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The Pan-Americans

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Honorable Senator Sagebrush," "The Fire Bringers," Etc.

The laying of rails through a country where a revolution is liable to break out at any moment is a pretty dangerous undertaking. Add to the task the rescue of a general's daughter, and the piloting of a pleasure party through the thick of the fighting, and you have a glimpse of the trouble-picture that Mr. Lynde has painted. This story of the Spanish-Americas, told by a keenly observant traveler and an expert engineer, as well as a picturesque writer, is one of the best we have published about the land of strife.

(A Complete Novel)

I.

"THE ROYAL SOUTHERN."



BY the time the sleet-covered taxicab was slewing and skidding up to the entrance of the Grand Central Station, Marchbanks had the door open and was looking for his alighting place on the icy pavement.

"Stay where you are; I shan't hold you more than a minute or two," he called to the half-frozen chauffeur who had broken all the speed laws getting him to Forty-second Street from the Threkelds' apartments, and Mrs. Tom Threkeld's cozy and hospitable dinner table. Then he picked his way across the slippery sidewalk, and pushed through the storm doors to make a quick dash for the package room, where, earlier in the day, he had left his suit cases.

At the window there was a delay. An irascible old man in a grandfather hat,

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and with a woolen comforter wound around his neck, had nervously torn his check in two, and could not find the numbered half.

Marchbanks was the third man back, and the waiting line behind him lengthened rapidly. He glanced at his watch. In a very short time the ferry for the train which he must catch would leave its slip at the foot of Twenty-third Street. Marchbanks was fuming like an impatient lover, when the man immediately behind him reached a hand over his shoulder, and said:

"Hello, Houston, old messmate. When did you get back? And what are you swearing at?"

Houston Marchbanks turned as well as he could without losing his place in the line, and the boyish-looking naval lieutenant who was giving him the hearty service grip, laughed.

"I thought the diplomatic corps never hurried, and never got impatient," he went on, adding, "You look as if you were about to swell up and explode."

"I shall, if old Uncle Wayback, there,

This is the second installment of Zane Grey's colorful Western story. It began two weeks ago in the June Month-End issue, which can be had at the news stands.

The Heritage of the Desert

By Zane Grey

Author of "The Last of the Plainsmen," "False Colors," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Jack Hare, given up by the doctors, goes to Salt Lake City in search of health. He is employed by a cattle company to get on the trail of Dene, the outlaw. He drops fainting on the desert, and is found by August Naab, an old Mormon, who takes him with him to his oasis. Holderness, a land thief, friend of Dene and chief enemy of Naab, demands that "Dene's spy" be given up, but Naab refuses. Snap Naab, one of August's sons, takes a dislike to Jack Hare, and in a drunken frenzy knocks him down. When Mescal—an adopted daughter of August, child of an Indian mother and a Spanish father—asks Jack about the bruise on his forehead, he says nothing of Snap, and tells her that he fell.

CHAPTER V.

BLACK SAGE AND JUNIPER.



UGUST NAAB appeared on the path leading from his fields.

"Mescal, here you are," he greeted. "How about the sheep?"

"Piute is driving them down to the lower range. He lost a good many while we were gone. There are a thousand coyotes hanging about the flock. Piute saw several big timber wolves, and the track of a bear."

"That's bad," rejoined August. "Jack, there's evidently some real shooting in store for you. We'll pack to-day and get an early start to-morrow. I'll put you on Noddle; he's slow, but the easiest climber I ever owned. He's like riding—What's the matter with your face?"

One of his long strides spanned the distance between them; he scrutinized the bruise on Hare's forehead, and touched it with his fingers.

"I fell," said Hare, flushing.

"Lad, I know of few circumstances that justify a lie. That blow was made by a man's fist. Snap struck you."

Hare might still have tried to dissimulate, notwithstanding August's positive affirmation, but one glance at his stern face showed the uselessness of it, so he kept silent.

"Drink makes my son unnatural." He breathed heavily, as one in conflict with wrath. "But that's no excuse—we'll not wait till to-morrow to go up on the plateau; we'll go at once."

Then quick surprise awakened for Hare in the meaning in Mescal's eyes; he caught only a fleeting glimpse, a dark flash, eloquent of anger, and it left him with the glow of an emotion, half pleasure, half pain.

"Mescal," went on August, "go into the house, and keep out of Snap's way. Jack, watch me pack. You need to learn these things." In a short time he had packs on three burros. "I could put all this outfit on two burros, but the trail is narrow, and a wide pack might bump a burro off. Let's see, I've got all your stuff but the saddle, that we'll leave till we get a horse for you. Black Bolly there—that's a mustang, Jack. If we could get one like her for you! We captured her when she was a colt. She can show heels to anything on the range. Well, all's ready."

Mescal came at his call, and, mount-

ing Black Bolly, rode out toward the cliff wall, with Wolf trotting at the fore. Hare got astride Noddle. August, waving good-by to his women folk, started the train of burros after Mescal.

How they would be able to climb the face of that steep cliff mystified Hare. He saw the white dog start, and then Black Bolly. Upon nearer view he discovered the yard-wide trail curving upward in corkscrew fashion round a projecting corner of cliff.

The stone was a soft red shale, and the trail had been cut in it at a steep angle. It was so steep that the burros appeared to be climbing straight up. Noddle pattered into it, dropped his head and his long ears, and slowed to patient plodding. August walked in the rear.

The first thing that struck Hare was the way the burros in front of him stopped at the curves in the trail, and turned in a space so small that their four feet were close together, yet they swung their packs scarcely scraping the wall. They took short steps, and stopped to rest of their own accord, and started again.

At every turn they were higher than he was, going in the opposite direction, yet he could reach out and touch them. He glanced up to see Mescal right above him, leaning forward with her brown hands clasping the pommel. Then he looked out and down; already the green cluster of cottonwoods lay far below. After that, sensations thronged swiftly in his mind.

Round and round, up and up, steadily, surely, the beautiful mustang led the train. There were sounds of rattling stones, and click of hoofs, and scrape of pack, and heave of burro. On one side was the iron-stained cliff, not smooth or glistening at close range, but of dull, dead, rotting rock; on the other the light grew whiter, and the green oval below smaller, and the blue oval above wider, and the red cliffs opposite farther away.

The trail changed to a zigzag along a seamed and cracked buttress, where ledges leaned outward, waiting to fall.

Then a steeper incline, where the burros crept upward warily, led to a long level ledge heading to the left.

Mescal halted on a promontory and waited. The girl—with her wind-blown hair, the gleam of white band, and a dash of red along the fringed leggings—and the black mustang, and the white dog, gave inexpressible life and beauty to that wild, jagged point of rock, sharp against the glaring sky.

"This is Lookout Point," said Naab. "I keep an Indian here all the time during daylight. He's a peon, a Navajo slave. He can't talk, as he was born without a tongue, or it was cut out; but he has the best eyes of any Indian I know. You see this point commands the farm, the Navajo trail across the river, the Echo Cliffs opposite, where the Navajos signal to me, and also the White Sage trail."

The oasis shone under the bare, triangular promontory. The red river with its rising roar wound in bold curve from the split in the cliffs. To the right, white-sloped Coconina brunted the horizon. Forward across the cañon line opened the glaring desert.

"With this peon watching here I'm not likely to be surprised," said Naab. "That red strip of sand protects me at night from approach, and I've never had anything to fear from across the river."

Naab's peon came from a little cave in the wall, and grinned the greeting he could not speak. To Hare's uneducated eye, all Indians resembled one another, yet this one stood apart from the others—not differing in blanketed leanness, or straggling black hair, or bronze skin, but in the bird-of-prey cast of his features, the sharpness, the wildness, the prominence of the eyes.

Naab gave him a bag from one of the packs, spoke a few words in Navajo, and then slapped the burros into the trail.

The climb thenceforth was more rapid, because less steep, and the trail now led among broken fragments of cliff. The color of stone had changed from red to yellow, and small cedars grew in protected places.

The ride had begun to tell on Hare's strength, and toward the end, as he occasionally saw the rim of the wall above, he thought he could not manage to stay longer upon Noddle. The air had grown thin and cold, and though the sun was yet an hour high, his fingers were numb.

"Hang on, Jack," cheered August. "We're almost up."

At last Black Bolly disappeared, likewise the bobbing burros, one by one; then Noddle, wagging his long ears, reached a level. At the same instant that Hare glimpsed a gray-green cedar forest, with yellow crags rising in the background, a rush of cold wind smote his face. For a moment he choked; he could not get his breath. The air was thin and rare, and he inhaled deeply, trying to overcome the suffocation, but ineffectually.

Presently he divined that the trouble was not with the rarity of the atmosphere, but with the rich, bitter-sweet, penetrating odor it carried. He was almost stifled. It was not like the smell of pine, though it made him think of pine trees.

"Ha! That's fine," said Naab, expanding his great chest. "That's air for you, my lad. Can you taste it? The bitter comes from black sage, the sweet from juniper. They drown the cedar smell. Well, here's camp, your home for many a day, Jack. We always bring the sheep down here in lambing season, because as soon as they begin to drop lambs the coyotes, wolves, lions, and bears follow the flock. We couldn't save any lambs up on the high range. There's Piute. How do? How's the sheep?"

A short, squat Indian, good-humored of face, shook his black head till the silver rings danced in his ears, and replied: "Bad! Coyotes!"

"Piute—shake with Jack. Him shoot coyote—got big gun," said Naab.

"How—do—Jack," replied Piute, extending his hand, and then straightway began examining and fondling the new rifle. "Heap big gun!"

"Jack, you'll find this Indian one you can trust, for all he's a Piute outcast,"

went on August. "I've had him with me ever since Mescal found him along the Coconina trail five years ago. He's devoted to her, and he'll make a good friend for you. What Piute doesn't know about this side of Coconina isn't worth learning."

In a depression, sheltered from the wind, snugly lay the camp. A fire burned in the centre. A little conical tent, like a tepee in shape, hung suspended from a cedar branch, and was staked at four points. A leaning slab of rock furnished shelter for camp supplies, and for the Indian, and at one end a spring gushed out. A huge, gray-sheathed cedar tree marked the entrance to this hollow glade, and under it August began preparing Hare's bed.

"Here's the place you're to sleep, rain or shine or snow," he said. "Now I've spent my life sleeping on the ground, and Mother Earth makes the finest bed. I'll dig out a little pit in this soft mat of needles—that's for your hips. Then the tarpaulin so; a blanket so. Now the other blankets. Your feet must be a little higher than your head; you really sleep downhill, which breaks the wind. So you never catch cold. All you need do is change your position according to the direction of the wind. Pull up the blankets, and then the long end of the tarpaulin. If it rains or snows, cover your head, and sleep, my lad, sleep to the song of the wind!"

From where Hare lay, resting a weary body, he could see down into the depression which his position guarded. Naab built up the fire; Piute peeled potatoes, with deliberate care; Mescal, on her knees, brown arms bare, kneaded dough in a basin; Wolf crouched on the ground, all his supple white strength outstretched, and watched his mistress; Black Bolly tossed her head, elevating the bag on her nose so as to get all the grain.

Naab called him to supper after a while, and when Hare set to with a will on the bacon and eggs, and hot biscuits, he nodded approvingly.

"That's what I want to see. You must eat. Piute will get a deer, or you may shoot one yourself; eat all

the venison you can. Remember what Scarbreast said. Piute will go down to the farm and bring back eggs, milk, butter, everything you need. Then rest. That's the secret. If you eat and rest, you will gain strength. This bench is level for a mile. The sheep will be somewhere on it, and so you'll not have to go far to keep near them."

The rim of the wall was not a hundred paces from the camp; and when Hare strolled out to it after supper, the sun had dipped the under side of its red disk behind the desert. He watched it sink, and the golden-red flood of light grow darker and darker. Thought seemed remote from him then; he watched, and watched; until he saw the last spark of fire die from the snow slopes of Coconina; the desert retreated dimmer and dimmer; the oasis sank its outline, except for a faint light, like a star, into a bottomless purple pit.

The bleating of sheep roused him, and he returned to camp. The fire was still bright. Wolf slept close to Mescal's tent; Piute was not in sight; and Naab had rolled himself in blankets.

Crawling into his bed, Hare stretched aching legs, and lay still, as if he would never move again. Tired as he was, the bleating of the sheep, the clear ring of the bell on Black Bolly, and the faint tinkle of lighter bells on some of the rams, drove out sleep for a while. Accompanied by the sigh of the wind through the cedars, the music of the bells was sweet, and he listened till he heard no more.

A thin coating of frost crackled on his bed when he awakened; and out from under the shelter of the cedar all the ground was hoar-white. As he slipped from his blankets, the same strong smell of black sage and juniper smote him, almost like a blow. His nostrils seemed pasted together by some rich, piny pitch; and when he opened his lips to breathe, a sudden pain, as of a knife thrust, pierced his lungs. The thought following was as sharp as the pain. Pneumonia! What he had long expected!

He sank against the cedar, overcome

by the shock. But he rallied presently, for with the reestablishment of his old settled bitterness, which had been cut off by the interest of his situation, he had only to remember that he had given up hope.

He put his hand under his flannel shirt, and found the soreness not at the apex of the right lung, always the one sensitive, but all through his breast. Little, panting breaths did not hurt; but a deep inhalation filled his whole chest with thousands of pricking icy needles. In the depth of his breast was a hollow that burned.

When he had pulled on his boots and coat, and had washed himself in the runway of the spring, his hands were so numb with cold they refused to hold his comb and brush; and he presented himself at the roaring fire half-frozen, disheveled, trembling, but cheerful. He would not tell Naab. If he had to die to-day, to-morrow, or next week, he would lie down under a cedar and die; he could not whine about it to this man.

"Up with the sun!" greeted Naab. What cheer he had, as impelling as his splendid virility! Following the wave of his hand, Hare saw the sun, a pale, pink globe through a misty blue, rising between the golden crags of the eastern wall.

Mescal had a shy "Good morning" for him, and Piute a broad smile and familiar "How do." The peon slave, who had finished breakfast, and was about to depart, moved his lips in friendly greeting that had no sound.

"Did you hear the coyotes last night?" inquired August. "No! Well, of all the choruses I ever heard! There must be a thousand on the bench. Jack, I wish I could spare the time to stay up here with you, and shoot some. You'll have practice with the rifle, but don't neglect a little with the Colt. Practice particularly the draw I taught you. Piute has a carbine, and he shoots at the coyotes, but who ever saw an Indian that could hit anything?"

"Ugh!—gun no good!" growled Piute, who evidently understood English pretty well.

Naab laughed, and while Hare ate

breakfast he discoursed on the sheep. The flock numbered three thousand. They were a goodly part of them Navajo stock, a small, hardy sheep, that could live on anything but cactus, and needed little water. This flock had grown from a small number to its present size in a few years. Being remarkably free from diseases and pests that retarded increase in low countries, the sheep had multiplied almost one for one for every year.

In the winter, he drove them down into the oasis; the other seasons, he herded them on the high ranges, where the cattle could not climb. There was grass enough on this plateau for a million sheep. After the spring thaw in early March, occasional snows fell till the end of May, and frost hung on even till summer; then the July rains made the plateau a garden.

"Get the forty-four now," concluded Naab, "and we'll go out and break it in."

With the long rifle in the hollow of his arm, Jack forgot that he was a sick man. When he got within gunshot of the flock, the smell of sheep effectually smothered the keen, cold, tasty odor of black sage and juniper. Sheep ranged everywhere under the low cedars. They browsed with noses in the frost, and from all around came the tinkle of tiny bells on the curly-horned rams, and an endless variety of bleats.

"They're spread now," said August. "Mescal drives them on every little while, and Piute gets ahead to pick out the best browse. Watch the dog, Jack. He's all but human. His mother was a big shepherd dog that I got in Lund. She must have had a strain of wild blood. Once while I was hunting deer on Coconina, she ran off with timber wolves, and we thought she was killed. But she came back, and had a litter of three puppies. Two were white, the other black. I think she killed the black one. And she neglected the others. One died, and Mescal raised the other. We called him Wolf. He loves Mescal, and loves the sheep, and hates a wolf. Mescal puts a bell on him when she is driving, and

the sheep know the bell. I think it would be a good plan for her to tie something red round his neck—a scarf—to keep you from shooting him for a wolf."

Nimble, alert, the big white dog was not still a moment. His duty was to keep the flock compact, to head the stragglers, and turn them back; and he knew his part perfectly. There was a dash, a fire about his work. He never barked. As he circled the flock, the small Navajo sheep, edging ever toward forbidden ground, bleated back to the fold, the larger ones wheeled reluctantly, and the old belled rams squared themselves, lowered their brown, massive horns, as if to butt him. Never, however, did they stand their ground when he reached them, for there was a decision about Wolf that brooked no opposition.

At times, when he was working on one side, a crafty sheep on the other would steal out into the thicket. Then Mescal called, and Wolf flashed back to her, lifting his proud head, eager, spirited, to take his order. A word, a wave of her long whip, sufficed for the dog to rout out the recalcitrant sheep, and send him bleating to his fellows.

"He manages them easily now," said Naab, "but when the lambs come, the little fellows, hundreds of them, can't be kept in. The coyotes and wolves hang out in the thickets, and pick up the stragglers. The worst enemy of sheep, though, is the silvertip, the old grizzly bear. Usually he is old, grouchy, dangerous to hunt. He comes into the herd, kills the mother sheep, and eats the milk bag—no more! He will kill forty sheep in a night. Piute saw the tracks of one up on the high range, and believes this bear is following the flock. Let's get off into the woods some little way, into the edge of the thickets—for Piute always keeps to the glades—and see if we can pick off a few coyotes. The best time, however, is in the late afternoon."

August cautioned Jack to step stealthily, and slip from cedar to cedar, to use every bunch of sage and juniper to hide his advance.

"Watch sharp, Jack; I've seen two already. Look for moving things. Don't try to see one quiet, for you can't till after your eye catches him moving. They are gray, gray as the cedars, the grass, the ground. Good! Yes, I see him, but don't shoot. That's too far. Wait. They sneak away, but will return. You can afford to make sure. Here now, by that stone—aim low, and be quick."

Jack leveled the rifle, and holding so that there was a faint line of ground between the front sight and the beast he hoped to kill, he pulled the trigger. With the ringing spang came the spat of the bullet, and the coyote flopped over.

Naab started to step off the distance, and Jack followed. The animal looked to him like a wild gray dog. It was shot through the middle, rather to Jack's surprise, for he had expected to see the bullet kick up the dust in front of the coyote. Naab said the distance was eighty-nine yards, called it a fine shot, advised Hare to remember how he had aimed; and, hanging the coyote on a cedar branch, once more cautiously advanced. In the course of a mile, without keeping the sheep near at hand, they saw upward of twenty coyotes, five of which Jack killed in as many shots.

"You've got the hang of it," said Naab, rubbing his hands. "Why, that's as well as I can do, Jack. You're going to make a great shot. You'll kill the varmints, and then we'll both get rich. Piute will skin and salt the pelts. Now I'm going up on the high range to look for bear sign. Go ahead, on your own hook."

Hare took little heed of the passing time while he stole under the cedars and through the thickets, spying out the cunning coyotes. He killed twelve more; and then, seeing a great, gaunt, gray beast loping off, he realized it was a timber wolf, and trembled in his eagerness.

Tree after tree he placed between the beast and himself, and then ran forward. At last, he was within a hundred yards. He thrust the rifle over

the branch of a cedar, and, breathless with opportunity, sighted quickly, but forgot to sight low, and the bullet puffed the dust far beyond.

Then Naab's yell, pealing out, claimed his attention; he answered, and directed his steps toward it. When they met, he recounted his last adventure, in mingled excitement and disappointment.

"Are you tired?" asked Naab.

"Tired? No," replied Jack.

"Well, you mustn't overdo, the very first day. It's now the middle of the afternoon. I've got to hurry down to the farm. I've news for you. There are some wild horses on the high range. I didn't see them, but found tracks everywhere. If they come down here, you send Piute to close the trail at the upper end of the bench, and you close the one where we came up. There are only two trails where even a deer can get off this plateau, and both are narrow splits in the wall, which can be closed by the gates. We made the gates to keep the sheep in, and they'll serve a turn. If you get the wild horses on the bench, send Piute for me at once."

They passed the Indian herding the sheep into a corral, built against an up-rising ridge of stone. Naab dispatched him to look for the dead coyotes. The three burros were in camp, two wearing empty pack saddles, and Noddle, for once not asleep, was eating from Mescal's hand.

"Mescal, hadn't I better take Black Bolly home?" asked August.

"Mayn't I keep her?"

"Of course. She's yours. But you run a risk. There are wild horses on the range. Will you keep her hobbled?"

"Yes," replied Mescal reluctantly. "Though I don't believe Bolly would run off from me."

"Look out she doesn't go, hobbles and all. Jack, here's the other bit of news I've for you. There's a great big grizzly camping on the trail of our sheep. I saw his tracks. He's a monster. He'll hide up in the rocks till lambing time—then look out! He might pay you a visit before. Now,

what I want to know is—shall I leave him to you, or put off important work and come up here to wait for him myself?"

"Why," said Jack slowly, "whatever you say. If you think you can safely leave him to me—I'm willing."

"A grizzly won't be pleasant to face. I never knew one of those sheep killers that would not run at a man, if wounded."

"Tell me what to do."

"If he comes down, it's more than likely to be after dark. Don't risk hunting him then. Wait till morning, and put Wolf on his trail. He'll be up in the rocks, and by holding in the dog you may find him asleep in a cave. However, if you happen to meet him by day, do this: Don't waste any shots. Climb a ledge or tree, if one be handy. If not, stand your ground. Get down on your knee, and shoot, and let him come. Mind you, he'll grunt when he's hit, and start for you, and keep coming till he's dead. Have confidence in yourself and your gun, for you can kill him. Aim low, and shoot steady. If he keeps on coming, there's always a fatal shot, and that is when he rises. You'll see a bare, light spot on his breast. Put a forty-four into that, and he'll go down."

August had spoken so easily and sincerely, quite as if he were explaining how to shear a yearling sheep, that Jack's feelings fluctuated between amaze and laughter. A day or so back, the Mormon had found him nearly dead on the desert, unable to lift a cup to his lips; now he calmly related the probable action of a ferocious beast, and told him how to meet it. Verily, this desert man was stripped of all the false fears of civilization.

"Now, Jack, I'm off. Good-by and good luck. Mescal, look out for him — So-ho! Noddle! Getep, Biscuit!" And with many a cheery word and slap, he urged the burros into the forest, where they, and his tall form, soon disappeared among the trees.

Piute came stooping toward camp so burdened with coyotes that he could scarcely be seen under the gray pile.

With a grunt, he tumbled them under a cedar, and trotted back into the forest for another load.

Jack insisted on assuming his share of the duties about camp; and Mescal assigned him to the task of gathering firewood, and breaking red-hot sticks of wood into small pieces, and raking them into piles of live coals. Then they ate, these two alone.

Jack did not do justice to the supper; excitement had robbed him of appetite. He told Mescal about how he had crept upon the coyotes, how so many had eluded him, how he had missed the gray wolf. He plied her with questions about the sheep, and wanted to know if there would be more wolves, and if she thought the silver-tip would come. He was quite carried away by the events of the day.

The sunset drew him to the rim. Dark clouds were mantling the desert like rolling smoke from a prairie fire. How weird and changeable! He almost stumbled over Mescal, who sat with her back to a stone. Wolf, lying with his head in her lap, growled.

"There's a storm on the desert," she said. "Those smoky streaks are flying sand. We may have snow to-night. It's colder, and the wind is north. See, I've a blanket. You had better get one."

He thanked her, and went for it. Piute was eating his supper, and the peon had just come in. The bright camp fire was agreeable, yet Hare did not feel cold. But he wrapped himself in a blanket, and returned to Mescal, and sat beside her. The sun, now a magenta loop, colored a pall of purple, drifting cloud; the desert lay indistinct in the fore, inscrutable beyond; the cañon lost its line in gloom.

The solemnity of the scene stilled his unrest, the whirl, the thrill, the strange freedom of longings unleashed that day. What had come over him? He shook his head; but with consciousness of self returned a feeling of fatigue, the burning pain in his chest, the bitter-sweet smell of black sage and juniper.

"You love this outlook?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Do you sit here often?"

"Every evening."

"Is it the sunset that you care for, the roar of the river, or just being here, high above it all?"

"It's that last, perhaps; I don't know."

"Haven't you been lonely?"

"No."

"You'd rather be here with the sheep than be in Lund, or Salt Lake City, as Esther and Judith want to be?"

"Yes."

Any other reply from her would not have been consistent with the impression she was making on him. As yet he had hardly regarded her as a young girl, shy, illusive; she had been part of this beautiful desert land. But he began to see in her a responsive being, influenced by his presence. If the situation was wonderful to him, what must it be for her?

Like a shy, wild creature, unused to men, she was troubled by questions, fearful of the sound of her own voice; yet in repose, when she watched the lights and shadows, she was serene, unconscious; her dark, quiet glance was dreamy and sad, and in it was the sombre, brooding strength of the desert.

Twilight and falling dew sent them back to the camp. Piute and Peon were skinning coyotes by the blaze of the fire. The night wind had not yet risen; the sheep were quiet; there was no sound save the crackle of burning cedar sticks. Jack began to talk, he had to talk; so addressing Piute and the dumb peon, he struck at random into speech, and words flowed with a rush. Piute approved, for he emitted a grunt whenever his intelligence grasped a meaning; and the peon twisted his lips and fixed his diamond eyes upon Hare in rapt gaze. The sound of a voice was welcome to the sentinels of that lonely sheep range.

Jack talked of cities, of ships, of people, of single things in the life he had left, and he discovered that Mescal listened. Not only did she listen—she became absorbed. It was romance to her, fulfillment of vague dreams roused by filterings from an unknown

world. Nor did she seek her tent till he ceased; then, with a startled "good night," she was gone.

From under the heavy snugness of his warm blankets, Jack watched out the last wakeful moments of that day of days. A star peeped through the fringe of cedar foliage. The wind sighed, and rose steadily, to sweep over him with breath of ice, with the fragrance, bitter and sweet, of juniper and black sage and a tang of cedar.

But that day was only the beginning of eventful days, of increasing charm, of forgetfulness of self, of time that passed unnoted. Every succeeding day was like its predecessor, only deeper, fuller, shorter. Every day, the hoar frost silvered the dawn; the sheep browsed; the coyotes skulked in the thickets; the rifle spoke truer and truer. Every sunset, Mescal's great, changing eyes mirrored the desert. Every twilight, Jack watched beside her with the wisdom of silence; every night, in the camp-fire flare, he talked to Piute and Peon, thus revealing to Mescal the world of men.

Lambing time came late in May, and Mescal, Wolf, Piute, and Jack knew no rest. Nighttime was safer for the sheep than the day, though the hungry howling of a thousand coyotes made it hideous for the shepherds. All in a day, seemingly, the little, fleecy white lambs came, as if by magic, and filled the forest with piping bleats. Then they were tottering after their mothers, gamboling at a day's growth, willful as youth—and the carnage began.

Boldly, the coyotes darted out of thicket and bush, and many little lambs never returned to their mothers. Gaunt, gray shadows hovered always near; the great timber wolves waited in covert for prey. Piute slept not at all, and the dog, morning and night, wore bloody jaws.

Jack hung up fifty-four coyotes the second day; the third he let them lie, seventy in number. Many times the rifle barrel burned his hands. His aim grew unerring, so that running, skulking, standing brutes in range dropped in their tracks. Many a gray coyote

fell with a lamb in his teeth. It was a hard time for Jack, but harder, he thought, for Mescal, who loved her lambs, and for Wolf, strange, wild, haunted by some spirit of savage progenitor when those gaunt, gray, ghostly wolves lurked in the shadows.

One night, when sheep and lambs were in the corral, and the shepherds rested round the camp fire, the dog rose quivering, sniffed the cold wind, and suddenly bristled, with every hair standing erect.

"Wolf!" called Mescal.

The sheep began to bleat. A rippling crash, a splintering of wood, told of irresistible onslaught on the corral fence.

"Chus—chus!" exclaimed Piute.

Wolf, not heeding Mescal's cry, flashed like a white streak under the dark cedars. The rush of the sheep, pattering across the corral, was succeeded by an uproar.

"Bear! Bear!" cried Mescal, with dark eyes on Jack. He grabbed up his rifle.

"Don't go," she implored, her hand on his arm. "Not at night—remember Father Naab said not."

"Listen! I won't stand that. I'll go. Here, get in the tree—quick!"

"No—no—"

"Do as I say!" It was a command. The girl wavered. He dropped the rifle, and swung her up. "Climb!"

"No—don't go—Jack!"

With Piute at his heels, Jack ran out into the darkness.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WIND IN THE CEDARS.

Piute's Indian sense of the advantage of position in attack stood Jack in good stead; he led him up the ledge that overhung one end of the corral. In the pale starlight, the sheep could be seen running in bands, massing together, crowding the fence; and their cries made a deafening din.

The Indian shouted, but Jack could not understand what he said. A large black object was discernible in the shade of the ledge. Piute fired his car-

bine. Before Jack could bring his rifle up, the black thing moved into startlingly rapid flight. Then spouts of red flame illumined the corral. As he shot, Jack got fleeting glimpses of the bear moving like a dark streak against a blur of white. For all he could tell, no bullet took effect.

When certain that the visitor had departed, Jack descended into the corral. He and Piute searched for dead sheep; but, much to their surprise, found none. If the grizzly had killed one, he must have taken it with him; and, estimating his strength from the gap he had broken in the fence, he could have run with a sheep without hindering himself. They repaired the break, and returned to camp.

"He's gone, Mescal. Come down," called Jack into the cedar. "Let me help you—there! Wasn't it lucky? He wasn't so brave. Either the flashes from the guns, or the dog, scared him. I was amazed to see how fast he could run."

Piute found woolly brown fur hanging from Wolf's jaws.

"He nipped the brute, that's sure," said Jack. "Good dog! Maybe he kept the bear from— Why, Mescal! You're white—you're shaking. There's no danger. Piute and I'll take turns watching with Wolf."

Mescal silently went into her tent.

The sheep quieted down and made no further disturbance that night. The dawn broke gray, with a cold north wind. Dun-colored clouds rolled up, hiding the tips of the crags on the upper range, and a flurry of snow whitened the cedars. After breakfast, Jack tried to get Wolf to take the track of the grizzly, but the scent had cooled.

Coyotes were troublesome that day, sometimes as many as ten in a band creeping out of the brush; and at such times Jack worked the lever on the Winchester with sure hand. When night came, Piute lighted a fire on the ledge overhanging the corral, and kept guard.

Several more nights went by, then a week, and still the grizzly did not come. This was an anxious, work-filled time

for the shepherds; every day, however, saw the coyotes grow fewer and warier. Every day the little lambs learned something; they did not stray so often or so far.

Jack had exceptional luck one evening, as the flock was working campward. He had hidden under a clump of sage that afforded command over a glade. Out of the tail of his eye, he saw three timber wolves lope into the open. His heart beat fast; these fellows he longed for; he had never killed one. They were coming; the wind was right. He waited, with finger twitching.

How gaunt and gray they were, how noiselessly they moved, how wildly! Presently, they stopped, one behind another, and in that instant Jack fired. Two went down, the other jumped straight into the cedars, but Jack's second ball broke a leg, and the third, sent with deliberate aim at the crippled, scrambling beast, ended his flight.

Next day Mescal drove the sheep eastward toward the crags, and about the middle of the afternoon reached the edge of the slope. Grass grew luxuriantly, and it was easy to keep the sheep in. Moreover, that part of the forest had fewer trees and scarcely any sage or thickets, so that the lambs were safer, barring danger which might lurk in the seamed and cracked cliffs overshadowing the open grassy plots.

Piute's task at the moment was to drag dead coyotes to the rim, near at hand, and throw them over. Mescal rested on a stone, and Wolf, reprieved by the well-behaved flock, reclined at her feet.

Jack presently found a fresh deer track, and trailed it into the cedars, then up the slope to where the huge rocks massed.

Suddenly, a cry from Mescal halted him; another, a piercing scream of mortal fright, sent him flying down the slope. He bounded out of the cedars, into the open.

The white, well-bunched flock had spread, and streams of jumping sheep led everywhere, headed frantically from an enormous brown, silver-backed bear.

As he whacked right and left, a terrible brute engine of destruction, Jack sent a bullet into him at long range. Stung, the grizzly whirled, bit at his side, and then reared, with a horrible howl of fury.

But he did not see Jack. He dropped down, and launched his huge bulk for Mescal. A bursting gush of blood rushed back to Jack's heart, and his empty veins seemed to freeze.

The grizzly hurdled the streams of sheep. Terror for Mescal dominated Jack; if he had possessed wings, he could not have flown quickly enough to head the bear. Plunging to a stop that fetched him to his knees, he righted himself, and leveled the rifle. It waved as if it were a stick of willow. The sight described a blurred curve round the bear. Yet he shot—in vain—again—in vain.

Above the bleat of sheep and trample of many hoofs rang out Mescal's cry, despairing.

She had turned helplessly, hands over her breast. Wolf spread his legs before her, and crouched to spring, mane erect, jaws wide.

By some lightning flash of memory, August Naab's words steadied Jack's shaken nerves. He aimed low and ahead of the running bear. Down the beast went in a long, sliding sprawl, with a muffled roar of rage. Up he sprang, dangling a useless leg, to leap forward, still agile and swift. One slap sent the attacking dog aside. Jack fired again. A wrestling, tussling, furry demon now, death-stricken, still instinctive to avenge with last heart beat! Jack aimed low, and shot again.

Slowly now, the grizzly reared, majestic, his frosted coat blood-flecked, his great head sagging. Spang! One wide sweep of paw—forward he sank, slowly, drooping, and stretched all his length, as if to rest.

Mescal, released from paralysis, staggered backward. Between her and the outstretched paw was the distance of one short stride.

Jack, bounding up, made sure the bear was dead before he looked at Mescal. She was faint. Wolf whined

about her. Piute came running from the cedars. Fear still lent her eyes a fixed stare.

"I couldn't run—I couldn't move," she said, shuddering. A dark blush drove the white from her cheeks, as she raised her face to Jack. "He would soon have reached me."

Piute added his encomium: "Heap big bear—Jack kill um—big chief!"

Hare laughed away his embarrassment, and turned their attention to the stampeded sheep. It was about dark before they got the flock together again, and they never knew whether they had found them all. Piute was for skinning the bear, but Jack said it could wait, that he must help drive in the sheep.

Supper time was unusually quiet this night. Piute was jovial, but no one appeared willing to talk save Peon, and he could only grimace. The reaction of feeling following Mescal's escape had robbed Jack of strength of voice; he could scarcely whisper. Mescal spoke no word; her long, black lashes hid her eyes; she was silent as on any other night; but there was that in her silence which was eloquent. Wolf, always indifferent save to Mescal, reacted to the subtle change; and, as if to make amends, laid his head on Jack's knees. The quiet hour round the camp fire passed, and sleep claimed them. Another day dawned, awakening them fresh, faithful to their duties, forgetful of what had gone before.

So days slipped by. June came, with more leisure for the shepherds, better grazing for the sheep, heavier dews, lighter frosts, snow squalls half rain, and bursting blossoms on the prickly thorns, wild-primrose patches in every shady spot, and bluebells lifting wan, blue faces to the sun.

The last snowstorm of June threatened all one morning; hung menacing over the yellow crags, in dull, lead clouds waiting for the wind. Then, like ships heaving anchor to a single command, they sailed down off the heights; and the cedar forest became the centre of a whirling, blinding, eddying storm. The flakes were as large

as feathers, moist, almost warm. The low cedars changed to mounds of white; the sheep, drooping curves of snow; the little lambs were lost in the color of their own pure fleece.

As the storm had been long in coming, it was brief in passing. Wind-driven toward the desert, it moaned its last in the cedars, and swept away, a sheeted pall. Out over the cañon it floated, a spreading sphere trailing long veils of white, that thinned out, darkened, failed far above the golden desert. The winding columns of snow merged into straight lines of leaden rain; the rain flowed into vapory mist, and the mist cleared in the gold-red glare of endless level and slope. No moisture reached the parched desert.

Jack marched into camp with a snowy burden over his shoulder. He flung it down, disclosing a small deer; then he flapped the thick white mantle from his coat, and, whistling, kicked the firelogs, and looked abroad at the silver cedars, now dripping under the hot sun, at the rainbows in the settling mists, at the rapidly melting snow on the ground.

"Got lost in that squall. Fine! Fine!" he exclaimed, and threw wide his arms.

"Jack!" said Mescal. "Jack!" Memory had revived some forgotten thing. The dark olive of her skin crimsoned; her eyes dilated and shadowed with rare change of emotion succeeding to calm.

"Jack!" she repeated.

"Well?" he replied, in surprise.

"To look at you!—I never dreamed—I'd forgotten—"

"What's the matter with me?" demanded Jack.

Wonderingly, with glance on him, mind on the past, she replied: "You were dying when we found you at White Sage."

He drew himself up, with a sharp catch in his breath, and stared at her as if he saw a ghost.

"Oh—Jack! You're going to get well!"

Her lips curved in a smile.

For an instant, Jack Hare spent his

soul in searching her face for truth. While waiting for death, he had utterly forgotten it; he remembered now, when life gleamed in the girl's dark eyes. Passionate joy flooded his heart.

"Mescal—Mescal!" he cried brokenly. The eyes were true that shed this sudden light on him; glad and sweet were the lips that bade him hope and live again. Blindly, instinctively, he kissed them—a kiss unutterably grateful, and then fled into the forest, running without aim.

That flight ended in physical exhaustion on the far rim of the plateau. The low, gray-sheathed, spreading cedars seemed to have eyes, and he shunned eyes this hour.

"To think I cared so much," he whispered. "What has happened?"

With time came rest to limbs, to labored breast and lungs, but not to mind. In a heat of passion, of doubt that would not die, he tore open his shirt. The leanness of arms, the flat chest, the hollows were gone! He did not recognize his own body. He breathed to the depths of his lungs. No pain—only exhilaration! He pounded his chest—no pain! He dug his eager, trembling fingers into the firm flesh over the apex of his right lung—the old sore spot, the hateful place, the burning canker of his torture—no pain!

"I wanted to live!" he cried. He buried his face in the fragrant juniper; he rolled on the soft, brown mat of earth, and hugged it close; he cooled his hot cheeks in the wild-primrose clusters. He opened his eyes to new, bright green of cedar, to sky of a richer blue, to a desert, strange, beckoning, enthralling as life loomed to him then.

He counted backward a month, two months, more, and marveled at the swiftness of time. He counted time forward, he looked into the future, and all was beautiful—long days, long hunts, long rides, service to his friend, freedom on the wild steppes, blue-white dawns over yellow, eastern crags, red-gold sunsets over the lilac mountains of the desert. He saw himself in triumphant health and strength,

earning day by day the spirit of this wilderness, coming to fight for it, live for it, and, in far-off time, when he had won his victory, to die for it.

Suddenly, his mind was illumined. The lofty plateau, with its healing breath of sage and juniper, had given back strength to him; the silence and solitude and strife of his surroundings had called to something deep within him; but it was Mescal who made this wild life sweet and significant. It was Mescal, the embodiment of the desert spirit. Like a man facing a great, glorious light, Hare divined his love.

Twilight had enfolded the plateau when Hare traced his way back to camp. Mescal was not there. His supper awaited him; Piute hummed a song; Peon sat grimacing at the fire. Hare told them to eat, and he moved away toward the rim.

Mescal was at her favorite seat, with the white dog beside her; and she watched the desert, where the last glow of sunset gilded the mesas. How cold and calm was her face, with its dominant cast of the mystic Navajo! A light hovered hauntingly over it, a promise of slow, warm smile, a proof of Spanish blood. How still she was! How slight a thing! How strange to him in this new-born character!

"Mescal, when I kissed you I didn't know I loved you, but I know it now."

Her face drooped quickly from its level poise, hiding the brooding eyes; her dark hand trembled on Wolf's head.

"You spoke the truth. I'll get well. I'd rather have had it from your lips than from any in the world. I intend to live my life here, where these wonderful things have come to me. Wonderful things, Mescal! The friendship of the good man who saved me, this wild, free desert, the glory of new hope, strength, life—and love."

He took her hand in his, and whispered: "For I love you. Do you care for me, Mescal? It must be complete. Do you care—a little?"

The wind blew her dusky hair; he could not see her face; he tried gently to turn her to him. The hand he had taken lay warm and shaking in his, but

it was not withdrawn. As he waited, in fear, in hope, it became still. Her slender form, rigid within his arm, gradually relaxed, and yielded to him; her face sank on his breast, and her dark hair, loosened from its band, blew across his lips. That was his answer.

He asked no more. Before him, under him, drove immense shadows, formless, pulsating, a chaotic, dim, dense world, night veils and vapors of the desert.

The wind sang in the cedars. No longer a sigh, a sigh, a moan, sad as thoughts of a past flown forever, but a song of what had come to him—of hope, of life, of Mescal's love, of the things to be!

CHAPTER VII.

SILVERMANE.

Little dew fell on the night of July first; the dawn brightened without mists; a hot sun rose; the short summer of the plateau had begun.

Hare, finishing a hearty breakfast, rose with alacrity; his whistle was cut short by the Indian.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Piute, lifting a dark finger. Black Bolly had thrown her nosebag, and slipped her halter, and she moved toward the opening in the cedars, her head high, her black ears straight up.

"Bolly!" called Mescal. The mare did not stop.

"What the deuce?" Hare ran forward to catch her.

"I never knew Bolly to act that way," said Mescal. "See—she didn't eat half the oats. Well, Bolly—Jack! look at Wolf!"

The white dog had risen, and stood warily shifting his nose. He sniffed the wind, turned round and round, and slowly stiffened, with his head pointed toward the eastern rise of the plateau.

"Hold, Wolf, hold!" called Mescal, as the dog appeared to be about to dash away.

"Ugh!" grunted Piute.

"Listen, Jack; did you hear?" whispered the girl.

"Hear what?"

"Listen!"

The warm breeze came down in puffs from the crags; it rustled in the cedars, and blew fragrant whiffs of camp-fire smoke in Jack's face; and, presently, it bore a low, prolonged whistle. Jack had never heard its like. The sound broke the silence again, clearer, a keen, sharp whistle.

"What is it?" he queried, reaching for his rifle.

"Wild mustangs," said Mescal.

"No!" corrected Piute, vehemently shaking his head. "*Clea! Clea!*"

"Jack, he says, 'Horse, horse.' It's a wild horse."

A third time the whistle rang down from the ridge, splitting the air, strong, trenchant, the fiery, shrill challenge of a stallion.

Black Bolly reared straight up.

Jack ran to the rise of ground above the camp, and looked over the cedars. "Oh!" he cried, and beckoned for Mescal. She ran to him, and Piute, tying Black Bolly, hurried after.

"Look! look!" cried Jack. He pointed to a ridge rising to the left of the yellow crags. On the bare summit stood a splendid stallion, clearly silhouetted against the ruddy, morning sky. He was an iron-gray, wild and proud, with long, silver-white mane waving in the wind.

"Silvermane! Silvermane!" exclaimed Mescal. "The leader of the Sevier range of wild horses!"

"What a magnificent animal!" Jack watched him with admiring eyes, as the horse stood long enough to make a never-to-be-forgotten picture, and then moved back along the ridge, and disappeared. Other horses, blacks and bays, showed above the sage for a moment, and they, too, soon passed out of sight.

"He's got some of his band with him," said Jack, bright with excitement. "Mescal, they're down off the upper range, and grazing along easy. The wind favors us. That whistle was just plain fight, judging from what Naab told me of wild stallions. He came to the hilltop, and whistled down defiance to any horse, wild or tame,

that might be below. I'll slip round through the cedars, and block the trail leading up to the other range, and you and Piute close the gate of our trail at this end. Then send Piute down to tell Naab we've got Silvermane."

Jack chose the lowest edge of plateau rim, where the cedars were thickest, for his detour to get behind the wild band; and he ran from tree to tree, avoiding the open places, taking advantage of the thickets, keeping away from the ridge. He had never gone so far as the gate; but, knowing about where the trail led into a split in the crags, he climbed the slope, threaded a way over masses of fallen cliff, between great stones, till he reached the base of the wall. The tracks of the wild-horse band were very fresh and plain in the yellow trail.

Four stout posts guarded the opening, and a number of bars lay ready to be pushed into place. He put them up, making a gate ten feet high, an impregnable barrier. This done, he hurried back to camp.

"Bolly will need more watching to-day than the sheep, unless I let her loose," Mescal declared. "Why, she pulls and strains so, she'll break that halter."

"She wants to go with the band; isn't that it?" asked Jack.

"I don't like to think so. But Father Naab doesn't trust Bolly, though she's the best mustang he ever broke."

"Better keep her in," replied Jack, remembering Naab's warning. "I'll hobble her, so if she does break loose she can't go far."

When Mescal and Jack drove the sheep in that afternoon, rather earlier than usual, Piute had returned with August Naab, Dave, and Billy, a string of mustangs, and a pack train of burros.

"Hello, Mescal," cheerily called August, as they came into camp. "Well, Jack—bless me! Why, my lad, how fine and brown—and, yes, how you've filled out!" He crushed Jack's hand in his broad palm, and his gray eyes

beamed. "I have not the gift of revelation—but, Jack, you're going to get well."

"Yes, I——" Jack had difficulty with his enunciation, but he thumped his breast significantly, and smiled.

"Black sage and juniper!" exclaimed August. "In this air, if a man doesn't go off quickly with pneumonia, always fatal at this altitude, he'll get well. I never had a doubt for you, Jack—and thank God!"

He interrogated Piute and Mescal about the sheep, and was greatly pleased with their report. He shook his head when Jack spread out the huge grizzly pelt, and asked for the story of the killing. Jack made a rather poor showing with the tale, and slighted his share in it, but Mescal told it as it actually happened. And Naab's great hand resounded from Jack's shoulder. Then, catching sight of the pile of coyote skins under the stone shelf, he gave vent to his surprise and delight. After that his conversation reverted to the object of his trip upon the plateau.

"So you've corralled Silvermane? Well, Jack, if he doesn't jump over the cliff, he's ours. He can't get off any other way. How many horses with him?"

"We had no chance to count. I saw at least twelve."

"Good! He's out with his picked band. Weren't they all blacks and bays?"

"Yes."

"Jack, the history of that stallion wouldn't make you proud of him, so I'll not tell it. I only say that we've corralled him by a lucky chance. If I don't miss my guess, he's scented Bolly, and he's after her. He has been a lot of trouble to ranchers all the way from the Nevada line across Utah. The stallions he's killed, the mares he's led off! Well, Dave, shall we thirst him out, or line up a long corral?"

"Better have a look around to-morrow," replied Dave. "It'll take a lot of chasing to run him down, but there's not a spring on the bench where we

can throw up a trap corral. We'll have to chase him."

"Mescal, has Bolly been good since Silvermane came down?"

"No, she hasn't," declared Mescal, and told of the circumstance.

"Bolly's all right," said Billy Naab. "Any mustang will do that. Keep her belled, hobbled."

"Silvermane would care a lot about that, now, if he wanted Bolly, wouldn't he?" queried Dave, in quiet scorn. "Keep her roped and haltered, I say."

"Dave's right," said August. "You can't trust a wild mustang any more than a wild horse."

How true this was, manifested itself in the fact that Black Bolly broke her halter about midnight, and escaped into the forest, hobbled as she was. The Indian heard her first, and he awoke August, who aroused the others.

"Don't make any noise," he said, as Jack came up, throwing on his coat. "There's likely to be some fun here presently. Bolly's loose, broke her rope, and I think Silvermane is close. Listen sharp, now."

What little breeze stirred favored their position; the camp fire was dead; and the night was clear and starlit. They had not been quiet many moments when the shrill neigh of a mustang rang out. The Naabs raised themselves, and looked at one another in the starlight.

"Now, what do you think of that?" whispered Billy.

"No more than I expected. It was Bolly," replied Dave.

"Bolly it was, confound her black hide!" added August. "Now, boys, did she whistle for Silvermane, or to warn him, which?"

"No telling," answered Billy. "Let's lie low, and take a chance on him coming close. It proves one thing—we can't break a wild mare. That spirit may sleep in her blood, maybe for years, but some time it'll answer—"

"Shut up—listen!" interrupted Dave.

Jack strained his hearing, yet caught no sound, except the distant yelp of a coyote. Moments went by.

"There!" whispered Dave.

From the direction of the ridge came the faint rattling of stones.

"They're coming," put in Billy.

Presently, sharp clicks preceded the rattles, which soon merged into regular rhythmic tramp. It softened at intervals, probably when the horses were under the cedars, and strengthened when they were out in the open on harder ground, and it came straight for the spring.

"I see them," whispered Dave.

A black, bobbing line wound out of the cedars—a line of horses approaching with drooping heads, hurrying a little as they neared the spring.

"Twenty odd, all blacks and bays," said August, "and some of them are mustangs. But where's Silvermane? Hark!"

Out among the cedars rose the peculiar halting thump of a hobbled horse trying to cover ground, followed by snorts and crashings of brush and the pound of plunging hoofs. The long, black line stopped short, and began to stamp. Then, in the starlit glade below, moved two shadows, the first a great, gray horse with snowy mane, the second a small, shiny, black mustang.

"Silvermane and Bolly!" exclaimed August. "And now she's broken her hobbles!"

The stallion, in the fulfillment of a conquest such as had made him king of the wild ranges, was magnificent in action and mien. Wheeling about her, whinnying, cavorting, he arched his splendid neck, and pushed his head against her. His importunity was that of a master. Suddenly, Black Bolly snorted, and whirled down the glade. Silvermane whistled one blast of anger or terror, and thundered after her. Bolly was at the last true to her desert blood. They vanished in the gray gloom of the cedars, and the band of frightened horses and mustangs clattered after them.

"It's one on me," remarked Billy. "That little mare played us at the finish. Caught when she was a yearling, broken better than any mustang

we ever had, she helped us run down many a stallion, and now she runs off wild with that big, white-maned brute!"

"They'll make a team, and if they get out of here we'll have to chase them to the Great Salt Basin," replied Dave.

"Mescal, that's a fine, well-behaved mustang of yours!" said August. "Not only did she break loose, but she whistled an alarm to Silvermane and his band. Well, roll in now, everybody, and sleep."

At breakfast the following day, the Naabs fell to a discussion as to the probability of means of exit from the plateau, other than the two trails already closed. They had never run any mustangs on the plateau, and in the case of a wild horse like Silvermane, that would take desperate chances, it was deemed advisable to know positively before the work of capturing began. So Billy and Dave, taking their mounts from the sheep corral, where they had put them up for the night, rode in opposite directions round the rim of the plateau. It was triangular in shape, and some six or seven miles in circumference; and the brothers rimmed it in less than an hour.

"Corralled," said Dave laconically.

"Good! Did you see him? What kind of a bunch has he with him?" asked his father.

"If we get the pick of the lot, it will be worth two weeks' work," replied Dave. "I saw him, and Bolly, too. I believe we can catch her easily. She was off from the bunch. It looks as if the mares were jealous. I think we can run her into a cove under the wall, and get her. Then Mescal can help us run down the stallion. And you can look out on this end for the best level stretch to drop the line of cedars and make our trap."

With that, the brothers, receiving their father's approval, rode off into the forest. Naab had detained the peon, and now gave him orders, and sent him off.

"To-night you can stand on the rim, here, and watch him signal across to the top of Echo Cliffs to the Navajos," explained August to Jack. "I've sent

for the best breaker of wild mustangs on the desert. Dave can break mustangs, and Piute is very good; but I want the best man in the country, because this is a grand horse, and I intend to give him to you."

"To me!" exclaimed Hare.

"Yes, and if he's broken right at the start, he'll serve you faithfully, and not try to bite your arm off every day, or kick your brains out. No white man can break a wild mustang to the best advantage."

"Why is that?"

"I don't know, but I have an idea it's bad temper and lack of patience. Just wait till you see this Navajo go at Silvermane!"

After Mescal and Piute drove down the sheep, Jack accompanied Naab to the corral.

"I've brought up your saddle," said Naab, "and you can put it on any mustang here."

What pleasure it was for Jack to be in the saddle again, and to feel the strength in him to remain there! He rode with August all over the western end of the plateau. They came at length to a strip of ground, higher than the bordering forest, that was comparatively free of cedars and brush; and when August had surveyed it once, he slapped his knee with satisfaction.

"Fine! Better than I hoped for! This stretch is about a mile long, and narrow at this end. Now, Jack, you see the other side faces the rim, this side the forest, and at the end, here, is a wall of rock; luckily, it curves in a half-circle, which will save us work. We'll cut cedars, and drag them in line, and make a big corral against the rock. From the opening in the corral we'll build two fences of trees, and then we'll chase Silvermane till he's done, run him down into this level, and turn him inside the fence. No horse can break through a close line of cedars. He'll run till he's in the corral, and then we'll rope him."

"Great!" said Jack, all enthusiasm. "But isn't it going to take a lot of work?"

"Rather," said August dryly. "It'll

take a week to cut and drag the cedars, let alone to tire out that wild stallion. When the finish comes, you want to be on that ledge where we'll have the corral."

They returned to camp, and, as the afternoon was already waning, prepared the supper. Mescal and Piute soon arrived. Dave and Billy came later, on jaded mustangs. Black Bolly limped behind, stretching a long halter; and, judging by her shaggy, dusty, foam-stained coat, and hanging head, she appeared to be a very wretched and unhappy mustang.

"Not bad," said August, examining the lame leg. "She'll be fit in a few days—long before we need her to help run down Silvermane. Bring the liniment and a cloth, one of you, and put her in the sheep corral to-night."

Mescal's love for the mustang shone in her eyes, while she smoothed out the crumpled mane and petted the slender neck.

When darkness fell, they all assembled on the rim to watch the signals. A fire blazed out of the black void below, and, as they waited, it brightened, and flamed higher.

"Ugh!" said Piute, pointing across to the dark line of cliffs.

"Of course he'd see it first," laughed Naab. "Dave, have you caught it yet? Jack, see if you can make out a fire over on Echo Cliffs."

"No, I can't see any light, except that white star. Have you seen it?"

"Long ago," replied Naab. "Here! Sight along my finger."

"I believe I see it—yes, I'm sure."

"Good. How about you, Mescal?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Jack, look sharp!" said August. "Peon is blanketing his fire. See the flicker? One, two—one, two—one. Now for the answer."

Jack peered out into the shadowy space, star-studded above, ebony below. Far across the depths shone a pinpoint of steady light. The Indian grunted again, and August vented his "Ha!" Then Jack saw the light blink like a star, go out for a second, and blink again.

"That's what I like to see," said August. "We're answered. Now that's all over but the work."

Work it certainly was, as Jack discovered next day. He helped the brothers cut down cedars, while August hauled them into line with his roan. They chose only the smallest trees, but some of these were so heavy that to move them required a mustang to help the horse.

What with this labor and the necessary camp duties, nearly a week elapsed. In the meantime, Black Bolly recovered from her lameness. Twice the workers saw Silvermane standing on open high ridges, restive and suspicious, with his white mane flying, and his head turned over his shoulder, watching, always watching.

"It'd be worth something to find out how long that stallion could go without water," commented Dave. "But we'll make his tongue hang out tomorrow. It'd serve him right to break him with Black Bolly."

Daylight came, warm and misty; veils unrolled from the desert; a purple curtain lifted from the eastern crags, and became a cloud, then the red sun burned.

Dave and Billy Naab mounted their wiry mustangs, and each led another mount by a halter.

"We'll go to the ridge, cut Silvermane out of his band, and warm him up; then we'll drive him down to this end."

Hare, in his eagerness, found very tedious the time that August delayed about camp, punching new holes in his saddle girth, shortening his stirrups, and smoothing kinks out of his lasso. At last he leisurely saddled the roan, and also Black Bolly.

Mescal came out of her tent ready for the chase. She wore a short skirt of buckskin, and leggings of the same material. Her hair, braided and fastened at the back, was bound by a double band, closely fitting her black head. She gave an impression of lithe, supple strength, and sat astride the saddle as if she were a part of it.

Hare walked, leading two mustangs

by the halters, and Naab and Mescal rode, each also leading two. August tied three mustangs at one point along the level stretch, and three at another. Then he led Mescal and Jack to the top of the stone wall above the corral, where they had a good view of a considerable part of the plateau.

The eastern rise of ground—a sage and juniper slope—was in particularly plain sight. Hare saw a white streak; then Silvermane broke out of the cedars into the sage. One of the brothers raced him half the length of the slope, and then the other, coming out, headed him off down toward the forest. He disappeared, as did his pursuers, for some time. Soon the pound of hoofs thudded through the trees nearer and nearer. Silvermane came out straight ahead on the open level. He was running easily.

"He hasn't opened up yet," said August.

Hare watched the stallion with sheer fascination. He ran seemingly without effort. What a stride he had! He veered off to the left, out of sight in the brush, while Dave and Billy galloped up to where August had tied the first three mustangs. Here they dismounted, changed saddles to fresh horses, and were off again.

The chase was close and all downhill for the watchers. Silvermane twinkled in and out among the cedars, and suddenly hauled up short on the rim. He wheeled and coursed away toward the crags, and vanished. But soon he reappeared, for Billy had cut across and faced him about. Again he struck the level stretch. Dave was there in front of him. He shot away to the left, and flashed through the glades beyond. The brothers saved their steeds, content to keep him cornered in that end of the plateau.

August then spurred his roan into the scene of action. Silvermane came out on the one piece of rising ground beyond the level, and stood looking backward toward the brothers. When the great roan crashed through the thickets into his sight, he leaped as if he had been stung, and plunged away.

The Naabs had hemmed him in a triangle, Dave and Billy at the broad end, August at the apex, and now the real race began. August chased him up and down, along the rim, across to the long line of cedars, always in the end heading him for the open stretch. Down this he fled with flying mane, only to be checked by the relentless brothers. To cover this broad end of the open required riding the like of which Hare had never dreamed of. The brothers, taking advantage of the brief times when the stallion was going toward August, changed tired mustangs for fresh ones.

"Ho! Mescal!" rolled out August's yell. That was the call for Mescal to put Black Bolly after Silvermane. Her fleetness made the other mustangs seem slow. In a flash, she was round the corral, with Silvermane between her and the long fence of cedars.

Uttering a piercing snort of terror, the gray stallion lunged out, for the first time panic-stricken, and lengthened his stride in a wonderful way. He raced down the stretch; he ran with his head over his shoulder, watching the little black. Seeing her gaining, he burst into desperate, headlong flight. He said nothing; he had found his match; he won that first race down the level, but it cost him his best. If he had been fresh, he might have left Black Bolly far behind, but now he could not elude her.

August Naab let him run this time, and Silvermane, keeping close to the fence, passed the gate, ran down to the rim, and wheeled. The black mustang was on him again, holding him in close to the fence, driving him back down the stretch.

The brothers remorselessly turned him, and Mescal, forcing the running now, caught him, lashed his haunches with her whip, and drove him into the gate of the corral.

August and his two sons were close behind, and blocked the gate. Silvermane's race was nearly run.

"Hold there, boys!" said August. "I'll go in and drive him round and round till he's done; then, when I yell,

you stand aside and rope him as he comes out."

Silvermane ran round the corral, tore at the steep, scaly walls, fell back, and began his weary round again, cracking the stones now with hoofs too heavy to lift. Then, as sense and courage gave way more and more to terror, he ran blindly, and every time he passed the guarded gateway, his eyes were wilder, his strides more labored.

"Now!" yelled August Naab.

Mescal drew out of the opening, and Dave and Billy pulled away, one on each side, lassoes swinging loosely.

Silvermane sprang for the vacated opening with something of his old speed. As he went through, yellow loops flashed in the sun, circling, narrowing, and he seemed to run right into them. One loop whipped close round his glossy neck like the twine of a snake; the other caught his head.

Dave's mustang staggered under the violent shock, went to his knees, struggled up, and held firmly. Bill's slid on his haunches, and spilled his rider from the saddle. Silvermane seemed to be climbing into the air.

Then August Naab, darting through the gate in a cloud of dust, shot his lasso, catching the right foreleg. Silvermane landed hard, his hoofs striking fire from the stones. For an instant, he strained in convulsive struggle, then fell, heaving and groaning.

In a twinkling, Billy loosened his lasso over a knot, making of it a halter, and the end he tied to a cedar stump.

The Naabs now stood back, and gazed at their prize.

Silvermane was badly spent; he was wet with foam, but no fleck of blood marred his mane; his superb coat showed scratches, but none cut into the flesh. After a while, he got up, panting heavily, and trembling in every muscle. He was a beaten horse; the noble head bowed; yet he showed no viciousness, only the fear of a trapped animal. He eyed Black Bolly, and then the halter, as if he divined the fatal connection between them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BREAKER OF WILD MUSTANGS.

The few days succeeding the capture of Silvermane, a time brimful of excitement for Hare, he had no word with Mescal, save morning and evening greetings; and when he did come to seek her, with an object in mind that had gathered growth since August Naab's arrival, he learned, to his bewilderment, that she avoided him. She gave him no opportunity to speak with her alone; her accustomed resting place on the rim at sunset knew her no more; early after supper she retired to her tent.

Hare nursed a grievance for forty-eight hours, and then, taking advantage of Piute's absence on an errand down to the farm, and of the Naabs' exceedingly strenuous day with four vicious wild horses in the corral at one time, he walked out to the pasture, where Mescal shepherded the flock.

"Mescal, you have given me no chance to speak with you," he said. "What have I done?"

She looked tired and unhappy, and her gaze, instead of meeting his, wandered to the crags.

"Nothing," she replied.

"Well, then, why be unkind to me? I wanted to know if you'd let me speak to August Naab."

"To Father Naab? Why, about what?"

"About you, of course, and me—that I love you, and want to marry you."

She turned white. "No—no!"

Hare paused blankly, not so much from her refusal as from the unmistakable fear in her face.

"Why not?" he asked presently, with an odd, weighty sense of trouble. There was more here than Mescal's habitual shyness.

"Because he'll be terribly angry."

"With you? With me?"

"He'll take you away."

"Mescal!" Jack drew her into his arms. She resisted and broke from him.

"You must never—never do that again."

"There's something I don't understand," returned Hare. "You're different because they came."

"I remembered." She hung her head.

"What?" queried Jack sharply.

"I am pledged to marry Father Naab's eldest son."

"Pledged! You never told me. You let me fall in love with you. You let me kiss you, Mescal!"

"Jack, I forgot. It was so new, so strange to have you up here. It was like a kind of dream. And after—you kissed me, I—I found out——"

"What?"

She was silent.

"But, Mescal, if you really love me—we can—there'll be some way——"

"No way," she interrupted.

"But there must be a way," he insisted. "I'm in the dark. What does it all mean? Tell me, Mescal, do you care for me?"

She hid her face from him. "Tell me," he demanded. He took her hands and found them weak and trembling, and suddenly, with the soft warmth of them, a tumultuous thrill throbbed through him and he encircled her with his arms and held her close. "You do care for me—love me. Look at me!" He drew her head back from his breast. Her face was pale and agitated; her eyes closed tight, with tears forcing a way out under the long lashes. Her lips were parted, and he bowed to their sweet nearness, and kissed them, again and again. "I love you, Mescal. You are mine—I will have you—I will keep you—I will not let him have you!"

She vibrated to that like a keen-strung wire to a strong touch. In a flash the trembling girl was transformed. She leaned back in his arms, supple, pliant with quivering life, and for the first time gave him wide-open, level eyes, in which there were now no tears, no shyness, no fear, but a dark, smoldering fire.

"You do love me, Mescal?"

"I—I couldn't help it."

A moment or an hour of unutterable sweetness drifted by.

"Mescal, tell me—about your being

pledged," he said, once more realizing the situation.

"I gave my promise because there was nothing else to do. I was pledged to—to him in the church at White Sage. It can't be changed. I've got to marry—Father Naab's eldest son."

"Eldest son?" echoed Jack, suddenly mindful of the implication. "Why, that's Snap Naab. Ah! I begin to see light. That—Mescal——"

"I hate him." With the words Jack Hare got a glimpse into the depths of this desert girl. What a brooding, sombre flash!

"You hate him and you're pledged to marry him! . . . Heavens! Mescal, I'd utterly forgotten Snap Naab already has a wife."

"You've also forgotten that we're Mormons."

"Are you a Mormon?" he queried bluntly.

"I've been raised as one."

"That's not an answer. Are you one? Do you believe any man under God's sky ought to have more than one wife at a time?"

"No. I've been taught that it gave woman greater glory in heaven. But long I've fought myself. There have been men here before you, men who talked to me, and I doubted before I ever saw you. And afterward—I knew."

"Would not Father Naab release you?"

"Release me? Why, he would have taken me as a wife for himself, but for Mother Mary. She hates me. So he pledged me to Snap."

"Does August Naab love you?" inquired Hare, conscious of a strange retreating perspective of a great figure.

"Love me? No. Not in the way you mean—perhaps as a daughter. But Mormons teach duty to the Church first, and say such love comes—to the wives—after. But it doesn't—not in the women I've seen. There's Mother Ruth—her heart is broken. She loves me, and I can tell."

"When was this—this marriage to be?"

"I don't know. Father Naab prom-

ised me to his son when he came home from the Navajo range. It would be soon, if they found out that you and I—— Jack, Snap Naab would kill you!"

The sudden thought startled the girl, and her eyes betrayed a woman's terror.

"I mightn't be so easy to kill as I was when he knocked me down that day," said Hare darkly. The words flowed from his lips, his first answer to the wild surroundings that had begun to influence him. "Mescal, I'm sorry—maybe I've brought unhappiness into your life."

"No; no. To be with you has been like sitting there on the rim watching the desert. That and Bolly and Wolf have been my only happiness. I used to love to be with the children, but Mother Mary forbade. When I am down there, which is seldom, I'm not allowed to play with the children any more."

"What can I do?" asked Hare passionately.

"Don't speak to Father Naab. Don't let him guess. Don't leave me here alone," she answered low. It was not the Indian speaking in her now. Love had sounded depths hitherto unplumbed; a warmth, a light, a quick, soft impulsiveness made the contrast sharp and vivid.

"How can I help but leave you, if he wants me on the cattle ranges?"

"I don't know. You must think. He has been so pleased with what you've done. He's had Mormons up here, and two men not of his church, and instead of killing coyotes they spent their time running after me. You've been ill—besides, you're different. He will keep me with the sheep as long as he can, for two reasons—because I drive them best, he says, and because Snap Naab's wife must be persuaded to welcome me in her home."

"I'll stay, if I have to get a relapse and go down on my back again," declared Jack. "But I hate to deceive him, and I shall be—oh, I *am* deceiving him; for, Mescal, pledged or not—I love you, and I won't give up hope."

Her hands flew to her face again, and tried to hide the dark blush.

"Mescal, there's one question I wish you'd answer. Does August Naab think he'll make a Mormon of me? Is that the secret of his wonderful kindness?"

"Of course, he hopes and believes he'll make a Mormon of you. That's his religion. He's felt that way over all the strangers who ever drifted out here. But he'd be the same to them without his hopes. I don't know the secret of his kindness, but I think he loves everybody and everything. And Jack, he's so good. All my life I owe to him. He would not let the Navajos take me; he raised me, kept me, taught me. I can't break my promise to him. He has been a father to me, and I love him."

"I think I love him, too," replied Hare simply.

He left her then and mounted the grassy slope and climbed high up among the tottering yellow crags, where he battled with himself. Whatever the charm of Mescal's surrender, the insistence of his love, the prompting of the disgust and scorn for these wiving Mormons, stern hammer strokes of fairness, duty, honor, beat into his brain his debt to the man who had saved him.

Twilight forced Hare from his lofty retreat, and he wended his way campward, weary and jaded, and with a victory over himself. He renounced his hope of Mescal; he returned with a resolve to be true to August, to her, and to himself; bitterness he would not feel. But he feared that intractable something, the lash of insurrection, the rising in him of a spirit which he had come to know in the hour as an assimilation from his wild surroundings. He was subtly changing, and he feared, vaguely, uncertainly what the future held, what he was to become.

"Well, Jack, we rode down the last of Silvermane's band," said August, at supper. "The Navajos came up and helped us out. To-morrow you'll see some fun, when we start to break Silvermane. As soon as that is done I'll

go, leaving the Indians to bring the horses down when they're broken."

"Are you going to leave Silvermane with me?" asked Jack.

"Surely. Why, in three days, if I don't lose my guess, he'll be like a lamb. Those desert stallions can be made into the finest kind of saddle horses. I've seen one or two. I want you to stay up here with the sheep. You're getting well, you'll soon be a strapping big fellow. Then when we drive the sheep down in the fall you can begin life on the cattle ranges, driving wild steers. There's where you'll grow lean and hard, like an iron bar. You'll need that horse, too, my lad."

"Why—because he's fast?" queried Jack, quietly answering to suggestion.

August gloomily nodded his shaggy head. "I have not the gift of revelation, but I've come to believe Martin Cole. Holderness is building an outpost for his riders close to Seeping Springs. He has no water. If he tried to pipe my water——" The pause was not a threat; it implied the Mormon's doubt of himself. "Then Dene is on the march this way. He's driven some of Marshall's cattle from the range next to mine. Some cattle were driven up on the mountain, others to Holderness, and, as they are unbranded, they cannot be picked out. Dene got away with about a hundred head. The barefaced robber sold them in Lund to a buying company from Salt Lake."

"Is he openly an outlaw, a rustler?" inquired Hare.

"Everybody knows it, and he's finding White Sage and vicinity warmer than it was. Every time he comes in, he and his band shoot up things pretty lively. Mormons are slow to wrath. But they are awakening. All the way from Salt Lake to the border, outlaws have come in. They'll never get the power on this desert that they had in the places from which they've been driven. Men of the Holderness type are more to be dreaded. He's a rancher, greedy, unscrupulous, but hard to corner in dishonesty. Dene is only a

bad man, a gun fighter. He and all his ilk will get run out of Utah. Did you ever hear of Plummer, John Slade, Boone Helm, any of those bad men?"

"No."

"Well, they were men to fear. Plummer was a sheriff in Idaho, a man high in estimation of his townspeople, but he was the leader of the most desperate band of criminals ever known in the West, so far, and he instigated the murder, or murdered outright, more than one hundred men. Slade was an outlaw, a man killer, fatal on the draw. Helm was a killing machine. These men all tried Utah, and had to get out. So will Dene have to get out. But I'm afraid there'll be warm times before that happens, and I'm afraid some of them will be in our ranges. And when you get in the thick of it you'll appreciate Silvermane."

"I surely will. But I can't see that wild stallion with a saddle and a bridle, eating oats like any common horse, and being led to water."

"Well, he'll come to your whistle presently, if I'm not greatly mistaken. You must make him love you, Jack. It can be done with any wild creature. Be gentle, but firm. Teach him to obey the slightest touch of rein, to stand when you throw your bridle on the ground, to come at your whistle. Always remember this: He's a desert-bred horse; he can live on scant browse and little water. Never break him of those best virtues in a horse. Never feed him grain if you can find a little patch of browse. Never give him a drink till he needs it—that's about one-tenth as often as a tame horse. Some day you'll be caught in the desert, and, for these things, Silvermane will carry you out."

Silvermane snorted his defiance from the cedar corral next morning when the Naabs and Indians and Hare appeared. A half-naked, sinewy Navajo, with a face as changeless as a bronze mask, sat astride August's blindfolded charger. He rode bareback, except for a blanket strapped upon the horse. He carried only a long, thick halter, with a loop and a knot.

When August opened the improvised gate, with its sharp, bayonet-like branches of cedar, the Indian rode into the corral. The watchers climbed to the knoll. Silvermane snorted a blast of fear and anger. August's huge roan manifested uneasiness; he stamped, and shook his head, as if to rid himself of the blinders.

Into the farthest corner of densely packed cedar boughs Silvermane pressed himself and watched. The Indian rode around the corral, circling closer and closer, yet appearing not to see the stallion.

Many rounds he made, closer he got, with the same steady gait. Silvermane left his corner and tried another. The same unwearying round brought Charger and the Navajo by him. Silvermane pranced out of his thicket of boughs; he whistled; he wheeled with shiny hoofs lifting. In an hour the Indian was edging the outer circle of the corral, with the stallion pivoting in the centre, ears laid back, eyes shooting sparks, fight in every line of him. And the circle narrowed inward.

Suddenly the Navajo sent the roan at Silvermane and threw his halter. It spread out like a lasso, and the loop went over the head of the stallion, slipped to the knot and held fast, while the rope tightened. Silvermane leaped up, fore hoofs pawing the air, and the shrill, prolonged sound he emitted was neither whistle, snort, nor screech, but all combined. He came down, missing Charger with his hoofs, sliding off his haunches.

In a whirl of dust the roan drew closer to the gray. Silvermane could no longer back nor rise; he raced around the corral. The roan raced with him, nose to nose. When Silvermane saw he could not shake him, with demon snort he opened his jaws, rolled back his lip in ugly snarl, white teeth glistening, and tried to bite. But the Indian's moccasined foot shot up under the stallion's ear and pressed him back. Then the roan hugged Silvermane so close that half the time the Navajo virtually rode two horses.

But for the rigidity of his arm, the

ripple and play and sudden tension of leg muscles, the Indian's work would have appeared light, so dexterous was he, so perfectly at home in his dangerous seat. When he let out a yell, August Naab hauled back the gate, and the two horses, neck and neck, thundered out upon the level stretch.

"Good!" cried August. "Let him rip now, Navvy. All over but the work, Jack. I feared Silvermane would spear himself on some of those dead cedar spikes in the corral. He's safe now."

Jack watched the horses plunge at breakneck speed down the stretch, circle at the forest edge, and come tearing back. Silvermane was pulling the roan faster than he had ever gone in his life, and the dark Indian kept his graceful seat. The speed slackened on the second turn, and decreased, as mile after mile, the imperturbable Indian held roan and gray, side to side, and let them run.

Though a long time passed, Hare lost no interest in the breaking of the stallion. He began to understand the Indian, and to feel what the restraint and drag must have been to the horse. Never for a moment could he elude the huge roan, the tight halter, the relentless Navajo. Gallop fell to trot, and trot to jog, and jog to walk, and hour by hour, without whip or spur or word, the breaker of desert mustangs drove the wild stallion.

If there was cruelty, it was in his implacable slow patience, his farsighted purpose. Silvermane would have killed himself in an hour; he would have cut himself to pieces in one headlong dash, but the steel arm that held him in suffered him only to wear himself out.

Late that afternoon the Navajo led a dripping, drooping, foam-lashed stallion into the corral, and tied him with the halter, and left him.

Later Silvermane drank of the water poured in the corral trough, and had not the strength or spirit to resent the Navajo's caressing hand on his mane.

Next morning, the Indian rode again into the corral on blindfolded Charger, and dragged Silvermane out on the

level and drove him up and down with remorseless, machine-like persistence. At noon he took him back and tied him up and roped him fast.

Silvermane tried to rear, he kicked his tired legs, he snorted, but the saddle went on, strapped with a flash of dark-skinned hands. Then again Silvermane ran the level stretch beside the giant roan, only he carried a saddle now, and, at the first, broke out with free, wild stride, as if to run forever from under the hateful thing. But, as the afternoon waned, he lagged back to the corral.

On the morning of the third day, the Navajo went into the corral without Charger, and he roped the gray, and saddled him. Then he loosed the lassoes, except the one round Silvermane's neck, which he whipped under his fore leg to draw him down. Silvermane heaved a groan that said he never wanted to rise again. Swiftly the Indian knelt on the stallion's head; his dark hands flashed; there was a scream, a click of steel on bone, and proud Silvermane jumped to his feet with a bit between his teeth.

The Navajo rose with him in the saddle, and Silvermane leaped through the corral gate, and out upon the stretch, in a wild, despairing burst of speed. The white mane waved in the wind; the dark, half-naked savage swayed to the motion. Horse and rider disappeared in the cedars.

They were gone all day. Toward night they appeared on the stretch. The Indian rode into camp, and dismounting, handed the bridle rein to Naab. He spoke no word; his dark, impassiveness invited no comment. Silvermane was dust-covered and sweat-stained. His silver crest had the same proud beauty, his neck still the splendid arch, his head the noble outline, but his was a broken spirit.

"My lad—here," said August Naab, throwing the bridle rein over Hare's arm. "What did I say once about seeing you astride a great gray horse? Ah! Well, take him and know this—you've the swiftest horse in this desert country."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCENT OF DESERT WATER.

Soon the shepherds were left to a quiet no longer broken by the whistle of wild mustang, the whoop of hunters, the ring of iron-shod hoofs on the stones. The scream of an eagle, the bleat of a sheep, the bark of a coyote were once more familiar sounds, accentuating the silence of the plateau.

For Hare, time seemed to stand still. Dim in his mind, at rare-occurring moments of reflection, was a distant severance of the present from the future. But in these days he thought little; his whole life was a matter of feeling from without. He arose at dawn, never failing to see the red sun tip the eastern crags. He glowed with the touch of cold spring water, and the morning air. He trailed Silvermane under the cedars and thrilled when the stallion answered his call and thumped the ground with hobbled feet and came his way, learning, day by day, to be glad at sight of his master.

He rode with Mescal behind the flock; he hunted, hour by hour, crawling over the fragrant brown mats of cedar, through the sage and juniper, up the grassy slopes. He put Silvermane to his fleetest to beat Black Bolly down the level stretch where once the gray, even with freedom at stake, had lost to the black. Then back to camp and fire and curling blue smoke, a supper that testified to busy Piute's farmward trips, sunset on the rim, endless changing desert, the wind in the cedars, bright stars in the blue, and sleep—so time stood still.

Mescal and Hare were together, or never far apart, from dawn to night. Until the sheep were in the corral, every moment had its duty, from camp work and care of horses, to the many practical problems of the flock, so that they earned the rest on the rim wall at sundown. Only a touch of hands bridged the chasm between them. They never spoke of their love, of Mescal's future, of Jack's return to health; a glance and a smile, scarcely sad, yet not altogether happy—that was all.

The July rains did not come; the mists failed, the dews no longer freshened the grass, and the hot sun began to tell on shepherds and sheep. Both sought the shade. The flowers withered first—all the bluebells and lavender patches of primrose, and pale yellow lilies, and white thistle blossoms. Only the deep magenta of cactus and vermilion of Indian paint brush, flowers of the sun, survived the heat.

Day by day the shepherds scanned the sky for storm clouds that did not appear. The spring ran lower and lower. At last the ditch that carried water to the corral went dry, and the margin of the pool began to retreat. Then Mescal sent Piute down for August Naab.

He arrived at the plateau the next day, with Dave, and at once ordered the breaking up of camp.

"It will rain some time," he said, "but we can't wait any longer." Then to Dave: "When last did you see the Blue Star water hole?"

"On my last trip in from Silver Cup, ten days ago," answered Dave. "The water hole was full then."

"Will there be water enough now?" asked August.

"We've got to chance it," Dave declared. "There's no water here; no springs on the upper range where we can drive sheep; we can't drive them down the home trail. We've got to go round under the Star."

"That's so," August nodded. His fears needed corroboration, because his hopes always influenced his judgment till no hope was left. "I wish I had brought Zeke and George. It'll be a hard drive, though we've got Jack and Mescal to help."

Hot as it was, August Naab lost no time in the start. Piute led the train on foot, and the flock, used to following him, got under way readily. Dave and Mescal rode along the sides, and August with Jack came behind, the pack burros bringing up the rear. Wolf circled them all, keeping the flanks close in, heading the lambs that strayed, and ever vigilant, made the drive orderly and rapid.

The trail to the upper range was wide and easy of ascent, the first of it winding under crags, the latter part climbing long slopes. It forked before the last summit, where dark pine trees showed against the sky, one fork proceeding upward, the other, which Piute took, beginning to go down.

It admitted of no extended view, being shut in for the most part on the left, but there were times when Hare could see a flowing, curving stream of sheep on half a mile of descending trail. Once started down, the flock could not be stopped, that was as plain as Piute's hard task. There were times when Hare could have tossed a pebble on the Indian just below him, yet there were more than three thousand sheep strung out in line between them.

Clouds of dust rolled up, sheets of gravel and shale rattled down the inclines, the clatter, clatter, clatter of little hoofs, the steady *baa-baa-baa* filled the air. Save for the crowding of lambs off the trail, and a jamming of sheep in the corners, the drive proceeded without mishap.

Hare was glad to see the lambs scramble back, bleating for their mothers, and that, though peril threatened at every steep turn, the steady down-flow always made space for the sheep behind. He was glad, too, when through a wide break ahead his gaze followed the face of a red cliff down to the red ground below, and he knew the flock would soon be safe on a level.

A blast as from a furnace smote Hare from this open break in the wall. The air was dust laden, and carried—beside the smell of dust, and the warm breath of desert growths—a dank odor that was unpleasant.

The sheep massed in a flock on a level once more, and the drivers spread to their several positions. The route lay under the bulge of red cliffs, between the base and enormous sections of wall that had broken off and fallen far out. There was no weathering slope; the wind had carried away the smaller stones and particles, and had cut the huge pieces of pinnacle and tower into hollowed forms. This zone

of red rim merged into another of strange contrast, the sloping red stream of sand that flowed from the wall of the cañon.

Piute swung the flock up to the left into a kind of amphitheatre, and there halted. The sheep formed a densely packed mass in the curve of wall. Dave Naab galloped back toward August and Hare, and before he reached them shouted out: "The water hole's plugged!"

"What?" yelled his father.

"Plugged, filled with stone and sand."

"Was it a cave-in?"

"I reckon not. There's been no rain."

August spurred his roan after Dave, and Hare kept close behind them, till they reined in on a muddy bank. What had once been a water hole was a red and yellow heap of shale, fragments of stones, gravel, and sand. There was no water, and the sheep were bleating.

August dismounted and climbed high above the hole to examine the slope; soon he strode down with giant steps, his huge fists clinched, shaking his gray mane like a lion.

"I've found the tracks," he cried. "Somebody climbed up and rolled the stones—started the cave-in. Who?"

"Holderness' men," said Dave promptly. "They did that for Martin Cole's water hole at Rocky Point. How old are the tracks?"

"Two days, perhaps, but don't think of pursuit. What can be done?"

"Some of Holderness' men are Mormons and others are square fellows. They wouldn't stand for such work as this, and somebody ought to ride in there and tell them."

"And get shot up by the men paid to do the dirty work! No. I won't hear of it. This amounts to nothing; we seldom use this hole, only twice a year, when driving the flock. But it serves to make me fear for Silver Cup and Seeping Springs."

"It makes me fear for the sheep, if this wind doesn't change."

"Ah! I had forgotten the river scent. It's not strong to-night. We might venture if it wasn't for the strip of

sand. We'll camp here and start the drive at dawn."

The sun went down under a crimson veil; a dull glow spread fan-shape upward; twilight faded to darkness with the going down of the wind. August Naab paced to and fro before his tired and thirsty flock.

Hare turned to Dave. "I'd like to know," he said, "why those men filled up this water hole."

"Holderness wants to cut us off from Silver Cup Spring, and this was a half-way water hole," Dave explained. "Probably he didn't know we had the sheep upland, but he wouldn't have cared. He's set himself to get our cattle range, and he'll stop at nothing. Prospects look black for us. Father never gives up. He doesn't believe yet that we can lose our water. He prays and hopes, and sees good and mercy in his worst enemies."

"If Holderness works as far as Silver Cup, how will he proceed, how go about this thieving of another man's range and water?"

"He'll throw up a cabin, send in his men, drive in ten thousand steers."

"Well, will his men try to keep you away from your own water, or your cattle?" persisted Jack.

"Not openly. They'll pretend to welcome us, and drive our cattle away in our absence. You see there are only five of us to ride the ranges, and we'd need five times five to watch all the stock."

"Then you have no means to check this outrage?"

"There's only one way," said Dave, significantly tapping the black handle of his revolver. "Holderness thinks he pulls the wool over our eyes by talking of the cattle company that employs him. He's the company himself, and he's hand and glove with Dene."

"And I suppose, if your father and you boys were to ride over to Holderness' newest stand, and tell him to get off, there would be a fight."

"We'd never reach him now—that is, if we went together. One of us alone might get to see him, especially in White Sage. If we all rode over to his

ranch we'd have to fight his men before we reached the corrals. You yourself will find it pretty warm when you go out with us on the ranges, and if you make White Sage you'll find it hot. You're called 'Dene's spy' there, and the rustlers are still looking for you. I wouldn't worry about it, though."

"Why not, I'd like to know?" inquired Hare, with a short laugh.

"Well, if you're like the other Gentiles who have come into Utah, you won't have scruples about drawing on a man. Father says the draw comes natural to you, and you're as quick as he is. Then he says you can beat any rifle shot he ever saw, and that long-barreled gun you've got will shoot a mile. So if it comes to shoot—why, you can shoot. If you want to run—who's going to catch you on that white-maned stallion? We talked about you—George and I; we're mighty glad you're well, and can ride with us."

Long into the night Jack Hare pondered on this conversation with Dave. It opened up a vista of the range life into which he was soon to enter. He tried to silence the voice within that cried out, eager and reckless, for the long rides on the windy open.

The years of his illness returned in fancy, the narrow room with the lamp and the book, and the tears over stories and dreams of adventure never for such as he. How wonderful was life! It was, after all, to be full for him. It was already full. Already he slept on the ground, open to the sky.

He knew himself to be close to strenuous action on the ranges, companion of these sombre Mormons, exposed to their peril, making their cause his cause, their life his life. What of their friendship, their confidence? Was he worthy? Would he not fail?

What a man he must become to approach their simple estimate of him! Because he had found health and strength, because he could shoot, because he had the fleetest horse on the desert—were these reasons for their friendship? No, these were only reasons for their trust. August Naab loved

him, Mescal loved him; Dave and George made of him a brother.

"They shall have my life," he muttered.

The bleating of the sheep heralded another day. With the brightening light began the drive over the sand. Under the cliff the shade was cool and fresh; there was no wind; the sheep made good progress. But the broken line of shade crept inward toward the flock, and passed it. The sun beat down, and the wind arose. A red haze of fine sand eddied about the toiling sheep and shepherds.

Piute trudged ahead leading the king ram, old Socker, the leader of the flock; Mescal and Hare rode at the right, turning faces from the sand-filled puffs of wind; August and Dave rode behind; Wolf, as always, took care of the stragglers. An hour went by without signs of distress, and with half the five-mile trip at his back August Naab's voice gathered cheer. The sun beat hotter.

Another hour told a different story—the sheep labored; they had to be forced by urge of whip, by knees of horses, by Wolf's threatening bark. They stopped altogether during the frequent hot sand blasts, and could not be driven. So time dragged. The flock straggled out to a long, irregular line; rams refused to budge till they were ready; sheep lay down to rest; lambs fell.

But there was an end to the belt of sand, and August Naab, at last, drove the lagging trailers out upon the stony bench.

The sun was about two hours past the meridian; the red walls of the desert were closing in; the V-shaped split where the Colorado cut through was in sight. The trail now was wide and unobstructed, and the distance short, yet August Naab ever and anon turned to face the cañon, and shook his head in anxious portent.

It quickly dawned upon Hare that the sheep were behaving in a way new and singular to him. They packed densely now, crowding toward the centre and fore, many raising heads over the haunches of others and bleating,

and they were not in the usual calm, pattering hurry, but nervous, excited, and continually faced west toward the cañon, noses up.

On the top of the next little ridge, Hare noted Silvermane snort in the way he always did when led to drink. There was a scent of water on the wind. Hare caught it, a damp, muggy smell. The sheep had noticed it long before, and now under its nearer, stronger influence began to bleat wildly, to run faster, to crowd without aim.

"There's work ahead. Keep them packed and going. Turn the wheelers," ordered August.

What had been a drive became a flight. And it was well, so long as the sheep headed straight up the trail. Piute had to take to the right to avoid being run down. Mescal rode up to fill his place. Hare got his cue from Dave, and rode along the flank, crowding the sheep inward. August cracked his whip behind.

For half a mile the flock kept to the trail; then, as if by common consent, sheered off to the right. This was a circumstance that transformed August and Dave into charging, yelling, intensely excited men. They galloped to the fore, and into the very faces of the turning sheep, and drove them back. Then the tail end of the flock curved outward.

"Drive them in!" roared August.

Hare sent Silvermane at the deflecting sheep and frightened them into line.

Wolf no longer had power to chase the stragglers; they had to be turned by a horse. All along the flank, noses pointed outward, and here and there sheep wilder than the others leaped forward to lead a widening wave of bobbing woolly backs. Mescal engaged one point, Hare another, Dave another, and August Naab's roar thundered up and down the constantly broken line.

All this while, as the shepherds fought back the sheep, the flight continued faster eastward, farther cañonward. Each side gained, but the flock gained more toward the cañon than the drivers gained toward the oasis.

By August's hoarse yells, by Dave's stern face, and ceaseless, swift action, by the increasing din, Hare knew something terrible hung over the flock—what it was, he could not tell. He heard the roar of the river rapids, and it seemed that the sheep heard it with him. They plunged madly; they had gone wild from the scent and sound of water. Their eyes gleamed red; their tongues flew out.

Branches of the flock moved at the will of leaders; there was no aim to the rush of the great body of sheep, but they followed the leaders, and the leaders followed the scent. And the drivers headed them off, rode them down ceaselessly, riding forward to check an outbreak, wheeling backward to check another.

The flight became a rout. Hare was in the thick of dust and din, of the terror-stricken, jumping mob, of the ever-starting, ever-widening streams of sheep, and he rode and yelled and fired his revolver. The dust choked him, the hot sun burned him, the flying pebbles cut his cheeks. Once he had a glimpse of Black Bolly in a mêlée of dust and sheep; Dave's mustang blurred in his sight; August's roan seemed to be double. Then Silvermane, of his own accord, was out before them all.

The sheep had now almost gained the victory; their keen noses were pointed toward the water; nothing could stop their flight, but still the drivers dashed and yelled, fighting, never wearying, never ceasing.

At the last incline, where a gentle slope led down to a dark break in the desert, the rout became a stampede. Left and right flanks swung round, the line lengthened, and round the struggling horses, knee deep in woolly backs, split the streams, to flow together beyond, in one resistless river of sheep.

Mescal forced Bolly out of danger; Dave escaped the right flank; August and Hare swept with the flood, till the horses, sighting the dark cañon, halted to stand like rocks.

"Will they run over the rim?" yelled Hare, horrified. His voice came to him as a whisper.

August Naab, sweat-stained in red dust, haggard, gray locks streaming in the wind, raised his arms above his head, hopeless.

The long, bobbing line of woolly forms, lifting like the crest of a yellow wave, plunged out and down in rounded billow over the cañon rim. With din of hoofs and bleats the sheep spilled themselves over the precipice, and an awful, deafening roar boomed up from the river, like the spreading, thunderous crash of an avalanche.

How endless seemed that fatal plunge! The last line of sheep, pressing so close to those gone before, impelled by the strange instinct to survive, turned their eyes too late on the

brink, and perished of their own momentum.

The sliding roar ceased; its echo, muffled and hollow, pealed from the cliffs, then rumbled down the cañon to merge at length in the sullen, dull, continuous sound of the rapids.

Hare removed his fascinated gaze from that narrow, iron-walled cleft, the depth of which he had not seen, now had no wish to see; and it fell upon a little Navajo lamb limping in the trail of the flock, headed for the cañon, as sure as its mother in purpose. Hare dismounted and grabbed up the lamb, to find, to his infinite wonder and gladness, that it wore a string and bell round its neck. It was Mescal's pet.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The third installment of this story will be published two weeks hence, in the July Month-End issue, on sale June 25th.



A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

AT a recent banquet in Washington there were among the guests Representative Talbot, of Maryland, and Representative Hobson, of Alabama, who is very proud of his heroism in having sunk the *Merrimac* in the attempt to bottle up the Spanish fleet in Santiago Harbor during the Spanish-American war.

Mr. Talbot, who is a farmer and likes to go to bed early, left the banquet hall before the speeches were over. He was in the cloakroom getting his coat and hat when he heard calls from the diners for Hobson to make a speech. Then came Hobson's voice:

"Gentlemen, have you ever heard the true story of the sinking of the *Merrimac*?"

On the impulse of the moment, Talbot stuck his head into the banquet hall and shouted:

"Yes, but you sank it in the wrong place!"



AT FACE VALUE

THERE is a clever and very handsome young woman clerk in the Treasury Department in Washington, and she has become famous on account of the frequency with which she has obtained raises in her salary. She went into the government service three years ago at nine hundred dollars, and now she draws eighteen hundred dollars a year.

"You are wonderful," one of her friends told her when she got the last promotion. "How do you do it? I can't understand it. You must have some influence to help you."

"I guess I have," she replied.

"But where is it?" queried the curious friend.

"Behind my veil," answered the successful clerk.