

THE NYMPH OF THE WEST. HOWARD EBBLY.

"That's no discountin the fact that Jack Foraker's death's a public benefit," he replied, with cheerful philosophy.

He turned his dull eyes toward the river and devoted some moments to profound meditation.

"I'm not so sure it wouldn't be a right smart idea to let Colonel Hunt and his rangers know how matters stand," he suggested.



"Henry Bruce," said Jerrold quietly. The old man had already mounted the box seat of his wagon and taken up the reins.

The house grew strangely quiet after their departure. The ebony Amelia had departed early that morning for a day's holiday at San Marcus.

It was late in the afternoon when the door opened suddenly and Cynthia came out. She was dressed as for a journey.

Arriving at the barn in the rear of the ranch, she roused herself sufficiently to shut the great hood in a neighboring box stall and hook the door securely.

Her mind was made up; she had decided what to do. In the interval since she had learned of the misfortune that had overtaken Henry Bruce she had weighed the possible dangers of his position.

"You're brave little girl," he said, "and a man oughter feel proud that one of your style takes the trouble to show an interest in him."

ford post—this was the errand the courageous girl had undertaken.

What if some other warning had called these adventurous men away from their headquarters, and she should arrive to find the place a solitude and herself powerless to aid or save him!

On she sped, while the trees flew reeling by and the ravens croaked an ominous presage from the wayside.

The camp occupied by Colonel Hunt and the rangers he commanded was pitched in a motte of pines that bordered a fertile valley.

It was the supper hour, and campfires were beginning to illuminate the shadows of the aisles.

The waters were already beginning to shimmer and dance with its reflected rays when the flap of this tent was pushed aside and a man strode out of the opening.

It was a characteristic face. One understood at a glance why it was that this man had been chosen to lead the disciplined band that followed him.

The apparition of her mounted presence came upon Hunt so suddenly that he cried out, "Halt!" with the sternness of one used to command.

She was so breathless and spent with the fatigue of her long ride that at first she could only indicate the urgency of her errand by broken sentences.

"You're brave little girl," he said, "and a man oughter feel proud that one of your style takes the trouble to show an interest in him."

to make this trip when he hears of the ride you've taken to save Henry Bruce, he's not fit to serve under Colonel Hunt.

But here he paused at a gesture of dissent from Cynthia, who had taken the bridle of Pepita and was already leading her into the grove.

CHAPTER XII.

The full moon in meridian splendor shone calmly down on Bradford post. The little plateau on which the frontier fort was placed stood out above the outlying country with all the distinctness of day.

Yet there was commotion at Bradford post—not within the confines of the fort itself, nor in the moonlight spaces of the level square, but far in the rear of the soldiers' barracks.

Trouble had been brewing since early morning. With the arrival of Sheriff Mosely and his prisoners, the news of the tragedy at San Marcus had spread like wildfire through the camp.

In consequence of the absence of the presiding justice, the time for a hearing in the case had been set down for the following day.

The soldiers had been in doubt at first as to which of the two was responsible for the death of the captain.

His imagination was entirely responsible for his facts. Yet so cleverly did he work upon the excited sympathies of the indignant company that by nightfall it was generally believed that Foraker had been butchered in cold blood while drunk and asleep.

As the afternoon wore away the feeling of animosity against Bruce grew more expressive and violent.

"We mean business. No fake. Economy Dry Goods Store." Mr. Wickson had expressed in words a cordial willingness to comply with these requests.

for supper. Sheriff Mosely availed himself of the interval to send a message of the state of things to the colonel at the fort, a message which that worthy unaccountably saw fit to disregard.

After this he loaded his extra pistols and withdrew with Humly Jim to the little guardroom behind the outer door.

"I allow," he said quietly to his only remaining deputy after participating with him in this refreshment.

As the shadows of evening drew around the jail the sheriff's forebodings seemed at first without foundation.

The moonbeams, stealing through the barred grating of the roof, were falling almost vertically upon the stone pavement at his feet when his quick ear caught the sound of voices.

"Who's there?" demanded Mosely at the slide.

"Come, come, Ike Mosely," replied a loud voice, which the sheriff instantly recognized as the sergeant of Foraker's men.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]



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