THE LIGHT OF WESTERN STARS

A Romance

by

Zane Grey

Illustrations by IRWIN MYERS

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CHAPTER XVII—Continued.
—15—

Stewart halted again. In the gloom Madeline discerned a log cabin, and beyond it spear-pointed dark trees piercing the sky line. She could just make out Stewart's tall form as he leaned against his horse. Either he was listening or debating what to do—perhaps both. Presently he went inside the cabin. Madeline heard the scratching of a match; then she saw a faint light. The cabin appeared to be deserted. Probably it was one of the many habitations belonging to prospectors and foresters who lived in the mountains. Stewart came out again. For a long moment he stood as still as a statue and listened. Then she heard him mutter, "If we have to start quick I can ride bareback." With that he took the saddle and blanket off his horse and carried them into the cabin.

"Get off," he said, in a low voice, as he stepped out of the door.

He helped her down and led her inside, where again he struck a match. Madeline caught a glimpse of a rude fireplace and rough-hewn logs. Stewart's blanket and saddle lay on the hard-packed earthen floor.

"Rest a little," he said. "I'm going into the woods a piece to listen. Gone only a minute or so."

Madeline had to feel round in the dark to locate the saddle and blanket. When she lay down it was with a grateful sense of ease and relief. As her body rested, however, her mind became the old through a maze for sensation and thought. All day she had attended to the alert business of helping her horse. Now, what had already happened, the night, the silence, the proximity of Stewart and his strange, stern caution, the possible happenings to her friends—all claimed their due share of her feeling. She could not sleep; she did not try to.

Stewart's soft steps sounded outside. His dark form loomed in the door. As he sat down Madeline heard the thump of a gun that he laid beside him on the sill; then the thump of another as he put that down too. The sounds thrilled her. He turned his ear to the wind and listened. Motionless he sat for what to her seemed hours.

Then the stirring memory of the day's adventure, the feeling of the beauty of the night, and a strange, deep-seated, sweetly vague consciousness of happiness portending, were all burned out in hot, pressing pain at the remembrance of Stewart's distance in her eyes. Something had changed within her so that what had been anger at herself was sorrow for him. He was such a splendid man. She could not feel the same; she knew her debt to him, yet she could not thank him, could not speak to him. She fought an unintelligible bitterness.

Then she rested with closed eyes, and time seemed neither short nor long. When Stewart called her she opened her eyes to see the gray of dawn. She rose and stepped outside. The horses whinnied. In a moment she was in the saddle, aware of cramped muscles and a weariness of limbs. Stewart led off at a sharp trot into the fir forest. They came to a trail into which he turned. The horses traveled steadily; the descent grew less steep; the firs thinned out; the gray gloom brightened.

When Madeline rode out of the firs the sun had arisen and the foothills reelled beneath her; and at their edge, where the gray of valley began, she saw a dark patch that she knew was the ranch house.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Sheriff of El Cajon.

About the middle of the forenoon of that day Madeline reached the ranch. Her guests had all arrived there late the night before, and wanted only her presence and the assurance of her well-being to consider the last of the campin' trip a rare adventure. They reported an arduous ride down the mountain, with only one incident to lend excitement. On the descent they had fallen in with Sheriff Hawe and several of his deputies, who were considerably under the influence of drink and very greatly enraged by the escape of the Mexican girl Bonita. Hawe had used insulting language to the ladies and, according to Ambrose, would have inconvenienced the party on some pretext or other if he had not been sharply silenced by the cowboys.

Madeline's guests were two days in recovering from the hard ride. On the third day they leisurely began to prepare for departure. This period was doubly trying for Madeline. Her sister and friends were kindly and earnestly persistent in their entreaties that she go back East with them. She desired to go. It was not going that mattered; it was how and when and under what circumstances she was to return that roused in her disturbing emotion. Before she went East she wanted to have fixed in mind her future relation to the ranch and the West. When the crucial hour arrived she found that the West had not claimed her yet. These old friends had warmed cold ties.

It turned out, however, that there need be no hurry about making the decision. Madeline would have welcomed any excuse to procrastinate; but, as it happened, a letter from Alfred made her departure out of the question for the present. He wrote that his trip to California had been very profitable, that he had a proposition for Madeline from a large cattle company, and, particularly, that he wanted to marry Florence soon after his arrival home and would bring a minister from Douglas for that purpose.

Madeline went so far, however, as to promise Helen and her friends that she would go East soon, at the very latest by Thanksgiving. With that promise they were reluctantly content to say goodby to the ranch and to her.

Helen's eyes had a sweet, grave, yet mocking light as she said: "Majesty, bring Stewart with you when you come. He'll be the rage."

Madeline treated the remark with the same merry lightness with which it was received by the others; but after the train had pulled out and she was on her way home she remembered Helen's words and looks with something almost amounting to a shock. Any mention of Stewart, any thought of him, displeased her.

"What did Helen mean?" mused Madeline. And she pondered. That mocking light in Helen's eyes had been simply an ironical glint, a cynical gleam from that worldly experience so suspicious and tolerant in its wisdom. The sweet gravity of Helen's look had been a deeper and more subtle thing. Madeline wanted to understand it, to divine in it a new relation between Helen and herself, something fine and sisterly that might lead to love. The thought, however, revolving around a strange suggestion of Stewart, was poisoned at its inception, and she dismissed it.

Upon the drive in to the ranch, as she was passing the lower lake, she saw Stewart walking listlessly along the shore. When he became aware of the approach of the car he suddenly awakened from his aimless saunter ing and disappeared quickly in the shade of the shrubbery. This was not by any means the first time Madeline had seen him avoid a possible meeting with her. Somehow the act had pained her, though affording her a relief. She did not want to meet him face to face.

It was annoying for her to guess that Stillwell had something to say in Stewart's defense. The old cattleman was evidently distressed. Several times he had tried to open a conversation with Madeline relating to Stewart; she had evaded him until the last time, when his persistence had brought a cold and final refusal to hear another word about the foreman. Stillwell had been crushed.

As days passed Stewart remained at the ranch without his old faithfulness to his work. Madeline was not moved to a kinder frame of mind to see him wandering dejectedly around. It hurt her, and because it hurt her she grew all the harder.

A telegram from Douglas, heralding the coming of Alfred and a minister, put an end to Madeline's broodings, as she shared something of Florence Kingsley's excitement. The cowboys were as eager and gossipy as girls. It was arranged to have the wedding ceremony performed in Madeline's great hall-chamber, and the dinner in the cool, flower-scented patio.

Alfred and his minister arrived at the ranch in the big white car. They appeared considerably wind-blown. In fact, the minister was breathless, almost sightless, and certainly battered. Alfred, used as he was to wind and speed, remarked that he did not wonder at Nels' aversion to riding a fleeting cannon-ball. The imperturbable Link took off his cap and goggles and, consulting his watch, made his usual apologetic report to Madeline, deploring the fact that a teamster and a few stray cattle on the road had held him down to the manana time of only a mile a minute.

Arrangements for the wedding brought Alfred's delighted approval. When he had learned all Florence and Madeline would tell him he expressed a desire to have the cowboys attend; and then he went on to talk about California, where he was going to take Florence on a short trip.

On the following day Alfred and Florence were married. Florence's sister and several friends from El Cajon were present, besides Madeline, Stillwell, and his men. It was Alfred's express wish that Stewart attend the ceremony. Madeline was amused when she noticed the painfully suppressed excitement of the cowboys. For them a wedding must have been an unusual and impressive event. She began to have a better understanding of the nature of it when they cast off restraint and pressed forward to kiss the bride. In all her life Madeline had never seen a bride kissed so much and so heartily, nor one so flushed and disheveled and happy. This indeed was a joyful occasion.

The dinner began quietly enough with the cowboys divided between embarrassment and voracious appetites that they evidently feared to indulge. Wine, however, loosened their tongues, and when Stillwell got up to make the speech everybody seemed to expect of him they greeted him with a roar.

Stillwell was now one huge, mountainous smile. He was so happy that he appeared on the verge of tears. He rambled on ecstatically till he came to raise his glass.

"An' now, girls an' boys, let's all drink to the bride an' groom; to their sincere an' lastin' love; to their happiness an' prosperity; to their good health an' long life. Let's drink to the unitin' of the East with the West. No man full of red blood an' the real breath of life could resist a Western girl an' a good boss an' God's free hand—that open country out there. So we claim Al Hammond, an' may we be true to him. An', friends, I think it fittin' that we drink to his sister an' to our hopes. Heah's to the lady we hope to make our Majesty! Heah's to the man who'll come ridin' out of the West, a fine, big-hearted man with a fast hoss an' a strong rope, an' may he win an' hold her! Come, friends, drink."

A heavy pound of horses' hoofs and a yell outside arrested Stillwell's voice and halted his hand in midair.

The patio became as silent as an unoccupied room.

Through the open doors and windows of Madeline's chamber burst the sounds of horses stamping to a halt, then harsh speech of men, and a low cry of a woman in pain.

Rapid steps crossed the porch, entered Madeline's room. Nels appeared in the doorway. Madeline was surprised to see that he had not been at the dinner-table. She was disturbed at sight of his face.

"Stewart, you're wanted outdoors," called Nels, bluntly. "Monty, you slope out here with me. You, Nick, an' Stillwell—I reckon the rest of you bed better shut the doors an' stay inside."

Nels disappeared. Quick as a cat Monty glided out. Madeline heard his soft, swift steps pass from her room into her office. He had left his guns there. Madeline trembled. She saw Stewart get up quietly and without any change of expression on his dark, sad face leave the patio. Nick Steele followed him. Stillwell dropped his wine-glass. As it broke, shivering the silence, his huge smile vanished. His face set into the old cragginess and the red slowly thickened into black. Stillwell went out and closed the door behind him.

Then there was a blank silence. The enjoyment of the moment had been rudely disrupted. Madeline glanced down the lines of brown faces to see the pleasure fade into the old familiar hardness.

"What's wrong?" asked Alfred, rather stupidly. The change of mood had been too rapid for him. Suddenly he awakened, thoroughly aroused at the interruption. "I'm going to see who's butted in here to spoil our dinner," he said, and strode out.

He returned before any one at the table had spoken or moved, and now the dull red of anger mottled his forehead.

"It's the sheriff of El Cajon!" he exclaimed, contemptuously. "Pat Hawe with some of his touch deputies gone to arrest Gene Stewart. They've got that poor little Mexican girl out there tied on a horse. Can found that sheriff!"

Madeline calmly rose from the table eluding Florence's retreating hand, and started for the door. The cowboys jumped up. Alfred barred her progress.

"Alfred, I am going out," she said.

"No, I guess not," he replied. "That's no place for you. Maybe there'll be a fight. You can do nothing. You must not go."

"Perhaps I can prevent trouble," she replied.

As she left the patio she was aware that Alfred, with Florence at his side and the cowboys behind, were starting to follow her. When she got out on the veranda upon the porch she heard several men in loud, angry discussion. Then, at sight of Bonita helplessly and cruelly bound upon a horse, pale and disheveled and suffering, Madeline experienced the thrill that slight or mention of this girl always gave her. It yielded to a hot pang in her breast—that live pain which so shamed her. But almost instantly, as a second glance showed an agony in Bonita's face, her bruised arms where the rope bit deep into the flesh, her hands stained with dried blood, Madeline was overcome by pity for the unfortunate girl and a woman's righteous passion at such barbarous treatment of one of her own sex.

The man holding the bridle of the horse on which Bonita had been bound was at once recognized by Madeline as the big-bodied, bullet-headed guerrilla who had found the basket of wine in the spring at camp. Redder of face, blacker of beard, coarser of aspect, evidently under the influence of liquor, he was as fierce-looking as a

He Was So Happy That He Appeared on the Verge of Tears.

gorilla and as repulsive. Besides him there were three other men present, all mounted on weary horses. The one in the foreground, gaunt, sharp-featured, red-eyed, with a pointed beard, she recognized as the sheriff of El Cajon.

Stillwell saw Madeline, and, throwing up his hands, roared to be heard. This quieted the gesticulating, quarreling men.

"Wal now, Pat Howe, what's drivin' you like a locoed steer on the ramp page?" demanded Stillwell.

"Keep in the traces, Bill," replied Hawe. "You savvy what I come for. I've been ridin' my time. But I'm ready now. I'm hyar to arrest a criminal."

The huge frame of the old cattleman jerked as if he had been stabbed. His face turned purple.

"What criminal?" he shouted, hoarsely.

The sheriff flicked his quirt against his dirty boot, and he twisted his thin lips into a leer.

"Why, Bill, I knowed you hed a no-good outfit ridin' this range; but I wasn't wise thet you hed more'n one criminal."

"Cut that talk! Which cowboy are you wantin' to arrest?"

Hawe's manner altered.

"Gene Stewart," he replied, curtly.

"On what charge?"

"Fer killin' a Greaser one night last fall."

"So you're still harpin' on that? Pat, you're on the wrong trail. You can't lay that killin' onto Stewart. The thing's ancient by now. But if you insist on bringin' him to court, let the arrest go today—we're havin' some fetin hyar—an' I'll fetch Gene in to El Cajon."

"Nope. I reckon I'll take him when I got the chance, before he slopes."

"I'm givin' you my word," thundered Stillwell.

"I reckon I don't hev to take your word, Bill, or anybody else's."

Stillwell's great bulk quivered with his rage, yet he made a successful effort to control it.

"See hyar, Pat Hawe, I know what's reasonable. Law is law. But in this country there always has been an' is now a safe an' sane way to proceed with the law. Mebbe you're forgot that. I'm a-goin' to give you a hunch, Pat, you're not overliked in these parts. You've rid too much with a high hand. Some of your deals hev been shady, an' don't you overlook what I'm sayin', But you're the sheriff, an' I'm respectin' your office. I'm respectin' it this much. If the milk of human decency is so soured in your breast that you can't hev a kind feel in', then try to avoid the unpleasantness that'll result from any contrary move on your part today. Do you get that hunch?"

"Stillwell, you're threatenin' an officer," replied Hawe, angrily. "I come to arrest him, an' I'm goin' to."

"So that's your game!" shouted Stillwell. "We all are glad to get you straight, Pat. Now listen, you cheap, red-eyed coyote of a sheriff! You don't care how many enemies you make. You know you'll never get office again in this county. What do you care now? It's amazin' strange how earnest you are to hunt down the man who killed that turkey-buzzard Greaser. I reckon there's been some dozen or more killins of Greasers in the last year. Why don't you take to trailin' some of them killin's? I'll tell you why. You're afraid to go near the border. An' your hate of Gene Stewart makes you want to hound him an' put him where he's never been yet—in jail. You want to spite his friends. Wal, listen, you lean-jawed, skunk-bitten coyote! Go ahead an' try to arrest him!"

Stillwell took one mighty stride off the porch. His last words had been gold. His rage appeared to have been transferred to Hawe. The sheriff had begun to stutter and shake a lanky red hand at the cattleman when Stewart stepped out.

"Here, you fellows, give me a chance to say a word."

As Stewart appeared the Mexican girl suddenly seemed vitalized out of her stupor. She strained at her bonds as if to lift her hands beseechingly. A flush animated her haggard face, and her big eyes lighted.

"Senor Gene!" she moaned. "Help me! I so seek. They beat me, rope me, 'mos' keel me. Oh, help me, Senor Gene!"

"Shut up, or I'll gag you," said the man who held Bonita's horse.

"Muzzle her, Juned, if she blabs again," called Hawe.

Madeline felt something tense and strained working in the short silence. Was it only a phase of her thrilling excitement? Her swift glance showed the faces of Nels and Monty and Nick to be brooding, cold, watchful. She wondered why Stewart did not look toward Bonita. He, too, was now dark-faced, cool, quiet, with something ominous about him.

"Hawe, I'll submit to arrest without any fuss," he said, slowly, "if you'll take the ropes off that girl."

"Nope," replied the sheriff. "She got away from me once. She's hawg tied now, an' she'll stay hawg-tied."

Madeline thought she saw Stewart give a slight start. But an unaccountable dimness came over her eyes, at brief intervals obscuring her keen sight.

"All right, let's hurry out of here," said Stewart. "You've made annoyance enough. Ride down to the creek with me. I'll get my horse and go with you."

"Hold on!" yelled Hawe, as Stewart turned away. "Not so fast. Who's doin' this? You'll ride one of my pack-horses, an' you'll go in irons."

"You want to handcuff me?" queried Stewart, with sudden swift start of passion.

"Want to? Haw, haw! Nope, Stewart, thet jest my way with hoss-thieves, raiders Greasers, murderers, an' sich. See hyar, you Sneed, git out an' put the irons on this man."

The guerrilla called Sneed slid off his hoge and began to fumble in his saddle-bags.

Stillwell was gazing at Stewart in a kind of imploring amaze.

"Gene, you ain't goin' to stand for them handcuffs?" he pleaded.

"Yes," replied the cowboy. "Bill, old friend, I'm an outsider here. There's no call for Miss Hammond and—and her brother and Florence to be worried further about me. Their happy day has already been spoiled on my account. I want to get out quick."

"Wal, you might be too d—n considerate of Miss Hammond's sensitive feelin's." There was now no trace of the courteous, kindly old rancher. He looked harder than stone. "How about my feelin's? I want to know if you're goin' to let this sneakin' coyote, this last gasp of the old run-guzzlin' frontier sheriffs, pin you in irons an' hawg-tie you an' drive you off to jail?"

"Yes," replied Stewart, steadily.

"Wal, by Gawd! You, Gene Stewart! What's come over you? Why, man, go in the house an' I'll tend to

"Senor Gene!" She Moaned. "Help Me! I So Seek"

this feller. Then tomorrow you can ride in an' give yourself up like a gentleman."

"No, I'll go. Thanks, Bill, for the way you and the boys would stick to me. Hurry, Hawe, before my mind changes."

His voice broke at last, betraying the wonderful control he had kept over his passions. As he ceased speaking he seemed suddenly to become spiritless, to drop all his head.

When the man Sneed came forward, jingling the iron fetters, Madeline's blood turned to fire. She would have forgiven Stewart then for lapsing into the kind of cowboy if had been her blind and sickly sentiment to abhor. Then was a man's West—a man's game at that moment, with her blood hot and racing, she would have gloried in the violence which she had so deplored; she would have welcomed the action that had characterized Stewart's treatment of Don Carlos; she had, in her the sudden dayshine temper of a woman who had been assimilating the life and nature around her and who would not have turned her eyes away from a harsh and bloody deed.

But Stewart held forth his hands to be manacled. Then Madeline heard her own voice burst out in a ringing, imperious "Wait!"

Sneed dropped the manacles. Stewart's face took on a chalky whiteness. Hawe, in a slow, stupid embarrassment beyond his control, removed his sombrero in a respect that seemed drenched from him.

"Mr. Hawe, I can prove to you that Stewart was not concerned in any way whatever with the crime for which you want to arrest him."

The sheriff's stare underwent a blinking change. He coughed, stammered, and tried to speak. Manifestly he had been thrown completely off his balance. Astonishment slowly merged into discomfiture.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Similar Woods Differ in Tests.

Osage orange and black locust are much alike in structure, strength, durability and color, although the former usually has more of a golden brownish tinge. These two woods can readily be distinguished by the fact that the sour orange gives off a yellowish color if wrapped in a wet rag or placed on a soaked blotter while black locust gives off practically no color under the same conditions.

Always a Last Resort.

"First we'll bore for oil."

"And if we don't strike oil?"

"Then we'll tunnel for copper."

"And if we don't strike copper?"

"We'll raise mushrooms."—Judge.

IS GIANT SPECIES OF CENTIPEDE

Reptile Found in Trinidad Secretes a Poison Which Enables It to Paralyze Prey.

Trinidad centipedes have been presented to the London zoo, an exchange says. They are more than a foot long, and at the broader part nearly half an inch across. They are dark brown with rings on the long feelers and on the legs, a pair of which projects from each flattened segment of the body. These tropical centipedes live in shady places, hidden under bark, stones or dead leaves, moving chiefly at night. They run quickly and can climb vertical surfaces if there is any foothold for their claws. They are entirely carnivorous, living on insects, grubs, small birds or, mammals, which they kill with their venom.

It has been shown that the whole of the body of these centipedes secretes a volatile venom, so that even the wounds made by the sharp claws are extremely painful. The under surface of the head carries a formidable pair of poison fangs, the venom of which escapes by a pore in the claw, being formed by large glands at the base of the claws. The venom is an acid opalescent liquid, hardly miscible with water. When injected into the veins of rabbits it produces instantaneous paralysis, with coagulation of the blood; when injected under the skin enormous abscesses are rapidly formed. The bite is very painful to human beings, but has not been known to be fatal, although it causes insomnia, local swelling and occasionally ulcers.

Who Does.

Flabson—The trouble with most advertisements is that they are not true to life. Some of these pictures give me a pain.

Crabson—Yes, if I would try to get while shaving I would cut myself.

So They Walked On.

"Let's try this restaurant—wh t kind of a place is it?"

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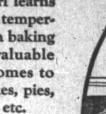

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W. N. U., DETROIT, NO. 39-1923.

TO HAUL AWAY MOUNTAIN

Workmen Near Bisbee, Ariz., Are Trying a New Venture in Copper Mining.

For some time past, it seems, work men near Bisbee, in Arizona, have been trying a new venture in copper mining. Instead of following the prescribed method of hollowing out a mountain and using shafts and tunnels, they dig it down with seam shovels and cart it away. One can form some idea of the magnitude of the task when he learns that it will take more than sixteen years to complete it, that during the process approximately 25,000,000 tons of copper ore will be carted away, and that from it something like a billion pounds of copper will be extracted.

During the five years the work has been carried on five million cubic yards or more of material have been taken from the mountain, though that amount does not represent pure ore. As fast as the material is dug it is hauled over a fifteen-mile railway to smelters and mills, where it is treated.

An engineer humorously remarks that when the huge pile is gone there will be room for the town to grow.

The Bright Side.

"Any luck on your fishing trip this morning?"

"No. Didn't get a bite."

"That's too bad."

"Not at all. It's just as well. If I'd caught enough fish for dinner the wife would have made me clean them and I hate that job."

Threat for Threat.

Woman in Court—She said to me, 'I'll kill you.' I said, "If you do, I'll never speak to you again."

PATIENTS AIDED BY RADIO

Helped to Forget Their Shattered Nerves and Takes the Place of Sedatives.

Comparing the drug habit was not among the uses to which it was believed that the radio could be put, even by its most optimistic promoters. Yet it has been discovered that patients in hospitals equipped with radio sets which can pass afternoon and evening concert programs are helped to forget their sufferings and are less in need of narcotics to quiet their shattered nerves. The radio goes far toward carrying into the wards the gayety and cheer that have been hitherto only for the healthy world outside. Inasmuch as all doctors agree that many drug addicts acquire the addiction during convalescence in hospitals, this achievement becomes one of the most important that has thus far been set down to the credit of the radio. The radio may remain a toy or a jest for the healthy and cynical. It has already established itself as a heaven-sent blessing for shut-ins.—New York Tribune.

What's Burning?

"Why do you call an auto speeder a scorcher?"

"Because he goes out at a hot pace, makes the pedestrians boiling mad, gets roasted in court, warms up the police, and calls it a burning shame."

Sometimes agreeing with others doesn't do any good. They're just as cross.

After the first kiss a young man kicks himself for having wasted so much time.

A natural source of vitamins

Grape-Nuts

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Contains every element for perfect nutrition —a complete food

"There's a Reason"

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