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BENTON, BOSSIER PARISH, LA., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1915.

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Hatful of Pearls.
The wit of Jenny Lind was as charming in its way as her voice. On the occasion of her second rehearsal at the Paris Opera House Lablache, the famous singer, was entranced with her voice. Hurrying up to her, he said enthusiastically:
"Give me your hand, mademoiselle! Every note in your voice is a pearl!"
"Give me your hat," replied Jenny Lind, with a playful smile.
Lablache handed the hat to her. Putting it to her mouth, she gave one of her matchless trills and birdlike snatches of song.
"Here," she said, smiling at the delighted Lablache as she returned his property. "Is a hatful of pearls for you, monsieur?"

LAHOMA

By JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

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SYNOPSIS.

Brick Willock, highwayman, saves one Gledware and a baby girl from being murdered by his fellow outlaws on the western plains.

Willock flees to the mountains and hides to escape the wrath of the outlaws he had unwittingly. He learns that some one has discovered his hiding place.

CHAPTER III.

A Mysterious Guest.

Of course, as soon as Brick's eyes could penetrate the semigloom sufficiently to distinguish small objects, he saw the proof, but even before that the air seemed tingling with some strange personality. He stood like a statue, gazing fixedly. His alert eyes, always on guard, had assured him that the cave was deserted. There was no use to look behind him. Whoever had been there must have scaled the mountain and had either crossed to the plain on the north or was hiding behind the rocks. What held his eyes to the stove was a heap of tobacco and a clay pipe beside it.

After a few minutes of immobility he entered, placed the meat on a box and departed softly, closing the door behind him. Casting apprehensive glances along the mountainside, he stole toward it and made his way up the gully. Not pausing at the crevice, he went on to the outer northern ridge of the range and, lying flat among some high rocks, looked down.

He counted seventeen men near the spot from which he had removed the wagon. Fifteen were on horseback, and two riderless horses explained the presence of the two on foot. All of them had drawn up in a circle about the heap of stones that covered the woman's burial place. Of the seventeen, sixteen were Indians, painted and adorned for the warpath. The remaining man, he who stood at the head of the stones beside the chief, was a white man, and at the first glance Willock recognized him. He was the dead woman's husband, Henry Gledware.

Brick's mind was perplexed with vain questionings. Was it Gledware who had visited his dugout or the Indians? Did the pipe and tobacco indicate a peace offering? What was the relationship between Gledware and these Indians? Was he their prisoner, and were they about to burn him upon the heap of stones? He did not seem alarmed. Had he made friends with the chief by promising to conduct him to the deserted wagon? If so, what would they think in regard to the wagon's disappearance? Had the dugout persuaded them that there was no other retreat in the mountains?

While Brick watched in agitated suspense several Indians leaped to the ground at a signal from the chief and advanced toward the white man. The chief turned his back upon the company and started toward the mountain, his face turned toward Brick's place of observation. He began climbing upward, the red feather in his hair gleaming against the green of the cedars. Brick had but to remain where he was to reach forth his hand and presently seize the warrior, but in that case those on the plain would come swarming up the ascent for vengeance.

Brick darted from his post, swept like a dipping swallow across the ravine and, snatching up the rope ladder from his nook under the bowlder, scurried down into the granite chamber. Having removed the ladder, he crept to the extremity of the excavation and with his back against the wall and his gun held in readiness awaited the coming of the chief. After the lapse of many minutes he grew reassured. The Indian, thinking the dugout his only home, had passed the crevice without the slightest suspicion.

However, lest in thrusting forth his head he call attention to his home in the rock, he kept in retreat the rest of that day. Nor did he venture forth that night.

One bright warm afternoon in October two years later Brick Willock sat smoking his pipe before the open door of his dugout. In repose he always sat when in the cave with his face toward the natural roadway. It was thus he hoped to prevent surprise from inimical horsemen, and it was thus that on this particular afternoon he detected a shadow creeping over the reddish brown stone passage.

At first glimpse of that shadow of a feathered head Willock flung himself down the dirt steps leading to the open door. Now, lying flat, he directed the barrel of his gun over the edge of the level ground, covering an approaching horseman. As only one Indian came

into view and as this Indian was armed in a manner as astounding as it was irresistible, Willock rose to his height of six feet three, lowered his weapon and advanced to meet him.

When he was near, the Indian—the same chief from whom Willock had fled on the day of his intended housewarming—sprang lightly to the ground and lifted from the horse that defense which he had borne in front of him on penetrating the cave. It was the child for whose sake Willock had separated himself from his kind.

At first Willock thought he was dreaming. The Indian made a sign to the little girl to remain with the horse, then he glided forward, holding some what ostentatiously, a filled pipe in his extended hand.

"Was it you that left a pipe and tobacco on my stove two years ago?" Willock asked abruptly.

"Yes, you got it? We will smoke." He seated himself gravely on the ground.

Willock went into the cabin and brought out the clay pipe. They smoked. Willock cast covert glances toward the girl. She stood slim and straight, her face rigid, her eyes fixed on the horse. Her limbs were bare and a blanket that descended to her knees seemed her only garment. The face of the sleeping child of five was the same, however, as this of the seven-year-old maid, except that it had grown more beautiful.

Willock was wonderfully moved, so much so that his manner was harsh, his voice gruff in the extreme.

"Where'd you find her?"

"Not been lost. Her safe all time. Sometime in one village—here, then there, two, three—move her about. Safe all time. I never forget. There she is. You take her?"

"Yes, I'll take her. Where's her daddy?"

"Him great man."

"Well—go ahead; tell the rest of it."

"Him settle among my tribe; him never leave our country. Big country, fat country, very rich. Him change name—everything; him one of us. Marry my daughter. That girl not see that man again. Your daughter him never see white man, white woman, white child, forget white people, he good Indian. The girl make him think of dead woman. When a man marry again, not good to remember dead woman."

He rose, straight as an arrow and turned his grim face toward the horse.

"I see. And you don't want to tell me where he is, because you want him to forget he is a white man?"

"Him always live with my people; him marry my daughter."

"Tell me this, is he far away?"

"Very far. Many days. You never find him. You stay here, keep girl and me and my people your friends. You come after him—not your friends."

"Why, bless your heart, I never want to see that man again. Your daughter is welcome to him, but I'm afraid she's got a bad bargain. This girl's just as I'd have her—unremembered. I'm awfully glad you come, pardner."

He strode forward and addressed the girl. "Are you willing to stay with me, little one?"

She shrank back from the wild figure. During his two years of hiding in the mountains Willock had cared nothing for his personal appearance. His garments of disintegrating had been replaced by skins, thus giving an aspect of assorted colors and materials rather remarkable.

He was greatly disconcerted by her attitude. "I guess I've been so much with myself that I ain't noticed my outside as a man ought. Won't you make your home with me, child?" He held out his rough hand appealingly.

She retreated farther, saying with disgust, "Much hair!"

Willock laid his hand on his breast, returning, "Much hair!"

"Him white," said the Indian, swinging himself upon his horse. "Him save your life. Some time me come visit, come eat, come stay with you."

As he wheeled about she held out her arms toward him, crying wildly: "Don't go! Don't leave me! Him much hair!"

The Indian dashed away without turning his head.

"Good Lord, honey," exclaimed Willock, at his wife's ends, "don't cry! I can't do nothing if you cry. Won't you come look at your new home?"

"Hole in the ground!" cried the girl desperately. "I want my tepee. Am I a prairie dog?"

"No, honey, you ain't. You and me is both white, and we ought to live together. It ain't right for you to live with red people that kills and burns you own kith and kin."

She looked at him repelently through her streaming ears. "Big hair!" she cried. "Big hair!"

"And must I cut it off? I'll make my head as smooth as yonder bald-headed mountain peak if it'll keep you from crying."

Her sobbing grew less violent. Despite his ferocious aspect, no fear could remain in her heart at sight of that distressed countenance, at sound of those conciliatory tones.

"I'm going to do whatever you say, honey, and you're going to be the queen of the cave. Ain't you never been lonesome among all them red devils? Ain't you missed your poor mammy as did crossing the plains? It was me that buried her. Ain't you never knowed how it felt to want to say your head on somebody's shoulder and slip your little arms about his neck and go to sleep like an angel whatever was happening around? Here I've been well, that's me too. Here I've been for two long year, never seeing nothing but wild animals or prowling savages till the last few months when a settler comes to them mountains seven mile

to the southwest. Looked like I'd die sometimes, just having myself to entertain."

"On lonesome, too?" said the girl, looking up incredulously. She drew a step nearer, a wistful light in her dark eyes.

"The man stretched out his arms and dropped them to his side heavily. "Like that," he cried—"just emptiness!"

"I stay," she said simply.

"You ain't afraid now, are you, little one?"

She shook her head and, drawing nearer, seated herself on the ground before the dugout. "You look Big Hair," she explained sedately, "but your speech is talk of weak squaw."

Somewhat disconcerted by these words, Willock sat down opposite her and resumed his pipe as if to assert his sex. "I seem weak to you," he explained, "because I love you, child, and want to make friends with you. But let me meet a big man—well, you'd see, then!" He looked so ferocious as he uttered these words, that she started up like a frightened quail.

"No, no, honey," he cooed absently, "I wouldn't hurt a fly. How comes it that you ain't forgot to talk like civilized beings?"

"Red Feather, him always put me with squaw that know English—that used to school on the reservation. Never let me learn talk like the Indians. Him always say some day take me to my own people."

"Did he tell you your mother died two years ago?"

"Yes, Father, him dead too. Both died in the plains. Father was shot by robbers. Mother was left in big wagon. You bury her near this mountain."

"Oh, ho! So your father was killed at the same time your mother was, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, all right. And now you got nobody but me to look after you. Just you tell me what you want, and it'll be did."

"Want to be all like white people: want to be just like mother."

"Well, I'll teach you as far up as I've been myself. Your style of talk ain't correct, but it was the best Red Feather could do for you. I'll take you by the hand right from where Red Feather left you and carry you up the heights."

She examined him dubiously. "You know how?"

"I ain't no bellwether in the paths of learning, honey, but Red Feather is some miles behind me. What's your name?"

"Lahoma."

"Born before he died him all time want to go settle in the Oklahoma country—settle on a claim with mother. They go there two times—three—but soldiers all time make them go back to Kansas. So me, I was born, and they named me Oklahoma, but all time they call me Lahoma. That I must be called, Lahoma, because that father and mother all time call me Lahoma, that my name." She inquired anxiously, "You call me Lahoma?" She leaned forward, hands upon knees, in breathless anxiety.

"You bet your life I will, Lahoma!"

"Then me stay all time with you—all time. And you teach me talk right and dress right and be like mother and my white people? You teach me all that?"

"That's the program. I'm going to civilize you—that means to make you

"Can you remember either of them?"

"Oh, yes, yes! And Red Feather, him talk about them, talk, talk; always say me be white with the white people some day. This is the day. You make me like mother was. You civilize me—begin!" The cloud had vanished from her face, and her eyes sparkled with expectancy.

CHAPTER IV.

"Your mother's grave."

"AIN'T got the tools yet, honey," went on Brick. "They's no breaking up and enriching land that ain't never bore nothing but buffalo grass without I have picks and spades and plows and harrers. I got to get my tools to begin."

She stiffened herself. "You needn't be afraid I'll cry. I want you to hurt me, if that the way."

"It ain't like a pain in the stomach, Lahoma. All I gets for you will be some books."

"Books? What are books?"

"Books?" Willock rubbed his busy head in desperation. "Books? Why, they is just thoughts that somebody has ketched and put in a cage where they can't get away. If you want to be civilized you got to lasso other people's thoughts—people as has went to and fro and has learned life—and you got to deform them ideas and tame 'em."

Lahoma examined him with new interest. "Are you civilized?" Her countenance fell.

"Not to no wide extent, but I can ford toler'ble deep stream that would drown you, honey. I can write my own name and yours too, I reckon. Lahoma Gledware—yes, I'm toler'ble well versed on a capital G; you just make a gap with a flying tail to it."

"My name not Lahoma Gledware," she interposed in some severity. "My name Lahoma Willock. Beautiful name—lovely, like flower—Willock. Call me Lahoma Willock—like song of little stream; Gledware—hard, rough."

Brick Willock stared at her in amazement. "Where'd you get that from?"

"My name Lahoma Willock—Red Feather tell me."

He smoked in silence, puffing rapidly. "How came you to be named Lahoma Willock?"

Lahoma suggested thoughtfully. "All white people named Willock?"

"There's a few"—Willock shook his head—"with less agreeable names. But after all, I'm glad you have my name. Well, honey, this is enough talk about being civilized. Now let's make the first move on the way. You want to see your mother's grave and lay some of these wild flowers on it. That's a part of being civilized, caring for graves is. It's just savages as forgets the past and consequently never learns nothing. Come along. Then moccasins will do famous until I can get you shoes from the settlements. But I got a pony the first time I ventured to Doan's store, and it'll carry you if I have to walk at your side. We'll make a festival march of that journey and lay in clothes as a girl should wear and books to last through the winter."

Willock rose and explained that they must cross the mountain. As they traversed it he reminded her that she had not gathered any of the flowers that were scattered under sheltering bowlders.

"Why?" asked Lahoma, showing that her neglect to do so was intentional.

"Well, honey, don't you love and honor that mother that bore so much pain and trouble for you, traveling with you in her arms to the Oklahoma country, trying to make a home for you up there in the wilderness and at last dying from the hardships of the plains? Ain't she worth a few flowers?"

"She dead. She not see flowers, not smell flowers, not know."

Willock said nothing, but the next time they came to a clump of blossoms he made a nosegay. Lahoma watched him with a face as calm and unemotional as that of Red Feather himself.

"What you do with that?" She pointed at the flowers in his rough hand.

"I'm going to put 'em on your mother's grave."

"She not know, not see, not smell. She dead; mother dead."

"Lahoma, do you know anything about God?"

"Yes—Great Spirit. God make my path white."

"Well, I want God to know that somebody remembers your mother. It's God that smells the flowers on the graves of the dead."

They walked on. Pretty soon Lahoma began looking about for flowers, but they had reached the last barren ledge, and no more came in sight.

"Take these, Lahoma."

"No. Couldn't fool God." They began the last descent. Willock suddenly discovered that tears were slipping down the girl's face. Suddenly she cried joyfully, "Oh, look, look!" She darted toward the spot at the foot of a tall cedar where purple and white blossoms showed in profusion. She gathered an armful, and they went down to the plain.

"Her head's toward the west," he said as they stood beside the pile of stones. Lahoma placed the flowers at the western margin of the pyramid. Willock laid his at the foot of the grave.

During the two years passed by Brick Willock in dreary solitude conditions about him had changed. The hardships of pioneer life which fifty years ago had obtained in the middle states yet prevailed in 1882 in the tract of land claimed by Texas under the name of Greer county, but the dangers of pioneer life were greatly lessened. As Lahoma made the acquaintance of the mountain range and explored the plain

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extending beyond the natural horizon, Willock believed she ran little danger from Indians. He himself had ceased to preserve his unrelaxing watchfulness. After all, it had been the highwaymen rather than the red men whom he had most feared, and after two years it did not seem likely that such volatile men would preserve the feeling of vengeance.

With the wisdom derived from his experience with wild natives, he carefully abstained from any attempt to force Lahoma's friendship; hence it was not long before he obtained it without reserve. In the meantime he talked incessantly, and to his admiration he presently found her manner of speech wonderfully like his own—both fluent and ungrammatical.

He knew nothing of grammar, to be sure, but there were times when his mistakes, echoed from her lips, struck upon his ear, and though he might not always know how to correct them, he was prompt to suggest changes, testing each, as a natural musician judges music—by ear. Dissatisfied with his own standards, he was all the more impatient to depart on the expedition after mental tools, despite the dangers that might beset the journey.

His first task, prompted by the coming of Lahoma, had been to partition off the half of the dugout containing the stove for the child's private chamber. Cedar posts set in the ground and plastered with mud higher than his head left a space between the top and the apex of the ceiling that the temperature might be equalized in both rooms. Thus far, however, they did not stay in the dugout except long enough to eat and sleep, for the autumn had continued delightful, and the cave seemed to the child her home, of which the dugout was a sort of cellar. Concerning the stone retreat in the crevice she knew nothing. Willock did not know why he kept the secret since he trusted Lahoma with all his treasures, but the unreasoning reticence of the man of great loneliness still rested on him.

"Lahoma," he said one day, "there's a settler over yonder in the mountains across the south plain. How'd you like to pay him a visit?"

"I don't want anybody but you," said Lahoma promptly.

Willock stood on one leg, rubbing the other meditatively with his delighted foot. Not the quiver of a muscle, however, revealed the fact that her words had flooded his heart with sunshine. "Well, honey, that's in reason. But I've got to take you with me after books and winter supplies, and I don't like the idea of traveling alone. It come to me that I might get Mr. Settler to go too. Time was not so long ago when Injun bands was coming and going, and although old Greer is better here and there, I can't get over the feel of the old times. They ain't no sensation as sticks by a man when he's come to be wedged in between forty-five and fifty as the feel of the old times."

"Well," said Lahoma earnestly, "I wish you'd leave me here when you go after them books. I don't want to be with no strangers. I want to just squat right here and bear myself company."

"That's in reason. But, honey, while you might be safe enough while bearing the same I would be plumb crazy worrying about you. I might not have good cause for worrying, but worrying ain't no bird that spreads its wings and goes north when cold weather comes; worrying—it's independent of causes and seasons."

"If you have got to be stayed with to keep you from worrying they ain't nothing more to be said."

"Just so. That there old settler, I've crossed a few words with him, and I believe he would do noble to travel with. He's as gruff and growly as a grizzly bear if you say a word to him, and if he'll just turn all that temper he's vented on me on any strangers we may run up against on the trail he'll do invaluable."

Continued on Page Four.



"You teach me all that?"

like white folks. It's going to take time, but the mountains are full of time."

"You 'civilize' me right now? You begin today?" She started up and stood erect with arms folded, evidently waiting for treatment.

"The process will be going on all the while you're associating with me, honey. That chief, Red Feather—he has a daughter, hasn't he?"

"No, him say no girl, no boy." She spoke with confidence.

"I see. And your father's dead, too, eh?" Evidently Red Feather had thoroughly convinced her of the truth of these pretenses.

"Both—mother, father. Nobody but me." She knelt down at his side, her face troubled. "If I had just one!"