

ment of the compliment. "I'll double up on that, Bill."

"And wish I were a woman instead, I suppose, or I don't know a man."

For a moment bent over in his saddle Careless eyed him in close, cool scrutiny—the almost pretty but meaningful face turned straight ahead with its smiling lips, and the plump shapely body beneath its loose cowboy dress.

"You'd hev made a purty good one, it strikes me," he said, "an' I rather imagine I would hev fallen in love with you. If you've a sister, I raickon, you best keep her out o' sight."

The other laughed again—a cajoling sound. "There is one girl in our family—and only one. Looks considerable like me too, they say."

"Would I stand a show?" asked Careless recklessly.

His companion turned humorously and regarded him with a veiled, musing glance, then spoke with deliberation. "If she ever loves anyone—it will be someone like you—I mean, I wouldn't wonder."

Careless sidled his horse till they rode close together. "Tell me something about her," he pleaded impulsively.

Once more the other laughed in his soft, rippling way. "Would you also like our address," he mocked lightly, "and an invitation to come and see me?"

"If you live in the same place," retorted Careless laconically. Then with an instinctive sense of courtesy and withdrawal. "But I meant it right, you know, an' I'm only askin' you about 'er—you needn't tell me."

His apology, however, met with unresponsive banter. "If you're going to take it so hard I rather guess I'd better—particularly as you're never likely to meet."

So with their horses reined to a walk, the young fellow half lightly, half earnestly, and with something that Careless could not understand, spoke

of a girl who lived somewhere on the limits of a big city, and who with an immense income left her, spent it on the poor because she was a Socialist—but outside of society lived her own life nevertheless and was a madcap in many ways. She could ride a horse he said with any man living and sometimes did—away into the mountains when she got tired of the dross. She was beautiful too—at least men were in the habit of saying so—but she loved none of them—yet. And as Careless listened a silence fell over him—for did he not know that it was just such a girl he had—or could—have been dreaming of all his life—and as the young fellow had said, they were never likely to meet.

He interrupted at length in tones, for a cowboy, almost sadly romantic. "You ken cut it out now," he stated uneasily, "for if yer not lyin' I raickon with her as a subject an' without that invite you might say a little too much."

"For a fellow who would ride over three hundred miles to see an actress?" added the other slyly.

Then they laughed together, a rich, reckless peal, and with Careless through some unknown yet vivid instinct keeping his pony as close as was possible and travel, they rode on into the white glare of the moonlight in silence.

It was at the first gray peep of the dawn that the young stranger expressed a desire to halt and have something to eat. So, where a clump of trees by a stream afforded some brushwood and shelter, they got down and built a fire and unrolled their blankets. A rather hearty meal they made out of it there out of the necessities they carried—a real jollification, in fact, that Careless remembered long afterward—then at the stranger's suggestion they lay down for a short nap.

On awakening about an hour later, by the token of the new day, Careless looked around to find his companion