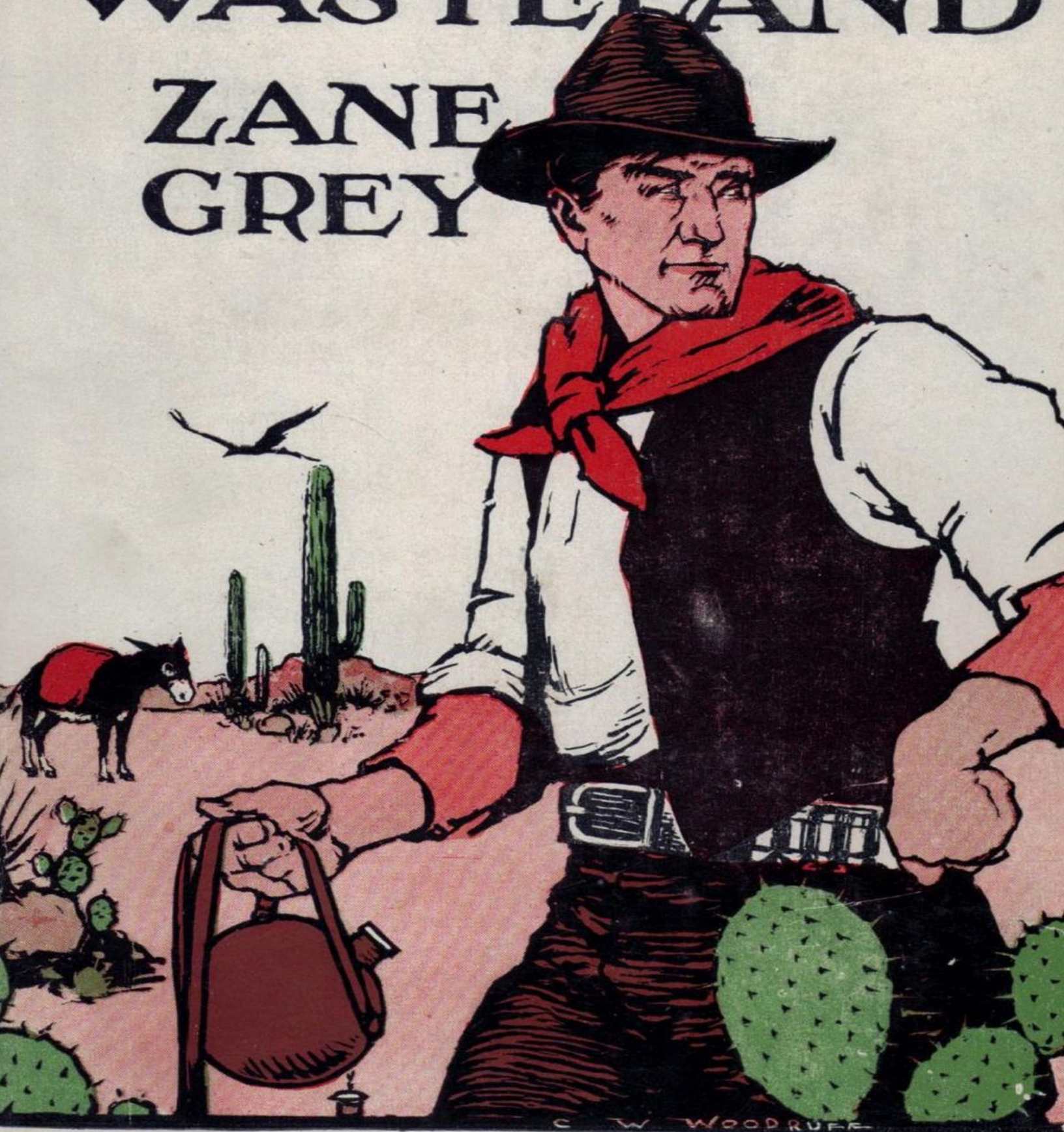


WANDERER OF THE WASTELAND

ZANE
GREY



WANDERER OF THE WASTELAND

BY

ZANE GREY

THE MAN OF THE FOREST,
TO THE LAST MAN, ETC.

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Dedicated to my wife
LINA ELISE GREY
Without whose love, faith, spirit
and help, I never could have
written this novel.
Zane Grey

CHAPTER I

Adam Larey gazed with hard and wondering eyes down the silent current of the red river upon which he meant to drift away into the desert.

The Rio Colorado was no river to trust. It chafed at its banks as if to engulf them; muddy and thick it swirled and glided along in flood, sweeping in curves back and forth from Arizona to California shore. Majestic and gleaming under the hot sky, it swung southward between wide green borders of willow and cottonwood toward a stark and naked upflung wilderness of mountain peaks, the red ramparts of the unknown and trackless desert.

Adam rushed down the bank and threw his pack into a boat. There his rapid action seemed checked by the same violence that had inspired his haste. He looked back, up at the dusty adobe town of Ehrenberg, asleep now under the glaring noonday heat. It would not wake out of that siesta till the return of the weary gold diggers, or the arrival of the stagecoach or the steamer. A tall Indian, swarthy and unkempt, stood motionless in the shade of a wall, watching stolidly.

Adam broke down then. Sobs made his utterance incoherent. "Guerd is no brother--of mine--any more!" he burst out. His accent was one of humiliation and cheated love. "And as for--for her--I'll never--never think of her--again."

When once more he turned to the river, a spirit wrestled with the emotion that had unnerved him. Adam Larey appeared to be a boy of eighteen, with darkly tanned, clear-cut and comely face, and a lofty stature, straight and spare and wide. Untying the boat from its mooring, he became conscious of a singular thrill. Sight of the silent river fascinated him. If it had been drink that had fortified his reckless resolve, it was some strange call to the wildness in him that had stirred exaltation in the prospect of adventure. But there was more. Never again to be dominated by that selfish Guerd, his brother who had taken

all and given nothing. Guerd would be stung by this desertion. Perhaps he would be sorry. That thought gave Adam a pang. Long habit of being influenced, and strength of love fostered in playmate days, these made him waver. But the tide of resentment surged up once more; and there flowed the red Colorado, rolling away to the southwest, a gateway to the illimitable wastes of desert land, with its mystery, its adventure, its gold and alluring freedom.

"I'll go," he declared, passionately, and with a shove he sent the boat adrift and leaped over the prow to the rowing seat. The boat floated lazily, half circling, till it edged into the current; then, as if grasped by unseen power, it glided downstream. Adam seemed to feel the resistless current of this mysterious river take hold of his heart. There would be no coming back--no breasting that mighty flood with puny oars. The moment was sudden and poignant in its revelation. How swiftly receded the cluster of brown adobe huts, the sombre, motionless Indian! He had left Ehrenberg behind, and a brother who was his only near relative, and a little sum of love that had failed him.

"I'm done with Guerd forever," he muttered, looking back with hard dry eyes. "It's his fault. Mother always warned me....Ah! if she had lived I would still be home. Home! and not here--in this awful desert of heat and wastelands--among men like wolves and women like..."

He did not finish the thought, but from his pack he took a bottle that glittered in the sunlight, and, waving it defiantly at the backward scene of glare and dust and lonely habitation, he drank deeply. Then he flung the bottle from him with a violent gesture of repulsion. He had no love for strong drink. The bottle fell with hollow splash, rode the muddy swirls, and sank. Whereupon Adam applied himself to the oars with long and powerful sweep.

In that moment of bitter soliloquy there had flashed through Adam Larey's mind memories and pictures of the past--the old homestead back East, vivid and unforgettable--the sad face of his mother, who had loved him as she had never loved his brother Guerd. There had been a mystery about the father who had died in Adam's childhood. Adam thought of these facts now, seeing a vague connection between them and his presence there alone upon that desert river. When his mother died she had left all her money to him. But

Adam had shared his small fortune with Guerd. That money had been the beginning of evil days. If it had not changed Guerd it had awakened slumbering jealousy and passion. Guerd squandered his share and disgraced himself in the home town. Then had begun his ceaseless importunity for Adam to leave college, to see life, to seek adventures, to sail round the Horn to the California gold fields. Adam had been true to the brother spirit within him and the voice of the tempter had fallen upon too thrilling ears. Yearning to be with his brother, and to see wild life upon his own account, Adam yielded to the importunity. He chose, however, to travel westward by land. At various points en route Guerd had fallen in with evil companions, among whom he seemed to feel freer. At Tucson he launched himself upon the easy and doubtful career of a gambler, which practice did not spare even his brother. At Ehrenberg, Guerd had found life to his liking--a mining and outfitting post remote from civilization, where he made friends compatible with his lately developed tastes, where he finally filched the favour of dark eyes that had smiled first upon Adam.

It was a June sun that burned down upon the Colorado desert and its red river. Adam Larey had taken to rowing the boat with a powerful energy. But the fiery liquor he had absorbed and the intense heat beating down upon him soon prostrated him, half-drunk and wholly helpless, upon the bottom of the leaky boat, now at the mercy of the current.

Strangest of all rivers was the Rio Colorado. Many names it had borne, though none so fitting and lasting as that which designated its colour. Neither crimson nor scarlet was it, nor any nameable shade of red, yet somehow red was its hue. Like blood with life gone from it! With its source at high altitude, fed by snow fields and a thousand lakes and streams, the Colorado stormed its great canyoned confines with a mighty torrent; and then, spent and levelled, but still tremendous and insatiate, it bore down across the desert with its burden of silt and sand. It was silent, it seemed to glide along, yet it was appalling.

The boat that carried Adam Larey might as well have been a rudderless craft in an ocean current. Slowly round and round it turned, as if every rod of the river was an eddy, sweeping near one shore and then the other. The hot hours of the afternoon waned. Sunset was a glaring blaze without clouds. Cranes and bitterns swept in lumbering flight over the wide green crests of the

bottom lands, and desert buzzards sailed down from the ruddy sky. The boat drifted on. Before darkness fell the boat had drifted out of the current into a back eddy, where slowly it rode round and round, at last to catch hold of the arrow-weeds and lodge in a thicket.

At dawn Adam Larey awoke, sober enough, but sick and aching, parched with thirst. The eastern horizon, rose-flushed and golden, told him of the advent of another day. He thrilled even in his misery. Scooping up the muddy and sand-laden water, which was cold and held a taste of snow, he quenched his thirst and bathed his hot face. Then opening his pack, he took out food he had been careful to bring.

Then he endeavoured to get his bearings. Adam could see by the stain on the arrow-weeds that the flood had subsided a foot during the night. A reasonable calculation was that he had drifted a good many miles. "I'll row till it gets hot, then rest up in a shady place," he decided. Pushing away from the reeds, he set the oars and rowed out to meet the current. As soon as that caught him the motion became exhilarating. By and bye, what with the exercise and the cool breeze of morning on his face and the sweet, dank smell of river lowlands, he began to wear off the effects of the liquor and with it the disgust and sense of unfitness with which it had left him. Then at length gloom faded from his mind, though a pang abided in his breast. It was not an unfamiliar sensation. Resolutely he faced that wide travelling river, grateful for something nameless that seemed borne on its bosom, conscious of a strange expansion of his soul, ready to see, to hear, to smell, to feel, to taste the wildness and wonder of freedom as he had dreamed it.

The sun rose, and Adam's face and hands felt as if some hot material thing had touched them. He began to sweat, which was all that was needed to restore his usual healthy feeling of body. From time to time he saw herons, and other long-legged waterfowl, and snipe flitting over the sand bars, and sombre, grey-hued birds that he could not name. The spell of river or desert hovered over these birds. The fact brought to Adam the strange nature of this silence. Like an invisible blanket it covered all, water and brush and land.

"It's desert silence," he said, wonderingly.

When he raised the oars and rested them there seemed absolutely no sound. And this fact struck him overpoweringly with its meaning and with a sudden

unfamiliar joy. On the gentle wind came a fragrant hot breath that mingled with the rank odour of flooded bottom lands. The sun, hot as it was, felt good upon his face and back. He loved the sun, as he hated the cold.

"Maybe Guerd's coaxing me West will turn out well for me," soliloquised Adam, with resurging boyish hope. "As the Mexicans say, Quien sabe?"

At length he espied a sloping bank where it appeared safe to risk landing. This was a cove comparatively free of brush, and the bank sloped gradually to the water. The summit of the bank was about forty or fifty feet high, and before Adam had wholly ascended it he began to see the bronze tips of mountains on all sides.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Adam. "No sign of man! No sign of life!"

Some distance from the river bank stood a high knoll. Adam climbed to the top of it, and what he saw here made him yearn for the mountain peaks. He had never stood at any great elevation. Southward the Colorado appeared to enter a mountain gateway and to turn and disappear.

When he had refreshed himself with food and drink he settled himself into a comfortable position to rest and sleep a little while. He had plucked at the roots of love, but not yet had he torn it from his heart. Guerd, his brother! The old boyhood days flashed up. Adam found the pang deep in his heart and ineradicable. The old beautiful bond, the something warm and intimate between him and Guerd, was gone for ever. For its loss there could be no recompense. He knew every hour would sever him the farther from this brother who had proved false. Adam hid his face in the dry grass, and there in the loneliness of that desert he began to see into the gulf of his soul.

"I can fight--I can forget!" he muttered. Then he set his mind to the problem of his immediate future. Where would he go? There were two points below on the river Picacho, a mining camp, and Yuma, a frontier town--about both of which he had heard strange, exciting tales. And at that moment Adam felt a reckless eagerness for adventure, and a sadness for the retreating of his old dream of successful and useful life. At length he fell asleep.

When he awoke he felt hot and wet with sweat. A luminous gold light shone through the willows and there was vivid colour in the west. He had slept hours. When he moved to sit up he heard rustlings in the willows. These

unseen creatures roused interest and caution in Adam. In his travels across Arizona he had passed through wild places and incidents. And remembering tales of bad Indians, bad Mexicans, bad white men, and the fierce beasts and reptiles of the desert, Adam fortified himself to encounters that must come.

When he stepped out of the shady covert it was to see river and valley as if encompassed by an immense loneliness, different, somehow, for the few hours of his thought and slumber. The river seemed redder and the mountains veiled in ruby haze. Earth and sky were bathed in the hue of sunset light.

He descended to the river. Shoving the boat off, he applied himself to the oars. His strong strokes, aided by the current, sent the boat along swiftly, perhaps ten miles an hour. The rose faded out of the sky, the clouds turned drab, the blue deepened, and a pale star shone. Twilight failed. With the cooling of the air Adam lay back more powerfully upon the oars. Night fell, and one by one, and then many by many, the stars came out. This night ride began to be thrilling. There must have been danger ahead. By night the river seemed vast, hurrying, shadowy, and silent as the grave. Its silence wore upon Adam until it seemed unnatural.

As the stars multiplied and brightened, the deep cut where the river wound changed its character, becoming dark and clear where it had been gloomily impenetrable. The dim, high outlines of the banks showed, and above them loomed the black domes of mountains. From time to time he turned the boat, and resting upon his oars, he drifted with the current, straining his eyes and ears. These moments of inaction brought the cold, tingling prickle of skin up and down his back. It was impossible not to be afraid, yet he thrilled even in his fear. In the clear obscurity of the night he could see several rods ahead of him over the gleaming river. But the peril that haunted Adam seemed more in the distant shadows, round the bends. What a soundless, nameless, unintelligible river! To be alone on a river like that, so vast, so strange, with the grand and solemn arch of heaven blazed and clouded white by stars, taught a lesson incalculable in its effects.

The hour came when an invisible something, like a blight, passed across the heavens, paling the blue, dimming the starlight. The intense purity of the sky sustained a dull change, then darkened. Adam welcomed the first faint gleam of light over the eastern horizon. It brightened. The wan stars faded. The

mountains heightened their clearness of silhouette, and along the bold, dark outlines appeared a faint rose colour, herald of the sun. It deepened, it spread as the grey light turned pink and yellow. The shadows lifted from the river valley and it was day again.

"Always I have slept away the great hour," said Adam. An exhilaration uplifted him.

He drifted round a bend in the river while once more eating sparingly of his food; and suddenly he espied a high column of smoke rising to the southwest. Whereupon he took the oars again and, having become rested and encouraged, he rowed with a stroke that would make short work of the few miles to the camp.

"Picacho!" soliloquised Adam, remembering tales he had heard. "Now what shall I do?...I'll work at anything." He carried a considerable sum of money in a belt round his waist--the last of the money left him by his mother, and he wanted to keep it as long as possible.

Adam was not long in reaching the landing, which appeared to be only a muddy bank. A small, dilapidated stern-wheel steamer, such as Adam had seen on the Ohio River, lay resting upon the mud. On the bow sat a gaunt weather-beaten man with a grizzled beard. He held a long crooked fishing pole out over the water, and evidently was fishing. The bank sloped up to fine white sand and a dense growth of green, in the middle of which there appeared to be a narrow lane. Here in a flowing serape stood a Mexican girl, slender and small, with a single touch of red in all her darkness of dress.

Adam ran the boat ashore. Lifting his pack, he climbed a narrow bench of the bank and walked down to a point opposite the fisherman. Adam greeted him and inquired if this place was Picacho.

"Mornin' stranger," came the reply. "Yes, this here's the gold diggin's, an' she's hummin' these days."

"Catching any fish?" Adam inquired, with interest.

"Yep; I ketched one day before yestiddy," replied the man, complacently.

"What kind?" went on Adam.

"I'll be doggoned if I know, but he was good to eat," answered the angler,

with a grin. "Where you hail from, stranger?"

"Back East."

"So I reckoned. No Westerner would tackle the Colorado when she was in flood. I opine you hit the river at Ehrenberg. Wal, you're lucky. Goin' to prospect for gold?"

"No, I'd rather work. Can I get a job here?"

"Son, if you're as straight as you look you can get a good job. But a husky lad like you, if he stayed sober, could strike it rich in the diggin's."

"How about a place to eat and sleep?"

"Thet ain't so easy to find up at the camp. It's a few miles up the canyon. But say, I'm forgettin' about the feller who stayed here with the Mexicans. They jest buried him. You could get his place. It's the 'dobe house--first one. Ask Margarita, there. She'll show you."

Thus directed, Adam saw the Mexican girl standing above him. Climbing the path to the top of the bank, he threw down his pack.

"Buenas dias, senior." The girl's soft, liquid accents fitted a dark, piquant little face, framed by hair as black as the wing of a raven, and lighted by big eyes, like night.

Adam's Spanish was not that of the Mexicans, but it enabled him to talk fairly well. He replied to the girl's greeting, yet hesitated with the query he had on his lips. He felt a slight shrinking as these dark eyes reminded him of others of like allurements which he had willed to forget. Yet he experienced a warmth and thrill of pleasure in a pretty face. Women invariably smiled upon Adam. This one, a girl in her teens, smiled with half-lowered eyes, the more provocative for that; and she turned partly away with a lithe, quick grace. Adam's hesitation had been a sudden chill at the proximity of something feminine and attractive--of something that had hurt him. But it passed. He had done more than boldly step across the threshold of a new and freer life.

CHAPTER II

For Adam's questions Margarita had a shy, "Si, senior," and the same subtle smile that had attracted him. Whereupon he took up his pack and followed her.

Back from the river the sand was thick and heavy, clean and white. The girl led down a path bordered by willows and mesquites which opened into a clearing where stood several squat adobe houses.

Margarita stopped at the first house. The girl's mother appeared to be an indolent person, rather careless of her attire. She greeted Adam in English, but when he exercised some of his laborsome Spanish her dark face beamed with smiles that made it pleasant to behold. The little room indoors, to which she led Adam, was dark, poorly ventilated, and altogether unsatisfactory. Adam said so. The senora waxed eloquent. Margarita managed to convey her great disappointment by one swift look. Then they led him outdoors and round under the low-branching mesquites, where he had to stoop, to a small structure. The walls were made of two rows of long slender poles, nailed upon heavier uprights at the corners, and between these rows had been poured wet adobe mud. The hut contained two rooms, the closed one full of wood and rubbish, and the other, which had an open front, like a porch, faced the river. It was empty, with a floor of white sand. This appeared very much to Adam's liking, and he agreed upon a price for it, to the senora's satisfaction and Margarita's shy rapture. Adam saw the latter with some misgiving, yet he was pleased, and in spite of himself he warmed toward this pretty senorita who had apparently taken a sudden fancy to him. He was a stranger in a strange land, with a sore and yearning heart. While Adam untied his pack and spread out its contents the women fetched a low bench, a bucket of water, and a basin. These simple articles constituted the furniture of his new lodgings. He was to get his meals at the house, where, it was assured, he would be well cared for. In moving away, Margarita, who was looking back,

caught her hair in a thorny branch of the mesquite. Adam was quick to spring to her assistance. Then she ran off after her mother.

"What eyes! Well, well!" exclaimed Adam, sensible of a warmth along his veins. Suddenly at that moment he thought of his brother Guerd. "I'm glad he's not here." Margarita had prompted that thought. Guerd was a handsome devil, irresistible to women. Adam went back to his unpacking, conscious of a sobered enthusiasm.

He hung his few clothes and belongings upon the walls, made his bed of blankets on the sand, and then surveyed the homely habitation with pleasure. He found the old fisherman in precisely the same posture. Adam climbed on board the boat.

"Get any bites?" he queried.

"I believe I jest had one," replied the fisherman.

Adam saw that he was about fifty years old, lean and dried, with a wrinkled tanned face and scant beard.

"Have a smoke," said Adam, proffering one of the last of his cigars. "Lordy!" ejaculated the fisherman, his eyes lighting. "When have I seen one of them?...Young man, you're an obligin' feller. What's your name?"

Adam told him, and that he hailed from the East and had been a tenderfoot for several memorable weeks.

"My handle's Merryvale," replied the other. "I came West twenty-eight years ago when I was about your age. Reckon you're about twenty."

"No. Only eighteen. Say, you must have almost seen the old days of 'forty-nine."

"It was in 'fifty. Yes, I was in the gold rush."

"Did you strike any gold?" asked Adam, eagerly.

"Son, I was a prospector for twenty years. I've made an' lost more than one fortune. Drink an' faro an' bad women!...And now I'm a broken-down night watchman at Picacho."

"I'm sorry," said Adam, sincerely. "I'll bet you've seen some great old times. Won't you tell me about them? You see, I'm footloose now and sort of wild."

Merryvale nodded sympathetically. He studied Adam with eyes that were shrewd and penetrating, for all their kindness. Wherefore Adam talked frankly about himself and his travels West. Merryvale listened with a nod now and then.

"Son, I hate to see the likes of you hittin' this gold diggin's," he said.

"Why? Oh, I can learn to take care of myself. It must be a man's game. I'll love the desert."

"Wal, son, I oughtn't to discourage you," replied Merryvale. "An' it ain't fair for me to think because I went wrong, an' because I seen so many boys go wrong, thet you'll do the same...But this gold diggin's is a hell of a place for a tough old timer, let alone a boy runnin' wild."

And then he began to talk like a man whose memory was a vast treasure store of history and adventure and life. Gold had been discovered at Picacho in 1864. In 1872 the mill was erected near the river, and the ore was mined five miles up the canyon and hauled down on a narrow-gauge railroad. The machinery and construction for this great enterprise, together with all supplies, were brought by San Francisco steamers round into the Gulf of California, loaded on smaller steamers, and carried up the Colorado River to Picacho. These steamers also hauled supplies to Yuma and Ehrenberg, where they were freighted by wagon trains into the interior. At the present time, 1878, the mine was paying well and there were between five and six hundred men employed. The camp was always full of adventurers and gamblers, together with a few bad women whose capacity for making trouble magnified their number.

"Down here at the boat landin' an' the mill it's always sorta quiet," said Merryvale. "You see, there ain't many men here. An' the gamblin' hells are all up at the camp, where, in fact, everybody goes of an evenin'. Lord knows I've bucked the tiger in every gold camp in California. There's a fever grips a man. I never seen the good of gold to the man thet dug it....So, son, if you're askin' me for a hunch, let me tell you, drink little an' gamble light an' fight shy of the females!"

"Merryvale, I'm more of a tenderfoot than I look, I guess," replied Adam. "You'd hardly believe I never drank till I started West a few months ago. I can't stand liquor."

Adam's face lost its brightness and his eyes shadowed, though they held frankly to Merryvale's curious gaze.

"Son, you're a strappin' youngster an' you've got looks no woman will pass by," said Merryvale. "An' in this country the preference of women brings trouble. Wal, for thet matter, all the trouble anywheres is made by them. But in the desert, where it's wild an' hot an' there's few females of any species, the fightin' gets bloody."

"Women have been the least of my fights or troubles," rejoined Adam. "But lately I had a--a little more serious affair--that ended suddenly before I fell in deep."

"Lordy! son, you'll be a lamb among wolves!" broke in Merryvale. "See here, I'm goin' to start you right. This country is no place for a nice clean boy, more's the shame and pity. Every man who gets on in the West, let alone in the desert where the West is magnified, has got to live up to the standard. He must work, he must endure, he must fight men, he must measure up to women. I ain't sayin' it's a fine standard, but it's the one by which men have survived in a hard country at a hard time."

"Survival of the fittest," muttered Adam, soberly.

"You've said it, son. Thet law makes the livin' things of this desert, whether man or otherwise. Quien sabe? You can never tell what's in a man till he's tried. Son, I've known desert men whose lives were beyond all understandin'. But not one man in a thousand can live on the desert. Thet has to do with his mind first; then his endurance. But to come back to this here Picacho. I'd not be afraid to back you against it if you meet it right."

"How is that?"

"Lordy! son, I wish I could say the right word," returned Merryvale, in pathetic earnestness. "You ain't to be turned back?"

"No. I'm here for better or worse. Back home I had my hopes, my dreams. They're gone--vanished...I've no near relatives except a brother who--who is not my kind. I didn't want to come West. But I seem to have been freed from a cage. This grand wild desert! It will do something wonderful--or terrible with me."

"Wal, wal, you talk like you look," replied Merryvale, with a sigh. "Time was, son, when a hunch of mine might be doubtful. But now I'm old, an' as I go down the years I remember more my youth an' I love it more. You can trust me." Then he paused, taking a deep breath, as if his concluding speech involved somehow his faith in himself and his good will to a stranger. "Be a man with your body! Don't shirk work or play or fight. Eat an' drink an' be merry, but don't live jest for thet. Lend a helpin' hand--be generous with your gold. Put aside a third of your earnin's for gamblin' an' look to lose it. Don't ever get drunk. You can't steer clear of women, good or bad. An' the only way is to be game an' kind an' square."

"Game--kind--square," mused Adam, thoughtfully.

"Wal, I need a new fishin' line," said Merryvale, as he pulled in his rod.

"We'll go up to the store an' then I'll take you to the mill."

While passing the adobe house where Adam had engaged board and lodging he asked his companion the name of the people.

"Arallanes--Juan Arallanes lives there," replied Merryvale. "An' he's the whitest greaser I ever seen. He's a foreman of the Mexicans employed at the mill. His wife is nice, too. But thet black-eyed hussy Margarita----"

Merryvale shook his grizzled head, but did not complete his dubious beginning. The suggestion piqued Adam's curiosity. Presently Merryvale pointed out a cluster of huts and cabins and one rather pretentious stone house, low and square, with windows. Both white- and dark-skinned children were playing on the sand in the shady places. Idle men lounged in front of the stone house, which Merryvale said was the store. Upon entering, Adam saw a complete general store of groceries, merchandise, hardware, and supplies; and he felt amazed until he remembered how the river steamers made transportation easy as far as the border of the desert. Then Merryvale led on to the huge structure of stone and iron and wood that Adam had espied from far up the river. As Adam drew near he heard the escape of steam, the roar of heavy machinery, and a sound that must have been a movement and crushing of ore, with a rush of flowing water.

Merryvale evidently found the manager, who was a man of medium height, powerfully built, with an unshaven broad face, strong and ruddy. He wore a red-flannel shirt, wet with sweat, a gun at his belt, overalls thrust into

cowhide boots; and altogether he looked a rough and practical miner.

"Mac, shake hands with my young friend here," said Merryvale. "He wants a job."

"Howdy!" replied the other, proffering a big hand that Adam certainly felt belonged to a man. Also he was aware of one quick all-embracing glance. "Are you good at figures?"

"Why, yes," answered Adam, "but I want to work."

"All right. You can help me in the office where I'm stuck. An' I'll give you outside work, besides. To-morrow." And with this brusque promise the manager strode away in a hurry.

"Mac don't get time to eat," explained Merryvale. Adam had to laugh at the incident. Here he had been recommended by a stranger, engaged to work for a man whose name he had not heard and who had not asked his, and no mention made of wages. Adam liked this simplicity.

A man must pass in this country for what he was.

Merryvale went on his way then, leaving Adam alone. It seemed to Adam, as he pondered there, that his impressions of that gold mill did not auger well for a satisfaction with his job. He had no distaste for hard labour, though to bend over a desk did not appeal to him. Then he turned his gaze to the river and valley. What a splendid scene! The green borderland offered soft and relieving contrast to the bare and grisly ridges upon which stood. At that distance the river shone red gold, sweeping through its rugged iron gateway and winding majestically down the valley to lose itself round a bold bluff.

Adam drew a long breath. A scene like this world of mountain wilderness, of untrodden ways, was going to take hold of him. And then, singularly, there flashed into memory an image of the girl, Margarita. Just then Adam resented thought of her. It was not because she had made eyes at him--for he had to confess this was pleasing but because he did not like the idea of a deep and vague emotion running parallel in his mind with thought of a roguish and coquettish little girl, of doubtful yet engaging possibilities.

"I think too much," declared Adam. It was action he needed. Work, play, hunting, exploring, even gold digging--anything with change of scene and movement of muscle--these things that he had instinctively felt to be the need