



WOLLETTE CLEAR BEARD.

SYNOPSIS.

Mamuel Ramirez and Pablo Vellos, two young herders, are rivals for the hand of Chiquita, a Mexican girl. Manuel is the favored one. He is just starting as a cattle raiser and has already a goodly herd. Chiquita herself had designed. The story opens on the day of the great spring roundup of the cattle, the great festival day in southern Arizona. Chiquita goes to the roundup with her friend, Senora Valdes. On the way she sees Manuel and Manuel's men. Ensign was clearly framed with a crossbow, a mark which Chiquita herself had designed. The story opens on the day of the great spring roundup of the cattle, the great festival day in southern Arizona. Chiquita goes to the roundup with her friend, Senora Valdes. On the way she sees Manuel and Manuel's men. Ensign was clearly framed with a crossbow, a mark which Chiquita herself had designed. The story opens on the day of the great spring roundup of the cattle, the great festival day in southern Arizona. Chiquita goes to the roundup with her friend, Senora Valdes. On the way she sees Manuel and Manuel's men. Ensign was clearly framed with a crossbow, a mark which Chiquita herself had designed. The story opens on the day of the great spring roundup of the cattle, the great festival day in southern Arizona. Chiquita goes to the roundup with her friend, Senora Valdes. On the way she sees Manuel and Manuel's men. Ensign was clearly framed with a crossbow, a mark which Chiquita herself had designed.

father came out of the door, followed by two other men. They did not see her, and, after waiting for them to get clear, she slipped quickly across the path of light that streamed from the door into the darkness that surrounded the corral. There were several horses there; she could just see them moving about or lying on the soft sand. Feeling along the cottonwood pales which inclosed the corral, she found the heavy, silver-mounted saddle of Don Ramon. Chiquita could not lift the saddle, for it was heavy far beyond her strength, but she hung over her horse, and this was what Chiquita wanted. She caught it up, and going to the silos quickly let them down and passed inside. The horse snorted distrustfully and edged away from the little figure, strange to them, that intruded at so unseasonably an hour. Chiquita spoke to them soothingly in a trembling undertone, for fear she might be heard. She called to them by endearing names in her soft Spanish, and binted of delicacies that would eventually be forthcoming. Finally one horse took heart and allowed her to approach, and, with a readiness given by a lifelong familiarity with his kind, Chiquita slipped the bit in his mouth and passed his ear through the loop that served as a throat latch. She led him after her to the opening of the corral, climbed on the fence and dropped on his back as he passed her and was away. After a few plunges to express his approval of this method of mounting, the animal settled into a long, swinging stride, such a stride as only the horses of Don Ramon could take; a stride that precluded successful pursuit.



CHIQUITA CREPT UPON THE CAMP.

the plaza. She had no idea of where Don Ramon could be found. All the more reason, therefore, for making haste. One slipper was lost; she kicked off the other and ran blindly on in the general direction of the village. Suddenly she was stopped, for in her heedless flight she had run into a man who caught her in his arms. Chiquita was too breathless to cry out and could only struggle faintly. "Is it you, child?" said her father's voice. "Where have you been? Everywhere I have been searching for you. The Senora is much alarmed." Chiquita clung to him and gasped out her story. She had been yonder by the fire, she said, and as she had lain there two men had told her that Pablo had driven away Manuel's cattle so that they might not be found. Her father interrupted her. "He went toward Phoenix," Chiquita heard one of them say to the other. "He will return in the morning. It was necessary that he should go in that direction, otherwise his would have had to pass the ranch along the Gila. In that direction, too, the country is better suited to his purpose. As the herd will be missing, he will be present too." Chiquita raised her head from the ground and strained her ears to catch every word. The light wood of which the fire had been made was burned to a bed of glowing coals. She was lying outside their circle of dull, red light, and as the men passed within the circle Chiquita recognized them both. They were cousins to each other and to Pablo. Chiquita saw the whole thing now. She was convinced of that beyond the possibility of a doubt. Pablo had driven it away to some place of hiding, so that it might not appear to attest Manuel's innocence. In the morning he would give the testimony that would finish the work. What a coward he would be! He did not dare to fight, as a Christian should, so he resorted to such means as this. How Chiquita loathed him! But he should not succeed. Chiquita would attend to that—she would see Don Ramon—now—herself. She sprang to her feet and ran across

suit, once they should have got clear away. Not even one of the other horses of Don Ramon could catch her, for she was mounted on the best of his powerful backs was no more than if a balloon had been tied to it. Chiquita walked slowly on, thinking hard as she went. She was somewhat relieved by what her father had said. She knew that he could succeed in his search if anyone could. Still, suppose he did not. No one could tell where Pablo had driven the cattle. To be of any use they must be on hand in the morning, and that was not likely. Pablo must not come, either; that was the only way out of it that she could see. Doubtless even now he was on his return journey. If he could only be found and stopped—if Chiquita herself could only find him. How she would stop him in case she did meet him on the road. Chiquita had not the most distant idea. Clearly the first thing to do was to find him; the rest could be determined afterward. She stopped in her journey beside the house. A watery crescent moon had risen over the mountain, filtering a faint gray light over the village and plain. The side of the mountain itself was still dark, and the open portals of the saloon glowed like great eyes set in the darkness. From one of these doors she saw her father quickly come and enter another. Evidently he was gathering his men. Near the saloon Chiquita knew that there was a corral, a small corral where Ramon de Quesada kept his horses when he visited Agua Caliente. They were by far the best horses in that part of the country. With a horse such as one of these Chiquita might find Pablo. Frightened at the audacity of her plan, she turned and ran toward the corral. She did not want to have time to consider—she would never, then, dare do such a thing as that which she had in mind. As Chiquita neared the saloon her

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