

THE SACRIFICE

By H. M. Egbert

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The day when Leila and Tommy came into the life of Jim Peters was his reddest of red letter days. He always saw the scene just as he had seen it then. The early snows had begun to whiten the hills and Peters had driven his stock down into the country for the winter pastures.

He was sitting in his hut, thinking over things. At 30 he felt vaguely that he ought to be doing better for himself. Not that he wanted to leave the cattle country for the city. But life in a two-room shack, where he cooked his own meals and made his own bed, was becoming unbearable.

Most of the settlers of his age were already married. The settlement was beginning to prosper. Neat little flower beds appeared around the houses and the young wives were very gaily dressed upon occasions. A church had been built; altogether it was a place for a young man with \$2,000 in the bank to rejoice in.

But Jim had always lived a lonely life. He did not know how to change it. Too bashful to make advances to any of the town girls whom he saw on his rare visits, and with a vague feeling that he wanted a wife of a special, hardly defined type, something above the common run, he was brooding in his chair when there came a tap on the door.

It was a timid tap, such as he had never heard. The men who tapped at Jim's door hammered with hairy fists until he opened to them. Jim opened now and was amazed to see a woman and a boy outside.

Both were thinly clad and shivering from the cold. Nevertheless, the woman did not attempt to enter, but only asked where lodging could be obtained.

She had come in on the evening train, she said. She offered no fur-

ther explanation, but it was evident that she was gently bred. The look of weariness in her eyes haunted Jim for days.

He took her down the hill to a woman of the valley. The hospitality of the west prevailed over suspicion. The stranger and her son were given shelter.

Next day Leila Drayton, as she called herself, went to work for one of the rich settlers. But soon she



Watched the Car Shoot Down Hill.

was asked to fill a pressing need. The children were growing up and, in spite of its advantages, there was no school in the valley. She became the school mistress.

Speculation was rife about her. She never mixed with the valley people, never talked about her past. And the west accepts women as well as men for what they are and asks no questions.

The days grew into weeks, into months. Jim Peters often found oc-