



THE LIGHT OF WESTERN STARS

A Romance

by Zane Grey

Illustrations by IRWIN MYERS

(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 "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. Madeline visits him 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, had been dismissed from his home because of 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 Mains, 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 house. He tells Madeline her guests are not safe while the Mexican revolution is going on, and urges them to go up to the mountains out of danger. They decide to do so.

CHAPTER XIV.—The guerrillas leave during the night, without making trouble. Madeline and her guests, with the cowboys, go up to the mountains.

CHAPTER XV.—Edith Wayne pleads with Madeline to return to the East, but she refuses.

CHAPTER XVI.—Wandering in the mountains, Madeline sees Stewart with the girl Bonita, and comes to the worst conclusions. At camp Stewart offers to explain. Madeline will not listen. Stewart, in a rage, starts to leave camp. Nels brings news that Don Carlos and his followers are coming.

CHAPTER XVII.—The women are concealed, and the approach of the guerrillas awaited. They come, blustering, but Stewart's determination saves them, and they leave hastily. The party at once begins its return to the ranch.

She was called out of her slumber. Day had broken bright and cool. The sun was still below the eastern crags. Ambrose, with several other cowboys, had brought up buckets of spring water, and hot coffee and cakes. Madeline's party appeared to be none the worse for the night's experience. Indeed, the meager breakfast might have been as merrily partaken of as it was hungrily had not Ambrose enjoined silence.

"They're expecting company down below," he said.

This information and the summary manner in which the cowboys soon led the party higher up among the ruined shelves of rock caused a recurrence of anxiety. Madeline insisted on not going beyond a projection of cliff from which she could see directly down into the camp.

"Ambrose, do you really think the guerrillas will come?" she asked.

"Sure. We know. Nels just rode in and said they were on their way up. Miss Hammond, can I trust you? You won't let out a squeal if there's a fight down there? Stewart told me to hide you out of sight or keep you from looking in."

"I promise not to make any noise," replied Madeline.

Madeline arranged her coat so that she could lie upon it, and settled down to wait developments. There came a slight rattling of stones in the rear. She turned to see Helen sliding down a bank with a perplexed and troubled cowboy. Ambrose sternly and heroically prepared to carry her back to the others. He laid hold of her. In a fury, with eyes blazing, Helen whispered:

"Let go of me! Majesty, what does this fool mean?"

Madeline laughed. She knew Helen, and had marked the whisper, when or-

dinarily Helen would have spoken imperiously, and not low. Madeline ex-



"I Promise Not to Make Any Noise," Replied Madeline.

plained to her the exigency of the situation. "I might run, but I'll never scream," said Helen. With that Ambrose had to be content to let her stay.

However, he found her a place somewhat farther back from Madeline's position, where he said there was less danger of her being seen. Then he sternly bound her to silence, tarried a moment to comfort Christine, his wife, acting as maid to the ladies, and returned to where Madeline lay concealed. He had been there scarcely a moment when he whispered:

"I hear hosses. The guerrillas are comin'!"

Madeline's hiding place was well protected from possible discovery from below. She could peep over a kind of parapet, through an opening in the tips of the pines that reached up to the cliff, and obtain a commanding view of the camp circle and its immediate surroundings. She could not, however, see far either to right or left of the camp, owing to the obstructing foliage. Presently the sound of horses' hoofs quickened the beat of her pulse and caused her to turn keener gaze upon the cowboys below.

Although she had some inkling of the course Stewart and his men were to pursue, she was not by any means prepared for the indifference she saw. Frank was asleep, or pretended to be. Three cowboys were lazily and unconcernedly attending to campfire duties, such as baking biscuits, watching the ovens, and washing tins and pots. The elaborate set of aluminum plates, cups, etc., together with the other camp fixtures that had done service for Madeline's party, had disappeared. Nick Steele sat with his back to a log, smoking his pipe. Another cowboy had just brought the horses closer into camp, where they stood waiting to be saddled. Nels appeared to be fussing over a pack. Stewart was rolling a cigarette. Monty had apparently nothing to do for the present except whistle, which he was doing much more loudly than melodiously. The whole ensemble gave an impression of careless indifference.

The sound of horses' hoofs grew louder and slowed its beat. One of the cowboys pointed down the trail, toward which several of his comrades turned their head for a moment, then went on with their occupations.

Presently a shaggy, dusty horse bearing a lean, ragged, dark rider rode into the camp and halted. Another followed, and another. Horses with Mexican riders came in single file and stopped behind the leader.

"Buenos dias, senior," ceremoniously said the foremost guerrilla.

By straining her ears Madeline heard that voice, and she recognized it as belonging to Don Carlos. Stewart answered the greeting in Spanish, and, waving his hand toward the campfire, added in English, "Get down and eat."

The guerrillas were anything but slow in complying. They crowded to the fire, then spread in a little circle and squatted upon the ground, laying their weapons beside them. The cowboys were not cordial in their reception of this visit, but they were hospitable. The law of the desert had always been to give food and drink to wayfaring men, whether lost or hunted or hunting.

"They appear to be friendly enough," whispered Madeline. "Ambrose, tell me—explain to me—the real thing."

"Sure. Gene thinks they're after you ladies—to carry you off. But Gene—Oh, Gene's some highfalutin in his ideas lately. Most of us boys think the guerrillas are out to rob—that's all."

Whatever might have been the se-

cret motive of Don Carlos and his men, they did not allow it to interfere with a hearty appreciation of a generous amount of food. Then, as each and every one began to roll and smoke the inevitable cigarette of the Mexican, there was a subtle change in manner. They smoked and looked about the camp, off into the woods, up at the crags, and back at the leisurely cowboys. They had the air of men waiting for something.

"Senior," began Don Carlos, addressing Stewart. As he spoke he swept his sombrero to indicate the camp circle.

Madeline could not distinguish his words, but his gesture plainly indicated a question in regard to the rest of the camping party. Stewart's reply and the wave of his hand down the trail meant that his party had gone home. Stewart turned to some task, and the guerrilla leader quietly smoked. He looked cunning and thoughtful. Presently a big-boned man with a bullet head and a blistered red face of evil coarseness, stepped up and threw away his cigarette. He was an American.

"Hey, cull," he called in loud voice, "ain't ye goin' to cough up a drink?"

"My boys don't carry liquor on the trail," replied Stewart.

"Haw, haw! I heard over in Rodeo that ye was gittin' in to shore some fer temperance," said this fellow. "I hate to drink water, but I guess I've gotter do it."

He went to the spring, sprawled down to drink, and all of a sudden he thrust his arm down in the water to bring forth a basket. The cowboys in the hurry of packing had neglected to remove this basket; and it contained bottles of wine and liquors for Madeline's guests. They had been submerged in the spring to keep them cold. The guerrilla fumbled with the lid, opened it, and then got up, uttering a loud roar of delight.

Stewart made an almost imperceptible motion as if to leap forward; but he checked the impulse. "Guess my party forgot that. You're welcome to it."

Like bees the guerrillas swarmed around the lucky finder of the bottles.



Like Bees the Guerrillas Swarmed Around the Lucky Finder of the Bottles.

The drink did not last long, and it served only to liberate the spirit of recklessness. The several white outlaws began to prow around the camp; some of the Mexicans did likewise; others waited, showing by their ill-concealed expectancy the nature of their thoughts.

It was the demeanor of Stewart and his comrades that puzzled Madeline. Apparently they felt no anxiety or even particular interest. Don Carlos, who had been covertly watching them, now made his scrutiny open, even aggressive. The guerrilla leader seemed undecided, but not in any sense puzzled.

In her growing excitement Madeline had not clearly heard Ambrose's low whispers and she made an effort to distract some of her attention from those below to the cowboy crouching beside her.

The quality, the note of Ambrose's whisper had changed. It had a slight sibilant sound.

"Don't be mad if sudden-like I clap my hands over your eyes, Miss Hammond," he was saying. "Somethin' brewin' below. I never seen Gene so cool. That's a dangerous sign in him. And look, see how the boys are workin' together! Oh, it's slow and accident-like, but I know it's sure not accident. That foxy Greaser knows, too. But maybe his men don't. If they are wise they haven't sense enough to care. The Don, though—his's worried. It's Nels and Monty he's watchin'. And well he need do it! There, Nick and Frank have settled down on that log with Booby. Don't seem to be packin' guns. But look how heavy their vests hang. A gun in each side! Those boys can pull a gun and flop over that log quicker than you can think. Do you notice how Nels and Monty and Gene are square between them guerrillas and the trail up here? It doesn't seem on purpose, but it is. Look at Nels and Monty. How quiet they are confablin' together, paying no attention to the guerrillas. I see Monty look at Gene, then I see Nels look at Gene. Well, it's up to Gene. And they're goin' to back him. I reckon, Miss Hammond, there'd be dead Greasers round that camp long ago if Nels and Monty were foot-loose. They're beholdin' to Gene. That's plain. And, Lord! how it tickles me to watch them! Both

packin' two forty-fives, butts swingin' clear. There's twenty-four shots in them four guns. And there's twenty-three guerrillas. If Nels and Monty ever throw guns at that close range, why, before you'd know what was up there'd be a pile of Greasers. There! Stewart said something to the Don. I wonder what. I'll gamble it was something to get the Don's outfit all close together. Sure! Greasers have no sense. But them white guerrillas, they're lookin' some dubious. Whatever's comin' off will come soon, you can bet. I wish I was down there. But maybe it won't come to a scrap. Stewart's set on avoidin' that. He's a wonderful chap to get his way. Lord, though, I'd like to see him go after that overbearin' Greaser! See! The Don can't stand prosperity. All this strange behavior of cowboys is beyond his pulque-soaked brains. Then he's a Greaser. If Gene doesn't knock him on the head presently he'll begin to get over his scare, even of Nels and Monty. But Gene'll pick out the right time. Never saw Nels in but one fight, then he just shot a Greaser's arm off for tryin' to draw on him. But I've heard all about him. And Monty! Monty's the real old-fashioned gunman. What I don't understand is how Monty keeps so quiet and easy and peaceful-like. That's not his way, with such an outfit lookin' for trouble. O-ha! Now for the grand bluff. Looks like no fight at all!"

The guerrilla leader had ceased his restless steps and glances, and turned to Stewart with something of bold resolution in his aspect.

"Gracias, senior," he said. "Adios." He swept his sombrero in the direction of the trail leading down the mountain to the ranch; and as he completed the gesture a smile, crafty and jeering, crossed his swarthy face.

Ambrose whispered so low that Madeline scarcely heard him. "If the Greaser goes that way he'll find our horses and get wise to the trick. Oh, he's wise now! But I'll gamble he never even starts on that trail."

Neither hurriedly nor guardedly Stewart rose out of his leaning posture and took a couple of long strides toward Don Carlos.

"Go back the way you came," he fairly yelled; and his voice had the ring of a bugle.

Ambrose nudged Madeline; his whisper was tense and rapid: "Don't miss nothin'. Gene's called him. Whatever's comin' off will be here quick as lightning! See! I guess maybe that Greaser don't savvy good U. S. lingo. Look at that dirty yaller face turn green. Put one eye on Nels and Monty! That's great—just to see 'em. Just as quiet and easy. But oh, the difference! Bent and stiff—that means every muscle is like a rawhide riata. They're watchin' with eyes that can see the workin's of them Greasers' minds. Now there ain't a hoss-hair between them Greasers and I—!"

Don Carlos gave Stewart one long malignant stare; then he threw back his head, swept up the sombrero, and his evil smile showed gleaming teeth.

"Senior—" he began.

With magnificent bound Stewart was upon him. The guerrilla's cry was throttled in his throat. A fierce wrestling ensued, too swift to see clearly; then heavy, sodden blows, and Don Carlos was beaten to the ground. Stewart leaped back. Then, crouching with his hands on the butts of guns at his hips, he yelled, he thundered at the guerrillas. He had been quicker than a panther, and now his voice was so terrible that it curdled Madeline's blood, and the menace of deadly violence in his crouching position made her shut her eyes. But she had to open them. In that single instant Nels and Monty had leaped to Stewart's side. Both were bent down, with hands on the butts of guns at their hips. Nels' piercing yell seemed to divide Monty's roar of rage. Then they ceased, and echoes clapped from the crags. The silence of those three men crouching like tigers about to leap was more menacing than the nerve-racking yell.

Then the guerrillas wavered and broke and ran for their horses. Don Carlos rolled over, rose, and staggered away, to be helped upon his mount. He looked back, his pale and bloody face that of a thwarted demon. The whole band got into action and were gone in a moment.

"I knew it," declared Ambrose. "Never seen a Greaser who could face gun-play. That was some warn. And Monty Price never flashed a gun! He'll never get over that. I reckon, Miss Hammond, we're some lucky to avoid trouble. Gene had his way, as you see. We'll be makin' tracks for the ranch in about two shakes."

"Why?" whispered Madeline, breathlessly. She became conscious that she was weak and shaken.

"Because the guerrillas sure will get their nerve back, and come sneakin' on our trail or try to head us off by ambushin'," replied Ambrose. "That's their way. Otherwise three cowboys couldn't bluff a whole gang like that. Gene knows the nature of Greasers. They're white-livered. But I reckon we're in more danger now than before, unless we get a good start down the mountain. There! Gene's callin'. Come! Hurry!"

Helen had slipped down from her vantage point, and therefore had not seen the last act in that little campfire drama. It seemed, however, that her desire for excitement was satisfied, for her face was pale and she trembled when she asked if the guerrillas were gone.

Ambrose hurried the three women over the rough rocks, down the cliff. The cowboys below were saddling horses in haste. Swiftly, with regard only for life and limb, Madeline, Helen, and Christine were lowered by lassoes and half carried down to the level. By the time they were safely down the

other members of the party appeared on the cliff above. They were in excellent spirits, appearing to treat the matter as a huge joke.

Ambrose put Christine on a horse and rode away through the pines; Frankie Slade did likewise with Helen. Stewart led Madeline's horse up to her, helped her to mount, and spoke one stern word, "Wait!" Then as fast as one of the women reached the level she was put upon a horse and taken away by a cowboy escort. Few words were spoken. Haste seemed to be the great essential. The horses were urged, and, once in the trail, spurred and led into a swift trot. One cowboy drove up four pack-horses, and these were hurriedly loaded with the party's baggage. Castleton and his companions mounted, and galloped off to catch the others in the lead. This left Madeline behind with Stewart and Nels and Monty.

"They're goin' to switch off at the hollow that heads near the trail a few miles down," Nels was saying, as he tightened his saddle-girth. "The hollow heads into a big canyon. Once in the hollow, it'll be every man fer hisself. I reckon there won't be anythin' wuss than a rough ride."

Nels smiled reassuringly at Madeline, but he did not speak to her. Monty took her canteen and filled it at the spring and hung it over the pommel of her saddle. He put a couple of biscuits in the saddle-bag.

"Don't forget to take a drink an' a bite as you're ridin' along," he said. "An' don't worry, Miss Majesty. Stewart'll be with you, an' me an' Nels hangin' on the back trail."

His somber and sullen face did not change in its strange intensity, but the look in his eyes Madeline felt she would never forget. Left alone with these three men, now stripped of all pretense, she realized how fortune had favored her and what peril still hung in the balance. Stewart swung astride his big black, spurred him, and whistled. At the whistle Majesty jumped, and with swift canter followed Stewart. Madeline looked back to see Nels already up and Monty handing him a rifle. Then the pines hid her view.

Once in the trail, Stewart's horse broke into a gallop. Majesty changed his gait and kept at the black's heels. Stewart called back a warning. The low, wide-spreading branches of trees might brush Madeline out of the saddle. Fast riding through the forest along a crooked, obstructed trail called forth all her alertness.

Before long Stewart wheeled at right angles off the trail and entered a hollow between two low bluffs. Madeline saw tracks in the open patches of ground. Here Stewart's horse took to a brisk walk.

At last Madeline was brought to a dead halt by Stewart and his horse blocking the trail. Looking up, she saw they were at the head of a canyon that yawned beneath and widened its gray-walled, green-patched slopes down to a black forest of fir. Retracting her gaze, Madeline saw pack-horses cross an open space a mile below, and she thought she saw the stag hounds. Stewart's dark eyes searched the slopes high up along the craggy escarpments. Then he put the black to the descent.

He led off to the right, zigzagging an intricate course through the roughest ground Madeline had ever ridden over. He crashed through cedars, threaded a tortuous way among boulders, made his horse slide down slanting banks of soft earth, picked a slow and cautious progress across weathered slopes of loose rock. Madeline followed, finding in this ride a tax on strength and judgment. It was dust and heat, a parching throat, that caused her to think of time; and she was amazed to see the sun sloping to the west. Stewart never stopped; he never looked back; he never spoke.

"After a mile or so of easy travel the ground again began to fall decidedly, sloping in numerous places,

slipped the bridle of both horses, and he led them. Every few paces he stopped to listen. He changed his direction several times, and the last time he got among rough, rocky ridges. The iron shoes of the horses cracked on the rocks. That sound must have penetrated far into the forest. It perturbed Stewart, for he searched for softer ground. Meanwhile the shadows merged into darkness. The stars shone. The wind rose. Madeline believed hours passed.

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. Gene 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 thronging 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 disgrace 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 rolled beneath her; and at their edge, where the gray of valley began, she saw a dark patch that she knew was the ranch house.

(To be continued.)



He Went Cautiously Forward to Listen.

with draws between. Soon night shadowed the deeper gullies. Madeline was refreshed by the cooling of the air.

Stewart traveled slowly now. The barks of coyotes seemed to startle him. Often he stopped to listen. And during one of those intervals the silence was broken by sharp rifle shots. Madeline could not tell whether they were near or far, to right or left, behind or before. Evidently Stewart was both alarmed and baffled. He dismounted and went cautiously forward to listen. Madeline fancied she heard a cry, low and far away. It was only that of a coyote, she convinced herself, yet it was so walling, so human, that she shuddered. Stewart came back. He

slipped the bridle of both horses, and he led them. Every few paces he stopped to listen. He changed his direction several times, and the last time he got among rough, rocky ridges. The iron shoes of the horses cracked on the rocks. That sound must have penetrated far into the forest. It perturbed Stewart, for he searched for softer ground. Meanwhile the shadows merged into darkness. The stars shone. The wind rose. Madeline believed hours passed.

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(To be continued.)

First American Fire Engine.

The first fire engine in America was received in Boston January 27, 1879. It was a crude contrivance, to be drawn by men and operated by hand power. No great improvement was made in fire-fighting apparatus from ancient times until the Nineteenth century, when the steam fire engine was invented. Fire engines are said to have been invented by Ctesibius in the year 250 B. C. A hero of Alexandria describes those ancient "siphons used in configurations." The mechanism consisted of two cylinders and pistons connected by a reciprocating beam which raised and lowered the pistons alternately, and this, with the aid of valves opening only toward the jet, projected the water from it, but not in a continuous stream, as the pressure ceased at each alternation of the stroke.

Salt-Spilling Superstition.

Ask ten people why they are horrified at the idea of spilling salt, and nine of them will admit that they think it is unlucky, but do not know the reason. It is the same with most of our superstitions, many of which are as old as the human race.

Salt is one of the necessities of life, and to eat it in a man's house in the East is today a sign of friendship, as it was in the days of Abraham. If you refuse to eat his salt you offer him the deadliest insult, while the accidental spilling of it could easily be mistaken for a willful act, and might cost a clumsy man his life.

If, however, he picked up a pinch and threw it over his left shoulder he signified that the spilling had been unintentional.