The afternoon of Marian's arrival at Kaidab was not without something of pleasure and happiness. The dark cloud hovered at the horizon of the mind. She herself brought cheer and gayety, for she felt she certainly owed them that. Besides the proximity of Nophaie made her more light-headed than she would have cared to confess.

"Marian, you should see Nophaie in the uniform he wore when he got here," said Mrs. Withers.

"His service uniform?" responded Marian eagerly.

"Yes, and it sure showed service."

Whereupon Marian conceived an irresistible desire to see Nophaie in the garb of a soldier. So she asked him to put it on. He refused. She importuned him, only to be again refused. Nophaie seemed a little strange about the matter. But Marian did not care and, persisting, she followed him into the long hall of the Indian decorations and there she waylaid him.

"Please, Nophaie, put your uniform on for me," she begged. "It's only a girl's sentimental whim. But I don't care what it is. That girl loves you."

"Benow di Cleash, I hate the sight of that uniform now," he said.

"Oh, why?"

"I don't know. I didn't hate it until I got back here—on the desert—home."

"**O**H! WELL, you need never put it on again after this time. Just once for me. I want to take your picture. Think! I have pictures of you in football suit, baseball suit, Indian suit, and now I want one of you as an American soldier. Why not?" And she was not above lending her arms and lips to persuasion, which quite vanquished him. "You're a white girl all right," he laughed.

"White? Certainly, and your white girl."

Somehow she seemed to want to be unutterably tender and loving to him, as if to make up for what she owed him. But when she saw him stride out in his uniform, she quite lost her teasing and affectionate mood. It was almost as if sight of him had struck her dumb. The slouchy loose garb of an Indian had never done justice to Nophaie. As a soldier he seemed magnificent. She dragged him out in the sunlight and photographed him to her satisfaction. Then all the rest of the afternoon, which they spent in the living room before the big open fireplace, she was very quiet and watched him.

After dinner he went to his room and returned in velveteen and corduroy, with his silver-buckled belt and moccasins. Nophaie again!

Marian felt glad. That soldier uniform had obsessed her. Its meaning was so staggering.

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The Vanishing American

(Continued from Page 228)

Withers seemed to throw off cares of the present and forebodings of the future. He teased Marian, and he kept coaxing Nophaie to tell something about the war. Marian added her entreaties to those of the trader. But Nophaie would not speak of himself. He told about the deaths of four of his Nopahs, all in action at the Front, and each story had for Marian a singular tragic significance. Then he told about Shoie, who had turned out to be more than a bear trapper of Germans. American officers discovered, late, Shoie's remarkable gift for seeing or picking out weaknesses in the German front line when they were driving. Nophaie said it was simply the Nopah's wonderful eyesight. At any rate Shoie was sent out on scout duty by both day and night. He could hide himself on apparently level bare ground. He needed no more cover than a jack rabbit. He had the Indian's instinct of stealthiness.

FROM one of his scouting trips Shoie did not return. He was reported among the missing. But some time during the fourth night of his absence he crawled back to his own trenches. A sentry stumbled over him. Shoie could not talk, and appeared covered with blood, probably seriously wounded. Examination proved that he had been spiked to a wall through hands and feet, and his tongue had been cut out. As Shoie could not write his own language or understand much of the white man's it was difficult to find out what had happened to him. Indians of his own kind at length pieced out the probable truth of his story. He had ventured too far and had been captured. The Germans had tried to force him to talk, or to make signs in regard to his regiment and trenches. They did not understand an Indian. Shoie made faces at them. They drove spikes through his hands and feet and left him to hang for a day. Then they tried again to make him tell what they wanted to know. Shoie stuck out his tongue at the intolerant Germans. They ordered his tongue cut out. And still they left him to hang. That night Shoie worked the spikes through his hands, then pulled out those that held his feet. And he crawled across No Man's Land to his own trenches. He recovered from his injuries.

"Oh, monsters!" cried out Marian. "Could they not have killed him?"

"Benow di Cleash, the Huns were like Blucher," replied Nophaie.

THAT was the only word he ever said against the Germans, the only time he ever spoke of them.

"And is Shoie here?" queried Marian.

"Wal, I reckon so," replied Withers. "He was in the store today, begging tobacco. Sure it's a sight when he tries to talk. The Indians are more scared of him than ever. They think he has offended the evil spirits who had his tongue cut out to punish him for casting spells. Something strange about what's happened to Shoie!"

Late that night, after the Withers family and others of their household had gone to bed, Marian sat a while with Nophaie before the glowing embers in the fireplace. This hour really was the happiest and most beautiful in its teaching of any she had ever spent with him. Much of his bitterness had vanished. If he had been great before he

went to war, what was he now? Marian could only feel little, humble, adoring, before this strange composite of a man. For Marian he was now more of a lover than he had ever been. Marian trembled a little, fearful even in her hour of bliss. Why had he let down his Indian reserve? What did he know that she did not? If he had gotten rid of the scourge of his soul—his unbelief—he would have told her. But she would have divined that. Nophaie was at once closer to her than ever, yet farther away. All she could do was to grasp at the skirts of the happy and thrilling and thought-provoking hour.

BAD news arrived the next day, along with more raw, cloudy weather. Both white travelers and Nopah couriers reported increasing illness in the sections of desert they had traversed.

"It's come," grated out Withers, somber as an Indian.

That night the desert wind mourned under the eaves of the house. Marian could not sleep for a long while. How mournful! It wailed low and rose to a shriek and lulled again. It made Marian shiver. It had an unearthly sound. Its portent was storm, cold, evil, plague, death, desolation.

At dawn a blizzard was blowing. Snow and sleet and dust sheeted across the bleak levels, obscuring the mesas. It lasted two days, and broke to raw rain that melted most of the snow—then sleet again, followed by bitter cold. The sun did not show. At night the moon and stars were hidden. A dark leaden rolling canopy obscured the heavens.

Nophaie rode the ranges. Neither Withers nor Marian could keep him in. And the concluding weeks of that month brought the catastrophe Withers had predicted.

The Indians were caught like rats in a trap. Their hogans were no places to fight influenza. Three months of growing poverty had suddenly culminated in a terrible situation. These Indians had saved no money. They had only horses, sheep and corn. The price of wool fell to nothing. Withers managed to hold the best of the blanket weavers working at a loss to himself. He kept these families. And no Indian was turned away empty-handed from the

store. Meat and corn were about all most of the Nopahs had to eat, and the time came when many of them did not have that. From a prosperous people they fell in six months to a starving people, at the mercy of a disease that seemed fatal to most. It killed them quickly. Those it did not kill it left blind or infirm or deaf.

IN THE midst of this tragic time Withers received word that Gekin Yashi had fallen victim to the dread malady. A sick Indian rode in with the news, disclosing the whereabouts of the Little Beauty. She was married to a Nopah who came often to the post, but who had never given Withers a

hint that might have cleared up the mystery of her disappearance.

"Just like a Nopah!" ejaculated the trader. "Well, Gekin Yashi is down with flu. It'll kill her, almost sure. Maybe we can get her out in time. Her husband's name is Ba ho Zohnie. He's a jester. Fine Nopah! His hogan is somewhere up Nugi Cañon.

(Continued on Page 232)

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The Vanishing American

(Continued from Page 231)

I've sent Indians with horses to the mouth of the cañon. I'll take the car. Maybe I can drive up to the pass; maybe to the cañon. Give me medicines."

He had been talking to Colman and his wife. Marian sat beside the fire, startled and grieved into silence. Suddenly Nophaie entered, unfolding his blanket. His quirt hung on his wrist. Snowflakes gleamed on his sombrero.

"Ah! Here's Nophaie," said Withers. "I was hoping you'd get back. Have you heard about Gekin Yashi?"

"Yes. We must hurry. She is dying. And she has a baby."

Marian leaped up, stung into action. "Let me go with you," she entreated.

Nophaie showed less willingness to take her than Withers. But Marian prevailed upon both of them, helped by Mrs. Withers.

THE ride in the car, with a hot stone at her feet and heavy blankets round her and over her face, was not much for Marian to endure. But when she got into the saddle, headed toward the wind, it was a different matter.

The day was not far advanced, and the sky appeared divided into sections of lowering gray pall, broken purple clouds and steely blue sky. The sun shone fitfully. At the outset the cold was not bitter, though the wind cut like a knife.

About five or six miles up the Nugi Cañon a gray moving cloud, low down, filling the cañon thickly as fog, came swooping down. It was a snow squall. Withers led off to the left into one of the intersecting cañons. When the snow reached Marian she had a few moments of exhilaration in the feathery white pall; and then, as it came thick and cold, she protected her face and paid attention only to the trail. Presently the snow squall lost its vigor, thinned out, and began to blow away as it had come. Clearer, more amber grew the light; and soon purple slopes of sage rose from the stream-bed to the snowbanks under the cliffs.

The storm swept on, wreathing the rims and filling the narrow cañon behind. To the fore all was clear once more—blue sky, golden towers gleaming down upon a closed, notched end of this cañon. It was a wild, beautiful place, inclosed by wet-faced cliffs, fringed by black spruce, sloped in snow and sage.

WHEN Withers rode up a bank and into a clump of cedars to dismount before a hogan, Marian realized with a shock that she was at the end of the ride. She had forgotten its portent. Nophaie slid off his horse and, dropping his blanket from his shoulders, bent his lofty form and entered the hogan. Withers ordered the two

Indians he had brought with him to build a fire under the cedars. "Get down and exercise a bit," he said to Marian. "They'll soon have a fire to warm you."

"Won't you let me see Gekin Yashi?" asked Marian with hesitation.

"Yes; but wait," he replied, and taking a saddlebag off his saddle he hurried into the hogan.

Marian had scarcely dismounted before the trader came out again, with a look on his face that made Marian's halting lips stiffen.

"Too late," he ejaculated a little huskily. "Gekin Yashi died in the night. Ba ho Zohnie's mother must have gone sometime yesterday, and —"

"Someone said there was a—a baby," faltered Marian as the trader hesitated.

"Come here to the fire," rejoined the practical Withers. "You look blue. Yes, there is a baby, and it's half white, as anyone could see. It's about gone, too, breathing its last. I can't do anything but stay and bury them."

"Oh, Withers, let me go into the hogan!" asked Marian.

"What for? It's no sight for you, let alone the risk."

"I'm not afraid of sight or risk. Please. I feel it's a duty. I cared for Gekin Yashi."

"Reckon that's one reason why I'd rather you remembered her as she used to be."

"I will never forget the Little Beauty of the Nopahs," murmured Marian sorrowfully.

"All right; you can go, but wait," went on Withers. "I want to tell you something. Ba ho Zohnie was one of the best of Nopahs. He had loved Gekin Yashi since she was a kid. But she didn't care for him, and Do Etin wouldn't make her marry him. Maybe she ran off from the school at Mesa in her shame. For Gekin Yashi was as good as she was pretty. But if she did run off it was made easy for her. Ba ho Zohnie found her—his brother who's with us told me—and he took her home and married her. The half-white baby was welcome too. Now he's in there holding on to the poor little dying beggar as if it were his own."

IT TOOK courage for Marian to walk up to that hogan and enter. The smoldering fire was almost out. She saw Nophaie sitting with bowed head beside a young Nopah, the counterpart of hundreds she had seen, who held a four or five months' old baby on his lap.

Nophaie did not look up, neither did the other Indian. Marian bent over that tiny bundle and peered into the convulsed face. How dark the Indian's hand alongside of the baby's cheek! Even as Marian gazed, an indefinable changing reached its culmination and set. She believed that had been the passing instant of life.

Beyond these sitting Indians lay a blanketed form close to the hogan wall. It suggested the inanimate nature of stone. Snow had drifted in through the open framework of the hogan upon the folds of blanket. Behind Marian on the other side, next the wall, lay a slither form, not wholly covered. Marian saw raven black hair and shape of head she thought she recognized.

"Nophaie," she whispered. "This—this must be Gekin Yashi."

"Yes," replied Nophaie, and rising he stripped back the blanket from the dead girl.

AT ONCE Marian recognized Gekin Yashi and yet did not know her. Could this be

the face of a sixteen-year-old girl? Disease and death had distorted and blackened it, but this change was not alone what Marian imagined she saw. Gekin Yashi's songs and dreams and ideals had died before her flesh. She looked a matured, settled Indian wife.

Marian fled out of the hogan, back to the fire under the cedar. A horror possessed her of she knew not what. Gekin Yashi had passed away. It was better so. Bruised, trampled flower of the desert! Had she not cried out to Marian: "No one ever tells me beautiful things!" What was that cry of the soul? How great had been the potentiality of that awakening mind?

Marian's poignant reflections were interrupted by the voice of Withers inside the

(Continued on Page 234)

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The Vanishing American

(Continued from Page 232)

hogan. "Nophaie, the baby is dead. Make him give it up. We've got to bury these Indians and beat it out of here pronto."

Marian spread her cold and trembling hands to the fire. Somehow the trenchant words of the practical trader roused her out of the depths. Such men as Withers bore the greater burdens. He had kindness, sympathy, but he dealt with the cold, hard facts. He was making himself a poor man for this Nopah tribe and working like a galley slave and risking his life. Through him Marian saw more of the truth. And it roused a revolt in her against weakness and a too great leaning towards idealism and altruism, and for the moment against this stark and awful plague of influenza.

NOPHAIE might be taken. He would be if he kept riding the range day and night, exposing himself to both bitter weather and the disease. The fear struck at Marian's heart. It did not pass. It shook her and stormed her. She called Nophaie to her and led him behind the clump of cedars, where the horses were nibbling at the sage. Nophaie's mind seemed clouded. She held his hand, endeavoring to quell her mounting excitement. The sun had come out momentarily, crowning the towers with gold. How deeply purple bloomed the sage!

"Benow di Cleash, you should not have come," said Nophaie regretfully.

"I'm glad. It has hurt me—done something more than that," she replied. "I was sick—sick deep in my soul. But I'm over it, I think. And now I want to talk."

"Why, you're white; you're shaking," he exclaimed.

"Is it any wonder? Nophaie, I love you—and I'm terror-stricken. This awful plague!"

He did not reply, but his hands pressed hers closely and his eyes dilated.

Marian had learned to sense in him the mystic, the Indian, when it stirred. She wrenched her hands free and then threw her arms round his neck. The action liberated and augmented the storm in her breast. What she had meant to express utterly, in her frenzy to save Nophaie and make him take her out of the desert, burst all bounds of woman's subtlety and deliberation. What she said or did in this mad moment of self-preservation she never realized. But she awakened to a terrifying consciousness that she had inflamed the savage in Nophaie.

He crushed her in his arms and bent to her face with eyes of black fire. Tenderness, gentleness, love had no part in this response to her woman's allurements. His mastery was that of the primal man. He bent her, swung and lifted her. Like a sack he threw her across her saddle, head and feet hanging.

BUT Marian, once partially free of his iron arms, struggled and rose, and got into better position on her horse. She reeled against Nophaie. She could scarcely see. But she felt release from his grip. Something checked him, and his blurred face began to grow distinct, to come closer until it pressed against her bosom.

"White woman, you'll make—an Indian of me," he panted huskily.

It pierced Marian. What more strange, incomprehensible appeal could he have made? Yet how deep it struck! She, who had loved the nobility of him, to drag him from the heights! Then came her struggle. Only the tragedy of this Indian man could ever have mastered the woman at that moment. Gekin Yashi, the poor demented

Shoie, Ba ho Zohnie and his unquenchable sense of loss, Do Etin and Maahasenie—these strange figures loomed beside Nophaie's. That was a terrible moment.

"Nophaie, forgive!" she whispered, encircling his head with her arms and pressing it closer to her breast. "I've been beside myself. This plague, this death has made me a coward. And I tried to make you —"

"Benow di Cleash, that'll be about all," he said, raising his face, and he smiled through tears.

An hour later Withers' melancholy task had been completed. Ba ho Zohnie refused to leave with the party. Marian's last sight of him was one she could never forget—the dark-faced Indian standing before the hogan he could never enter again, peering across the graves of his mother and wife and the ill-gotten baby he had meant to father, across the gray sage flat to the blank walls of stone. What did he see? What did he hear? Whence came his strength?

XX

THREE thousand Nopahs died of the plague, and from one end of the reservation to the other a stricken, bewildered and crushed people bowed their heads. When spring came, with its warm sun dissipating the strange wind of death, the Indians believed that the eating of horseflesh had saved them.

Slowly the clutch of fear loosed its possession of Marian's heart. Slowly the long spell of gloom yielded to a hope inspired by sunshine and a steady decline in the death rate of Nopahs. Yet not wholly did her old spirit return. There was something ineradicable, vague, tenacious, inscrutable, something she felt every time Nophaie smiled at her.

They all worked to alleviate the sufferings of the Indians. If the trader had ever saved any money he lost it all and more that winter. Marian's means had shrunk to almost nothing. Civilization seemed far away, absorbed in its own problems. The affairs of the reservation moved on as always. And the little circle of white people at Kaidab lived true to something the Indians had inspired in them, forgotten by the outside world.

March, with its last icy breath of winter, yielded to April with its sandstorms. The wind blew a gale one day and the next was calm, warm, with spring in the air. Only a few cases of influenza were reported, and deaths but seldom.

Yet Marian could not quite feel free. The tentacles of a deep-seated emotion, stranger than love, and impalpable, still were fastened in her heart.

Nophaie had ridden to Oljato, and when he did not return the following day the nameless thing that was neither thought nor feeling laid its cold hand on Marian's soul. She worked on Withers' accounts that day; she wrote long-neglected letters; she busied herself for an hour over a sadly depleted and worn wardrobe; she rode horseback out to the rocky ridge above Kaidab and strained her eyes on the trail to Oljato.

BUT these energies did not allay her nervousness nor quell the woman's sixth sense. She tried the trading post, which of late had been hard to bear. Hungry, gaunt Indians would come in and stand around, staring with great dark eyes until Withers or Colman gave them something to eat. It was a starved tribe now.

(Continued on Page 235)



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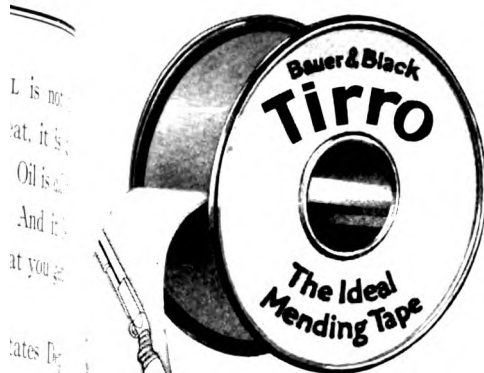
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The Vanishing American

(Continued from Page 234)

Marian saw Indians carrying bows and arrows, a custom long past, which had been resumed because the hunters had sold their guns or could not buy ammunition. Wool had practically ceased its use as a means of trade. The Indians would not shear sheep for the price offered. A few goatskins and an occasional blanket were bartered over the counter. It was distressing to watch an Indian woman come in with a blanket, often a poorly made one that Withers did not want and could not sell, and haggle over a price which was ruinous for the trader to offer. In this way Withers kept alive the Nopahs of his district. They did not thank him, for none of them understood.

This day Marian encountered Shoie again, and despite the feeling almost of horror that he incited she resolutely stood her ground and watched him. Shoie's companion was a young Nopah, very dark and wild-looking, ragged and unkempt, with a crippled foot. Something about this second Indian impelled Marian's sensitiveness even more than Shoie. He was watching Shoie's signs and the contortions of his lacerated lips as he tried to convey some meaning. Withers observed Marian's perplexity and gave her his interpretation.

"THAT crippled Nopah is one of the few criminals of the tribe. They caught him and held his foot in the fire until it was burned to a crisp. That was his punishment, and he is now an outcast. I reckon Shoie is trying to say that he'll cast an evil spell over him."

Marian earned her momentary forgetfulness of self then in contemplation of these two Indians. She compared them with Ba ho Zohnie and Nophaie. But when thought of Nophaie recurred, she could no longer stay in the store.

Outside it was growing cool. The sun had set, and there shone a ruddy effulgence over the tilted sections of wall in the west. Coyotes were wailing. Marian walked in the twilight. It seemed an immense and living thing, moving up out of the desert. An oppression weighed upon her. How dark and lonely the empty space out beyond! The stone-walled confines of the wasteland flung their menace at her thinking mind.

Withers appeared unusually quiet that night. His wife talked a little in her low voice, grown like an Indian's. Marian sat beside the hearth, with eyes on the glowing white-and-gold embers.

Suddenly she was startled out of her reveries. "What was that?" she asked. "Horse. Must be Nophaie," replied the trader, as if relieved.

MARIAN sat still, listening. But she heard only a strange knocking at her heart. At length the door opened with a sweep. Nophaie! His eyes were those of an Indian, but his face seemed that of a white man. He staggered slightly as he closed the door behind him and leaned back against it. His whole body was in vibration, strung, like that of an athlete about to leap.

His piercing gaze left Marian's face to search the trader's. "John, give me a room to die in."

Withers gasped and sank back limp. His wife uttered a frightened cry.

"It's got me," whispered Nophaie.

Marian's terror voiced its divination of her nameless instinct. "Oh, Nophaie!" she cried, and ran to him.

Nophaie reeled. He clasped her shoulders, held her away from him.

"Benow di Cleash, I should have been dead hours ago, but I had to see you. I had to die as a white man."

Marian shuddered under the clasp of his hands. They burned through her blouse.

"White woman, savior of Nophaie, go back to your people. All—is—well."

Then he collapsed against her and was caught by the trader. They half-carried him to his room and laid him on the bed. Then began frantic ministrations in his behalf. But little could be done for him. His jaw was locked. The fire of his face, the marble pallor, the hurried pulse, the congested lungs, the laboring heart all proclaimed the dread plague in its most virulent form.

ONCE in the dim lamplight, as Marian knelt beside the bed in agony, calling "Nophaie—Nophaie!" he opened his eyes, somber, terrible, no longer piercing with his unquenchable spirit; and it seemed to her that a fleeting smile, the old beautiful light, veiled for an instant his tragic soul and blessed her.

The trader took her back to the sitting room. There she huddled down before the fire, racked with pangs. Oh, the futility of Nophaie's life and of her love! Mrs. Withers came and went, softly stepping, tender of hand, but she did not speak. The night wore on. Outside the wind rose, to mourn into the dead silence. The vines under the eaves rustled.

Sometime in the late hours Withers came to her and touched her gently. "Marian, his sufferings are over," he said huskily.

"Nophaie — he is — gone?" whispered Marian, rising.

"Yes. Unconscious of course. I must tell you the strangest thing. Many of these Nopahs who died of this plague turned black. Nophaie turned white! I was shocked. It's as strange as what he said, 'John, give me a room to die in!' Marian, it must mean he was true at the last—to the mind, the soul developed in him. Yet his life here was one endless struggle to be true to his birthright. Oh, the pity of it!"

MARIAN wrapped a blanket round her and went out into the night. The cold desert wind fanned her face and whipped her hair. Dawn was not far away. The stars were paling and the blackest hour was at hand. Desert and sky, the shadows, the mournful wind, the silence—all kept their secret. But while life was here and there, only a step away was death. "All—is—well!" Nophaie's last words must be the inspiration of her life. What had he

meant by calling her his savior? Forever that must be mystery. But perhaps, in the grip of death, his unbelief had been illumined away. Her belief in God must teach her so. Yet she stood again with Nophaie on the heights above the Marching Rocks!

The desert was not to be her home. But always it must be an irresistible influence for thought, for good, for memory, for the clarifying of life. Always limned on her inward vision must be the upland sage of purple, the golden-crowned monuments asleep in the sunlight, the long green sweep and slope, and in the shadow of the silent walls—the Indian Nophaie.

THE END



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