

McCLURE'S

EDITED BY

HERBERT KAUFMAN

JUNE
1920

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New
Serial

"The Wanderer of the Wasteland"

Painted by
Neysa McMein

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McCLURE'S



Volume 52
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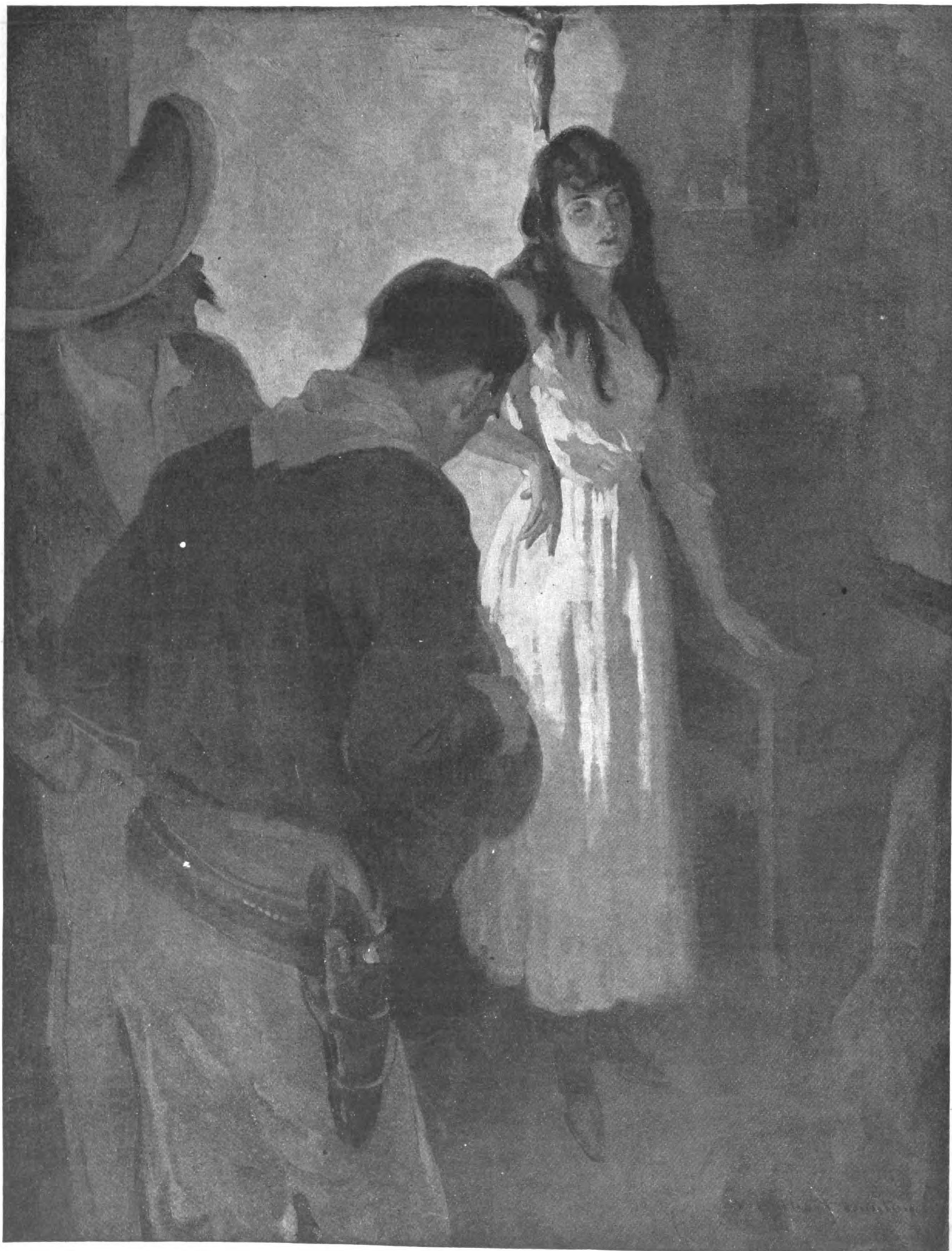
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Hudson River by Day

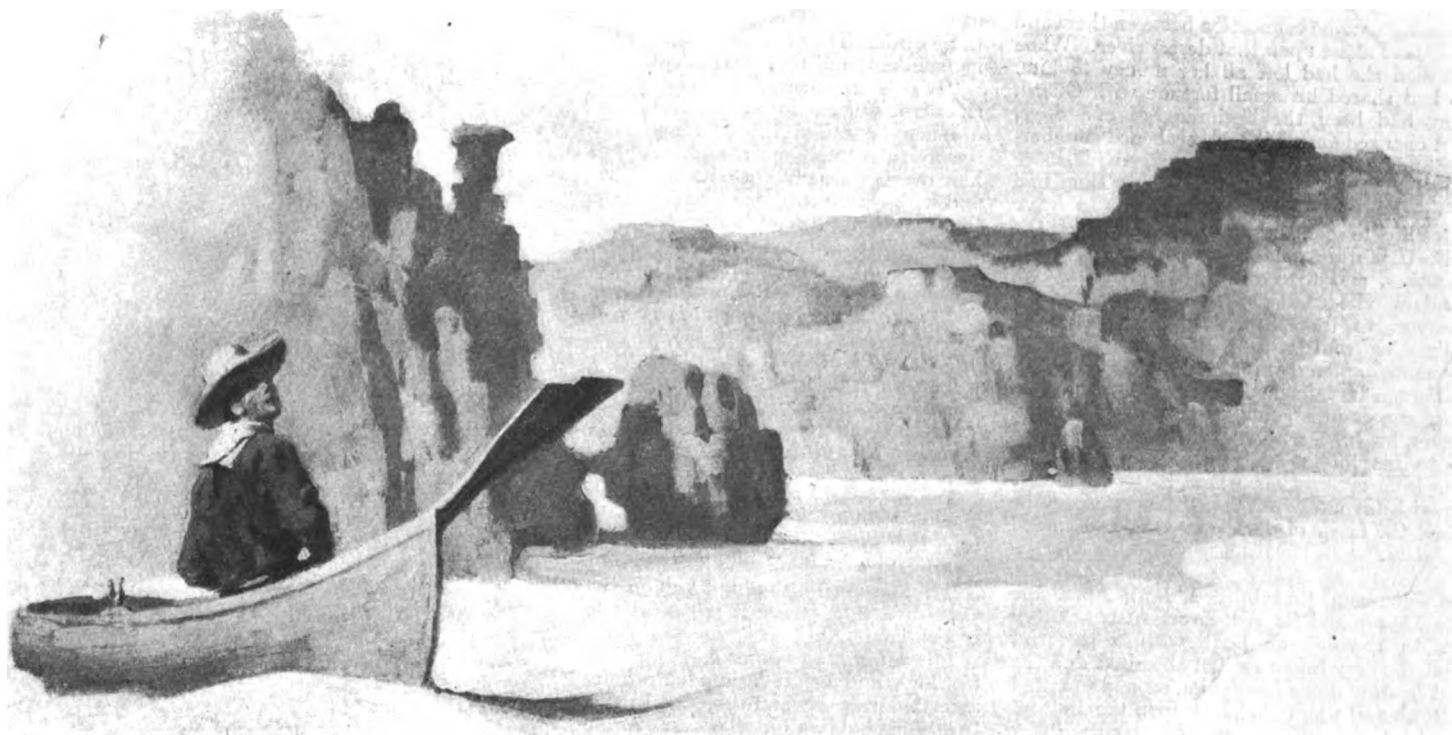
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"I—I shall be pleased," stammered Adam, as he backed away. The girl's red lips curled in pouting scorn and with a wonderful dusky flash of eyes she whirled away



"By Jove!" exclaimed Adam. "No sign of man! No sign of life! It's desert silence. This river is taking me into the desert"

A New Zane Grey Novel

A Story of Bold Men and Raw Places

ADAM LAREY gazed with hard and wondering eyes down the silent current of the broad red river upon which he meant to drift away to the rock-ribbed and sand-wasted confines of the desert. A wild youth he was indeed, and fired to this flight by drink and jealous rage and broken faith; yet he had paused, answering to the most natural instinct of life.

The Rio Colorado was no river to trust. It chafed at its banks as if to engulf them; muddy and thick it swirled and glided along in flood, sweeping in curves back and forth from Arizona to California's shore. Its contending currents bore the flotsam and jetsam of two thousand miles of canyons. Majestic and gleaming under the hot sky it swung southward between wide green borders of willow and cottonwood toward a stark and naked upflung wilderness of mountain peaks, the red ramparts of the unknown and trackless desert.

Adam rushed down the bank and threw his pack into a boat. There his rapid action seemed checked by the same violence that had inspired his haste. Something gave him pause. He looked back, up at the dusty adobe town of Ehrenberg, asleep now under the glaring noonday heat. It would not wake out of that siesta till the return of the weary gold-diggers, or the arrival of the stage-coach or the steamer. A tall Indian, swarthy and unkempt, stood motionless in the shade of a wall, watching stolidly.

Adam broke down then. Sobs made his utterance incoherent. "Guerd is no brother—of mine—any more!" he burst out. His accent was one of humiliation and cheated love. "And as for — for her — I'll never — never think of her — again!"

When once more he turned to the river, a spirit wrestled with the emotion that had unnerved him. His sobs ceased, and tears fell no more. Adam Larey appeared to be a boy of eighteen, with darkly tanned, clear-cut and comely face, and a lofty stature, straight

The Wanderer of the Wasteland

Illustrations by W. Herbert Dunton

and spare and wide, that gave promise of magnificent manhood. Untying the boat from its mooring he became conscious of a singular thrill. Sight of the silent river fascinated him. If it had been drink that had fortified his reckless resolve, it was some strange call to the wildness in him that had stirred exaltation in the prospect of adventure. But there was more. Never again to be dominated by that selfish Guerd, his brother, who had taken all and given nothing! Guerd would be stung by this desertion. Perhaps he would be sorry. That thought gave Adam a pang. Long habit of being influenced, and strength of love fostered in playmate days — these made him waver.

But the tide of resentment surged up once more; and there flowed the red Colorado, rolling away to the southwest, a gateway to the illimitable wastes of desertland.

"I'll go," he declared, passionately, and with a shove he sent the boat adrift and leaped over the bow to the rowing-seat. The boat floated lazily, half circling, till it edged into the current; then as if grasped by unseen power it glided down stream. Adam seemed to feel the resistless current of this mysterious river take hold of his heart. There would be no coming back — no breasting that mighty flood with puny oars. The moment was sudden and poignant in its revelation. He uttered a half-strangled cry. How swiftly receded the cluster of brown adobe huts, the sombre motionless Indian! He had left Ehrenberg behind, and a brother who was his only near relative, and a little sum of love that had failed him.

"I'm done with Guerd forever," he muttered, looking back with hard dry eyes. "It's his fault. Mother always warned me. . . . Ah! if she had lived I would still be home. Home! and not here in this awful desert of heat and wasteland — among men like wolves, and women like. . . ."

He did not finish the thought, but from his pack he took a bottle that glittered in the sunlight, and waving it defiantly at the backward scene of glare and dust and lonely habitation, he drank deeply. Then he flung the bottle from him with a violent gesture of repulsion. He had no love for strong drink. The bottle fell with hollow splash, rode the muddy swirls, and sank. Whereupon Adam applied himself to the oars with long and powerful sweep, soon to see Ehrenberg pass out of sight around a bend in the river.

In that moment of bitter soliloquy there had flashed through Adam Larey's mind memories and pictures of the past — the old homestead back east, vivid and unforgettable — the sad face of his mother who had

loved him as she had never loved his brother Guerd. There had been a mystery about the father who had died in Adam's childhood. Adam thought of these facts now, seeing a vague connection between them and his presence there alone upon that desert river. When his mother died she had left all her money to him. But Adam had shared his small fortune with Guerd. That money had been the beginning of evil days. If it had not changed Guerd it had awakened slumbering jealousy and passion. Guerd squandered his share and disgraced himself in the home-town. Then had begun his ceaseless importunity for Adam to leave college, to see life, to seek adventures, to sail round the Horn to the California gold fields. Yearning to be with his brother, and to see wild life on his own account, Adam yielded to the importunity. He chose, however, to travel westward by land. At various points en route Guerd had fallen in with evil companions, among whom he seemed to feel freer. At Tucson he launched himself upon the easy and doubtful career of a gambler, which practise did not spare even his brother. At Ehrenberg Guerd had found life to his liking—a mining and outfitting post remote from civilization, where he made friends compatible with his lately developed tastes, where he finally filched the favor of dark eyes that had smiled first upon Adam.

It was a June sun that burned down upon the Colorado Desert and its red river. Adam Larey had taken to rowing the boat with a powerful energy. But the fiery liquor he had absorbed, and the intense heat beating down upon him, soon prostrated him, half drunk and wholly helpless upon the bottom of the leaky boat, now at the mercy of the current.

Strangest of all rivers was the Rio Colorado. Many names it had borne, though none so fitting and lasting as that which designated its color. Neither crimson nor scarlet was it, nor any nameable shade of red, yet somehow red was its hue. Like blood with life gone from it! This was the season of its flood. With its source at high altitude, fed by snow fields and a thousand lakes and streams, the Colorado stormed its great canyon confines with a mighty torrent.

The hot hours of the afternoon waned. Sunset was a glaring blaze without clouds. Cranes and bitterns swept in lumbering flight over the wide green crests of the bottomlands, and desert buzzards sailed down from the ruddy sky. The boat drifted on. Miraculously it avoided the shelving banks and the treacherous whirlpools and the labyrinthine network of canals over the flooded bottomlands. A child asleep upon the bow would have been in no peril from the rapacious river. Adam Larey had thrown a gauntlet into the face of destiny; and something as inscrutable as the nature of the river had begun its work.

Before darkness fell the boat drifted out of the current into a back eddy where slowly it rode round and round, at last to catch hold of the arrow-weeds and lodge in a thicket.

At dawn Adam Larey awoke, sober enough, but sick and aching, parched with thirst. One glance acquainted him with his situation. The eastern horizon, rose-flushed and golden, told him of the advent of another day. He thrilled even in his misery. Scooping up the muddy and sand-laden water, which was cold and held a taste of snow, he quenched his thirst and bathed his hot face. Then opening his pack he took out food he had been careful to bring; and soon, with hunger and thirst appeased, something of his wretchedness was alleviated.

Then he endeavored to get his bearings. Not a range or mountain was in sight, and all around him appeared river lowlands, green and soft and rosy in the morning light. Adam could see by the stain on the arrow-weeds that the flood had subsided a foot during the night. A reasonable calculation was that he had drifted a good many miles; however, of this he could not be certain until he reached a point along the river where he could beach the boat and climb up to see beyond the level.

"Why should a fellow drink rum?" he muttered, with wet cool hands on his aching head. "Bad medicine! . . . Drink might do in the dreary towns where a man wants to forget, but when he wants to be alone, to remember, to think, to feel, to meet what comes—then it won't do. . . . Not for me!"

So he soliloquized, pondering an awakening reality. Presently, rousing himself, Adam looked abroad at the gleaming sliding noiseless river, reminded of the issue at hand.

"I'll row till it gets hot, then rest up in a shady place," he decided. Pushing away from the weeds he set the oars and rowed out to meet the current.

The sun rose, and Adam's face and hands felt as if some hot material thing had touched them. He began to sweat, which was all that was needed to restore his usual healthy feeling of body.

From time to time he saw herons, and other long-legged waterfowl, and snipe flitting over the sand-bars, and sombre gray-hued birds that he could not name. The spell of river or desert hovered over these birds. They expressed no swift joy in the morning sunlight, and they were silent.

"It's desert silence," he said, wonderingly. "This river is taking me into the desert."

When he raised the oars and rested them, there seemed absolutely no sound. And this fact struck him overpoweringly with its meaning, and with a sudden unfamiliar joy. On the gentle wind came a fragrant hot breath that mingled with the rank odor of flooded bottomlands. The sun, hot as it was, felt good upon his face and back. He loved the sun, as he had hated the cold.

"Maybe Guerd's coaxing me west will turn out well for me," soliloquized Adam, with resurging boyish hope. "Maybe the desert will be my stamping-ground. As the Mexicans say, *quien sabe?*"

Toward noon he became overheated, though he did not tire; and he began to search for a landing-place, where he could climb to look about him. At length he espied a sloping bank on the California side, where it appeared safe to risk landing.

The summit was some forty or fifty feet high, and before Adam had wholly ascended it, he began to see the bronze tips of mountains on all sides. As he climbed higher, these lifted more into sight. Once he got above the deep cut that had obstructed the view, his eager gaze swept over a valley, eight or ten miles wide, with its red river winding between borders of green.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Adam. "No sign of man! No sign of life!"

There seemed to thrill through him a consciousness of stepping across the threshold of an immense and unprecedented experience. He divined that this adventure was the entrance to something baffling and fearful, yet enchanting.

Some distance from the river bank stood a high knoll. Adam climbed to the top of it, and what he saw here made him yearn for the mountain peaks. He had never stood at any great elevation. Southward, the Colorado appeared to enter a mountain gateway and to turn and disappear. He had to restrain his desire to walk farther and climb higher. Returning to the boat he got out his pack and repaired to a shady spot under the willows.

When he had refreshed himself with food and drink he settled himself into a comfortable position to rest and think awhile, perhaps to sleep a little. Though sultry and warm it was pleasant there out of the glare of the sun. How still! Almost there was an oppression in the drowsy air. But momentarily he was conquered by memory. He had plucked at the roots of love, but not yet had he torn it from his heart. Guerd, his brother! Adam hid his face in the dry grass, and there in the loneliness of that desert bottomland he suffered; he began to see into the gulf of his soul, and the future with all its alluring prospect dismayed him.

In the overcoming of his grief he realized something of latent will power. "I can fight—I can forget—I can do anything!" he muttered. Then he set his mind to the problem of his immediate future. There were two points below on the river—Picacho, a mining camp, and Yuma, a frontier town—about both of which he had heard strange exciting tales. He would go to both places and see for himself what they were like. At length he fell asleep.

When he awoke the sun was on the wane. He had slept hours. When he moved to sit up he heard rustlings in the willows, and soft stealthy steps, and other faint sounds, not familiar to him. These unseen creatures, whatever they might be, roused interest and caution in Adam. Remembering tales of bad Indians, bad Mexicans, bad white men, and the fierce beasts and reptiles of the desert, Adam fortified himself to encounters that must come as inevitably as the passing of the days.

When he stepped out of the shady covert it was to see river and valley as if encompassed by an immense loneliness, different somehow for the few hours of his thought and slumber. The river seemed redder and the mountains veiled in ruby haze. Earth and sky were bathed in the hue of sunset light.



He descended to the river. Shoving the boat off he applied himself to the oars.

The rose faded out of the sky, the clouds turned drab, the blue deepened, and a pale star shone. Twilight failed. With the cooling of the air Adam lay back more powerfully upon the oars. By night the river seemed vast, hurrying, shadowy, and silent as the grave. Its silence wore upon Adam until it seemed unnatural.

As the stars multiplied and brightened the dim high outlines of the banks showed, and above them loomed the black domes of mountains. Adam calculated that he had entered the gateway of the range. From time to time he turned the boat and resting upon his oars he drifted with the current, straining his eyes and ears. These moments of inaction brought the cold tingling prickle of skin up and down his back. It was impossible not to be afraid, yet he thrilled even in his fear.

Drifting and rowing Adam progressed down the dark river without serious mishap. The hour came when an invisible something, like a blight, passed across the heavens, paling the blue, dimming the starlight. The intense purity of the sky sustained a dull change, then darkened. Dawn was not many moments distant. Adam welcomed the first faint gleam of light over the eastern horizon. It brightened. The wan stars faded. The mountains heightened their clearness of silhouette, and along the bold dark outlines appeared a faint rose color, herald of the sun.

"Always I have slept away the great hour," said Adam as he saw the sunrise. Tired and sleepy as he was an exhilaration uplifted him, and hope as blazing and beautiful as the sunrise had unquenchable birth in him, never thereafter to die while his heart beat. Whatever spirit came to him then, vague and inscrutable, it had its source in the infinite from which had burst the dawn.

He drifted round a bend in the river, while once more eating sparingly of his food; and suddenly he espied a high column of smoke rising to the southwest. This surely must come from the gold mill at the mining camp.

"Picacho!" soliloquized Adam, remembering tales he had heard from a boat captain about the wildness of this gold camp. "Now what shall I do? . . . I'll work at anything." He carried a considerable sum of money in a belt round his waist — the last of the money left him by his mother — and he meant to keep it. Hard labor had no terrors for him, and he had not yet become obsessed with the fever for digging gold.

Curve after curve Adam turned in the river until there came one that swept into a long stretch between a wilderness of mountain peaks, all bare and red and bronze and copper, rising in irregular low chains of lofty ranges. The right-hand bank of the river began to lift along this stretch and was covered with a dense growth of willow and arrow-weed. Across the top of this green border he saw a rise of colored ridges, and then high under a beetling red wall a huge structure that was belching a column of smoke to the skies. This, of course, must be the gold mill. It passed out of sight behind the brushy bank. Next Adam espied what appeared to be an old boat moored along the shore perhaps a mile farther down.

He was not long in reaching the landing which appeared to be only a muddy bank, somewhat bare. A small dilapidated stern-wheel steamer, such as Adam had seen on the Ohio River, lay resting upon the mud. On the bow sat a gaunt weather-beaten man with a grizzled beard. He held a long crooked pole out over the water, and evidently was fishing. The bank sloped up to fine white sand, and a dense growth of green, in the middle of which there appeared to be a narrow lane. Here in a flowing zerapic stood a Mexican girl, slender and small, with a single touch of red in all her darkness of dress.

Adam ran the boat ashore, and leaping out he pulled the bow well up. Lifting his pack he climbed a narrow bench of the bank and walked down to a point opposite the fisherman. Adam greeted him and inquired if this place was Picacho.

"Mornin', stranger," came the reply. "Yes, this here's the gold diggin's, an' she's hummin' these days."

Adam listened for the hum of the busy mining-camp, but he heard only a drowsy hum of bees in the trees.

"Catching any fish?" he inquired, with interest.

"Yep, I ketches one day before yestiddy," replied the man, complacently. "Where you hail from, stranger?"

"Back east."

"So I reckoned. No westerner would tackle the Colorado when she was in flood. I opine you hit the river at Ehrenberg. Wal, you're lucky. Goin' to prospect for gold?"

"No, I'd rather work. Can I get a job here?"

"Son, if you're as straight as you look you can get a good job. But a husky lad like you, if he stayed sober, could strike it rich in the diggin's."

"How about a place to eat and sleep?"

"Thet ain't so easy to find up at the camp. It's a few miles up the canyon. But say, I'm forgettin' about the feller who stayed here with the Mexicans. They jest buried him. You could get his place. It's the dobe house — first one. Ask Margarita there. She'll show you."

THUS directed Adam saw the Mexican girl standing above him. Climbing the path to the top of the bank he threw down his pack.

"Buenas dias, señor!" The girl's soft liquid accents fitted a dark, piquant little face, framed by hair as black as the wing of a raven, and lighted by big eyes, like night.

Adam's Spanish was not that of the Mexicans, but it enabled him to talk fairly well. He replied to the girl's greeting, yet hesitated with the query he had on his lips. Something inhibited him. He felt a slight shrinking as these dark eyes reminded him of others of like allurements which he had willed to forget. Yet he experienced a warmth and thrill of pleasure in a pretty face. Women invariably smiled upon Adam. This one, a girl in her teens, smiled with half-lowered eyes, the more provocative for that; and she turned partly away with a lithe quick grace. Adam's hesitation had been a sudden chill at the proximity of something feminine and attractive — of something that had hurt him. But it passed. And with it went the bar of his old habit of restraint. He had done more than boldly step across the threshold of a new and freer life.

For Adam's questions, Margarita had a shy, "Si, Señor," and the same subtle smile that had attracted him at first sight of her. Whereupon he took up his pack and followed her.

The girl led down a path bordered by willows and

mesquites which opened into a clearing where stood several squat adobe houses. Above these rose a rocky knoll upon which perched a picturesque hut of odd structure, new to Adam. Far back and high up loomed the serrated craggy peaks.

Margarita stopped at the first house. It was almost hidden by wide spreading branches of mesquite. The girl's mother appeared to be an indolent person, rather careless of her attire. She greeted Adam in English, but when he exercised some of his Spanish her dark face beamed with smiles that made it pleasant to behold. The little room indoors to which she led Adam was dark, poorly ventilated, and altogether unsatisfactory. Adam said so. The Señora waxed eloquent. Margarita managed to convey her great disappointment by one swift look. Then they led him outdoors, and round under the low-branching mesquites, where he had to stoop, to a small structure like the one Adam had seen on the knoll. The walls were made of two rows of long slender poles, nailed upon heavier uprights at the corners, and between these rows had been poured wet adobe mud. There were holes in places. The hut contained two rooms, the closed one full of wood and rubbish; and the other, which had an open front, like a porch, faced the river. It was empty, with a floor of white sand. This appeared very much to Adam's liking, and he agreed upon a price for it, to the Señora's satisfaction, and Margarita's shy rapture. Adam saw the latter with some misgivings, yet he was pleased, and in spite of himself he warmed toward this pretty señorita, who had apparently taken a sudden fancy to him. He was a stranger in a strange land, with a sore and yearning heart. Adam was to get his meals at the house, where, he was assured, he would be well cared for. Adam could not doubt the sincerity of their hospitality. They were glad to have him there, irrespective of any gain. They left him on his knees beside his pack. In moving away, Margarita, who was looking back, caught her hair in a thorny branch of the mesquite.

Adam was quick to spring to her assistance, and his hands touched hers in the untangling of the black tresses. Another half-averted coquettish glance was his reward. Then she ran off after her mother.

"What eyes! — Well, well," exclaimed Adam, sensible of a warmth along his veins. He seemed less disposed to quarrel with fortune. He was young, full of fire and life. Suddenly at that moment he thought of his brother Guerd. "By Jove! I'm glad he's not here," Margarita had prompted that thought. Guerd was a handsome devil, irresistible to women; and his fancy was as versatile as it was fickle. Adam went back to his unpacking, conscious of a sobered enthusiasm. So much for just a thought of Guerd!

He hung his few clothes and belongings upon the walls, made his bed of blankets on the sand, and then sauntered down to the river to make friends with the old fisherman.

ADAM saw that he was about fifty years old. He had sharp aquiline features, kindly blue eyes, and the serene cast of countenance of a man to whom nothing more could happen.

"Have a smoke," said Adam, proffering one of the last of his cigars.

"Lordy!" ejaculated the fisherman, his eyes lighting. "When have I seen one of them? . . . Young man, you're an obligin' feller. What's your name?"

Adam told him, and that he hailed from the east, and had been a tenderfoot for several memorable weeks.

"My handle's Merryvale," replied the other. "I came west twenty-eight years ago when I was about your age. Reckon you're about twenty."

"No. Only eighteen. Say, you must have almost seen the old days of '49."

"It was in '50. Yes, I was in the gold rush."

"Did you strike any gold?" asked Adam, eagerly.

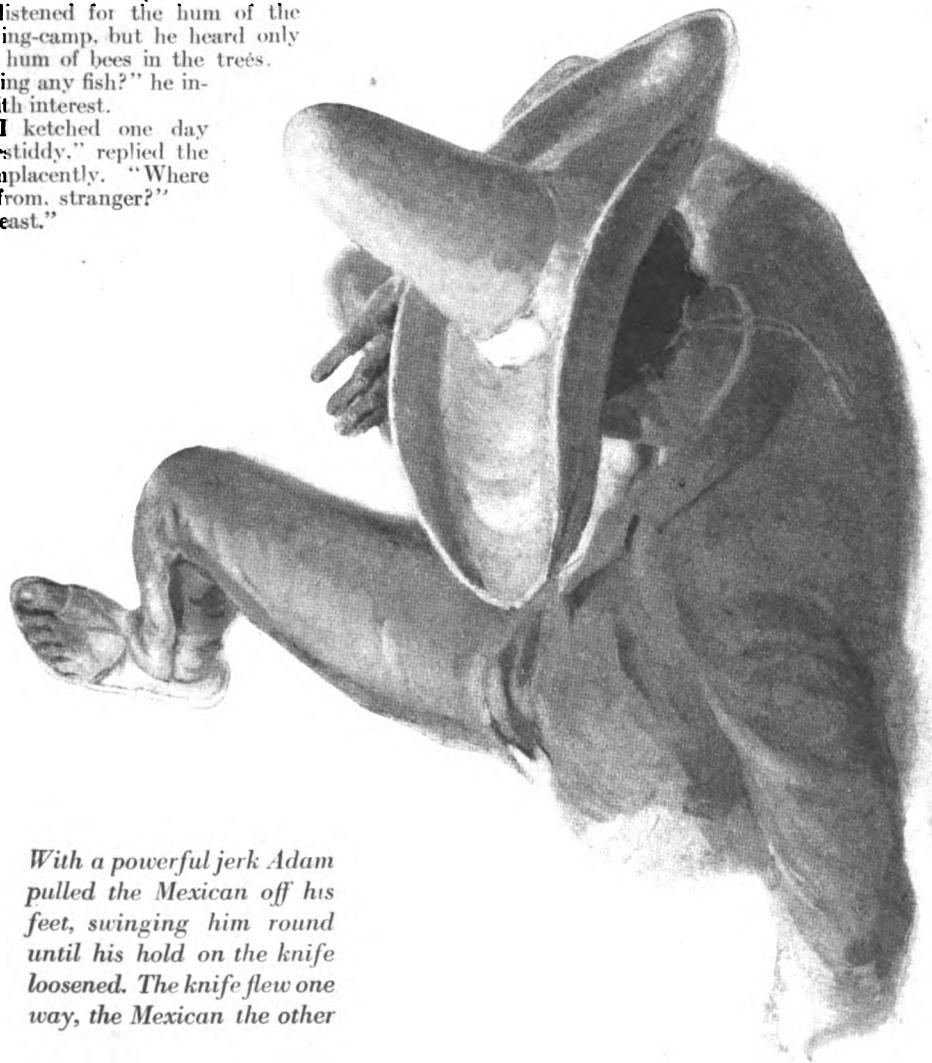
"Son, I was a prospector for twenty years. I've found gold mines — sold them, lost them, been robbed of them. Yes, I made an' lost more than one fortune. Drink an' faro an' bad women! . . . An' now I'm a broken-down night-watchman at Picacho."

"Son, I hate to see the likes of you hittin' this gold diggin's," Merryvale continued, with kindly concern.

"Why? Oh, I can learn to take care of myself. I'm not afraid. It must be a man's game. I'll love the desert. And what about Picacho?"

"Wal, son, I oughtn't to discourage you," replied Merryvale. "An' it ain't fair for me to think because I went wrong, an' because I seen so many boys go wrong, thet you'll do the same. Lord, I hope not! You're a fine-spoken lad. . . . But this gold diggin's is a hell of a place for a tough old-timer, let alone a boy runnin' wild."

And then he began to talk like a man whose memory was a vast treasure store of history and adventure and life. Gold had been discovered [Continued on page 49]



With a powerful jerk Adam pulled the Mexican off his feet, swinging him round until his hold on the knife loosened. The knife flew one way, the Mexican the other

The Wanderer of the Wasteland—Continued from page 11

at Picacho in 1864. In 1872 the mill was erected near the river and the ore was mined five miles up the canyon and hauled down on a narrow-gauge railroad. The machinery and construction for this great enterprise, together with all supplies, were brought by San Francisco steamers round into the Gulf of California, loaded on smaller steamers and carried up the Colorado River to Picacho. These steamers also hauled supplies to Yuma and Ehrenberg, where they were freighted by wagon-trains into the interior. At the present time, 1878, the mine was paying well and there were between five and six hundred men employed. The camp was always full of adventurers and gamblers, with a few bad women whose capacity for making trouble magnified their number.

"The gamblin'-hells are all up at the camp, where, in fact, everybody goes of an evenin'." Merryvale went on. "I'm the night-watchman at the mill, an' all hours I hear the men come whistlin' an' singin' an' cussin' home. It's a life I'm not likin' to see a young feller take to. But then I'm no judge to advise. Lord knows I've bucked the tiger in every gold camp in California. There's a fever grips a man. I never seen the good of gold to the man that dug it. . . . So, son, if you're askin' me for a hunch, let me tell you: drink little an' gamble light an' fight shy of the females!"

"MERRYVALE, I'm more of a tenderfoot than I look, I guess," replied Adam. "You'd hardly believe I never drank till I started west a few months ago. I can't stand much liquor. And I'm absolutely the poorest gambler that ever made a fool of himself. I can't savvy gambling. You pretend to have what you haven't—you bet on a lie. I don't care for games like that. And as for the females, as you call them, well—"

Adam's face lost its brightness, and his eyes shadowed, though they held frankly to Merryvale's curious gaze. Then he laughed, but did not conclude his speech.

"Son, you're a strappin' youngster an' you've got looks no woman will pass by," said Merryvale. "An' in this country the preference of women brings trouble. Wal, for that matter all the trouble anywheres is made by them. But in the desert, where it's wild an' hot, an' there's few females of any species, the fightin' gets bloody."

"Women have been the least of my fights or troubles," rejoined Adam. "I've had a few crazy love affairs—calf love, the father of one of my girls kindly called it. Then lately I had a— a little more serious affair—that ended suddenly before I fell in deep."

"Lordy, son, you'll be a lumb among wolves!" broke in Merryvale. "See here, I'm goin' to start you right. This country is no place for a nice clean boy, more's the shame an' pity. Every man who gets on in the west, let alone in the desert where the west is magnified, has got to live up to the standard. He must work, he must endure, he must fight men, he must measure up to women. I ain't sayin' it's a fine standard, but it's the one by which men have survived in a hard country at a hard time."

"You can never tell what's in a man till he's been tried. Son, I've known desert men whose lives were beyond all understandin'. But not one man in a thousand can live on the desert. Thet has to do with his mind first—then his endurance. But to come back here to this Picacho. I'd not be afraid to back you against it if you meet it right."

"How is that?"

"Lordy, son, I wish I could say the right word," returned Merryvale, in pathetic earnestness. "You ain't to be turned back?"

"No. I'm here for better or worse. I hope it's for the better. Back home I had my hopes, my dreams, like any boy. They're gone—vanished."

"Wal, wal, you talk like you look," replied Merryvale. Then he paused, taking a deep breath, as if his concluding speech involved somehow his faith in himself and his good will to a stranger. "Be a man with your body! Don't shirk work or play or fight. 'Eat an' drink an' be merry, but don't live jest for thet. Lend a helpin' hand—be generous with your gold. Put aside a third of your earnin' for gamblin' an' look to lose it. Don't ever get drunk. An' as for fightin'—tell me, can you handle a gun?"

"Friend, that's the only qualification I've got," replied Adam, with pride. He pulled his gun, and smiling, rubbed at the newness of it. "Will you be convinced if I cut your fishing line in one shot?"

"Convinced? Lordy, boy, I'll be stumped, an' sure tickled, too. But you can't do thet."

Adam extended the gun and aimed at the fishing line. His hand quivered finer and finer until it seemed to set immovably. Then he fired. Merryvale's rod jerked up and the line slackened. It had parted near the water.

"I am stumped! If you didn't do it!" he ejaculated, in admiration. "Wal, boy, don't you ever be afraid of a fight—only get to your gun first. . . . An' now to finish your education for Picacho. You can't steer clear of women, good or bad. An' the only way is to be game an' kind an' square. Thet's what gets the women."

"Game—kind—square," mused Adam, thoughtfully.

"Wal, I'll need a new fishin' line, an' thet's a fact," said Merryvale, as he pulled in his rod. "We'll go up to the store an' then I'll take you to the mill."

While passing the adobe house where Adam had engaged board and lodging he asked his companion the name of the people.

"Arallanes—Juan Arallanes lives there," replied Merryvale. "An' he's the whitest greaser I ever seen, both in color an' nature. He's a foreman of the Mexicans employed at the mill. His wife is nice, too. But thet black-eyed hussy, Margarita—"

Merryvale shook his grizzled head, but did not complete his dubious beginning. The suggestion piqued Adam's curiosity.

Presently Merryvale pointed out a cluster of huts and cabins, and one rather pretentious stone house, low and square with windows. Both white and dark-skinned children were playing on the sand in the shady places. Idle men lounged in front of the stone house, which Merryvale said was the store.

From this point a sandy road led down the river, winding through a dense thicket of arrow-weed and willow and then up a steep ridge of hard, bare ground. Higher still and back on this ridge stood the huge structure of stone and iron and wood that Adam had espied from far up the river. The rusty boilers, standing as on stone stilts and open all around, gave a crude unfinished look to this engine house. It was situated considerably higher than the square stone building that Merryvale said was the mill.

Merryvale evidently was seeking the manager, for he passed so quickly through the several huge barn-like apartments that Adam got only a confused impression of thick walls, heavy timbers, strange machinery, sluices and shafts, bustling laborers, all together with a hum and roar and vibration.

His guide climbed another slope to a level where Adam's eyes met a scene that, interesting as it was, seemed to him to be a sordid blot upon the vast colored ridges which sloped down from the rugged range to the river. Crude adobe structures glared in the sunlight; an immense water-tank, unshapely and battered, loomed high; the boilers hissed and steamed; smoke belched from a leaning chimney of sheet-iron; huge stacks of firewood stood near-by; a train-load of ore had just come in on the narrow-gauge railroad, and the dinky engine was puffing its harsh importance; workmen, the majority of them Mexicans, were toiling and sweating under the hot sun.

ADAM'S attention, however, was drawn by Merryvale, who had succeeded in finding the person he wanted. Adam saw a man of medium height, powerfully built, with an unshaven broad face, strong and ruddy. He wore a red flannel shirt, wet with sweat, a gun at his belt, overalls thrust into cowhide boots; and altogether he looked a rough and practical miner.

"Mac, shake hands with my young friend here," said Merryvale. "He wants a job."

"Howdy," replied the other, proffering a big hand that Adam felt belonged to a man. Also he was aware of one quick all-embracing glance. "Are you good at figures?"

"Why, yes," answered Adam, "but I want to work."

"All right. You can help me in the office where I'm stuck. An' I'll give you outside work besides. To-morrow." And with this brusque promise the manager strode away.

"Mac don't get time to eat," explained Merryvale. "Wal, he'll give you good wages. For there ain't one man in a hundred thet can help him in the office. An' if it's hard work of hand you're hankerin' after, wal, you'll get your belly full of thet."

Adam had to laugh at the incident. Here he had been recommended by a stranger, engaged to work for a man whose name he had not heard and who had not asked his, and no mention made of wages. Adam liked this simplicity. A man must pass in this country for what he was. He felt that, though he could not yet understand why.

MERRYVALE went his way then, leaving Adam alone. It seemed to Adam, as he pondered there, that his impressions of that gold mill did not augur well for a satisfaction with his job. He had no distaste for hard labor, though to bend over a desk did not appeal to him. But a noisy dirty environment like this would never hold him any length of time.

It was action he needed. Work, play, hunting, exploring, even gold-digging, anything with change of scene and movement of muscle,—these things that he had instinctively felt to be the need of his body, now seemed equally the need of his soul.

Arallanes, the foreman, did not strike Adam as being typical of the Mexicans among whom he lived. He was not a little runt of a swarthy-skinned man, but well-built, of a clean olive complexion and regular features, bearing some resemblance to a Greek that Adam had met once.

After supper, Arallanes invited Adam to ride up to the camp. Whereupon Margarita asked to be taken. Arallanes laughed, and then talked so fast that Adam could not understand. He gathered, however, that the empty ore-train traveled up the canyon to the camp, there to remain until morning. Also Adam perceived that Margarita did not get along well with this man who was her stepfather. They appeared on the verge of a quarrel. But the Señora spoke a few soft words that worked magic upon Arallanes, though they did not change the passion of the girl. How swiftly she had paled! Her black eyes burned with a dusky fire. When she turned them upon Adam it was certain that he had a new sensation.

"Will not the gracious Señor take Margarita to the dance?"

That was how Adam translated her swift, eloquent words. Embarrassed and hesitating, he felt that he cut a rather sorry figure before her. Then he realized the singular beauty of her big eyes, sloe-black and brilliant, neither half-veiled nor shy now, but bold and wide and burning, as if the issue at stake was not trivial.

Arallanes put a hand on Adam. "No, Señor," he said. "Some other time you may take Margarita."

"I—I shall be pleased," stammered Adam, as he backed away with a bow.

The girl's red lips curled in pouting scorn, and with a wonderful dusky flash of eyes she whirled away.

Outside Arallanes led Adam across the sands, still with that familiar hand upon him.

"Boy," he said, in English, "that girl—she no blood of mine. She damn leetle wild-cat—mucha Indian—on fire all time."

If ever Adam had felt the certainty of his youthful years, it had been during those last few moments. His collar was hot and tight. A sense of shock remained with him. He had not fortified himself at all, nor had he surrendered himself to recklessness. But to think of going to a dance this very night, in a mining-camp, with a dusky-eyed little Spanish girl who appeared exactly what Arallanes had called her—the very idea took Adam's breath with the surprise of it, the wildness of it, the strange appeal to him.

"Señor verre beeg, but young—like colt," said Arallanes, with good nature. "Tenderfoot, the gamblers say. . . . He mos' dam sure have tough feet soon!"

"Well, Arallanes, that can't come too soon for me," declared Adam.

They climbed to the track where the ore-train stood, already with laborers in almost every car, evidently bound for an evening's excitement at the camp. Arallanes found a seat for himself and Adam on the front of the engine. After a little wait that seemed long to the impatient Adam the train started, winding round the bluff to strike into the

canyon half a mile above its mouth. The track was built some few feet above the sand, but showed signs of having been submerged, and in fact washed out in places. The grade did not appear to be steep, for the engine clattered along at a rate that made Adam hold fast.

It developed, however, that there was a considerable up-grade. The engine slowed a little and puffed harder. That seemed a long five miles to Adam. But finally the canyon opened out wide and flat; tracks and cars and sheds directed his gaze to a bulging embankment that must have been debris from the mine. The train halted.

Arallanes led Adam up a long winding path, quite steep, and the other men followed in single file. When Adam reached a level once more, Arallanes called out: "Picacho!" and waved his arm impressively.

But he certainly could not have meant the wide gravelly plateau with its squalid huts, its adobe shacks, its rambling square of low flat buildings, like a stockade-fort roofed with poles. Arallanes meant the mountain that dominated the place—Picacho, the Peak.

Adam faced the west as the sun was setting. A ruddy haze, shading the blue, filled the canyons and the spaces. Picacho seemed grand there, towering to the sky, crowned in gold, aloof, unscalable.

Arallanes laughed at Adam, then sauntered on. Mexicans jabbered as they passed; and some of the white men made jocular comment at the boy standing there so wide-eyed and still. A weakened little Irishman gaped at Adam and said to a comrade: "Begorra, he's after seein' a peanut atop ole Picacho. . . . What-th-hell now, me young frind! Come, hev a drink."

The crowd passed on, and Arallanes lingered, making himself a cigarette.

Adam had not been prepared for such a spectacle of grandeur and desolation. It stunned him. He seemed to feel himself a mite flung there, encompassed by colossal and immeasurable fragments of upheaved rock, jagged and jutting, with never a softening curve, and all steeped in vivid and intense light. The range to the left bore a crimson crest, and it lost itself in a region of a thousand peaks. The range to the right was cold pure purple and it ended in a dim infinity. Between these ranges, far flung across the Colorado, loomed now with exquisite clearness in Adam's sight the mountain world he had gotten a glimpse of from below. But now he perceived its all-embracing immensity, magnified by the transparent light, its limitless horizon line an illusion, its thin purple distances unbelievable.

A hand fell upon Adam's shoulder. "Come, let us look at games of gold and women," said Arallanes.

BEFORE they reached the doors of the wide rambling jumble of shacks, into which the crowd was pouring, a couple of laborers intercepted Arallanes. They appeared pale and excited; they jabbered unintelligibly, as far as Adam was concerned. But he gathered that something was amiss. Whatever their information or warning, Arallanes treated it with scorn.

Then he led Adam into a big, poorly-lighted, low-ceiled place, as crudely constructed as a shed, and full of noise and smoke. The attraction seemed to be a rude bar, various gambling games, and some hawk-faced ghastly spectacles of women, drinking with the men. From an adjoining apartment came discordant music.

It developed that Arallanes liked to drink, and talk loud, and laugh, and to take a bold chance at a gambling game. But Adam refused, and meant to avoid drinking as long as he could, without being churlish or aloof. He wandered around by himself, to find that everybody was merry and friendly, even the cold-faced gamblers eying him with interest. Adam tried not to look at any of the women while they looked at him. The apartment from which came the music was merely a bare canvas-covered room with a board floor. Dancing was going on. Adam watched a little while, long enough to be glad that he had not brought Margarita.

Adam's aimless steps finally led him back to the sand-floored hall, where he became absorbed in watching the gambling games, one of which was composed of half-tipsy laborers. The little Irishman who had accosted Adam outside formed one of this



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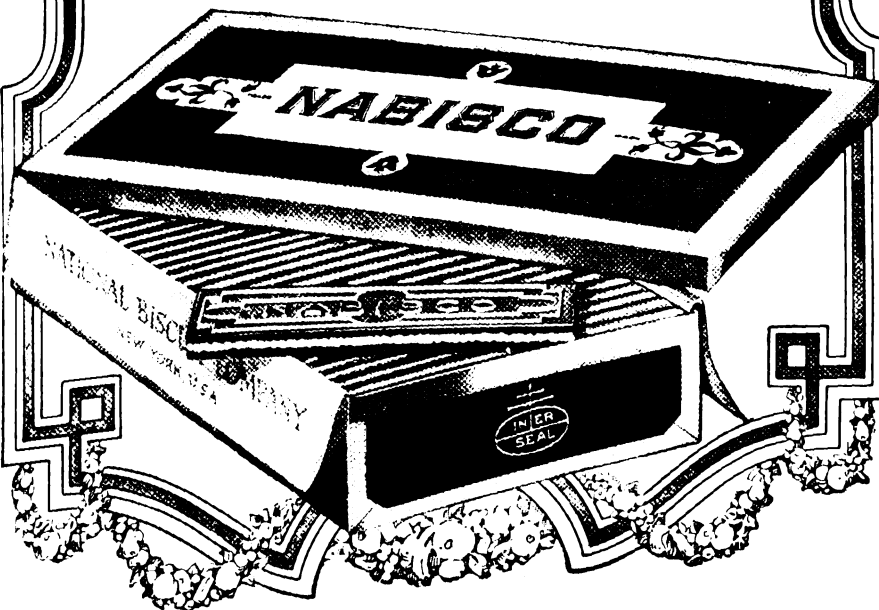
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group, and recognizing him he invited him to take part in the game. Adam politely declined. Whereupon the little man added: "Mon, I'm sure skinnin' me friends here an' I'll lind you money if you're busted."

Adam laid a hand on the Irishman's shoulder. "Thanks. I'll play sometime but not to-night. What's your name?"

"Moine's Pat Regan. Phwat's yours?"

When Adam told him, Regan blinked solemnly at him. "You're a foine fellar. Hang around an' we'll git dhrunk together."

Adam felt the better for even the half-drunken Irishman's warmth and freedom. This frontier seemed a place of quick friendships. Then Adam sauntered on, and presently was attracted by a quarrel among some Mexicans. To his surprise, it apparently concerned Arallanes. All of them showed the effects of liquor, and after the manner of their kind they were gesticulating and talking excitedly. Suddenly one of them drew a knife and lunged toward Arallanes. Adam saw the movement, and then the long shining blade before he saw what the man looked like. That action silenced the little group.

The outstretched hand, quivering with the skewer-like dagger, paused as in its sweep it reached a point opposite Adam. Instinctively he leaped, and quick as a flash he caught the wrist in a grip so hard that the fellow yelled. Adam, now that he possessed the menacing hand, did not know what to do with it. But he was frightened. With a powerful jerk he pulled the Mexican off his feet, and then, exerting his strength to its utmost, he swung him round, knocking over men and tables, until the Mexican's hold on the knife loosened. The knife flew one way and the Mexican the other. He lay where he fell. Arallanes and his comrades made much of Adam. The incident, however, so far as Adam could see, did not attract any particular attention.

"We are friends. You will drink with me," said Arallanes, grandly.

Though no one would have suspected it, Adam was really in need of something bracing. The violence he had exerted had been the result of fright—the sudden necessity of getting rid of that wicked knife. But Arallanes took the action to be one of valor. Adam drank, and the liquor seemed like flowing fire.

"Señor is only a boy, but he has an arm," said Arallanes, as he clutched Adam's shoulder and biceps with a nervous hand. "Feel that, my friend! . . . When Señor becomes a man he will be a giant."

Adam's next change of emotion was from fright to a sense of foolishness at his standing there, victim of the admiring words and grasps of these excited and vainglorious Mexicans. Then he had another drink, and after that his feelings changed again, and for that matter the whole complexion of everything changed. Certain it was that if it had not been for a sane desire on the part of Arallanes to quit the place, Adam would have gotten drunk. As it was he escaped with a whirling brain and a rather disturbed sense of equilibrium.

HE never could have found the narrow path leading down into the canyon. Arallanes was his guide. Walking on the sandy floor of the canyon was slow hard work and made Adam sweat. The loose sand and gravel dragged at his feet. Not long was it before he had walked off the effects of the strong liquor. He became curious as to why the Mexican had threatened Arallanes, and was told that during the day the foreman had discharged this fellow, who had a bad reputation and was an indifferent laborer; and his motive evidently was revenge.

"He ran after Margarita," added Arallanes, "and I kicked him out. The women, Señor! Ah! they do not mind what a man is! . . . Have a care of Margarita. If she falls really in love with you that might be good for her. But that girl! She has as many loves and lives as a spotted she-cat."

For the most part, however, the two men were silent on this laborious walk down the canyon. Adam was occupied between his thoughts of what had happened, and the speculations aroused in him by Margarita. He would stay away from Picacho, for one thing. As for Margarita, she had piqued his interest. He liked her looks. Her strange charm of eyes, of movements, lingered in his memory. She was Spanish. It did not worry him that her stepfather had labeled her dangerous.

By and by the canyon widened out so that Adam could view the great expanse of sky, fretted with fire, and the mountain spurs, rising on all sides, cold and dark against the blue. He had seen nothing so

soft, misty and shadowy as the desert shrubbery growing in the canyon. These little trees did not seem real. But when in the gloom he happened to brush against one of them to receive a stinging stab of thorns then there was indeed reality about them.

At last Arallanes announced that they were home. Adam had not seen a single house in the gray shadows. A few more steps, however, brought tangible substance of walls to Adam's touch. Arallanes bade him good night and went into the dark house. Adam had to guess at the direction of his own quarters, and he did not hit it the first time. The gloom under the mesquites was thick; besides, he had to stoop to avoid the low branches and thorns. It seemed strange, yet how glad he was to get there! Sitting down he pulled back the canvas and blankets, made a pillow of his coat, put his gun and belt under it, and crawled into bed.

THEN he drew a long deep breath and realized how tired he was. The darkness gradually changed from pitch black to a pale obscurity. He could see dim spectral outlines of mesquites, and a star shining through. At first the night appeared to be absolutely silent, but after a while, by straining his ears, he heard a rustling of mice or ground squirrels in the adobe walls. The sound comforted him, somehow, and when one of them, or at least some little animal, ran softly over his bed the feeling of utter loneliness was broken.

"I've begun it," he whispered, and meant the lonely life that was to be his.

"But I'm glad," he burst out, as if telling his secret to the darkness. "Glad to be rid of Guerd—damn him and his meanness! . . . Glad to be alone! . . . Glad to come into this wild desert! . . . Glad that girl made eyes at me! I'll not lie to myself. I wanted to hug her—to kiss her—and I'll do it if she'll let me. . . . That gambling-hell disgusted me—and the sight of the greaser's knife scared me cold. Yet when I got hold of him—felt my strength—how helpless he was—that I could have cracked his bones—scared as I was, I felt a strange wild something that is not gone yet. . . . I'm changing. It's a different life. I've got to meet things as they come, and be game."

Next morning Adam went to work. The matter of figures that evidently had been a nightmare for Mackay did not present any difficulty to Adam. It developed that part of Adam's work was to copy Mackay's lead-pencil scrawls, and after that was done to keep accurate account of ore mined and operated, of the gold assayed, of the supplies ordered and received, of the laborer's hours and wages—in fact, every detail incident to the running of a big plant.

Several days passed before Adam caught up with his work to the hour. Then Mackay, true to his word, said he would set him on a man's job part of the time. Adam was curious and pleased. Already the occupation of his time had effected a better frame of mind.

The job, upon which Mackay put Adam, was no less than keeping up the fire under the huge boilers. As wood had to be used for fuel, and as it was consumed rapidly, the task of stoking was not easy. Besides, hot as the furnace was, it seemed the sun was hotter. Adam perspired till he could wring water out of his shirt. But he always liked heat, and though this was far from pleasant, he found that he could endure it.

That night he made certain Mackay was playing a joke on him. Arallanes confirmed this intelligence, and even Margarita had been let into the secret. Mackay had many laborers for the hard work, and he wanted to cure the tenderfoot of his desire for a man's job, such as he had asked for. It was all good-natured, and amused Adam. He imagined he knew what he needed, and while he was trying to find it, he could have just as much fun as Mackay. He determined that he would not be the one to be fooled.

Much to Mackay's surprise, Adam presented himself next afternoon, in boots, overalls and undershirt, to go on with this job of firing the engine.

"Wasn't yesterday enough?" queried the boss.

"I like it," replied Adam.

"Humph! Say, boy, you'll get sun-struck."

"Not much. I can stand the sun."

Then it pleased Adam to see a considerable evidence of respect, as well as concern, in the rough mill-operator's expression. For a week Adam kept up with his office work and labored each afternoon at the stoking job. No one suspected that he suffered, though it was plain enough that he lost flesh and was exceedingly fatigued. But he stuck to



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the job. His rewards were many, among them signs of forthcoming proof that the joke would be on Mackay—a sense of satisfaction with himself—a liberation of energy that called deep to the nameless physical feeling which had been growing stronger of late. Then Margarita's reception of him, when he trudged home, was sweet despite the fact that he tried to repudiate its sweetness. Once she put a little, brown hand on his blistered arm, and her touch held the tenderness of woman.

The following week Mackay took a laborer off a strenuous job and put Adam in his place. Mackay maintained his good humor, but he had acquired a little grimness. This long-limbed tenderfoot was a hard nut to crack. Adam began to sense a spirit that must have been peculiarly western. It seemed to him that now Mackay, trying to break him, had begun to have a secret pride in this development.

If the other job had been toil for Adam, this new one was pain. He learned there what labor meant. Also he learned how there was only one thing that common men understood and respected in a co-laborer, and it was the grit and muscle to stand the grind. He realized, too, that those long hours of toil at which he stubbornly stuck had set his spirit in some immeasurable and unquenchable relation to the strange life that he divined was to be his.

Two weeks and more went by. Mackay, in proportion to the growth of his admiration and friendship for Adam, gradually weakened on his joke. And one day, when banteringly he dared Adam to tip a car of ore that two Mexicans were laboring at, and Adam in a single heave sent the tons of ore roaring into the shaft—Mackay gave up, and in true western fashion, swore his defeat and shook hands with the boy.

So in those few days Adam made friends who changed the color and direction of his life. From Merryvale he learned the legend and history of the frontier. Mackay opened

his eyes to the great health for mind and body in sheer toil. Arallanes represented a warmth of friendship that came unsought. Margarita was still an unknown quantity in Adam's development. Their acquaintance had gone on mostly under the eyes of the Señora, or Arallanes. Sometimes at sunset Adam had sat with her on the sand of the river bank. Her charm grew. Adam had worked too hard and been too weary in leisure hours to find out any reason why Arallanes had ninted to him to have a canoe Margarita. Nevertheless he had watched to see if any men came to see her, or if she went out of her way to meet any. And he had been compelled to admit that she stayed at home, and worked, and always was there to meet him and greet him with a smile. He felt that she was drawn to him, and the knowledge pleased and disturbed him.

THEN the unexpected happened—that thing of chance no man could foresee; that which made life different for Adam from what it might have been. In this case it was the shutting down of the mill. A break occurred in the machinery.

Adam seemed to be thrown back upon his own resources. He did not know what to do with himself. Arallanes advised him not to go panning for gold in the canyons, and to be cautious if he went up to Picacho, for the Mexican Adam had so roughly handled was the ringleader in a bad gang that it would be well to avoid. Adam fished with Merryvale until he got so tired waiting for the bite which never came that he went to sleep holding the pole. Then he hunted wild-fowl in the breaks of willow and arrowweed. This might have been sport if the birds had not been so tame. All things conspired, it seemed, to throw Adam into the company of Margarita, who always waited around the corner of every hour, watching with her dusky eyes.

(To be continued)

The Devastations of Dora

[Continued from page 26]

looking at the bill Harry had just given him. "I was," replied Harry, grinning, "but I told Uncle when he came home last night that I was turning over a new leaf and everything's all right now."

The idea of referring her two admirers to a court of arbitration in order to establish their worthiness appealed to Dora when Abie had made it clear to her.

"I'll go along with them," he explained, "so they don't get into a fight. I'll make each of them tell the Rabbi why he thinks he's good enough for you and I'll bet the old man will pick out the right one."

"Did Harry—I mean Mr. Hyman—say whether he's coming back this afternoon?" asked Dora.

"He didn't say anything about it. But don't you get stuck on him, Dora. He's got to marry a rich girl some day or his uncle will be terribly mad."

Dora tossed her head, disdainfully.

"I wouldn't get stuck on the best man what ever lived," she said.

"NOT even on me?" asked Abie, playfully; "if I was young and rich and good-looking?"

"Maybe," said Dora, "if you was rich."

That afternoon Fishel, the baker, and Moritz, the head-waiter, arrived almost simultaneously, a few minutes before the boat left the landing.

"Where's that Rabbi?" asked Moritz, the moment he beheld Abie.

"How should I know?" asked Abie.

Moritz, with a grunt of disgust, purchased two tickets, leaving his rival to buy his own.

"Here's a ticket for you," he said to Abie. "Now you go and find that Rabbi quickly."

The two men followed Abie on board and seated themselves a few chairs apart, at a convenient distance for glaring at each other, while Abie went in search of the Rabbi. Abie's search was slow but thorough, yet he found no Rabbi.

"Maybe," he said to Moritz, "he missed the boat and will get on by the next stop."

"Find out what the next stop is," demanded Moritz.

Abie consulted the man who was collecting the tickets and returned to Moritz.

"He says there ain't no stops," Abie reported. "The boat keeps going for three hours until it comes back to the Battery."

"Three hours!" cried Fishel, who had been listening. "I got to be back in my bakery at three o'clock or I lose a big order."

"On your left," they suddenly heard a stentorian voice, calling through a megaphone from the bow of the boat, "you see the tower of the Woolworth Building is sev-un hun-dred and fifty feet high and has fifty-one stories. It cost—"

"Tell him to stop the boat!" cried Moritz. "I got to get off."

"Sh-h-h!" said Abie. "I want to listen to what he says."

It is a delightful ride up and down the rivers and harbor of the metropolis; but Moritz and Fishel, furious and nervous, cursing the Rabbi, Abie and even Dora, found no enjoyment in it. Abie, on the other hand, not only enjoyed himself but acquired a great fund of statistics regarding the height and cost of buildings, the history of landmarks and the topography of Greater New York. He was actually sorry when the trip was over.

When the boat landed, Fishel and Moritz hastened off in different directions, leaving Abie to return by himself.

"Them ain't the right fellows for Dora," was Abie's uppermost thought. "They got a bad temper. I won't even bother the Rabbi about them."

When he reached Susskind's he found, to his surprise, Mrs. Susskind standing behind the counter in Dora's place.

"Where's Dora?" was his first question. Mrs. Susskind attempted to smile, but the rage in her heart shone in her dark eyes.

"She has suddenly went away," she explained, with an ill-concealed sneer. "She is getting married with that good-for-nothing Harry Hyman what lives on his uncle."

"Harry Hyman!" repeated Abie, non-plused.

Then Mrs. Susskind's suppressed emotions burst forth. "Yes, Harry Hyman," she cried. "That false-faced, bleached blond what you men thought was so fine. Good riddance with bad rubbishes is all I got to say."

Abie sank weakly into a chair and rubbed his head. Slowly and vaguely incident after incident became linked together in his mind.

"I suppose you can't understand it," said Mrs. Susskind, sarcastically.

"Not yet," murmured Abie, "but it commences to get translucent!"

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