

THE LIGHT OF WESTERN STARS

A Romance



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(Continued from last week.)

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Arriving at the lonely little railroad station of El Cajon, New Mexico, Madeline Hammond, New York 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 "G.I." 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.

CHAPTER II.—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.

CHAPTER III.—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. Madeline learns Stewart has gone over the border.

CHAPTER IV.—Danny Malns, one of Stillwell's cowboys, has disappeared. With some of Stillwell's money, his friends link his name with the girl Bonita.

CHAPTER V.—Madeline gets a glimpse of life on a western ranch.

CHAPTER VI.—Stewart's horse comes to the ranch with a note on the saddle asking Madeline to accept the beautiful animal. With her brother's consent she does so, naming him "Majesty," her own pet nickname. Madeline, independently rich, arranges to buy Stillwell's ranch and that of Don Carlos, a Mexican neighbor.

CHAPTER VII.—Madeline feels she has found her right place. Under the light of the western stars.

CHAPTER VIII.—Learning Stewart had been hurt in a brawl at Chiricahua, and knowing her brother's fondness for him, Madeline visits him and persuades him to come to the ranch as the boss of her cowboys.

CHAPTER IX.—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 pledges Stewart to see that peace is kept.

CHAPTER X.—Madeline and Florence, returning home from Alfred's ranch, run into an ambush of vaqueros. Florence, knowing the Mexicans are after Madeline, decoys them away, and Madeline gets home safely but alone.

CHAPTER XI.—A raiding guerrilla band carries off Madeline. Stewart follows alone. The leader is a man with whom Stewart had served in Mexico. He releases the girl, arranging for ransom. Returning home with Stewart, Madeline finds herself strangely stirred.

CHAPTER XII.—Madeline's sister Helen, with a party of eastern friends, arrives at the ranch, craving excitement.

CHAPTER XIII.—For the guests' entertainment a game of golf is arranged. Stewart interrupts the game, insisting the whole party return at once to the home. He tells Madeline her guests are not safe while the Mexican retribution is going on, and urges them to go up to the mountains out of danger. They decide to do so.

Stewart rode on, and Madeline followed. The way led in a winding course through a matted, storm-wrenched forest of stunted trees. Even up to this elevation the desert reached with its gaunt hand. The clouds over-spreading the sky, hiding the sun, made a welcome change. The pack-train rested, and Stewart and Madeline waited for the party to come up. Here he briefly explained to her that Don Carlos and his bandits had left the ranch some time in the night. The air grew oppressive; the horses panted. "Sure it'll be a hummer," said Stewart. "The first storm almost always is bad. I can feel it in the air."

The air, indeed, seemed to be charged with a heavy force that was waiting to be liberated.

One by one the couples mounted to the cedar forest, and the feminine contingent declaimed eloquently for rest. But there was to be no permanent rest until night and then that depended upon reaching the crags. The pack-train waggled onward, and Stewart fell in behind. The storm-center gathered slowly around the peaks; low rumble and bowl of thunder in-



Immovable as Stone, He Sat His Horse, Dark-Faced, Dark-Eyed, and Like an Indian Unconscious of Thought.

creased in frequency; slowly the light shaded as smoky clouds rolled up; the air grew sultrier, and the exasperating breeze pulsed a few times and then fell.

An hour later the party had climbed high and was rounding the side of a great bare ridge that long had hidden the crags. The last burro of the pack-train plodded over the ridge out of Madeline's sight. She looked backward down the slope, amused to see her guests change wearily from side to side in their saddles. Far below lay the cedar flat and the foothills. Far to the west the sky was still clear, with shafts of sunlight shooting down from behind the encroaching clouds.

Stewart reached the summit of the ridge and, though only a few rods ahead, he waved to her, sweeping his hand round to what he saw beyond. It was an impressive gesture, and Madeline, never having climbed as high as this, anticipated much.

Majesty snouted the last few steps and, snorting, halted beside Stewart's black. To Madeline the scene was as if the world had changed. The ridge was a mountain-top. It dropped before her into a black, stone-ridged, shrub-patched, many-canyoned gulf. Matted inky clouds were piling across the peaks, obscuring the highest ones. A fork of white lightning flashed, and, like the booming of an avalanche, thunder followed.

Madeline glanced at Stewart. He had forgotten her presence. Immovable as stone, he sat his horse, dark-faced, dark-eyed, and, like an Indian unconscious of thought, he watched and watched. To see him thus, to divine the strange affinity between the soul of this man, become primitive, and the savage environment that had developed him, were powerful helps to Madeline Hammond in her strange desire to understand his nature.

A cracking of iron-shod hoofs behind her broke the spell. Monty had reached the summit.

"Gene, what it won't all be doin' in a minnut Moses hisself couldn't tell," observed Monty.

Then Dorothy climbed to his side and looked.

"Oh, isn't it just perfectly lovely!" she exclaimed. "But I wish it wouldn't storm. We'll all get wet."

Once more Stewart faced the ascent, keeping to the slow heave of the ridge as it rose southward toward the looming spires of rock. Soon he was off smooth ground, and Madeline, some rods behind him, looked back with concern at her friends. Here the real toil, the real climb began, and a mountain storm was about to burst in all its fury.

The sky grew blacker; the slow-gathering clouds appeared to be suddenly agitated; they piled and rolled and mushroomed and obscured the crags. The air moved heavily and seemed to be laden with sulphurous smoke, and sharp lightning flashes began to play. A distant roar of wind could be heard between the peals of thunder.

Stewart waited for Madeline under the lee of a shelving cliff, where the cowboys had halted the pack-train. Majesty was sensitive to the flashes of lightning. Madeline patted his neck and softly called to him. The weary burros nodded; the Mexican women covered their heads with their mantles. Stewart untied the slicker at the back of Madeline's saddle and helped her on with it. Then he put on his own. The other cowboys followed suit. Presently Madeline saw Monty and Dorothy rounding the cliff, and hoped the others would come soon.

A blue-white, knotted rope of lightning burned down out of the clouds, and instantly a thunder-clap crashed, seeming to shake the foundations of the earth. This moment of the breaking of the storm, with the strange growing roar of wind, like a moaning monster, was pregnant with a heart-disturbing emotion for Madeline Hammond. Glorious it was to be free, healthy, out in the open, under the shadow of the mountain and cloud, in the teeth of the wind and rain and storm.

Suddenly, as the ground quaked under her horse's feet, and all the sky grew black and crisscrossed by flaming streaks, and between thunderous reports there was a strange hollow roar sweeping down upon her, she realized how small was her knowledge and experience of the mighty forces of nature.

With blacker gloom and deafening roar came the torrent of rain. It was a cloud-burst. It was like solid water tumbling down. For long Madeline sat her horse, head bent to the pelting rain. When its force lessened and she heard Stewart call for all to follow, she looked up to see that he was starting once more. She turned her horse into his trail.

Rain fell steadily. The fury of the storm, however, had passed, and the roll of thunder diminished in volume. The air had wonderfully cleared and was growing cool. Madeline began to

feel uncomfortably cold and wet. Stewart was climbing faster than formerly, and she noted that Monty kept at her heels, pressing her on. Time had been lost, and the camp-site was a long way off. The stag-hounds began to lag and get footsore. The sharp rocks of the trail were cruel to their feet. Then, as Madeline began to tire, she noticed less and less around her. Her horse climbed and climbed, and brush and sharp corners of stone everlastingly pulled and tore at her wet garments. A gray gloom settled down around her. Night was approaching.

Stewart's horse was on a jog-trot now, and Madeline left the trail more to Majesty than to her own choosing.

As black night began to envelop her surroundings, she marked that the fir trees had given place to pine forest. Suddenly a pin-point of light pierced the ebony blackness. It grew larger. Black tree-trunks crossed her line of vision. The light was a fire. She heard a cowboy song and the wild chorus of a pack of coyotes. Stewart's tall figure, with sombrero slouched against a growing circle of light. And by the aid of that light she saw him turn every moment or so to look back, probably to assure himself that she was close behind.

With a prospect of fire and warmth, and food and rest, Madeline's enthusiasm revived. What a climb! There was promise in this wild ride and lonely trail and hidden craggy height, not only in the adventure her friends yearned for, but in some nameless joy and spirit for herself.

CHAPTER XV

The Crags.

Glad indeed was Madeline to be freed of her horse beside a roaring fire—to see steaming pots upon red-hot coals. Except about her shoulders, which had been protected by the slicker, she was wringing wet. The Mexican women came quickly to help her change in a tent nearby; but Madeline preferred for the moment to warm her numb feet and hands and to watch the spectacle of her arriving friends.

"Warm clothes—hot drinks and grub—warm blankets," rang out Stewart's sharp order.

Then, with Florence helping the Mexican women, it was not long until Madeline and the feminine side of the party were comfortable, except for the weariness and aches that only rest and sleep could alleviate.

Neither fatigue nor pains, however, nor the strangeness of being packed saddlelike under canvas, nor the howls of coyotes, kept Madeline's guests from stretching out with long, grateful sighs, and one by one dropping into deep slumber. Madeline whispered a little to Florence, and laughed with her once or twice, and then the light flickering on the canvas faded and her eyelids closed. Darkness and roar of camp life, low voices of men, thump of horses' hoofs, coyote serenade, the sense of warmth and sweet rest—all drifted away.

When she awakened shadows of swaying branches moved on the sunlit canvas above her. Slow, regular breathing attested to the deep slumbers of her tent comrades. She observed presently that Florence was missing from the number. Madeline rose and peeped out between the flaps.

An exquisitely beautiful scene surprised and enthralled her gaze. Eager to get out where she could enjoy an unobstructed view, she searched for her pack, found it in a corner, and then hurriedly and quietly dressed.

Her favorite stag-hounds, Russ and Tartar, were asleep before the door, where they had been chained. She awakened them and loosened them, thinking the while that it must have been Stewart who had chained them near her. Close at hand also was a cowboy's bed rolled up in a tarpaulin.

The cool air, fragrant with pine and spruce and some subtle nameless tang, sweet and tonic, made Madeline stand erect and breathe slowly and deeply. It was like drinking of a magic draught. She felt it in her blood, that it quickened its flow. Turning to look in the other direction, beyond the tent, she saw the remnants of last night's temporary camp, and farther on a grove of beautiful pines from which came the sharp ring of the ax. Wilder gaze took in a wonderful park, not only surrounded by lofty crags, but full of crags of lesser height, many lifting their heads from dark green groves of trees. The morning sun, not yet above the eastern elevations, sent its rosy and golden shafts in between the towering rocks to tip the pines.

Madeline, with the hounds beside her, walked through the nearest grove. The ground was soft and springy and brown with pine-needles.

Florence espied her under the trees and came running. She was like a young girl, with life and color and joy. She wore a flannel blouse, corduroy skirt, and moccasins. And her hair was fastened under a band like an Indian's.

"Castleton's gone with a gun, for hours, it seems," said Florence. "Gene just went to hunt him up. The other gentlemen are still asleep. I imagine they sure will sleep up heah in this ain."

Then, business-like, Florence fell to questioning Madeline about details of camp arrangement which Stewart, and Florence herself, could hardly see to without suggestion.

As the day advanced the charm of the place grew upon Madeline. Even at noon, with the sun beating down, there was comfortable warmth rather than heat. It was the kind of warmth that Madeline liked to feel in the spring.

Presently a chorus of merry calls attracted her attention, and she turned to see Helen limping along with Dorothy, and Mrs. Beck and Edith sup-

porting each other. They were all rested, but lame, and delighted with the place, and as hungry as bears awakened from a winter's sleep.

Then they had dinner, sitting on the ground after the manner of Indians; and it was a dinner that lacked merriment only because everybody was too busily appeasing appetite.

For a few days the prevailing features of camp life for Madeline's guests were sleep and rest. The men were more visibly affected by the mountain air than the women.

This languorous spell disappeared presently, and then the days were full of life and action. Necessarily, of course, Madeline and her guests were now thrown much in company with the cowboys. And the party grew to be like one big family.

Madeline found the situation one of keen and double interest for her. If before she had cared to study her cowboys, particularly Stewart, now, with the contrasts afforded by her guests, she felt by turns she was amused and mystified and perplexed and saddened, and then again subtly pleased.

From the thought of Stewart, and the watchfulness growing out of it, she discovered more about him. He was not happy; he often paced up and down the grove at night; he absented himself from camp sometimes during the afternoon when Nels and Nick and Monty were there; he was always watching the trails, as if he expected to see some one come riding up. He alone of the cowboys did not indulge in the fun and talk around the campfire. He remained preoccupied and sad, and was always looking away into distance. Madeline had a strange sense of his guardianship over her; and, remembering Don Carlos, she imagined he worried a good deal over his charge, and, indeed, over the safety of all the party.

A favorite lounging spot of Madeline's was a shaded niche under the lee of crags facing the east. Here in the shade of afternoon, she and Edith would often lounge under a low-branched tree. Seldom they talked much, for it was afternoon and dreamy with the strange spell of this mountain fastness. There was smoky haze in the valleys, a fleecy cloud resting over the peaks, a sailing eagle in the blue sky, silence that was the unbroken silence of the wild heights, and a soft wind laden with incense of pine.

One afternoon, however, Edith appeared prone to talk seriously.

"See here, Majesty Hammond, do you

intend to spend the rest of your life in this wilderness?" she asked, bluntly. Madeline was silent.

"Oh, it is glorious! Don't misunderstand me, dear," went on Edith, earnestly, as she laid her hand on Madeline's. "This trip has been a revelation to me. I did not tell you, Majesty, that I was ill when I arrived. Now I'm well. So well! Look at Helen, too. Why, she was a ghost when we got here. Now she is brown and strong and beautiful. If it were for nothing else than this wonderful gift of health I would love the West. But I have come to love it for other things—even spiritual things. Majesty, I have been studying you. I see and feel what this life has made of you. When I came I wondered at your strength, your virility, your serenity, your happiness. And I was stunned. I wondered at the causes of your change. Now I know. You were sick of idleness, sick of uselessness, if not of society—sick of the horrible noises and smells and contacts one can no longer escape in the cities. I am sick of all that, too, and I could tell you many women of our kind who suffer in a like manner. You have done what many of us want to do, but have not the courage. You have left it. I am not blind to the splendid difference you have made in your life. I think I would have discovered, even if your brother had not told me, what good you have done to the Mexicans and cattlemen of your range. Then you have work to do. That is much the secret of your happiness, is it not? Tell me. Tell me something of what it means to you!"

"Work, of course, has much to do with any one's happiness," replied Madeline. "No one can be happy who has no work. As regards myself—for the rest I can hardly tell you. I have never tried to put it in words. Frankly, I believe, if I had not had money that I could not have found such contentment here. That is not in any sense a judgment against the West.

But if I had been poor I could not have bought and maintained my ranch. Stillwell tells me there are many larger ranches than mine, but none just like it. Then I am almost paying my expenses out of my business. Think of that! My income, instead of being wasted, is mostly saved. I think—I hope I am useful. Of course my ranch and range are real, my cowboys are typical. If I were to tell you how I feel about them it would simply be a story of how Madeline Hammond sees the West. They are true to the West. It is I who am strange, and what I feel for them may be strange, too, Edith, hold to your own impressions."

"But, Majesty, my impressions have changed. At first I did not like the wind, the dust, the sun, the endless open stretches. But now I do like them. Where once I saw only terrible wastes of barren ground now I see beauty and something noble. Then, at first, your cowboys struck me as dirty, rough, loud, crude, savage—all that was primitive. But I was wrong. I have changed. The dirt was only dust, and this desert dust is clean. They are still rough, loud, crude, and savage in my eyes, but with a difference. They are natural men. They are little children. Monty Price is one of nature's noblemen. The hard thing is to discover it. All his hideous person, all his actions and speech, are masks of his real nature. Nels is a joy, a simple, sweet, kindly, quiet man whom some woman should have loved. What would love have meant to him! He told me that no woman ever loved him except his mother, and he lost her when he was ten. Every man ought to be loved—especially such a man as Nels. Somehow his gun record does not impress me. I never could believe he killed a man. Then take your foreman, Stewart. He is a cowboy, his work and life the same as the others. But he has education and most of the graces we are in the habit of saying make a gentleman. Stewart is a strange fellow, just like this strange country. He's a man, Majesty, and I admire him. So, you see, my impressions are developing with my stay out here. I like the country, I like the men. One reason I want to go home soon is because I am discontented enough at home now, without falling in love with the West, for, of course, Majesty, I would. I could not live out here. And that brings me to my point. Admitting all the beauty and charm and wholesomeness and good of this wonderful country, still it is no place for you, Madeline Hammond. You have your position, your wealth, your name, your family. You must marry. You must have children. You must not give up all that for a quixotic life in a wilderness."

"I am convinced, Edith, that I shall live here all the rest of my life."

"Oh, Majesty! I hate to preach this way. But I promised your mother I would talk to you. And the truth is I hate—I hate what I'm saying. I envy you your courage and wisdom. I know you have refused to marry Boyd Harvey. I could see that in his face. I believe you will refuse Castleton. Whom will you marry? What chance is there for a woman of your position to marry out here? What in the world will become of you?"

"Quien sabe?" replied Madeline, with a smile that was almost sad.

Not so many hours after this conversation with Edith Madeline sat with Boyd Harvey upon the grassy promontory overlooking the west, and she listened once again to his suave courtship.

Suddenly she turned to him and said, "Boyd, if I married you would you be willing—glad to spend the rest of your life here in the West?"

"Majesty!" he exclaimed. There was amazement in the voice usually so even and well modulated—amazement in the handsome face usually so indifferent. Her question had startled him. She saw him look down the iron-gray cliffs, over the barren slopes and cedared ridges, beyond the cactus-covered foothills to the grim and ghastly desert. Just then, with its red veils of sunlit dust-clouds, its illimitable waste of ruined and upheaved earth, it was a sinister spectacle.

"No," he replied, with a tinge of shame in his cheek.

Madeline said no more, nor did he speak. She was spared the pain of refusing him, and she imagined he would never ask her again. There was both relief and regret in the conviction.

It was impossible not to like Boyd Harvey. He was handsome, young, rich, well born, pleasant, cultivated—he was all that made a gentleman of his class. He was considered a very desirable and eligible young man. Madeline admitted all this.

Then she thought of things that were perhaps exclusively her own strange ideas. Boyd Harvey's white skin did not tan even in this southwestern sun and wind. His hands were whiter than her own, and as soft. They were a proof that he never worked. His frame was tall, graceful, elegant. It did not bear evidence of ruggedness. He had never indulged in a sport more strenuous than yachting. He hated effort and activity. He rode horseback very little, disliked any but moderate motoring, spent much time in Newport and Europe, never walked when he could help it, and had no ambition unless it were to pass the days pleasantly. If he ever had any sons they would be like him, only a generation more toward the inevitable extinction of his race.

Madeline returned to camp in just the mood to make a sharp, deciding contrast. It happened—fatefully, perhaps—that the first man she saw was Stewart. Stewart was a combination of fire, strength, and action. These attributes seemed to cling about him. There was something vital and compelling in his presence. In him Made-

line saw the strength of his forefathers unimpaled. The life in him was marvelously significant.

Madeline Hammond compared the man of the East with the man of the West; and that comparison was the last parting regret for her old standards.

(To be continued.)

TOURISTS KEEP OUT OF GERMANY.

Berlin.—Foreign tourists, especially those from North and South America, are so wearied and annoyed by the passport, police and housing regulations in Germany that only the most resolute are remaining in the German cities.

The influx of outsiders is so slight that the German press, backed by complaining hotelkeepers, merchants, restaurant keepers and theatre managers, is criticizing the central government for the difficulties it has placed in the way of obtaining passport visas, and the municipal government for its heavy tax on foreigners and the exacting police regulations.

The simplest sort of single room in a Berlin hotel of the second class now costs the equivalent of \$4 a day. This came about through the 80 per cent. tax which the city of Berlin imposes on the room charges to foreigners.

The result of this is hotels are practically empty and hotel men are facing bankruptcy. Tourist agencies no longer refer visitors to hotels, but send them to boarding-houses.

In Hamburg and Bremen there is as much complaint about overcharges in hotels as there is in Berlin. During the recent Leipzig fair American buyers were charged such extortionate rates that many of them left in disgust without making any purchases.

The troubles of foreigners begin when they attempt to get visas to enter Germany. For a time only persons with documents proving they are coming for business reasons were granted permission. Students and tourists who desired to visit Germany were curiously refused.

Complaints poured in from Americans in London, Paris, Rome and Vienna who had come to Europe with the intention of visiting Germany, but who had failed to get visas in New York before leaving.

There apparently has been some relaxation in the visa policy. Business men now realize that by requiring foreigners to limit their stay in German cities, and by preventing others from entering, the financial situation has been made worse than ever.

Prices on practically all manufactured articles in Germany were up to the world level, so there was no reason to keep the visitors out on the ground that they would profiteer if admitted.

The uncertainty about the status of foreigners in Germany, coupled with the difficulties of crossing the Rhine-land because of the train service interruptions incidental to the French occupation, has been widely heralded in western Europe.

France and Italy have used it to advantage in their efforts to attract and retain visitors as long as possible. Nevertheless the cities still collect their high taxes on foreigners, and hotels and shops continue to charge foreigners more than they do Germans. One hotelkeeper defended the practice on the ground that the Germans must increase rates because their hotels are nearly empty.

Red Lights in the Ruhr.

From the Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Scarlet lights at last are beginning to flicker in the uncertain dusk of the Ruhr. The wonder is that these signal rockets of trouble have been delayed so long.

The Nationalists are as ripe for trouble and blood as the Communists. The uprising has taken the shape of a "hunger strike"; but it is impossible to ignore its political trends and threats.

The Nationalists are ready to help rip things apart, then turn on Communist and Republican alike and, finally, on the French. The Communists get their inspiration from Moscow. It was not for nothing that Moscow has been sending thousands of tons of grain into the Ruhr. That grain was used as a bribe to German radicals. If they were willing to form "Red centuries" and strike in the name of the proletariat, they got the grain. If not, they didn't.

Russians may be starving, but Moscow is able to boast that she can find grain for export. For this she must be paid in trouble and revolts.

The Soviet hand has been, and will be busy in the Ruhr; but at most and worst the Moscow Reds have only hastened the inevitable. Disorders were bound to come. Berlin has been expecting them and Paris has been counting on them, in some way, to help in breaking the deadlock. The industries of the Ruhr are on a gold basis; the Krupp von Bohlen, the Stinnes and the Thyssens would see to that. The workers are being paid in paper marks and their wages are dropping farther and farther behind the cost of living.

The Red uprisings in Dortmund and Essen may be the beginnings of the big explosion. The Ruhr is ripe and ready for disorder, anarchy and chaos. It is one great powder barrel with the head knocked out, with Communists and Nationalists hurling a shower of sparks around and into it.

Citizens Must Have Fishing License.

Under the provision of House Bill No. 358 signed by the Governor May 24th, it is necessary for all resident citizens, male or female, over the age of eighteen years to procure a license to fish in any of the waters of the Commonwealth, or the waters bounding or adjacent thereto.

The bill further provides that any amount in excess of \$400,000 in any one year shall be used solely under the direction of the Department of Fisheries with the consent of the Governor for the purchase of lands and waters, and for the impounding of waters, and to make the same available for use by the citizens of the Commonwealth for fishing, hunting and forest purposes.

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