

# The Light of Western Stars

A ROMANCE by ZANE GREY

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## AN UNKNOWN VOICE

**SYNOPSIS.**—Arriving at the lonely little railroad station at El Cajon, New Mexico, Madeline Hammond, New York society 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 friend, 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 cowboys let a girl, Bonita, take his horse and escape, then conduct Madeline to Florence Kingsley, friend of her brother, 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. Alfred, scion of a wealthy family, had been dismissed from his home because of his dissipation. Madeline sees that the West has redeemed him. She meets Stillwell, A's employer, typical western ranchman. Stillwell tells her how Stewart beat up the sheriff to save her from arrest and then lit out for the border. Danzy Mains, one of Stillwell's cowboys, has disappeared, with some of Stillwell's money. His friends link his name with the girl Bonita. Madeline gets a glimpse of life on a western ranch. Stewart sends Madeline his horse Majesty. She buys out Stillwell and "Her Majesty's Ranch" becomes famous. She finds her life work under "The Light of Western Stars." Learning Stewart had been hurt in a brawl at Chihuahua, Madeline visits him and persuades him to come to the ranch as the boss of her cowboys. 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 makes Stewart promise that peace is kept. They raid Don Carlos' ranch for contraband arms. Madeline and Florence, returning home from Alfred's ranch, run into an ambush of vaqueros. Florence decoys them away, and Madeline gets home safely.

## CHAPTER XI—Continued.

She entered the last room. There was no lock or bar upon the door. But the room was large and dark, and it was half full of bales of alfalfa hay. Probably it was the safest place in the house; at least time would be necessary to find any one hidden there. She dropped her valuables in a dark corner and covered them with loose hay. That done, she felt her way down a narrow aisle between the piled-up bales and presently crouched in a niche.

With the necessity of action over for the immediate present, Madeline became conscious that she was quivering and almost breathless. Her skin felt tight and cold. There was a weight on her chest; her mouth was dry, and she had a strange tendency to swallow. Jull sounds came from parts of the house remote from her. In the intervals of silence between these sounds she heard the squeaking and rustling of mice in the hay. A mouse ran over her hand.

She listened, waiting, hoping, yet dreading to hear the clattering approach of her cowboys. There would be fighting—blood—men injured, perhaps killed. Even the thought of violence of any kind hurt her. But perhaps the guerrillas would run in time to avoid a clash with her men. She hoped for that, prayed for it. Through her mind flitted what she knew of Nels, of Monty, of Nick Steele; and she experienced a sensation that left her somewhat chilled and sick. Then the thought of the dark-browed, fire-eyed Stewart. She felt a thrill drive away the cold nausea. And her excitement augmented.

Waiting, listening increased all her emotions. Nothing appeared to be happening. Yet hours seemed to pass while she crouched there. Had Florence been overtaken? Could any of those lean horses outrun Majesty? She doubted it; she knew it could not be true. Nevertheless, the strain of uncertainty was torturing.

Suddenly the bang of the corridor door pierced her through and through with the dread of uncertainty. Some of the guerrillas had entered the east wing of the house. She heard a babel of jabbering voices, the shuffling of boots and clinking of spurs, the slamming of doors and ransacking of rooms.

Madeline lost faith in her hiding place. Moreover, she found it impossible to take the chance. The idea of being caught in that dark room by those ruffians filled her with horror. She must get out into the light. Swiftly she rose and went to the window. It was rather more of a door than window, being a large aperture closed by two wooden doors on hinges. The iron hook yielded readily to her grasp, and one door stuck fast, while the other opened a few inches. She looked out upon a green slope covered with flowers and bunches of sage and bushes. Neither man nor horse showed in the narrow field of her vision. She believed she would be safer hidden out there in the shrubbery than in the house. The jump from the window would be easy for her.

She pulled at the door. It did not

udge. It had caught at the bottom. Pulling with all her might proved to be in vain. Pausing, with palms hot and bruised, she heard a louder, closer approach of the invaders of her home. Fear, wrath, and impotence contested for supremacy over her and drove her to desperation. She was alone here, and she must rely on herself. And as she strained every muscle to move that obstinate door and heard the quick, harsh voices of men and the sounds of a hurried search she suddenly felt sure that they were hunting for her. She knew it. She did not wonder at it. But she wondered if she were really Madeline Hammond, and if it were possible that brutal men would harm her. Then the tramping of heavy feet on the floor of the adjoining room lent her the last strength of fear. Pushing with hands and shoulders, she moved the door far enough to permit the passage of her body. Then she stepped upon the sill and slipped through the aperture. She saw no one. Lightly she jumped down and ran in among the bushes. But these did not afford her the cover she needed. She stole from one clump to another, flinching too late that she had chosen with poor judgment. The position of the bushes had drawn her closer to the front of the house rather than away from it, and just before her were horses, and beyond a group of excited men. With her heart in her throat Madeline crouched down.

A shrill yell, followed by running and shouting, roused her hope. They had sighted the cowboys and were in flight. Rapid thumping of boots on the porch told of men hurrying from the house. Several horses dashed past her, not ten feet distant. One rider saw her, for he turned to shout back. This drove Madeline into a panic. Hardly knowing what she did, she began to run away from the house. Her feet seemed leaden. She felt the same horrible powerlessness that sometimes came over her when she dreamed of being pursued. Horses with shouting riders streaked past her in the shrubbery. There was a thunder of hoofs behind her. She turned aside, but the thundering grew nearer. She was being run down.

As Madeline shut her eyes and, staggering, was about to fall, apparently right under pounding hoofs, a rude, powerful hand clapped round her waist, clutched deep and strong, and swung her aloft. She felt a heavy blow when the shoulder of the horse struck her, and then a wrenching of her arm as she was dragged up. A sudden blighting pain made sight and feeling fade from her.

But she did not become unconscious to the extent that she lost the sense of being rapidly borne away. She seemed to hold that for a long time. When her faculties began to return the motion of the horse was no longer violent. For a few moments she could not determine her position. Apparently she was upside down. Then she saw that she was facing the ground, and must be lying across a saddle with her head hanging down. She could not move a hand; she could not tell where her hands were. Then she felt the touch of soft leather. She saw a high-topped Mexican boot, wearing a huge silver spur, and the reeking flank and legs of a horse, and a dusty, narrow trail. Soon a kind of red darkness veiled her eyes, her head swam, and she felt motion and pain only dully.

After what seemed a thousand weary hours some one lifted her from the horse and laid her upon the ground, where, gradually, as the blood left her head and she could see, she began to get the right relation of things.

She lay in a sparse grove of firs, and the shadows told of late afternoon. She smelled wood smoke, and she heard the sharp crunch of horses' teeth nipping grass. Voices caused her to turn her face. A group of men stood and sat round a campfire eating like wolves. The looks of her captors made Madeline close her eyes, and the fascination, the fear they roused in her made her open them again. Mostly they were thin-bodied, thin-bearded Mexicans, black and haggard and starved. Whatever they might be, they surely were hunger-stricken and squalid. Not one had a coat. A few had scarfs. Some wore belts in which were scattered cartridges. Only a few had guns, and these were of diverse patterns. Madeline could see no packs, no blankets, and only a few cooking utensils, all battered and blackened. Her eyes fastened upon men she believed were white men; but it was from their features and not their color that she judged. Once she had seen a band of nomad robbers in the Sahara, and somehow was reminded of them by this motley outlaw troop.

They divided attention between the satisfying of ravenous appetites and a vigilant watching down the forest aisles. They expected some one, Madeline thought, and, manifestly, if it were a pursuing posse, they did not show anxiety. She could not understand more than a word here and there that they had uttered. Presently, however, the name of Don Carlos revived keen curiosity in her and realization of her situation, and then once more dread possessed her breast.

A low exclamation and a sweep of

arm from one of the guerrillas caused the whole band to wheel and concentrate their attention in the opposite direction. They heard something. They saw some one. Grimy hands sought weapons, and then every man stiffened. Madeline saw what hunted men looked like at the moment of discovery, and the sight was terrible. She closed her eyes, sick with what she saw, fearful of the moment when the guns would leap out.

There were muttered curses, a short period of silence followed by whisperings, and then a clear voice rang out, "El Capitan!"

A strong shock vibrated through Madeline, and her eyelids swept open. Instantly she associated the name El Capitan with Stewart and experienced a sensation of strange regret. It was not pursuit or rescue she thought of then, but death. These men would kill Stewart. But surely he had not come alone. She heard the slow, heavy thump of hoofs. Soon into the wide aisle between the trees moved the form of a man, arms flung high over his head. Then Madeline saw the horse, and she recognized Majesty, and she knew it was really Stewart who rode the roan. When doubt was no longer possible she felt a suffocating sense of gladness and fear and wonder.

Many of the guerrillas leaped up with drawn weapons. Still Stewart approached with his hands high, and he rode right into the campfire circle. Then a guerrilla, evidently the chief, waved down the threatening men and strode up to Stewart. He greeted him. There was amazement and pleasure and respect in the greeting. Madeline could tell that, though she did not know what was said. At the moment Stewart appeared to her as cool and careless as if he were dismounting at her porch steps. But when he got down she saw that his face was white. He shook hands with the guerrilla, and then his glittering eyes roved over the men and around the glade until they rested upon Madeline. Without moving from his tracks he seemed to leap, as if a powerful current had shocked

him. Madeline tried to smile to assure him she was alive and well; but the intent in his eyes, the power of his controlled spirit telling her of her peril and his, froze the smile on her lips.

With that he faced the chief and spoke rapidly in the Mexican jargon. Madeline had always found so difficult to translate. The chief answered, spreading wide his hands, one of which indicated Madeline as she lay there. Stewart drew the fellow a little aside and said something for his ear alone. The chief's hands swept up in a gesture of surprise and acquiescence. Again Stewart spoke swiftly. His hearer then turned to address the band. Madeline caught the words "Don Carlos" and "posos." There was a brief muttering protest which the chief thundered down. Madeline guessed her release had been given by this guerrilla and bought from the others of the band.

Stewart strode to her side, leading the roan. Majesty reared and snorted when he saw his mistress prostrate. Stewart knelt, still holding the bridle. "Are you all right?" he asked. "I think so," she replied, essaying a laugh that was rather a failure. "My feet are tied."

Dark blood blotted out all the white from his face, and lightning shot from his eyes. She felt his hands, like steel tongs, loosening the bonds round her ankles. Without a word he lifted her upright and then upon Majesty. Madeline roiled a little in the saddle, held hand to the pommel with one hand, and tried to lean on Stewart's shoulder with the other.

"Don't give up," he said. She saw him gaze furtively into the forest on all sides. And it surprised her to see the guerrillas riding away. Putting the two facts together, Madeline formed an idea that neither Stewart nor the others desired to meet with some one evidently due shortly in the

glade. Stewart guided the roan off to the right and walked beside Madeline, steadying her in the saddle. At first Madeline was so weak and dizzy that she could scarcely retain her seat. The dizziness left her presently, and then she made an effort to ride without help. Her weakness, however, and a pain in her wrenched arm made the task laborious.

Stewart had struck off the trail, if there were one, and was keeping to denser parts of the forest. Majesty's hoofs made no sound on the soft ground, and Stewart strode on without speaking. Neither his hurry nor vigilance relaxed until at least two miles had been covered. The soft ground gave place to bare, rocky soil. The horse snorted and tossed his head. A sound of splashing water broke the silence. The hollow opened into a wider one through which a little brook murmured its way over the stones. Majesty snorted again and stopped and bent his head.

"He wants a drink," said Madeline, "I'm thirsty, too, and very tired."

Stewart lifted her out of the saddle, and as their hands parted she felt something moist and warm. Blood was running down her arm and into the palm of her hand.

"I'm bleeding," she said, a little unsteadily. "Oh, I remember. My arm was hurt."

He held it out, the blood making her conscious of her weakness. Stewart's fingers felt so firm and sure. Swiftly he ripped the wet sleeve. Her forearm had been cut or scratched. He washed off the blood.

"Why, Stewart, it's nothing. I was only a little nervous. I guess that's the first time I ever saw my own blood."

He made no reply as he tore her handkerchief into strips and bound her arm. His swift motions and his silence gave her a hint of how he might meet a more serious emergency. She felt safe. And because of that impression, when he lifted his head and she saw that he was pale and shaking, she was surprised. He stood before her folding his scarf, which was still wet, and from which he made no effort to remove the red stains.

"Miss Hammond," he said, hoarsely, "it was a man's hands—a Greaser's fingers—that cut your arm. I know who he was. I could have killed him. But I mightn't have got your freedom. You understand? I didn't dare."

Madeline gazed at Stewart, astounded more by his speech than his excessive emotion.

"My dear boy!" she exclaimed. And then she paused. She could not find words.

He was making an apology to her for not killing a man who had laid a rough hand upon her person. He was ashamed and seemed to be in a torture that she would not understand why he had not killed the man. There seemed to be something of passionate scorn in him that he had not been able to avenge her as well as free her.

"Stewart, I understand. You were being my kind of cowboy. I thank you."

But she did not understand so much as she implied. She had heard many stories of this man's cool indifference to peril and death. He had always seemed as hard as granite. Why should the sight of a little blood upon her arm pale his cheek and shake his hand and thicken his voice? What was there in his nature to make him implore her to see the only reason he could not kill an outlaw? The answer to the first question was that he loved her. It was beyond her to answer the second. But the secret of it lay in the same strength from which his love sprang—an intensity of feeling which seemed characteristic of these western men of simple, lonely, elemental lives. All at once over Madeline rushed a tide of realization of how greatly it was possible for such a man as Stewart to love her. The thought came to her in all its singular power. All her eastern lovers who had the graces that made them her equals in the sight of the world were without the only great essential that a lonely, hard life had given to Stewart. Nature here struck a just balance. Something deep and dim in the future, an unknown voice, called to Madeline and disturbed her. And because it was not a voice to her intelligence she deadened the ears of her warm and throbbing life and decided never to listen.

"Is it safe to rest a little?" she asked. "I am so tired. Perhaps I'll be stronger if I rest."

"We're all right now," he said. "I can get you home by midnight. They'll be some worried down there."

"What happened?"

"Nothing much to any one but you. That's the—the hard luck of it. Florence caught us out on the slope. We were returning from the fire. We were dead beat. But we got to the ranch before any damage was done. We sure had trouble in finding a trace of you. Nick spotted the prints of your heels under the window. And then we knew. I had to fight the boys. If they'd come after you we'd never have gotten you without a fight. I didn't want that. I had to rope Monty. Honest, I tied him to the porch. Nels and Nick promised to stay and hold

him till morning. That was the best I could do. I was sure lucky to come up with the band so soon. I had figured right. I knew that guerrilla chief. He's a bandit in Mexico. It's a business with him. But he fought for Madero, and I was with him a good deal. He may be a Greaser, but he's white."

"How did you effect my release?" "I offered them money. That's what the rebels all want. They need money. They're a lot of poor, hungry devils."

"I gathered that you offered to pay ransom. How much?" "Two thousand dollars Mex. I gave my word. I'll have to take the money. I told them when and where I'd meet them."

"Certainly, I'm glad I've got the money," Madeline laughed. "What a strange thing to happen to me! I wonder what had would say to that? Stewart, I'm afraid he'd say two thousand dollars is more than I'm worth. But tell me. That rebel chieftain did not demand money?"

"No. The money is for his men. We were comrades before Juarez. One day I dragged him out of a ditch. I reminded him. Then I—I told him something I—I thought—"

"Stewart, I know from the way he looked at me that you spoke of me. I heard Don Carlos' name several times. That interests me. What have Don Carlos and his vaqueros to do with this?"

"That Greaser has all to do with it," replied Stewart, grimly. "He burned his ranch and corrals to keep us from getting them. But he also did it to draw all the boys away from your home. They had a deep plot, all right. I left orders for some one to stay with you. But Al and Stillwell, who're both hot-headed, rode off this morning. Then the guerrillas came down."

"Well, what was the idea—the plot—as you call it?" "To get you," he said, bluntly.

"Me! Stewart, you do not mean my capture—whatever you call it—was anything more than mere accident?" "I do mean that. But Stillwell and your brother think the guerrillas wanted money and arms, and they just happened to make off with you because you ran under a horse's nose."

"You do not incline to that point of view?" "I don't. Neither does Nels nor Nick Steele. And we know Don Carlos and the Greasers. Look how the vaqueros chased Flo for you!"

"What do you think, then?" "I'd rather not say. Once I heard Nels say he'd seen the Greaser look at you, and if he ever saw him do it again he'd shoot him."

"Why, Stewart, that is ridiculous. To shoot a man for looking at a woman! This is a civilized country."

"Well, maybe it would be ridiculous in a civilized country. There's some things about civilization I don't care for."

"What, for instance?" "For one thing, I can't stand for the way men tell other men treat women."

"But, Stewart, this is strange talk from you, who, that night I came—"

She broke off, sorry that she had spoken. His shame was not pleasant to see. Suddenly he lifted his head, and she felt scorched by flaming eyes.

"Suppose I was drunk. Suppose I had met some ordinary girl. Suppose I had really made her marry me. Don't you think I would have stopped being a drunkard and have been good to her?"

"Stewart, I do not know what to think about you," replied Madeline. Then followed a short silence. Madeline saw the last bright rays of the setting sun glide up over a distant crag. Stewart rebuked the horse and looked at the saddle-girths.

"I got off the trail. About Don Carlos I'll say right out, not what Nels and Nick think, but what I know. Don Carlos hoped to make off with you for himself, the same as if you had been a poor peon slave-girl down in Sonora. Maybe he had a deeper plot than my rebel friend told me. Maybe he even went so far as to hope for American troops to chase him. The rebels are trying to stir up the United States. They'd welcome intervention. But, however that may be, the Greaser meant evil to you, and has meant it ever since he saw you first. That's all."

"Stewart, you have done me and my family a service we can never hope to repay."

She fell asleep with her head on Stewart's breast.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Grocery" Stores.

Webster's dictionary gives as one of the meanings of the word "grocery" in the United States a "retail grocer's store." It is quite correct to use it in this sense and to pluralize it, so as to make it unnecessary to say "grocery stores," just as we have "bakeries," etc.

Nigerian Cradles.

The women of Nigeria carry their newborn babies in calabash shells.

## FARMER GAINED FIFTEEN POUNDS

Feels Like Brand New Man Since Taking Tanlac, States Neb. Citizen.

"Tanlac measured up to my expectations, my troubles have vanished, and I feel fit all over," declared Henry J. Schlekman, truck farmer, Station B, Route 1, Omaha, Neb.

"For over a year I suffered terribly with stomach trouble and run-down condition. I was in misery with indigestion and heartburn after eating; my head ached fit to burst, and there was a sharp, constant pain in my back. I was nervous, couldn't sleep, and kept losing weight.

"But the Tanlac treatment smoothed out everything and I gained fifteen pounds. My truck business gets me up bright and early, but I cover my route regularly and never tire out. I am certainly grateful to Tanlac, and always telling about it."

Tanlac is for sale by all good druggists. Accept no substitute. Over 37 million bottles sold.

Tanlac Vegetable Pills are nature's own remedy for constipation. Sold everywhere.—Advertisement.

Repeating the Mistake.

North—Why do you think he has such a poor memory?  
West—Well, he married again!

The Cuticura Toilet Trio.

Having cleared your skin keep it clear by making Cuticura your everyday toilet preparations. The Soap to cleanse and purify, the Ointment to soothe and heal, the Talcum to powder and perfume. No toilet table is complete without them.—Advertisement.

What did Adam have to brag about until he got out of the Garden of Eden?

Any man who looks for trouble is blind to his own interests.

## What would you do in his place?

The steeplejack lights his pipe and goes on painting

Imagine, if you can, a steeplejack 437 feet above the street level. Hanging on by his teeth he is applying a more or less rough-and-ready coat of paint to a flagpole.

It may seem foolish that a flagpole 437 feet in the air should need a coat of paint; but anyway, that's the case.

Right in the midst of a busy morning's painting an adventurous bee buzzes into the picture. In fact, there are two bees, both buzzing viciously.

What should the steeplejack do? There being in the profession no local rules for buzzing bees, your average steeplejack probably would get the all-clear signal from below and slide promptly down to safety.

But not Our Hero. He takes out his pipe, lights it, and goes on painting.

"It soothes the nerves," he says frankly about pipe smoking.

And, by the way, although there are only twenty-five genuine, no-scaffold steeplejacks in the country, Our Hero is one of them.

We have no way of knowing what kind of tobacco the steeplejack pours into his pipe on these bee-buzzing occasions, but we have a feeling that it is Edgeworth.

For Edgeworth does much to give the smoker a sense of calm and peaceful security.

Of course, we wouldn't care to go on record as claiming that smoking a can of Edgeworth is as good as a two-week's rest cure in the mountains; but we would like to register very strongly the opinion that smoking any pipe makes life seem more worthwhile and that smoking a pipe filled with Edgeworth helps a lot.

At least, smokers from all parts of the country write in to tell how much Edgeworth helps them in the general pursuit of health, happiness and several good pipefuls a day.

If you are interested in finding out more about Edgeworth, the most sensible plan is for you to let Larus & Brother Company send you some free samples so that you can try the tobacco for yourself.

Just write your name and address down on a postcard and you will receive immediately generous helpings both of Edgeworth Plug Slice and Ready-Rubbed. If you will also include the name and address of your tobacco dealer, we will make it easier for you to get Edgeworth regularly.

For the free samples address Larus & Brother Company, 80 South 21st Street, Richmond, Virginia.

To Retail Tobacco Merchants: If your jobber cannot supply you with Edgeworth, Larus & Brother Company will gladly send you prepaid by parcel post a one- or two-dozen carton of any size of Edgeworth Plug Slice or Ready-Rubbed for the same price you would pay the jobber.



Grimy Hands Sought Weapons, and Then Every Man Stiffened.