

The Light of Western Stars

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THE VISITORS

SYNOPSIS.—Arriving at the lonely little railroad station at El Cajon, New Mexico, Madeline Hammond, New York society girl, finds no one to meet her. While in the waiting room, a drunken cowboy enters, asks if she is married, and departs, leaving her terrified. He returns with a priest, who goes through some sort of ceremony, and the cowboy forces her to say "Si." Asking her name and learning her identity the cowboy seems dazed. In a shooting scrape outside the room a Mexican is killed. The cowboy lets a girl, Bonita, take his horse and escape, then conducts Madeline to Florence Kingsley, friend of her brother. Florence welcomes her, learns her story, and dismisses the cowboy. Gene Stewart, next day Alfred Hammond, Madeline's brother, takes Stewart to task. Madeline exonerates him of any wrong intent. Alfred, scion of a wealthy family, has been dismissed from his home because of his dissipation. Madeline sees that the West has redeemed him. She meets Stillwell, Al's employer, typical western ranchman. Stillwell tells her how Stewart beat up the sheriff to save her from arrest and then it out for the border. Danny Mains, one of Stillwell's cowboys, has disappeared, with some of Stillwell's money. His friends link his name with the girl Bonita. Madeline gets a glimpse of life on a western ranch. Stewart sends Madeline his horse Majesty. She buys out Stillwell and "Her Majesty's Ranch" becomes famous. She finds her life work under "The Light of Western Stars." Learning Stewart had been hurt in a brawl at Chihuahua, Madeline visits him and persuades him to come to the ranch as the boss of her cowboys. Jim Nels, Nick Steele and "Monty" Price are Madeline's chief riders. They have a feud with Don Carlos vaqueros, who are really guerrillas. Madeline makes Stewart promise that peace is kept. They raid Don Carlos' ranch for contraband arms. Madeline and Florence, returning home from Alfred's ranch, run into an ambush of vaqueros. Florence decoys them away, and Madeline gets home safely. A raiding guerrilla band carries off Madeline. Stewart follows alone. He releases the girl, arranging for ransom. Returning home with Stewart, Madeline finds herself strangely stirred. Madeline's sister Helen, with a party of eastern friends, arrives at the ranch, craving excitement.

CHAPTER XII—Continued.

Edith Wayne was a patrician brunette, a serious, soft-voiced woman, sweet and kindly, despite a rather bitter experience that had left her worldly wise. Mrs. Carrollton Beck, a plain, lively person, had chaperoned the party. The fourth and last of the feminine contingent was Miss Dorothy Coombs—Dot, as they called her—a young woman of attractive blond prettiness.

For a man Castleton was of very small stature. He had a pink-and-white complexion, a small golden mustache, and his heavy eyelids, always drooping, made him look dull. His attire, cut to what appeared to be an exaggerated English style, attracted attention to his diminutive size. He was immaculate and fastidious. Robert Weede was a rather large florid young man, remarkable only for his good nature. Counting Boyd Harvey, a handsome, pale-faced fellow, with the careless smile of the man for whom life had been easy and pleasant, the party was complete.

"Majesty, have you planned any fun, any excitement for us?" asked Helen. "Above all, Majesty, we want something to happen."

"My dear sister, maybe you will have your wish fulfilled," replied Madeline, soberly. "Edith, Helen has made me curious about your special yearning."

"Majesty, it is only that I wanted to be with you for a while," replied this old friend.

There was in the wistful reply, accompanied by a dark and eloquent glance of eyes, that told Madeline of Edith's understanding, of her sympathy, and perhaps a betrayal of her own inquiet soul. It saddened Madeline. How many women might there not be who had the longing to break down the bars of their cage, but had not the spirit!

CHAPTER XIII

Cowboy Golf.

In the whirl of the succeeding days in a mooted question whether Madeline's guests or her cowboys or herself got the keenest enjoyment out of the flying time. Considering the sameness of the cowboys' ordinary life, she was inclined to think they made the most of the present. Stillwell and Stewart, however, had found the situation trying. The work of the ranch had to go on, and some of it got sadly neglected. Stillwell could not resist the ladies any more than he could resist the fun in the extraordinary goings on of the cowboys. Stewart alone kept the business of cattle-raising from a serious setback. Early and late he was in the saddle, driving the lazy Mexicans whom he had hired to relieve the cowboys.

One morning in June Madeline was sitting on the porch with her merry friends when Stillwell appeared on the corral path. He had not come to consult Madeline for several days—an omission so unusual as to be remarked.

"Here comes Bill—in trouble," laughed Florence.

Indeed, he bore some faint resemblance to a thundercloud as he approached the porch; but the greetings he got from Madeline's party, especially from Helen and Dorothy, chased away the blackness from his face and brought the wonderful wrinkling smile.

"Miss Majesty, sure I'm a sad demoralized old cattleman," he said, presently. "An' I'm in need of a heap of help."

"Very well; unburden yourself."

"Wal, the cowboys have gone plumb batty, jest plain crazy over this heah game of gol-lof."

A merry peal of mirth greeted Stillwell's solemn assertion.

"Oh, Stillwell, you are in fun," replied Madeline.

"I hope to die if I'm not in daid earnest," declared the cattleman. "It's an amazin' strange fact. Ask Flo. She'll tell you. She knows cowboys, an' how if they ever start on somethin' they ride it as they ride a hoss."

Florence being appealed to, and evidently feeling all eyes upon her, modestly replied that Stillwell had scarcely misstated the situation.

"Cowboys play like they work or fight," she added. "They give their whole souls to it. They are great big simple boys."

"Indeed they are," said Madeline. "Oh, I'm glad if they like the game of golf. They have so little play."

"Wal, somethin's got to be did if we're to go on raisin' cattle at Her Majesty's Ranch," replied Stillwell. He appeared both deliberate and resigned.

Madeline remembered that despite Stillwell's simplicity he was as deep as any of his cowboys, and there was absolutely no gaging him where possibilities of fun were concerned. Madeline fancied that his exaggerated talk about the cowboys' sudden craze for golf was in line with certain other remarkable tales that had lately emanated from him. Some very strange things had occurred of late, and it was impossible to tell whether or not they were accidents, mere coincidents, or deep-laid, skillfully worked-out designs of the fun-loving cowboys. Certainly there had been great fun, and at the expense of her guests, particularly Castleton. So Madeline was at a loss to know what to think about Stillwell's latest elaboration. From mere force of habit she sympathized with him and found difficulty in doubting his apparent sincerity.

"To go back a ways," went on Stillwell, as Madeline looked on expectantly, "you recollect what pride the boys took in fixin' up that gol-lof course out on the mesa? Wal, they worked on the job, an' though I never seen any other course, I'll gamble yours can't be beat. The boys was sure curious about that game. You recollect also how they all wanted to see you an' your brother play, an' be caddies for you? Wal, whenever you'd



"Miss Majesty, Sure I'm a Sad Demoralized Old Cattleman," He Said Presently.

quit they'd go to work tryin' to play the game. Monty Price, he was the leadin' spirit. Old as I am, Miss Majesty, an' used as I am to cowboy eccentricities, I nearly dropped daid when I heard that little hobble-footed, burned-up Montana cow-puncher say there wasn't any game too swell for him, an' gol-lof was just his speed. Serious as a preacher, mind you, he was. An' he was always practicin'. When Stewart gave him charge of the course an' the clubhouse an' all them funny sticks, why, Monty was tickled to death. You see, Monty is sensitive that he ain't much good any more for cowboy work. He was glad to have a job that he didn't feel he was hangin' to by kindness. Wal, he practiced the game, an' he read the books in the

clubhouse, an' he got the boys to doin' the same. That wasn't very hard, I reckon. They played early an' late an' in the moonlight. For a while Monty was coach, an' the boys stood it. But pretty soon Frankie Stude got puffed on his game, an' he had to have it out with Monty. Wal, Monty beat him bad. Then one after another the other boys tackled Monty. He beat them all. After that they split up an' began to play matches, two on a side. For a spell this worked fine. But cowboys can't never be satisfied long unless they win all the time. Monty an' Link Stevens, both cripples, you might say, joined forces an' elected to beat all comers. Wal, they did, an' that's the trouble. Down at the bunks in the evenin's it's some mortifyin' the way Monty an' Link crow over the rest of the outfit. They've taken on superior airs. You couldn't reach up to Monty with a trimmed spruce pole. An' Link—wal, he's just amazin' scornful. I want to say, for the good of ranchin', not to mention a possible fight, that Monty an' Link hev got to be beat. There'll be no peace round this ranch till that's done."

Madeline could hardly control her mirth.

"What in the world can I do?"

"Wal, I reckon I couldn't say. I only come to you for advice. All I'm sure of is that the conceit has got to be taken out of Monty an' Link."

"Stillwell, listen," said Madeline, brightly. "We'll arrange a match game, a foursome, between Monty and Link and your best picked team. Castleton, who is an expert golfer, will umpire. My sister, and friends, and I will take turns as caddies for your team. That will be fair, considering yours is the weaker. Caddies may coach, and perhaps expert advice is all that is necessary for your team to defeat Monty's."

"A grand idee," declared Stillwell, with instant decision. "When can we have this match game?"

"Why, today—this afternoon. We'll all ride out to the links."

The idea was as enthusiastically received by Madeline's guests as it had been by Stillwell. Madeline was pleased to note how seriously they had taken the old cattleman's story. She had a little throb of wild expectancy that made her both fear and delight in the afternoon's prospect.

The June days had set in warm; in fact, hot during the noon hours; and this had incited in her insatiable visitors a tendency to profit by the experience of those used to the Southwest. They indulged in the restful sleazta during the heated term of the day.

Madeline was awakened by Majesty's well-known whistle and pounding on the gravel. Then she heard the other horses. When she went out she found her party assembled in gala golf attire, and with spirits to match their costumes. Castleton, especially, appeared resplendent in a golf coat that beggared description. Madeline had faint misgivings when she reflected on what Monty and Nels and Nick might do under the influence of that blazing garment.

"Oh, Majesty," cried Helen, as Madeline went up to her horse, "don't make him kneel! Try that flying mount. We all want to see it. It's so stunning!"

"But that way, too, I must have him kneel," said Madeline, "or I can't reach the stirrup. He's so tremendously high."

Madeline had to yield to the laughing insistence of her friends, and after all of them except Florence were up she made Majesty go down on one knee. Then she stood on his left side, facing back, and took a good firm grip on the bridle and pommel and his mane. After she had slipped the toe of her boot firmly into the stirrup she called to Majesty. He jumped and swung her up into the saddle.

"Now just to see how it ought to be done watch Florence," said Madeline.

The Western girl was at her best in riding-habit and with her horse. It was beautiful to see the ease and grace with which she accomplished the cowboys' flying mount. Then she led the party down the slope and across the flat to climb the mesa.

Madeline never saw a group of cowboys without looking them over, almost unconsciously, for her foreman, Gene Stewart. This afternoon, as usual, he was not present. However, she now had a sense—of which she was wholly conscious—that she was both disappointed and irritated. He had really not been attentive to her guests, and he, of all her cowboys, was the one of whom they wanted most to see something.

Stewart, however, immediately slipped out of her mind as she surveyed the group of cowboys on the links. By actual count there were sixteen, not including Stillwell. The cowboys were on dress-parade, looking very different in Madeline's eyes, at least, from the way cowboys usually appeared. Sombrosos with silver buckles and horsehair bands were in evidence; and bright silk scarfs, embroidered vests, fringed and ornamented chaps, huge swinging guns, and clinking silver spurs lent a festive appearance.

"Wal, you-all raced over, I seen," said Stillwell, taking Madeline's bridle. "Get down—get down. We're sure amazin' glad an' proud. An', Miss Majesty, I'm offerin' to beg paydin' for the way the boys are packin' guns. Mebbe it ain't polite. But it's Stewart's orders."

"Stewart's orders!" echoed Madeline. Her friends were suddenly silent. "I reckon he won't take no chances on the boys bein' surprised sudden by raiders. An' there's raiders operatin' in from the Guadalupe. That's all. Nothin' to worry over. I was just explainin'."

Madeline, with several of her party, expressed relief, but Helen showed excitement and then disappointment. "Oh, I want something to happen!" she cried.

Sixteen pairs of keen cowboy eyes fastened intently upon her pretty, petulant face; and Madeline, divided, if Helen did not, that the desired consummation was not far off.

"So do I," said Dot Coombs. "It would be perfectly lovely to have a real adventure."

The gaze of the sixteen cow boys shifted and sought the demure face of this other discontented girl. Madeline laughed, and Stillwell wore his strange, moving smile.

Monty and Link, like two emperors, came stalking across the links.

Madeline's friends were hugely amused over the prospective match; but, except for Dorothy and Castleton,



No Action of His Was Any Longer Insignificant, but Violent Action Meant So Much.

they disclaimed any ambition for active participation. Accordingly, Madeline appointed Castleton to judge the play, Dorothy to act as caddie for Ed Linton, and she herself to be caddie for Ambrose. While Stillwell beamingly announced this momentous news to his team and supporters Monty and Link were striding up.

Both were diminutive in size, bow-legged, lame in one foot, and altogether unprepossessing. Link was young, and Monty's years, more than twice Link's, had left their mark. But it would have been impossible to tell Monty's age. He was burned to the color and hardness of a cinder. He was dark-faced, swaggering, for all the world like a barbarian chief.

"That Monty makes my flesh creep," said Helen, low-voiced. "Really, Mr. Stillwell, is he so bad—desperate—as I've heard? Did he ever kill anybody?"

"Sure. Most as many as Nels," replied Stillwell, cheerfully.

"Oh! And is that nice Mr. Nels a desperado, too? I wouldn't have thought so. He's so kind and old-fashioned and soft-voiced."

"Nels is sure an example of the docility of men, Miss Helen. Don't you listen to his soft voice. He's really as bad as a side-winder rattlesnake."

One of the cowboys came for Castleton and led him away to exploit upon ground rules.

The game began. At first Madeline and Dorothy essayed to direct the endeavors of their respective players. But all they said and did only made their team play the worse. At the third hole they were far behind and hopelessly bewildered.

Madeline and her party sat up to watch the finish of the match. It came with spectacular suddenness. A sharp yell pealed out, and all the cowboys turned attentively in its direction. A big black horse had surmounted the rim of the mesa and was just breaking into a run. His rider yelled sharply to the cowboys. They wheeled to dash toward their grazing horses.

"That's Stewart. There is something wrong," said Madeline, in alarm. Castleton stared. The other men exclaimed uneasily. The women sought Madeline's face with anxious eyes.

The black got into his stride and bore swiftly down upon them.

Madeline divided her emotions between growing alarm of some danger menacing and a thrill and quickening of pulse-beat that tingled over her whenever she saw Stewart in violent action. No action of his was any longer insignificant, but violent action meant so much. It might mean anything. For one moment she remembered Stillwell and all his talk about fun, and plots, and tricks to amuse her guests. Then she discountenanced the thought. Stewart might lend himself to a little fun, but he cared too much for a horse to run him at that speed unless there was imperative need. That alone sufficed to answer Madeline's questioning curiosity. And her alarm mounted to fear not so much for herself as for her guests. But what dan-

ger could there be? She could think of nothing except the guerrillas.

Whatever threatened, it would be met and checked by this man Stewart, who was thundering up on his fleet horse; and as he neared her, so that she could see the dark gleam of face and eyes, she had a strange feeling of trust in her dependence upon him.

The big black was so close to Madeline and her friends that when Stewart pulled him the dust and sand kicked up by his pounding hoofs flew in their faces.

"Oh, Stewart, what is it?" cried Madeline.

"Guess I scared you, Miss Hammond," he replied. "But I'm pressed for time. There's a gang of bandits hiding on the ranch, most likely in a deserted hut. They held up a train near Agua Prieta. Pat Hawe is with the posse that's trailing them, and you know Pat has no use for us. I'm afraid it wouldn't be pleasant for you or your guests to meet either the posse or the bandits."

"I fancy not," said Madeline, considerably relieved. "We'll hurry back to the house."

They exchanged no more speech at the moment, and Madeline's guests were silent. Perhaps Stewart's actions and looks belied his calm words. His piercing eyes roved round the rim of the mesa, and his face was as hard and stern as chiseled bronze.

Monty and Nick came galloping up, each leading several horses by the bridles. Nels appeared behind them with Majesty, and he was having trouble with the roan. Madeline observed that all the other cowboys had disappeared.

One sharp word from Stewart calmed Madeline's horse; the other horses, however, were frightened and not inclined to stand. The men mounted without trouble, and likewise Madeline and Florence. But Edith Wayne and Mrs. Beck, being nervous and almost helpless, were with difficulty gotten into the saddle.

"Beg pardon, but I'm pressed for time," said Stewart, coolly, as with iron arm he forced Dorothy's horse almost to its knees. Dorothy, who was active and plucky, climbed astride; and when Stewart loosed his hold on bit and mane the horse doubled up and began to buck. Dorothy screamed as she shot into the air. Stewart, as quick as the horse, leaped forward and caught Dorothy in his arms. She had slipped head downward, and had he not caught her, would have had a serious fall. Stewart, handling her as if she were a child, turned her right side up to set her upon her feet. Dorothy evidently thought only of the spectacle she presented, and made startled motions to readjust her riding-habit. It was no time to laugh, though Madeline felt as if she wanted to. Besides, it was impossible to be anything but sober with Stewart in violent mood. For he had jumped at Dorothy's stubborn mood. All cowboys were masters of horses. It was wonderful to see him conquer the vicious animal. He was cruel, perhaps, yet it was from necessity. When, presently, he led the horse back to Dorothy she mounted without further trouble. Meanwhile, Nels and Nick had lifted Helen into her saddle.

"We'll take the side trail," said Stewart, shortly, as he swung upon the big black. Then he led the way, and the other cowboys trotted in the rear. It was a loose trail. The weathered slopes seemed to slide under the feet of the horses. Dust-clouds formed; rocks rolled and rattled down; cactus spikes tore at horse and rider. Half the time Madeline could not distinguish those ahead through the yellow dust. It was dry and made her cough. The horses snorted. At length the clouds of dust thinned and Madeline saw the others before her ride out upon a level. Soon she was down, and Stewart also.

The alert, quiet manner of all the cowboys was not reassuring. As they resumed the ride it was noticeable that Nels and Nick were far in advance. Monty stayed far in the rear, and Stewart rode with the party. Madeline knew that they were really being escorted home under armed guard.

When they rounded the head of the mesa, bringing into view the ranch-house and the valley, Madeline saw dust or smoke hovering over a hut upon the outskirts of the Mexican quarters. As the sun had set and the light was fading, she could not distinguish which it was. Then Stewart set a fast pace for the house. In a few minutes the party was in the yard, ready and willing to dismount.

Stillwell appeared, ostensibly cheerful, too cheerful to deceive Madeline. She noted also that a number of armed cowboys were walking with their horses just below the house.

"Wal, you-all had a nice little run," Stillwell said, speaking generally. "I reckon there wasn't much need of it. Pat Hawe thinks he's got some outlaws corralled on the ranch. Nothin' at all to be fussed up about. Stewart's that particular he won't have you meetin' with any rowdies."

Many and fervent were the expressions of relief from Madeline's feminine guests as they dismounted and went into the house. Madeline lingered behind to speak with Stillwell and Stewart.

"That gang of bandits Pat Hawe was chasin'—they're hidin' in the house."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Possible to Be Too Critical. It is a most unhappy and unhealthy thing to have too critical eyes for others.—J. H. Neesima.

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New Grading System for Vegetables and Fruits to Start July 27

Denver.—Agreement on a joint state and federal inspection service for fruits and vegetables, was announced here a few days ago by Joseph Passonneau, state director of markets.

The service will issue grade certificates bearing both federal and state endorsements, which must be accepted by eastern commission merchants. The inspection will be voluntary, and will succeed the present compulsory arrangement which expires July 23.

E. F. McCune, assistant in the Colorado division of markets, has been appointed head of the service, with the title of state supervisor of standards and inspection. He will take office July 27.

District supervisors will be named in Greeley, Carbondale, Grand Junction and the San Luis valley.

Grants of \$5,000 from the bureau of markets and \$2,700 from the State Agricultural College have been obtained to finance the service.

The arrangement will enable shippers to prevent commission merchants arbitrarily fixing low grades, a practice which has cost Colorado farmers huge sums in the past. The federal inspection certificate stands as prima facie evidence in any court.

\$500,000 Scattered in Collision

San Francisco.—A taxicab carrying \$500,000 in currency, coin and notes from the Bank of Italy to the Federal Reserve bank smashed into a street car here, scattering the money and notes over the street and slightly injuring Police Detective Fred Pearl, who was in the taxicab as a guard. Several bystanders offered to pick up the money and notes, but Pearl drew his pistol and advised them that the two bank messengers who accompanied him would attend to that little detail.

Machine Guns Halt Masked Strikers

Sydney, N. S.—Machine guns manned by 200 soldiers succeeded in turning back a mob of 4,000 masked strikers, who in a three-hour battle stoned police stationed about the plant of the British Empire Steel Company here. Calls for additional troops were sent out.

\$500,000 Loss in Oil Well Fire

Long Beach, Calif.—A fire in the Signal Hill oil fields, north of here, destroyed two derricks and caused a loss estimated at \$500,000. The Union Oil Company of Southern California and the Petroleum Midway Company lost their derricks, tools and riggings. Property of the Marine Oil Corporation and the Henderson Petroleum Company was saved by oil workers risking their lives in bringing the blaze under control. The fire, which was started by oil escaping from a broken line, becoming ignited under a boiler, burned for two hours.

No Retrial in Croker Will Case

Dublin.—There will be no retrial of the suit brought by Richard Croker, Jr., contesting the will of his father, one time Tammany hall chieftain. The time for serving notice of an appeal for an application for a new trial expired a few days ago. No such notice or application had been served. Thus the verdict recently returned in favor of Mrs. Bula Croker, the widow, is upheld.

New Road for Lower California

Mexicali, Lower California.—Bids for the construction of 150 miles of railroad through lower California by the national railways of Mexico were opened recently, according to an announcement of Jose I. Lugo, military governor of the northern district of Lower California. The construction of this railroad, government officials state, will make available more than 2,000,000 acres of farming lands, particularly adapted to cotton, for which water can be obtained from the abundant flow of the Colorado river.