

next time, Jim, it will be as well merely to fire the gun."

"Oh," explained Jim, in an off-hand manner, "our folk don't pay any attention to a thing like that. You've got to show 'em you mean business. If this gentleman had come on, the next shot would have hit him where it would have hurt."

"Is the baggage where he left it?"

"It is, ma'am. Do you wish it brought here?"

"I do, Jim, and as soon as possible."

"I'll see to it, ma'am. It's all been a little mistake, sir," he added amiably, as he turned to Stranleigh, and with a flourish of the hat he departed.

Miss Armstrong rose as if to leave the verandah. As she approached the door, Stranleigh said in a tone of mild reproach:

"I'm puzzled, I confess."

"So am I," replied the girl, brightly.

"Why is there such a prejudice against a sheriff here? In the land I came from a sheriff is regarded with great respect. He rides about in a gilded coach, and wears magnificent robes decorated with gold lace. I believe he develops ultimately into a Lord Mayor, just as a grub, if one may call so glorious a personage as a sheriff a grub, ultimately becomes a butterfly. We'd never think of shooting a sheriff. Why, then, do your men pot at sheriffs, and hit innocent people?"

THE girl laughed.

"Our sheriffs are elected persons, drawn from the politician class; and if you know America, you will understand what that means. Among the various duties of a sheriff is that of seizing property and selling it, if the owner of that property hasn't paid his debts."

"They act as bailiffs, then?"

"Very likely; I am not acquainted with legal procedure. But I must go, Mr. Stranleigh, for whatever the position of sheriff may be, mine is that of assistant to my mother, who is just now preparing dinner, a meal that, further east, is called luncheon. And now, what would you prefer to read? The latest magazine, or the pharmaceutical journal?"

"Thank you, Miss Armstrong; I prefer gazing at the scenery to either."

"Then good-bye till dinner time," whereupon she disappeared into the house.

Stranleigh could not remember any repast he had enjoyed so much, although he suspected horseback exercise in the keen air had whetted his appetite. When he mentioned his gratification at so satisfactory a menu, the girl smiled.

"Plain living and high thinking is our motto on the ranch," she said.

"This is anything but plain living," he replied. "How far away is your market?"

"Oh, a market is merely an effete contrivance of civilization. The basis of our provender is the farm. Farm-house fare is often what it should not be because art belongs to the city, while nature belongs to the farm. To produce a good result, the two must be united. We were speaking just now of Thun. If, leaving that town, you proceed along the left hand road by the lake, you will arrive at a large institution, which is devoted entirely to the art of cookery. The more I progressed with my medical studies at Lausanne, the more I realized that the basis of health is good food. So I interrupted my studies for a time, and learned to cook."

"Miss Armstrong, you are evidently a paragon!"

"You are complimentary, Mr. Stranleigh; and to enhance myself further in your eyes, I may add that I have brought another much needed accomplishment to the farm. I am an expert accountant, and can manage business affairs in a way that would startle you. Regarding this last statement of mine, I would like

to ask, hoping you will forgive my seeming impertinence; are you a rich man?"

Stranleigh was startled—she had succeeded in doing that—and he hesitated slightly in his reply.

"There are so many degrees to wealth," he said, "but—yes—I may say I am fairly well provided for."

"I am very glad to hear it, for it has been the custom of my father, who is not a good business man, to charge those who come here with their guns and fishing tackle two or three dollars a week. Now, we are in a unique position. We have the advantage of being free from competition. The hotels of New York meet competition in its fiercest form, yet the prices they charge are much more per day than we charge a month. So I am determined that our prices shall equal those of New York, but I think it fair to let any customer know this fact before he is called upon to pay his bill."

"An excellent plan," said Stranleigh, relieved that he was not asked to finance some new scheme. "And in my case there will be the additional account for medical services. Will that be on the basis of professional charges in London, New York, Vienna, Berlin or Lausanne?" Stranleigh's eyes twinkled with an enjoyment they did not often show.

"Not on the basis of Lausanne, certainly, for there an excellent doctor is contented with a fee of five francs, so, if you don't object, I'll convert francs into dollars."

"My admiration for your business capacity is waning, Miss Armstrong. If this is to be an international matter, why choose your own country instead of mine? Transpose your francs into pounds. There are five francs in a dollar, but five dollars in a pound sterling. Let me recommend to you my own currency."

"A good idea, Mr. Stranleigh," she rejoined, laughing. "I shall at once take it into consideration, but I hope you won't be shocked at the final round-up."

"I shall have no excuse for astonishment, being honestly forewarned, and now that we are conversing internationally, I'd like to carry it a little further. In Italy they call an accident a *disgrazia*, and when you read in an Italian paper that a man is disgraced, you realize that he has met with an accident. Then the account ends by saying that the patient is guaranteed curable in two days, or a week, or a month, as the case may be. How long, then, doctor, must I rest under this 'disgrace'?"

"I should say a week."

"I hope your orders won't be too strict. By the way, was that my luggage I heard arriving?"

"Your belongings are all in the large room upstairs, but if you have designs upon it, you are disobeying orders."

"I must get at a bag that is in one of the bundles."

"I will fetch what you want, so don't worry about that, but come and sit on the verandah once more."

STRANLEIGH protested and finally a compromise was reached. Miss Armstrong would whistle for Jim, and he would do the unpacking. She saw a shade of distrust pass over Stranleigh's face, and she reassured him that Jim was the most honest and harmless man in the world, except, perhaps, where sheriffs were concerned.

"Now," she continued, when he had seated himself, "you have talked enough for one day, so you must keep quiet for the rest of the afternoon. I will do the talking, and give you an explanation of our brigandish conduct."

"I shall be interested," said Stranleigh. "But permit me, before silence falls, to ask what you may regard as an impertinent question. Do you smoke?"

"Goodness, no!" she replied, with widely-opened eyes.

"Many ladies do, you know, and I



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