

Nan of Music Mountain

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN
Author of "WHISPERING SMITH"

CHAPTER XXIX.—Continued.

"Lenny, Henry," pleaded Nan, seeking shelter from the furious blast within his arm, "just for a moment, please!"

"Not now, I tell you," cried De Spain.

"But you're coming, Henry, all the way—and he is sick—just say it to you. Let him say it here, now."

"Go on," cried De Spain roughly.

"I'm not afraid of you, De Spain!" shouted the old man, his neck bared to the freezing air. "Don't think it! You're a better man than I am, better than I ever was—don't think I don't know that. But I'm not afraid of a man I faced. De Spain, I tell you that when I'm dead, all the trouble that ever came between you and me came by an accident—come before you was born, and come through Dave Sassoon, and he's held it over me ever since you came up into this country. I was a young fellow, Sassoon worked for my father. The cattle and sheep was on, north of Medicine Bend. The fence river steppes ruled our place—your father was with them. He never did us no harm, but my brother, Big Morgan, was shot in that bad by a man name of Jennings. I started out to get the man that shot him, Sassoon trailed him to the Bar M, the old De Spain ranch, working for your father."

The words fell fast and in a fury. They came as if they had been choked from the north, and beneath its shoulder, while Morgan loosened the horses, he scooped and kicked away a mass of snow. The wagon had been drawn just above the point of refuge, and the two men, with the aid of the wind, dumped it over sideways, making of the body a windbreak over the hollow, a sort of roof, around which the snow, driven by the gale, would heap itself in hard waves. Within this shelter the men stood. The horses were driven down behind it, and from one of them De Spain took the collar, the tugs and the whiffletree. He struck a hitching strap in his pocket, and while Morgan steadied the Lady's head, De Spain buckled the collar on her, doubled the tugs around the whiffletree, and fastened the roll at her side in front of the saddle.

Nan came out and stood beside him as he worked. When he had finished she put her hand on his sleeve. He held her close, Duke listening, to tell her what he meant to try to do. Each knew it well might be the last moment together. "One thing and another have kept you from marriage vows, Nan," said De Spain, beckoning at length to Morgan to step closer that he might clearly hear. "Nothing must keep us longer. Will you marry me?"

She looked up into his eyes. "I've promised you I would. I will promise every time you ask me. I never could have but one answer to that, Henry—it must always be yes!"

"Then take me, Henry," he said slowly, "here and now for your wedded husband. Will you do this, Nan?"

Still looking into his eyes, she answered without surprise or fear: "Henry, I do take you."

"And I, Henry, take you, Nan, here and now for my wedded wife, for bet-

ting, packing, and making all effort increasingly difficult. It was well-nigh impossible to head the horses into the storm, and De Spain looked with ever more anxious eyes at Nan. After half an hour's superhuman struggle to regain a trail that should restore their bearings, they halted, and De Spain, riding up to the wagon, spoke to Morgan, who was driving: "How long is this going to last?"

"All day and all night," Nan leaned closely over to hear the curt question and answer. Neither man spoke again for a moment.

"We'll have to have help," said De Spain after a pause.

"Help?" echoed Morgan scornfully.

"Where's help coming from?"

De Spain's answer was not hurried. "One of us must go after it," Nan looked at him intently.

Duke set his hard jaw against the hurrying stream of ice that showered on the forlorn party. "I'll go for it," he snapped.

"No," returned De Spain. "Better for me to go."

"Go together," said Nan.

De Spain shook his head. Duke Morgan, too, said that only one should go; the other must stay. De Spain, while the storm rattled and shook at the two men, told why he should go himself. "It's not claiming you are not entitled to say who should go, Duke," he said evenly. "Nor that our men, anywhere you reach, wouldn't give you the same attention they would me. And it isn't saying that you're not the better man for the job—you've traveled the sinks longer than I have. But between you and me, Duke, it's twenty-eight years against fifty. I ought to hold out a while the longer, that's all. Let's work farther to the east."

Quarreling against the mad hurricane, they drove and rode on until the team could hardly be urged to further effort against the infuriated elements—De Spain riding at intervals as far to the right and the left as he dared in vain quest of a landmark. When he halted beside the wagon for the last time he was a mass of snow and ice; horse and rider were frozen to each other. He got down to the ground with a visible effort, and in the stinging wind told Duke his plan and purpose.

He had chosen on the open desert a hollow falling somewhat abruptly from the north, and beneath its shoulder, while Morgan loosened the horses, he scooped and kicked away a mass of snow. The wagon had been drawn just above the point of refuge, and the two men, with the aid of the wind, dumped it over sideways, making of the body a windbreak over the hollow, a sort of roof, around which the snow, driven by the gale, would heap itself in hard waves. Within this shelter the men stood. The horses were driven down behind it, and from one of them De Spain took the collar, the tugs and the whiffletree. He struck a hitching strap in his pocket, and while Morgan steadied the Lady's head, De Spain buckled the collar on her, doubled the tugs around the whiffletree, and fastened the roll at her side in front of the saddle.

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"And I, Henry, take you, Nan, here and now for my wedded wife, for bet-

ter for worse, for richer for poorer, from this day forward, until death us do part."

They sealed their pact with a silent embrace. De Spain turned to Duke. "You are the witness of this marriage, Duke. You will see, if an accident happens, that anything, everything I have—some personal property—my father's old ranch north of Medicine Bend—some little money in bank at Sleepy Cat—goes to my wife, Nan Morgan de Spain. Will you see to it?"

"I will. And if it comes to me—you, De Spain, will see to it that what stock I have in the gap goes to my niece, Nan, your wife."

She looked from one to the other of the two men. "All that I have," she said in turn, "the lands in the gap, everywhere around Music Mountain, go to you two equally together, or whichever survives. And if you both live, and I do not, remember my last message—bury the past in my grave."

Duke Morgan tested the cinches of the saddle on the Lady once more, unloosed the tugs once more from the harness that fastened each horse to the other, and then, with a

strip of leather, the re-enforced fastenings on the whiffletree, rolled all up again, strapped it, and stood by the saddle. He bent down once to whisper a last word of cheer to his wife, and, without looking back, headed the Lady into the storm.

CHAPTER XXX.

Gambling With Death.

Beyond giving his horse a safe headway from the shelter, De Spain made little effort to guide her. He had chosen the Lady, not because she was fresher, for she was not, but because he believed she possessed of the three horses the clearest instinct to bring her through the fight for the lives that were at stake. He did not deceive himself with the idea he could do anything to help the beast find a way to succor; that instinct rested wholly in the Lady's head, not in his. He only knew that if she could not get back to help, he could not. His own part in the effort was quite outside any aid to the Lady—it was no more than to reach alive whatever aid she could find, that he might direct it to where Nan and her companion would endure a few hours longer the fury of the storm.

His own struggle for life, he realized, was with the wind—the roaring wind that hurled its broadsides of frozen snow in monstrous waves across the maddened sky, challenging every living thing. It drove icy knives into his face and ears, paralyzed in its swift grasp his muscles and sinews, fought the stout flow of blood through his veins, and searched his very heart to still it.

Encouraging the Lady with kind words, and cursing her in her groping efforts as she turned head and tail from the blinding sheets of snow and ice, De Spain let her drift, hoping she might bring them through, what he confessed in his heart to be, the narrowest of chances.

He bent low in his saddle under the unending blasts. He buffeted his legs and arms to fight off the fatal cold. He slipped more than once from his seat, and with a hand on the pommel tramped beside the horse to revive his falling circulation, there would come a time, he realized, when he could no longer climb up again, but he staved that issue off to the last possible moment of endurance, because the Lady made better time when he was on her back. When the struggle to remount had been repeated until nature could no longer by any staggering effort be made to respond to his will, until his legs were no longer a part of his being—until below his hips he had no body answerable to his commands, but only two inescapable masses of lead that anchored him to the ground—he still forced the frozen feet to carry him, in a feeble, monstrous gait beside the Lady, while he dragged with his hands on the saddle for her patient aid.

One by one every thought, as if congealed in their brain cells, deserted his mind—save the thought that he must not freeze to death. More than once he had hoped the insensate fury of the blizzard might abate. The Lady had long since ceased to try to face it—like a stripped vessel before a hurricane, she was drifting under it. De Spain realized that his helpless legs would not carry him farther. His hands, freezing to the pommel, no longer supported him. They finally slipped from it and he fell prostrate in the snow beside his horse. When he would cry out to her his frozen lips could mumble no words. It was the fight no longer of a man against nature, but only of an indomitable soul against a cruel, hateful death. He struggled to his feet only to fall again more heavily. He pulled himself up this time by the stirrup strap, got his hands and arms up to the pommel, and clung to it for a few paces more. But he fell at last, and could no longer rise from the ground. The storm swept unceasingly on.

The Lady, checked by the lines wrapped on his arm, stopped. De Spain lay a moment, then bucked her up a step, pulled her head down by the bridle, clasped his wooden arms around her neck, spoke to her, and, lifting her head, the mare dragged him to his feet. Clumsily and helplessly he loosened the tugs and the whiffletree, beat his hands together with idiotic effort, hooked the middle point of the whiffletree into the elbow of his left arm, brought the forearm and hand against his shoulder, and with the hitching strap lashed his forearm and upper arm tightly together around the whiffletree.

He drew the tugs stiffly over the Lady's back, unloosed the cinches of the saddle, pushed it off the horse and, sinking into the snow behind her, struck with his free arm at her feet. Relieved of the saddle, the Lady once more started, dragging slowly behind her through the snow a still breathing human being. Less than an hour before it had been a man. It was hardly more now, as the Lady plodded on, than an insensate log. But not even the death could part it again from the horse to which De Spain, alive, had fastened it.

The fearful pain from the tortured arm, torn at times almost from its socket, the gradual snapping of straining ligaments, the constant rupture of capillaries and veins sustained his consciousness for a while. Then the torturing pain abated, the rough dragging shattered the bruised body less. It was as if the Lady and the storm together were making easier for the slowly dying man his last trail across the desert. He still struggled to keep alive, by sheer will power, flickering sparks of consciousness, and to do so concentrated every thought on Nan. It was a poignant happiness to summon her picture to his fainting senses; he knew he should hold to life as long as he could think of her. Love, stronger than death, welled in his heart. The bitter cold and the merciless wind were kinder as he called her image from out of the storm. She seemed to speak—to lift him on her arms. Ahead, distant mountains rose, white-peaked. The sun shone. He rode with her through green fields, and a great peace rested on his weary senses.

Lady Jess, pushing on and on, encouraged by that instinct before which

nothing, as it were, through the impenetrable curtain of the storm where refuge lay, herself a slow-moving crust of frozen snow, dragged to her journey's end—to the light-shed doors of the Calabasas barn—her unconscious burden, and stood before them patiently waiting until someone should open for her. It was one of the heartbreaks of tragic day that no one ever knew just when the Lady reached the door or how long she and her unconscious master waited in the storm for admission. A startled exclamation from John Lefever, who had periodically and anxiously left the red-hot stove in the office to walk moodily to the window, brought the men tumbling over one another as he ran from his companions to throw open the outer door and pull the drooping horse into the barn.

It was the Indian, Scott, who, reading first of all the men everything in the dread story, sprang forward with a stifled exclamation, as the horse dragged in the snow-covered log, whipped a knife from his pocket, cut the incumbered arm and white hand free from the whiffletree, and, carrying the stiffened body into the office, began with insane haste to cut away the clothing.

Lefever, perceiving it was De Spain thus drawn to their feet, shouted, while he tore from the blade of Scott's knife the frozen garments, the orders for the snow, the heated water, the warm blankets, the alcohol and brandy, and, stripped to his waist, chafed the marble feet. The Indian, better than a staff of doctors, used the cunning of an innkeeper to revive the spark of inanimate life not yet extinguished by the storm. A fearful interval of suspense followed the silence into which the work settled, a silence broken only by the footsteps of men running to and from the couch over which Scott, Lefever and McAlpin, half-naked, worked in mad concert.

De Spain opened his eyes to wander from one to the other of the faces. He half rose up, struggling in a frenzy with the hands that restrained him. While his companions pleaded to quiet him, he fought them until, restored to its seat of reason, his mind reasserted itself, and, lying exhausted, he told them in his exquisite torture of whom he had led, and what must be done to find and bring them in.

While the relief wagons, equipped with straining teams and flanked by veteran horsemen, were dashing out of the barn, he lapsed into unconsciousness. But he had been able to hold Scott's hand long enough to tell him he must find Nan and bring her in, or never come back.

It was Scott who found her. In their gropings through the blizzard the three had wandered nearer Calabasas than any one of them dreamed. And on the open desert, far south and east of the upper lava beds, it was Scott's horse that put a foot through the bottom of the overturned wagon box. The suspected mound of snow, with the buried horses scrambling to their feet, rose upright at the crash. Duke crouched, half-conscious, under the rude shelter. Lying where he had placed her, snugly between the horses, Scott found Nan. He spoke to her when she opened her staring eyes, picked her up in his arms, called to his companions for the covered wagon, and began to restore her, without a moment of delay, to life. He even promised if she would drink the hateful draft he put to her lips and let him cut away her shoes and leggings and the big coat frozen on her, that in less than an hour she should see Henry De Spain alive and well.

CHAPTER XXXI.

At Sleepy Cat.

Nothing in nature, not even the storm itself, is so cruel as the beauty of the after calm. In the radiance of the sunshine next day De Spain, delicious and nurturing, was taken to the hospital at Sleepy Cat. In an adjoining room lay Nan, moaning reproaches at those who were torturing her reluctantly back to life. Day and night the doctors worked over the three. The town, the division, the stagemen and the mountain men watched the outcome of the struggle. From as far as Medicine Bend railroad surgeons came to aid in the fight.

De Spain cost the most acute anxiety. The crux of the battle, after the three lives were held safe, centered on the effort to save De Spain's arm—the one he had chosen to lose, if he must lose one, when he strapped it to the whiffletree. The day the surgeons agreed that if his life were to be saved the arm must come off at the shoulder a gloom fell on the community.

In a lifetime of years there can come to the greater part of us but a few days, a few hours, sometimes no more than a single moment, to show of what stuff we are really made. Such a crisis came that day to Nan. Already she had been wheeled more than once into De Spain's room, to sit where she could help woo him back to life. The chief surgeon, in the morning, told Nan of the decision. In her hospital bed she rose bolt upright. "No!" she declared solemnly. "You shan't take his arm off!"

The surgeon met her rebellion tactfully. But he told Nan, at last, that De Spain must lose either his arm or his life. "No," she repeated without hesitation and without blanching, "you shan't take off his arm. He shan't lose his life."

The blood surged into her cheeks—better blood and redder than the doctors had been able to bring there—such blood as De Spain alone could call into being. Nan, with her nurse's help, dressed, joined De Spain, and talked long and earnestly. The doctors, too, laid the situation before him. When they asked him for his decision, he nodded toward Nan. "She will tell you, gentlemen, what we'll do."

And Nan did tell them what the two who had met at stake in the decision would do. Any man could have done as much as that. But Nan did more. She set herself out to save the arm and patient both, and, lest the doctors should change their tactics and move together on the arm surreptitiously, Nan stayed night and day with De Spain, until he was able to make such active use of either arm as to convince her that he and not the surgeons would

UNCLE SAM TAKES KEEN INTEREST IN 1917 APPLE CROP

Our Big Fruit Harvest Must Be Used to Help Save Wheat and Meat for Allies.

FOOD ADMINISTRATION PLANS

"Consumer Campaign" Throughout the Land to Aid in Home Consumption During Autumn, Winter and Spring of Next Year.

Uncle Sam takes the keenest interest in this year's apple crop. For the fruit must be used to help save wheat and meats for our allies.

The food administration is planning a consumer campaign of publicity throughout the country.

This year's apple crop calls for intelligent handling. The latest government reports indicate a crop of about 190,000,000 bushels. That is a little below normal. Good prices are assured for all honestly packed, first quality apples, and also for honestly packed, selected second grades, which government experts say can be put into storage. When the crop is big it does not pay to store second grades, but this year, despite the fact that we cannot ship our usual 2,000,000 barrels of apples abroad, because shipping space is precious, we should be able to get fair prices for all good apples at home.

Careless packing of poor quality fruit has always been one of the chief causes of market instability and unsatisfactory prices to the growers. This year the whole apple industry is co-operating to remove this market handicap. There has never been an apple year such as this one is going to be. Growers have never been able to get together and engage and finance a national educational campaign among consumers to increase apple consumption. This year the situation makes it necessary for the United States government, through the food administration, to conduct a consumer's campaign of publicity on behalf of the apple. This campaign will begin while the crop is being sent to market, and will probably continue until the last apple is eaten up late next spring. So the grower has three great incentives for grading, packing and storing this crop with especial care.

1. It is a good crop and calls for care.

2. The government will encourage apple eating and apple storage and will discourage speculation that raises the price abnormally.

3. We must eat up at home more than two million barrels of apples, which would ordinarily be exported.

To get the best of the crop to the market in prime condition it must be picked carefully at the time of maturity and promptly cooled in temporary storage, and then skillfully graded and packed. Second-grade fruit should not go into barrels or boxes. If it cannot be marketed in bulk in nearby consuming centers, then it should be worked up into by-products along with the culls.

There has been a gratifying improvement in apple marketing the past two or three years. Western apples are boxed to strictly honest standards, by the great co-operative growers' organizations in Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho and Colorado. The eastern barrel apple has also been wonderfully improved in New York and other states. Because apples are honestly packed and give the best possible value for the money, there is an increase in the consumer demand. Retail merchants who were formerly almost afraid to buy apples in barrels, because they were not sure of getting marketable values for their money, are now buying freely and in confidence. This good work makes it possible for the government to go further and encourage the use of apples as a war-time food measure.

Because the bulk of the crop will be picked by volunteer workers this year, and put into common storage until the grower can find time to grade and pack, there will be an opportunity to give closer personal attention to the grading and packing than might be the case if the crop were handled as in peace times. For the grower who desires instructions in apple packing, the department of agriculture at Washington has information in bulletin form. These bulletins can be secured free by writing to the department. Growers will do well to obtain a few copies for their pickers and packers.

Find a Use for Rats.

The city authorities of Stockholm have begun a campaign against rats by offering a reward of 2½ cents for every dead one. While it is hoped thus to reduce the rat plague considerably, the chief end is to get an important addition to the stocks of fats available for the making of soaps and lubricants. The rats are treated in a "corpse utilization establishment," where, after the fat has been boiled out, what remains is converted into a poultry food. South Sweden has for some time been utilizing carcasses of animals. Considerable fat is also obtained by skimming large quantities placed in the sewers leading from hotels, restaurants and other places where there is an unavoidable waste of fat.

Free From Any Such Taint.

Parson—"This eccentricity you speak of in your daughter, isn't it, after all, a matter of heredity?" Girl's Mother—"No, sir. I'd have you know that there was never any heredity in our family."—Boston Transcript.

One Explanation.

"I like this poem of yours to a brook. It fairly gurgles. You evidently wrote it by a rippling rill." "Not exactly," said the poet, "but I did write it with a fountain pen. Maybe that accounts for it."

Don't let Trachoma stand between you and the one big chance to do your duty fighting for the Stars and Stripes in France.

Examining Physicians Ordered to Make Strict Tests for Trachoma.

Gen. Crowder also sent this additional caution to examining physicians of the local boards: "Surgeon general advises that in order to prevent the terrible ravages which result from the introduction into the army of that dread disease of the eyes known as trachoma, the lids of every recruit be examined to insure the absence of this disease, and that any border line or suspicious case be referred to an ophthalmic surgeon especially qualified in this line."

Read the above clippings from the St. Louis Globe-Democrat of Aug. 9.

If you are afflicted with Trachoma decide now to have it cured, in order to do your duty for your country.

People of all ages suffering with Trachoma, granulated lids and chronic sore eyes, come from all parts of the country to take the remarkable, inexpensive

Halcyon Treatment

Just write a letter today and ask for complete information and also learn how you can be treated 10 days before paying a penny.

Write now—today!

HALEY EYE INFIRMARY

CENTRALIA, ILL.



The Reason.

"Let that man down easy." "Why should I?" "Because he's so hard up."

Natural Feeling.

"How is that stitch in your side?" "Oh, it is only sews-sew."—Hillmore American.

WOMAN'S CROWNING GLORY

Is her hair. If yours is streaked with ugly, grizzled, gray hairs, use "La Creole" Hair Dressing and change it in the natural way. Price \$1.00.—Adv.

Slight Mistake.

"I must say this khaki campaign skirt is a loose fit." "You're in wrong, auntie. That is the boy's tent you have on."

Alert for the Future.

"You've got a lot of weeds in your garden." "Pretty fine weeds, too, don't you think?" rejoined Mr. Crossroads. "Surely you are not nursing them along?"

"Yes, sir. I've been finding out that so many new things are edible that I'm holding out to see whether science won't discover some way of frying the Jimson or stewing the burdock."

Idleness Makes a Fortune.

"If you sit idly you will lose money every minute," is a liberal paraphrase of a well-known Japanese proverb and serves as a protest against idleness, but the Tokyo Hochiichi cites the case of the great Buddha at Nara, which, despite inaction, is reaping a fortune. During the year ending June 25 the Buddha received 351,000 visitors, who paid admission fees aggregating \$9,250. The taxation of a fee to visit the big Buddha began in 1911, since which time \$127,500 gate money has been received.

The Potato Blessing.

Riding outside the city, one will not fail to see the wide expanse of potato plants growing luxuriously, and forthwith he indulges in anticipations of the golden plenty that is soon to be the good fortune of our people. But clouding these anticipations is a dark fear that the speculator will invade these premises and get nearly all these potatoes into his own hands and by some sort of restriction or limitations so work the prospects that he will be able to keep up the price and gather in the profits, says the Ohio State Journal. It would be a decided advantage to the public welfare if it could be so decreed that no producer should sell to a mere speculator. There is no oppression in that. Of course, it might stave off a little inconvenience, but it will pay in the end. Let us hope that the beautiful potato prospect will turn out a public blessing.

No bowl is too big when it holds Post Toasties

