

[CONTINUED.]
This was one reason why Jack was not afraid of Indians. There was no moment when he was not ready. He frequently remarked: "They ain't got me yet; a man can't die now till his time comes." And in that last piece of philosophy he lived and believed with so profound and simple a faith that it seems a pity it had not more sense in it. But simple and honest as was the life of this gentle savage, he had one fault, and that, of course, had incident which made him seem like the men around him, and showed the early of the same stuff was in all made.

Dolores was the handsomest woman Jack had ever known in his wild life. She was Spanish, had brown eyes and dark hair, and was still as comely as a man in her race, but as and as fine as the profane word "blonde" uses as a comparative. She was only a laundress at the time, and as far as Dolores was concerned, she was a woman, and she caught Jack on the tender side which all men present to a woman's handmaid.

But as he had been in his latest Indian fight, he must needs surrender to this fragile Senorita while recovering from his wounds. Dolores had had many lovers. She could hardly count them on her fingers. Some had been carded, to wit: all she had ever had, at odd times, of her own race, and some had discarded her, namely: certain American Lotharios who could be faithful long to none. But she was not brokenhearted, nor indeed incommensurable, and had steadily replaced vacancies by new recruits.

And last came honest Jack, whose heart she accepted without hesitation, and whose money she spent without remorse. Doubtless for her sake Jack would have left off taking his life among the Apaches. There is no telling but that he might in time have been induced to live in a town, and to sleep upon a bed. Now it must be understood in this case, as in all others of the kind, that a man's liking for a woman is not controlled by any trait in her character. Dolores was handsome, she knew men very well, and she practiced those of coquetry with all the skill of her race and her sex. It may be that there had descended to her through a long and forgotten line some of the cunning graces and charms which long ago distinguished the dames of old Castile. She had at least the softness, the subtle, smooth suavity, which gives to the women of the Latin race a peculiar attractiveness to the Anglo-Saxon. So she married the hunter, after the manner of the country; and well it was, to one whose vows sat with such habitual lightness, that the ceremony was of no more binding a character. It was done side to side, however, and they two lived together in a small adobe, within sight of the flag-staff. Likely Dolores never intended to cling with any great tenacity to him alone. She probably argued that it was convenient, and judging him by her standard, she calculated upon his roving life, and the faithfulness of men in general, for final freedom when she should be offered. But as stated, it was a part of Jack's personality to be faithful. He had no idea but that he was tied hand and foot, and as was natural, he expected a good deal of feeling.

In a few weeks Dolores began to use her fine eyes upon the uncouth masculine she met, after the old fashion, and Jack began to grow moody, and to look hard and determined out of his blue eyes; and by and by there was a look about him that the veriest death-seeker in all that abandoned country would hardly have cared to face, and when at last he certainly kept his house and his family to himself.

But now there came and stayed at the trader's store, a man who wore barbaric gold and a linen shirt; one whose fingers were long, and exceeding nimble in dealing cards, and whose eye had in it a look of mingled bravado and cunning. He came as a traveler, but he stayed for weeks; and ere long he and Jack's wife were exchanging glances and winks, and Dolores was no longer so plainly written on this man's face that it was easy to believe that to demand Jack was what he stayed and waited for.

But meantime the hunter had ideas and purposes of his own, and with a silence that was at least ominous kept his own counsel. He seemed always waiting and watching for something, and the man who has a time to wait, and who is waiting for a time to come, is a time to come of rickety through vigilance, does not wait and watch for nothing. What he waited for finally came, and with it, his idea of reparation and justice.

As was not uncommon, he took his gun and canteen, and went away to the mountains. But he never went regularly, and generally returned on the third day. Strongly enough, he brought back no game, but he looked clean, grimed and tired. He told his wife when he would return on all these occasions, and so far as could be known found everything to use his own discretion, "regular." Nevertheless, it was a well-known fact among the traveling ones, that the dull hours were guided by the gambler at Jack's table, in these frequent absences of the hunter. More than a month passed in this way, and Jack's eyes grew harder and colder every day. No common man could have passed unquested. But there was that purpose in his face, and that determination in his eyes, that that determined, that those who knew him well, silently awaited results. Meantime, possessing all the qualities which are valued and admired in the hunter, in which he believed, and having been faithful to all, and wronged none, he had many friends, and his enemy, if as yet he might be called such, had none.

Several times was the gambler, warned that these frequent absences of the hunter, but he considered himself "in luck," in that he had so simple an enemy, and he stayed on. He did not know his man. He might have known him, for men that are cool and steady and who are always to be feared when the time of reckoning comes with an enemy. More than once, when Jack was absent on his fruitless expeditions to the mountains, a tall figure which looked like he had been seen near his cabin in the starlight, only to glide away and disappear in the gloom.

One starry night, when Jack had been gone only since the morning, he suddenly walked in among the story-tellers and poker-players at the store. All turned toward him with inquiry and surprise in their faces. He looked fairly grim, and there was a certain palpable determination on his face. He closed the door carefully behind him. "Boys," said he, "come along with me now, and I'll answer to you all the questions you've been looking at me for more'n a month; and provide I don't do nothin' desperate, will you promise not to interfere?"

A half-looked and half-spoken answer was given, and four men started out with Jack. At the door he noticed a donkey, such as are of common use in the country, and drove him before him toward the cabin. The hunter walked resolutely up the hill, without ceremony pushed open the door and entered. At the same moment, with the dexterity of long practice, he whipped out of its sheath the inevitable revolver, with three bullets he was across the room, and in a moment the moonbeams were looking straight down the bore, with an expression of face which indicated that he regarded it as several times in danger.

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