(Conclusion.)

The car glided out of the yard, leaped from level to slope, and started swiftly down the road, out into the open valley. Each stronger rush of dry wind in Madeline's face marked the increase of speed. The buzz, the roar of wheels, of heavy body in flight, increased to a continuous droning hum. The wind became an insupportable body moving toward her, crushing her breast, making the task of breathing most difficult. To Madeline the time seemed to fly with the speed of miles.

Cactus barred the way, rocks barred the way, gullies barred the way, and these Nels addressed in the grim humor with which he was wont to view tragic things. Again and again Link used the planks to cross washes in sand. Presently he came to a ditch where water had worn deep into the road. Without hesitation he placed them, measuring distance carefully, and then started across. The danger was in ditching the machine. One of the planks split, sagged a little, but Link made the crossing without slip.

At length a mile of clean, brown slope, ridged and grooved like a washboard, led gently down to meet the floor of the valley, where the scant grama-grass struggled to give a tinge of gray. The road appeared to become more clearly defined, and could be seen striking straight across the valley.

To Madeline's dismay, that road led down to a deep, narrow wash. The crossing would have been laborsome for a horse; for an automobile it was impassable. Link drove back to the road, crossed it, and kept on down the line of the wash. It was a deep cut in red earth, worn straight down by swift water in the rainy season. It narrowed. When Link reached the narrowest points he got out of the car and walked from place to place. Once with a little jump he cleared the wash. Then Madeline noted that the farther rim was somewhat lower. In a flash she divined Link's intention. He was hunting a place to jump the car over the crack in the ground.

Soon he found one that seemed to suit him, for he tied his red scarf upon a greasewood-bush. Then, returning to the car, he clambered in, backed up the gentle slope and halted just short of steeper ground. Hunching low over the wheel, he started, slowly at first, then faster, and then faster. The great car gave a spring like a huge tiger. The impact of suddenly formed wind almost tore Madeline out of her seat. She felt Nels' powerful hands on her shoulders. She closed her eyes. The jolting headway of the car gave place to a gliding rush. This was broken by a slight jar, and then above the hum and roar rose a cowboy yell. Madeline waited with strained nerves for the expected crash. It did not come. Opening her eyes, she saw the level valley floor without a break. She had not even noticed the instant when the car had shot over the wash.

A strange breathlessness attacked her, and she attributed it to the celerity with which she was being carried along. Pulling the hood down over her face, she sank low in the seat. The whir of the car now seemed to be a world-filling sound. There was a long, blank period from which she awakened to feel an arm supporting her. Then she rallied. The velocity of the car had been cut to the speed to which she was accustomed. Throwing back the hood, she breathed freely again, recovered fully.

The car was bowling along a wide road upon the outskirts of a city. Madeline asked what place it could be.

"Douglas," replied Link. "An' jest around is Agua Prieta!"

That last name seemed to stun Madeline. She heard no more, and saw little until the car stopped. Nels spoke to some one. Then sight of khaki-clad soldiers quickened Madeline's faculties. She was on the boundary-line between the United States and Mexico, and Agua Prieta, with its white and blue-walled houses, its brown-tiled roofs, lay before her. A cavalry officer approached the car, stared, and removed his sombrero.

"Can you tell me anything about Stewart, the American cowboy who was captured by rebels a few days ago?" asked Madeline.

"Yes," replied the officer. "Stewart is reported to have done reckless fighting and was captured. He got a Mexican sentence. He is known here along the border, and the news of his capture stirred up excitement. We did all we could to get his release. The guerrillas feared to execute him here, and believed he might be aided to escape. So a detachment departed with him for Mezquital."

"He was sentenced to be shot Thursday at sunset—tonight?"

"Yes. I regret that I can't give you definite information. If you are friends of Stewart's—relatives—I might find—"

"I am his wife," interrupted Madeline. "Will you please read these." She handed him the telegrams. "Advise me—help me, if you can?"

With a wondering glance at her the officer received the telegrams. He read several, and whistled low in amaze. His manner became quick, alert, serious.

"I can't read these written in Spanish, but I know the names signed." Swiftly he ran through the others. "Why, these mean Stewart's release has been authorized. They explain mysterious rumors we have heard here. Greaser treachery! For some strange reason messages from the rebel junta have failed to reach their destination. I'll go with you to General Salazar, the rebel chief in command. I know him. Perhaps we can find out something."

Nels made room for the officer. Link sent the car whirring across the line into Mexican territory. The road ended in an immense plaza, in the center of which was a circular structure that in some measure resembled a corral. It was a bull-ring, where the national sport of bull-fighting was carried on.

Madeline caught a glimpse of tents inside, then her view was obstructed by a curious, pressing throng. The cavalry officer leaped from the car and pushed his way into the entrance.

How stifling was this crowded, ill-smelling plaza! The sun, red and lowering, had sloped far down in the west, but still burned with furnace heat. A swarm of flies whirled over the car. The shadows of low-sailing buzzards crossed Madeline's sight. Then she saw a row of the huge, uncanny black birds sitting upon the tiled roof of a

She Handed Him the Telegrams. "Advise Me—Help Me, If You Can?"

house. They had neither an air of sleeping nor resting. They were waiting. She fought off a horrible ghastly idea before its full realization.

Suddenly the crowd parted to let the cavalry officer and a rebel of striking presence get to the car.

"Madam, it is as I suspected," said the officer, quickly. "The messages directing Stewart's release never reached Salazar. They were intercepted. But even without them we might have secured Stewart's exchange if it had not been for the fact that one of his captors wanted him shot. This guerrilla intercepted the orders, and then was instrumental in taking Stewart to Mezquital. It is exceedingly sad. Why, he should be a free man this instant. I regret—"

"Who did this—this thing?" cried Madeline, cold and sick. "Who is the guerrilla?"

"Senor Don Carlos Martinez. He has been a bandit, a man of influence in Sonora. He is more of a secret agent in the affairs of the revolution than an active participator. But he has seen guerrilla service."

"Don Carlos! Stewart in his power! Oh, God!" Madeline sank down, almost overcome. Then two great hands, powerful, thrilling, clasped her shoulders, and Nels bent over her.

"Miss Majesty, shore we're wastin' time here," he said. His voice, like his hands, was uplifting. She wheeled to him in trembling importunity. How cold, bright, blue the flash of his eyes! They told Madeline she must not weaken. But she could not speak her thought to Nels—could only look at Link.

"It figgers impossible, but I'll do it!" said Link Stevens, in answer to her voiceless query.

"Can I get a permit to go into the interior—to Mezquital?" asked Madeline of the officer.

"You are going on? Madam, it's a forlorn hope. Mezquital is a hundred miles away. But there's a chance—the barest chance if your man can drive this car. The Mexicans are either murderous or ceremonious in their executions. The arrangements for Stewart's will be elaborate. But, barring unusual circumstances, it will take place precisely at the hour designated. You need no permit. Your messages are official papers. But to save time, perhaps delay. I suggest you take this Mexican, Senor Montes, with you. He outranks Don Carlos and knows the captain of the Mezquital detachment."

"I thank you, sir. I shall not forget your kindness," concluded Madeline.

The white, narrow road flashed out of the foreground, slipped with inconceivable rapidity under the car. When she marked a clump of cactus far ahead it seemed to shoot at her, to speed behind her even the instant she noticed it. Nevertheless, Madeline knew Link was not putting the car to its limit. Swiftly as he was flying, he held something in reserve. And every leaf and blade and branch of cactus bore wicked thorns, any one of which would be fatal to a tire.

It came at length, the bursting report. The car lurched, went on like a crippled thing, and halted, obedient to the master hand at the wheel. Swift as Link was in replacing the tire, he lost time. The red sun, more sullen, duskier as it neared the black, bold horizon, appeared to mock Madeline, to eye her in derision.

Link leaped in, and the car sprang ahead. The road began to wind up; it turned and twisted in tantalizing, lazy curves; it was in no hurry to surmount a hill that began to assume proportions of a mountain; it was leisurely, as were all things in Mexico except strife. That was quick, fierce, bloody—it was Spanish.

The descent from that elevation was difficult, extremely hazardous, yet Link Stevens drove fast. Then, in taking an abrupt curve, a grasping spear ruined another tire. This time the car rasped across the road into the cactus, bursting the second front-wheel tire. Like demons indeed Link and Nels worked. Shuddering, Madeline felt the declining heat of the sun, saw with gloomy eyes the shading of the red light over the desert. She did not look back to see how near the sun was to the horizon. She wanted to ask Nels. Strange as anything on this terrible ride was the absence of speech. As yet no word had been spoken. Madeline wanted to shriek to Link to hurry. But he was more than humanly swift in all his actions. So with mute lips, with the fire in her beginning to chill, with a lifelessness menacing her spirit, she watched, hoped against hope, prayed for a long, straight, smooth road.

Quite suddenly she saw it, seemingly miles of clear, narrow lane disappearing like a thin, white streak in distant green. Perhaps Link Stevens' heart leaped like Madeline's. The huge car with a roar and a jerk seemed to answer Madeline's call, a cry no less poignant because it was silent.

Faster, faster, faster! The roar became a whining hum. Then for Madeline sound ceased to be anything—she could not hear. The wind was now heavy, imponderable, no longer a swift, plastic thing, but solid, like an onrushing wall. It bore down upon Madeline with such resistless weight that she could not move. The green of desert plants along the road merged in two shapeless fences, sliding at her from the distance. Objects ahead began to blur the white road, to grow streaky, like rays of light, the sky to take on more of a reddening haze.

That was Madeline's last clear sensation upon the ride. Blinded, dazed, she succumbed to the demands upon her strength. She reeled, fell back, only vaguely aware of a helping hand. Confusion seized her senses. All about her was a dark chaos through which she was rushing, rushing, rushing under the wrathful eye of a setting sun.

But at an end of infinite time that rush ceased. Madeline lost the queer feeling of being disembodied by a frightfully swift careening through boundless distance. She distinguished voices, low at first, apparently far away. Then she opened her eyes to blurred but conscious sight.

The car had come to a stop. Link was lying face down over the wheel. Nels was rubbing her hands, calling to her. She saw a house with clean whitewashed wall and brown-tiled roof. Beyond, over a dark mountain range, peeped the last red curve, the last beautiful ray of the setting sun.

CHAPTER XXIII

At the End of the Road.

Madeline saw that the car was surrounded by armed Mexicans. They presented a contrast to the others she had seen that day; she wondered a little at their silence, at their respectful front.

Suddenly a sharp spoken order opened up the ranks next to the house. Senor Montes appeared in the break, coming swiftly. His dark face wore a smile; his manner was courteous, important, authoritative.

"Senora, you got here in time. El Capitan Stewart will be free."

"Free!" she whispered.

She rose, reeling.

"Come," replied Montes, taking her arm. "Perdoneme, Senora.

Senor Montes led Madeline through a hall to a patio, and on through a large room with flooring of rough, bare boards that rattled, into a smaller room full of armed quiet rebels facing an open window.

Montes directed Madeline's attenton to a man by the window. A loose scarf of vivid red hung from his hand.

"Senora, they were waiting for the sun to set when we arrived," said Montes. "The signal was about to be given for Senor Stewart's walk to death."

"Stewart's walk!" echoed Madeline.

"Ah, Senora, let me tell you his sentence—the sentence I have had the honor and happiness to revoke for you."

Stewart had been court-martialed and sentenced according to a Mexican custom observed in cases of brave soldiers to whom honorable and fitting executions were due. His hour had been set for Thursday when the sun had sunk. Upon signal he was to be liberated and was free to walk out into the road, to take any direction he pleased. He knew his sentence; knew that death awaited him, that every possible avenue of escape was blocked by men with rifles ready. But he had not the slightest idea at what moment or from what direction the bullets were to come.

"Senora, we have sent messengers to every squad of waiting soldiers—an order that El Capitan is not to be shot. He is ignorant of his release. I shall give the signal for his freedom."

"Is there no—no possibility of a mistake?" faltered Madeline.

"None. My order included unloading of rifles."

"Don Carlos?"

"He is in irons, and must answer to General Salazar," replied Montes.

With a heart stricken by both joy and agony, she saw Montes give the signal.

Then she waited. No change manifested itself down the length of that lonely road. There was absolute silence in the room behind her. How terribly, infinitely long seemed the waiting!

Suddenly a door opened and a tall men stepped out.

Madeline recognized Stewart. She had to place both hands on the window-sill for support, while a storm of emotion swayed her. Like a retreating wave it rushed away. Stewart lived. He was free. He had stepped out into the light. She had saved him. Life changed for her in that instant of realization and became sweet, full, strange.

Stewart shook hands with some one in the doorway. Then he looked up and down the road. The door closed behind him. Leisurely he rolled a cigarette, stood close to the wall while he scratched a match. Even at that distance Madeline's keen eyes caught the small flame, the first little puff of smoke.

Stewart then took to the middle of the road and leisurely began his walk.

Madeline watched him, with pride, love, pain, glory combating for a mastery over her. This walk of his seemingly took longer than all her hours of awakening, of strife, of remorse, longer than the ride to find him. She felt that it would be impossible for her to wait till he reached the end of the road. Yet in the hurry and riot of her feelings she had fleeting panics. She wanted to run to meet him. Nevertheless, she stood rooted to her covert behind the window, living that terrible walk with him to the uttermost thought of home, sister, mother, sweetheart, wife, life itself—every thought that could come to a man stalking to meet his executioners. With all that tumult in her mind and heart Madeline still fell prey to the

"Who Are You?" He Whispered Hoarsely.

incomprehensible variations of emotion possible to a woman. Every step Stewart took thrilled her. She had some strange, subtle intuition that he was not unhappy, and that he believed beyond shadow of doubt that he was walking to his death. His steps dragged a little, though they had begun to be swift. The old, hard, physical, wild nerve of the cowboy was perhaps in conflict with spiritual growth of the finer man, realizing too late that life ought not to be sacrificed.

Then the dark gleam that was his face took shape, grew sharper and clearer. He was stalking now, and there was a suggestion of impatience in his stride. It took these hidden Mexicans a long time to kill him! At a point in the middle of the road, even with the corner of a house and opposite to Madeline's position, Stewart halted stockstill. He presented a fair, bold mark to his executioners, and he stood there motionless a full moment.

That wait was almost unendurable for Madeline. Perhaps it was only a moment, several moments at the longest, but the time seemed a year. Stewart's face was scornful, hard. Did he suspect treachery on the part of his captors, that they meant to play with him as a cat with a mouse, to murder him at leisure? Madeline was sure she caught the old, inscrutable, mocking smile fleeting across his lips. He held that position for what must have been a reasonable time to his mind, then with a laugh and a shrug he threw the cigarette into the road. He shook his head as if at the incomprehensible motives of men who could have no fair reasons now for delay.

He made a sudden violent action that was more than a straightening of his powerful frame. It was the old instinctive violence. Then he faced north. Madeline read his thought, knew he was thinking of her, calling her a last silent farewell. He would serve her to his last breath, leave her free, keep his secret. That picture of him, dark-browed, fire-eyed, strangely sad and strong, sank indelibly into Madeline's heart of hearts.

The next instant he was striding forward, to force by bold and scornful presence a speedy fulfillment of his sentence.

Madeline stepped into the door, crossed the threshold. Stewart staggered as if indeed the bullets he expected had pierced him in mortal wound. His dark face turned white. His eyes had the rapt stare, the wild fear of a man who saw an apparition, yet who doubted his sight. Perhaps he had called to her as the Mexicans called to their Virgin; perhaps he imagined sudden death had come unawares, and this was her image appearing to him in some other life.

"Who—are—you?" he whispered, hoarsely.

She tried to lift her hands, failed, tried again, and held them out, trembling.

"It is I. Majesty. Your wife!"

[THE END]

SAVAGE CUSTOMS IN HAWAII

Almost Unbelievable Atrocities Followed the Death of a Man the Islanders Ranked Highly.

Death was a catastrophe that was made the occasion of great demonstration among the Hawaiian people, even within the last century. In private families this varied in character from the head of the household down to the humblest member. When, however, a prominent person died, the ceremonies were barbarous in the extreme. A chief's immediate followers, as well as many of his serfs, shaved their heads or cut the hair short, which was a tremendous sacrifice, and they knocked out some of their front teeth. Often these devoted people tattooed their tongues somewhat in the same fashion as it was customary to do on other parts of the body. All this was done to keep alive the memory of the dead chief. It was also a custom to bury alive some of the retainers around the tomb.

When a very high rank chieftain died, men and women, old and young, priest and laity, acted like those possessed with devils. Property was wantonly destroyed, and dwellings fired merely to add to the confusion, while gambling, theft and murder were openly committed. No women, except the widows of the deceased, were exempt from the grossest violation, and in their state of mental intoxication, women made no effort to protect themselves.

ROOM OF GREWSOME MEMORY

Wholesale Murders Committed in Chamber in What Is Believed Oldest Inn in England.

The oldest inn in England is believed to be a certain hostelry at Colnbrook, Buckinghamshire. This place has a very black history, for here, many years ago, 60 murders were perpetrated by the landlord and his wife before the crimes were discovered!

In this gloomy abode there is, on the first floor, a large room known as the "Blue Room." Formerly it contained an innocent-looking bed in which quite a number of persons slept their last sleep. The part of the floor on which the bed rested was really a hinged trap-door fixed above the brewhouse's boiling vat.

Guests who were known to be wealthy always slept in the Blue room. When the inkeeper had made sure that the guest was asleep, the trap-door bolts were drawn, and the unfortunate man tumbled into the vat.

The last victim was Thomas Cole, a clothier, of Reading, who had three escapes before finally meeting his death. Once he was taken ill before reaching the inn, and so slept elsewhere; a second time he was in a hurry to get to London, and consequently drove straight on; while on another occasion when he stayed at the inn the Blue room was occupied by someone else. But at last his time came, and his body was found later in a brook.

Early Days of the United States.

Virtuous early geographers of the United States did not confine their unflattering portrayals to lands across the sea. Benjamin Davies, in 1813, had this to say about his own country in "Manners and Customs in the United States."

"Travelers have observed a want of urbanity, particularly in Philadelphia; and in all the capital cities an eager pursuit of wealth, by adventurous speculations in commerce, by landjobbing, banks, insurance offices and lotteries. The multiplication of inns, taverns and dram shops is an obvious national evil that calls loudly for legislative interference; for in no country are they more numerous or more universally baneful. Schools are spread everywhere through the well-settled parts of the country, yet the domestic regulation of children and youth is not duly regarded."

CHEAP BOOKS NOT LONG AGO

Time When All the Best Literature of the World Could Be Obtained for Small Sum.

We poke fun at the age of the penny dreadful and the dime novel, the golden age of the newsboy story and of Nick Carter. Yet that age was the golden age not only of these, but also of the book lover. Not, of course, of the bibliophile, but of the lover of books. It is a mistake to think that the cheap old books were all trash, declares the Nation. In the Seaside library of Munro, for instance, one could buy in the guise of the dime novel the works of Balzac and Hardy; one could buy "Don Quixote" and "Faust." The firm of John W. Lovell printed at 10 cents a volume all the works of Carlyle, Ruskin and Emerson, of major poets and historians, and issues, in the same series, all of Morley's "English Men of Letters." From England Cassell sent his marvelous national library of little paper-covered books in which many a man first read his Plato, his Bacon and his Johnson. To have a quarter in those days was indeed to be free to enter all the realms of gold. Well-bound reprints of all the world's great books could then be had in such series as the Salem edition, issued by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., and the priceless Canterbury Poets and Camelot Classics exported to us by Walter Scott. The Everyman Library at 35 cents a volume was the culminating point of the great age of cheap and handy English books.

VARYING OPINIONS ON LOVE

From the Selections Made, Some Will Disapprove and Some Will Read With a Smile.

The Married Man—Love is an illusion of youth, which only time, a wife and ten children will dispel.

The Bachelor—Love is a mythical emotion which was first foisted upon the world by a sap-headed novelist in need of "copy."

The Debutante—Love! Search me; I can't tell you, but it's nice.

The Old Maid—Love is the heavenly reward of all who withstand the temptations of this life. If it isn't, I've backed a loser.

The Cynic—Love is only experienced by fools and babies. Neither are qualified to give opinions.

The Married Woman—Love is like expensive face cream. It wears off quickly—but cannot be renewed.

The Chorus Girl—Love is an ideal way of getting ready cash, and a sure way through a breach of promise suit to single happiness.

The Average Young Man—Love is the most expensive form of gambling, with all the odds against the man.

All the World—Love is an emotion everyone seeks and no one is satisfied with when found.—Passing Show, London.

Collie Dog Saved Youngster.

A shepherd's collie found a boy of two and a half years of age who had been lost in the hills on the Scottish border for four days. The boy was the son of a shepherd. He had been taken by his mother on a peat cutting expedition about a quarter of a mile from their cottage home at Kerrhead, on the Solway firth. While the mother worked at the fuel the child lay down and fell asleep. But when she had finished her task the boy had disappeared. A three days' search failed to find him. On the fourth day, a shepherd from the neighboring farm of Chaighouse steads, was recovering some sheep which had strayed when his dog ran off. The collie replied to his master's whistle, and, looking up at him, again went off in the direction from which he had come. The shepherd, realizing that there was something to account for the dog's behavior, followed. He found the missing boy asleep in a bunch of rushes.

Combating Pinyon Jays.

Pinyon jays, inhabiting Rocky mountain states, are birds of the same family as crows and about half their size. Between nesting seasons they rove in large flocks, often containing hundreds of birds and cause serious damage to grain crops. Successful experiments in methods of control of these birds when attacking corn were made by the biological survey of the United States Department of Agriculture in west-central Colorado, and a leaflet containing directions for using a simple but effective poison formula has been distributed in that territory. During the wheat harvest control measures are not so successful, and in large fields, where the birds can find ample food, the use of poisoned baits is not found profitable.

Strange Experience.

Not long ago I was visiting at my sister's home. Her little boy, a child of two years, was playing in the living room one afternoon when the rest of us were in the sewing room. Suddenly I called him very sharply. "What's the matter?" asked my sister. I blushed. I did not know why I had called him. I had no reason at all, for the child was not doing anything naughty. "I don't know," I answered her, trying to think of some reason for the sharp summons. In the meantime the little one ran to me. He had no sooner reached my side than the ceiling of the room in which he had been fell. Everything in the room was either broken or badly scarred. Had the baby been there he would certainly have been killed.—Chicago Journal.