

The Light of Western Stars

A Romance By Zane Grey

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"HURRY, MADELINE!"

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 priest, 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 cowboy lets a girl, Bonita, take his horse and escape, then conducts 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, Al'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. Danny Malns, 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 Rancho" becomes famous. She finds her life work under "The Light of Western Stars." Learning Stewart has been hurt in a brawl at Chiricahua, 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.

CHAPTER X—Continued.

"Senor Stewart, he keel my vaquero!" shouted Don Carlos, as, sweating and spent, he concluded his arraignment of the cowboy. "Him you must arrest! Senor Stewart a bad man! He keel my vaquero!"

"Do you hear that?" yelled Howe. "The Don's got you figured for that little job at El Cajon last fall."

The clamor burst into a roar. Howe began shaking his finger in Stewart's face and hoarsely shouting. Then a lithe young vaquero, swift as an Indian, glided under Howe's uplifted arm. Whatever the action he intended, he was too late for its execution. Stewart lunged out, struck the vaquero, and knocked him off the porch. As he fell a dagger glittered in the sunlight and rolled clinking over the stones. The man went down hard and did not move. With the same abrupt violence, and a manner of contempt, Stewart threw Howe off the porch. Then Don Carlos, who, being less supple, fell heavily. Then the mob backed before Stewart's rush until all were down in the courtyard.

The shuffling of feet ceased, the clanking of spurs, and the shouting. Nels and Monty, now re-enforced by Nick Steele, were as shadows of Stewart, so closely did they follow him. Stewart waved them back and stepped down into the yard. He was absolutely fearless; but what struck Madeline so keenly was his magnificent disdain. Manifestly, he knew the nature of the men with whom he was dealing. From the look of him it was natural for Madeline to expect them to give way before him, which they did, even Howe and his attendants sullenly retreating.

Don Carlos got up to confront Stewart. The prostrate vaquero stirred and moaned, but did not rise.

"You needn't gibber Spanish to me," said Stewart. "You can talk American, and you can understand Ameri-

I'll have the United States cavalry here in six hours, and you can gamble they'll get what my cowboys leave of you."

Don Carlos was either a capital actor and gratefully relieved at Stewart's leniency or else he was thoroughly cowed by references to the troops.

"Si, Senor! Gracias, Senor!" he exclaimed; and then, turning away, he called to his men. They hurried after him, while the fallen vaquero got to his feet with Stewart's help and staggered across the courtyard. In a moment they were gone, leaving Howe and his several comrades behind.

Howe was spitefully ejecting a wad of tobacco from his mouth and swearing in an undertone about "white-livered Greasers." He cocked his red eye speculatively at Stewart.

"Wal, I reckon as you're so hell-bent on doin' it up brown that you'll try to fire me off'n the range, too?"

"If I ever do, Pat, you'll need to be carried off," replied Stewart. "Just now I'm politely inviting you and your deputy sheriffs to leave."

"We'll go; but we're comin' back one of these days, an' when we do we'll put you in irons."

"Howe, if you've got it in that bad for me, come over here in the corral and let's fight it out. You've got it in for me, man to man. Speak up now and prove you're not the cowardly skunk I've always thought you. I've called your hand."

Muttering, cursing, pallid of face, Howe climbed astride his horse. His comrades followed suit. Certain it appeared that the sheriff was contending with more than fear and wrath. Savagely he spurred his horse, and as it snorted and leaped he turned in his saddle, shaking his fist. His comrades led the way, with their horses clattering into a center. They disappeared through the gate.

When, later in the day, Madeline and Florence, accompanied by Alfred and Stillwell, left Don Carlos' ranch it was not any too soon for Madeline. The inside of the Mexican's home was more unprepossessing and uncomfortable than the outside. The halls were dark, the rooms huge, empty, and musty; and there was an air of silence and secrecy and mystery about them most fitting to the character Florence had bestowed upon the place.

On the other hand, Alfred's ranch-house, where the party halted to spend the night, was picturesquely located, small and cozy, camplike in the arrangement, and altogether agreeable to Madeline.

The day's long ride and the exciting events had wearied her. She rested while Florence and the two men got supper. During the meal it was not lost upon Madeline that Florence appeared unusually quiet and thoughtful. Madeline wondered a little at the cause. She remembered that Stewart had wanted to come with them, or detail a few cowboys to accompany them, but Alfred had laughed at the idea and would have none of it.

After supper Alfred monopolized the conversation by describing what he wanted to do to improve his home before he and Florence were married.

Then at an early hour they all retired.

Madeline's deep slumbers were disturbed by a pounding upon the wall, and then by Florence's crying out in answer to a call.

"Get up! Throw some clothes on and come out!"

It was Alfred's voice.

"What's the matter?" asked Florence, as she slipped out of bed.

"Alfred, is there anything wrong?" added Madeline, sitting up.

The room was dark as pitch, but a faint glow seemed to mark the position of the window.

"Oh, nothing much," replied Alfred. "Only Don Carlos' rancho going up in smoke."

"Fire?" cried Florence, sharply.

"You'll think so when you see it. Hurry out."

Florence helped Madeline to dress. Then they hurriedly stumbled over chairs, and, passing through the dining room, went out upon the porch.

Away to the westward, low down along the horizon, she saw leaping red flames and wind-swept columns of smoke.

Stillwell appeared greatly perturbed.

"Al, I'm lookin' fer that ammunition to blow up," he said. "There was enough of it to blow the roof off the rancho."

"Bill, surely the cowboys would get that stuff out the first thing," replied Alfred, anxiously.

"I reckon so. But all the same, I'm worryin'. Maybe there wasn't time. Supposin' that powder went off as the boys was goin' fer it or carryin' it out! We'll know soon. If the explosion doesn't come quick now we can figger the boys got the boxes out."

For the next few moments there was a silence of sustained and painful suspense. Florence gripped Madeline's arm. Madeline felt a fullness in her throat and a rapid beating of her heart. Presently she was relieved with the danger of an explosion needed to be feared no longer.

"Sure you can gamble on Gene Stewart," he added. "There! She's smolderin' down now. Reckon we-all might

jest as well turn in again. It's only three o'clock."

Madeline awakened early, but not so early as the others, who were up and had breakfast ready when she went into the dining room. Stillwell was not in an amiable frame of mind. The furrows of worry lined his broad brow and he continually glanced at his watch, and growled because the cowboys were so late in riding over with the news. He gulped his breakfast, and while Madeline and the others ate theirs he tramped up and down the porch. Madeline noted that Alfred grew nervous and restless. Presently he left the table to join Stillwell outside.

"They'll slope off to Don Carlos' rancho and leave us to ride home alone," observed Florence.

"Do you mind?" questioned Madeline.

"No, I don't exactly mind; we've got the fastest horses in this country; but I've no hankering for a situation Gene Stewart thinks—"

Florence began disconnectedly, and she ended evasively. Madeline did not press the point, although she had some sense of misgiving. Stillwell tramped in, shaking the floor with his huge boots; Alfred followed him, carrying a field-glass.

"Not a boss in sight," complained Stillwell. "Somethin' wrong over Don Carlos' way. Miss Majesty, it'll be just as well fer you an' Flo to hit the home trail. We can telephone over an' see that the boys know you're comin'."

Alfred, standing in the door, swept the gray valley with his field-glass.

"Bill, I see running stock-horses or cattle; I can't make out which. I guess we'd better rustle over there."

Both men hurried out, and while the horses were being brought up and saddled Madeline and Florence put away the breakfast dishes, then speedily donned spurs, sombreros and gauntlets.

"Here are the horses ready," called Alfred. "Flo, that black Mexican horse is a prince."

The girls went out in time to hear Stillwell's good-by as he mounted and spurred away. Alfred went through the motions of assisting Madeline and Florence to mount, which assistance they always flouted, and then he, too, swung up astride.

"I guess it's all right," he said, rather dubiously. "You really must not go over toward Don Carlos'. It's only a few miles home."

"Sure it's all right. We can ride, can't we?" retorted Florence. "I declare he and Al were sure rattled."

Florence dismounted and went into the house. She left the door open. Madeline had some difficulty in holding Majesty. It struck Madeline that Florence stayed rather long indoors. Presently she came out with sober face and rather tight lips.

"I couldn't get anybody on the phone. No answer. I tried a dozen times."

"Why, Florence?" Madeline was more concerned by the girl's looks than by the information she imparted.

"The wire's been cut," said Florence. Her gray glance swept swiftly after Alfred, who was now far out of earshot. "I don't like this a little bit. Heah's where I've got to 'figger,' as Bill says."

She pondered a moment, then hurried into the house, to return presently with the field-glass that Alfred had used. With this she took a survey of the valley, particularly in the direction of Madeline's ranch-house. This was hidden by low, rolling ridges which were quite close by.

"Anyway, nobody in that direction can see us leave heah," she mused. "There's mesquite on the ridges. We've got cover long enough to save us till we can see what's ahead."

"Florence, what—what do you expect?" asked Madeline, nervously.

"I don't know. There's never any telling about Greasers. I wish Bill and Al hadn't left us. Still, come to think of that, they couldn't help us much in case of a chase. We'd run right away from them. Besides, they'd shoot. I guess I'm as well satisfied that we've got the job of getting home on our own hands. We don't dare follow Al toward Don Carlos' rancho. We know there's trouble over there. So all that's left is to hit the trail for home. Come, let's ride. You stick like a Spanish needle to me."

A heavy growth of mesquite covered the top of the first ridge, and the trail went through it. Florence appeared cautious, deliberate, yet she lost no time. She was ominously silent. Madeline's misgivings took definite shape in the fear of vaqueros in ambush.

Upon the ascent of the third ridge, which Madeline remembered was the last uneven ground between the point she had reached and home, Florence exercised even more guarded care in advancing. Before she reached the top of this ridge she dismounted, looped her bridle round a dead snag, and, motioning Madeline to wait, she slipped ahead through the mesquite, out of sight. Madeline waited, anxiously listening and watching. All of a sudden she saw Majesty's ears were held up. Then Florence's face, now strangely white, showed round the turn of the trail.

"S-s-s-sh!" whispered Florence, holding up a warning finger. She reached the black horse and patted him, evidently still an uneasiness he manifested. "We're in for it," she went on. "A whole bunch of vaqueros hiding among the mesquite over the

ridge! They've not seen or heard us yet. We'd better risk riding ahead, cut off the trail, and beat them to the ranch. Madeline, you're white as death! Don't faint now!"

"I shall not faint. But you frighten me. Is there danger? What shall we do?"

"There's danger. Madeline, I wouldn't deceive you," went on Florence, in earnest whisper. We should—Al should have listened to Gene! I believe—I'm afraid Gene knew!"

"Knew what?" asked Madeline.

"Never mind now. Listen. We daren't take the back trail. We'll go on. I've a scheme to fool that grinning Don Carlos. Get down, Madeline—hurry!"

Madeline dismounted.

"Give me your white sweater. Take it off—And that white hat! Hurry, Madeline." She had divested herself of sombrero and jacket, which she held out to Madeline. "Heah. Take these. Give me yours. Then get up on the black. I'll ride Majesty. Rustle now, Madeline. This is no time to talk."

"But, dear, why—why do you want—? Ah! You're going to make the vaqueros take you for me!"

"You guessed it. Will you—"

"I shall not glow you to do anything of the kind," returned Madeline.

It was then that Florence's face, changing, took on the hard, stern sharpness so typical of a cowboy's. Madeline had caught glimpses of that expression in Alfred's face, and on Stewart's when he was silent, and on Stillwell's always. It was a look of iron and fire—unchangeable, unquenchable will. There was even much of

from something; what that was she did not know. But she remembered Florence, and she wanted to look back, yet hated to do so for fear of the nameless danger Florence had mentioned.

Madeline listened for the pounding of pursuing hoofs in her rear. Involuntarily she glanced back. On the mile or more of gray level between her and the ridge there was not a horse, a man, or anything living. She wheeled to look back on the other side, down the valley slope.

The sight of Florence riding Majesty in zigzag flight before a whole troop of vaqueros blanched Madeline's cheek and made her grip the pommel of her saddle in terror. That strange gait of her roan was not his wonderful stride. Could Majesty be running wild? It flashed over Madeline that Florence was putting the horse to some such awkward flight as might have been expected of an eastern girl frightened out of her wits. Madeline made sure of this when, after looking again, she saw that Florence, in spite of the horse's breaking gait and the irregular course, was drawing slowly and surely down the valley.

Madeline had not lost her head to the extent of forgetting her own mount and the nature of the ground in front. When, presently, she turned again to watch Florence, uncertainty ceased in her mind. The strange features of that race between girl and vaqueros were no longer in evidence. Majesty was in his beautiful, wonderful stride, low down along the ground, stretching, with his nose level and straight for the valley. Between him and the lean horses in pursuit lay an ever-increasing space. He was running away from the vaqueros. Florence was indeed "riding the wind," as Stewart had aptly expressed his idea of flight upon the fleet roan.

A dimness came over Madeline's eyes, and it was not all owing to the sting of the wind. She rubbed it away, seeing Florence as a flying dot in a strange blur. What a daring, intrepid girl! This kind of strength—and awe, splendid thought for a weaker sister—was what the West inculcated in a woman.

The next time Madeline looked back Florence was far ahead of her pursuers and going out of sight behind a low knoll. Assured of Florence's safety, Madeline put her mind to her own ride and the possibilities awaiting at the ranch. She remembered the failure to get any of her servants or cowboys on the telephone. To be sure, a windstorm had once broken the wire. But she had little real hope of such being the case in this instance. She rode on, pulling the black as she neared the ranch.

It was perhaps fortunate for her, she thought, that the climb up the slope cut the black's speed so she could manage him. He was not very hard to stop. The moment she dismounted, however, he jumped and trotted off. At the edge of the slope, facing the corral, he halted to lift his head and shoot up his ears. Then he let out a piercing whistle and dashed down the lane.

Madeline, prepared by that warning whistle, tried to fortify herself for a new and unexpected situation; but as she espied an unfamiliar company of horsemen rapidly riding down a hollow leading from the foothills she felt the return of fears gripping at her like cold hands, and she fled precipitously into the house.

CHAPTER XI

A Band of Guerrillas.

Madeline bolted the door, and, flying into the kitchen, she told the scared servants to shut themselves in. Then she ran to her own rooms. It was only a matter of a few moments for her to close and bar the heavy shutters, yet even as she was fastening the last one in the room she used as an office a clattering roar of hoofs seemed to swell up to the front of the house. She caught a glimpse of wild, shaggy horses and ragged, dusty men. She had never seen any vaqueros that resembled these horsemen. Vaqueros had grace and style; they were fond of lace and glitter and fringe; they dressed their horses in silvered trappings. But the riders now tramping into the driveway were uncouth, lean, savage. They were guerrillas, a band of the raiders who had been harassing the border since the beginning of the revolution. A second glimpse assured Madeline that they were not all Mexicans.

The presence of outlaws in that band brought home to Madeline her real danger. She remembered what Stillwell had told her about recent outlaw raids along the Rio Grande. These flying bands, operating under the excitement of the revolution, appeared here and there, everywhere, in remote places, and were gone as quickly as they came. Mostly they wanted money and arms, but they would steal anything, and unprotected women had suffered at their hands.

Madeline, hurriedly collecting her securities and the considerable money she had in her desk, ran out, closed and locked the door, crossed the patio to the opposite side of the house, and, entering again, went down a long corridor, trying to decide which of the many unused rooms would be best to hide in. And before she made up her mind she came to the last room. Just then a battering on door or window in the direction of the kitchen and shrill screams from the servant women increased Madeline's alarm.



"Give Me Your White Sweater. Take It Off—and the White Hat; Hurry, Madeline."

violence in the swift action whereby Florence compelled Madeline to the change of apparel.

"It'd been my idea, anyhow, if Stewart hadn't told me to do it," said Florence, her words as swift as her hands. "Don Carlos is after you—you, Miss Madeline Hammond! He wouldn't ambush a trail for any one else. He wants you for some reason. So Gene thought, and now I believe him. Well, we'll know for sure in five minutes. You ride the black; I'll ride Majesty. We'll slip around through the brush, out of sight and sound, till we can break out into the open. Then we'll split. You make straight for the ranch. I'll cut loose for the valley where Gene said positively the cowboys were with the cattle. The vaqueros will take me for you. They'll chase me. And you'll be on a fast horse. He can take you home ahead of any vaqueros. But you won't be chased. I'm staking all on that. Trust me, Madeline. If it were only my calculation, maybe I'd—It's because I remember Stewart. That cowboy knows things. Come, this heah's the safest and smartest way to fool Don Carlos." Madeline felt herself more forced than persuaded into acquiescence. She mounted the black and took up the bridle. In another moment she was guiding her horse off the trail in the tracks of Majesty. Florence led off at right angles, threading a slow passage through the mesquite. She favored sandy patches and open aisles between the trees and was careful not to break a branch. Often she stopped to listen. This detour of perhaps half a mile brought Madeline to where she could see open ground, the ranch-house only a few miles off, and the cattle dotting the valley. She had not lost her courage, but it was certain that these familiar sights somewhat lightened the pressure upon her breast. Excitement gripped her. The shrill whistle of a horse made both the black and Majesty jump. Florence quickened the gait down the slope. Soon Madeline saw the edge of the brush, the gray-bleached grass and level ground.

Florence waited at the opening between the low trees. She gave Madeline a quick, bright glance.

"All over but the ride! That'll sure be easy. Bolt now and keep your nerve!"

When Florence wheeled the fiery roan and screamed in his ear Madeline seemed suddenly to grow lax and helpless. The big horse leaped into thundering action. Florence's hair streamed on the wind and shone gold in the sunlight. Then hoarse shouts unclamped Madeline's power of movement, and she spurred the black into the open.

He wanted to run and he was swift. Madeline loosened the reins—laid them loose upon his neck. His action was strange to her. He was hard to ride. But he was fast, and she cared for nothing else. She was running away

from something; what that was she did not know. But she remembered Florence, and she wanted to look back, yet hated to do so for fear of the nameless danger Florence had mentioned.

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"A rude, powerful hand clapped round her waist and swung her aloft."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

RHEUMATISM IS ENTIRELY GONE

Tanlac Made Short Work of It, Declares Contractor. Strength Restored.

It is like rheumatism, which are often caused by a disordered condition of the stomach, frequently disappear once the digestive organs are again properly functioning. A striking illustration of this is furnished in the statement of Clayton Willis, bridge contractor, Midland hotel, Omaha, Neb., regarding his experience with Tanlac. He says:

"Last spring I had indigestion so bad I couldn't eat a bite without suffering. Rheumatism swelled my feet until I had to wear shoes far bigger than my regular size, and I finally got so weak and sick I lost a lot of time from work."

"But Tanlac fixed me up to where I now have the appetite and digestive powers of a Kansas farm hand, and even my rheumatism has cleared out so I can work with steel or concrete all day without tiring. Tanlac delivers the goods."

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.

Unhappiness Explained.

Man's unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the finite.—Carlyle.

Every department of housekeeping needs Red Cross Bell Tows. Equally good for kitchen towels, table linen, sheets and pillowcases, etc.—Advertisement.

Object of Greatest Admiration.

There are nine or thirteen million things in this well-known republic that elicit our admiration; none, however, more than the woman who does her own work and still has time to keep her oldest daughter at her piano lesson!—Buffalo Evening Times.

Flies sell their lives dearly. Only one expires at each swat.

The Same Old Backache!

Does every day bring the same old backache? Do you drag along with your back a dull, unceasing ache? Evening find you "all played out"? Don't be discouraged! Realize it is merely a sign you haven't taken good care of yourself. This has probably strained your kidneys. Take things easier for awhile and help your kidneys with Doan's Kidney Pills. Then the backache, dizziness, headaches, tired feelings and bladder troubles will go. Doan's have helped thousands and should help you. Ask your neighbor!

A Nebraska Case

Mrs. M. Steffen, Geneva, Neb., says: "My back was weak and tired and I had dizzy headaches. A friend who had been helped by Doan's Kidney Pills advised me to try them, and as a result I got well. The trouble hasn't bothered me in the last seven years. I give Doan's the credit."

Get Doan's at Any Store, 60c a Box
DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS
FOSTER-MILBURN CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.

Bilious Attacks Are Usually Due to Constipation

When you are constipated, not enough of Nature's lubricating liquid is produced in the bowel to keep the food waste soft and moving. Doctors prescribe Nujol because it acts like this natural lubricant and thus secures regular bowel movements by Nature's own method—lubrication.

Nujol is a lubricant—not a medicine or laxative—so cannot gripe. Try it today.



No Soap Better For Your Skin Than Cuticura

Soap 25c, Ointment 25 and 50c, Talcum 25c.



Wanted, District Manager to appoint agents to sell our full coverage Health and Accident Policies, which pay for natural death. Write for full information. **PIONEER INSURANCE CO.** LINCOLN, NEBRASKA



"Senor Stewart, He Keel My Vaquero!" Shouted Don Carlos.

can. If you start a rough-house here you and your Greasers will be cleaned up. You've got to leave this ranch. You can have the stock, the packs and traps in the second corral. There's grub, too. Saddle up and hit the trail. Don Carlos, I'm dealing more than square with you. You're lying about these boxes of guns and cartridges. You're breaking the laws of my country, and you're doing it on property in my charge. If I let smuggling go on here I'd be implicated myself. Now you get off the range. If you don't