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WOLF MOON

A ROMANCE OF THE GREAT
SOUTHWEST

BY JOSEPH J. QUINN

CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED

Both listened to hear the answering reports. Before the echoes died Jack clasped her hand and urged: "You must go now. They're coming down this way. Just leave me here. I'll take care of myself. But you must go!"

"Jack, leave you now? Here? Alone? You couldn't, you wouldn't think I'd do that. She bent close to his face and with all her affection coalesced into the words she added: "Why, Jack, I'll never leave you."

The sentence slipped from her throat before she was aware of the strength and meaning of her declaration. It was too much for her to say yet the crisis dragged the resolve from her trembling mouth. She felt the confession as it rang from her lips and its vividness and truth surprised her.

Down from the gulf of heaven space a darkness closed in on Jack's wearied brain and through it came her words, "Jack, I'll never leave you." It was enough. It lulled him into a happiness surpassing sweet. Warfare with rough men on moonlit plains, fitful passions of robbers fighting in the wrong, plunges through space into dark abysses gave way and melted to a strange tranquillity which the tender voice of the woman in noble pledge of faith hallowed and made divine.

Louise heard the answer that came mounting to his lips, heard it though unuttered and his intimation of returned promise thrilled her into whispers that came crowding to be spoken. But they fell on unhearing ears for Jack's brain sought slumber and found it there lying in Louise's lap. He failed to hear her words or even feel her caressing hands upon his face. Whispering and waiting with the moon visiting her with its beams she passed an hour, a recollective hour, yet one of the sweetest in her life.

They were minutes of waiting, of ministering to Jack, binding his shoulder with her neckerchief, in turn looking up the valley now silent, now filled with noise, then bending over to Jack's breast to hear his heart beat. She held him quiet when he moved, felt his pulse throbbing sternly and shifted his head from side to side. But he did not speak again. Were she to have heard his voice she would have been transported from the ghostly scene. Yet it had a realism that held no hint of pleasure. The broad mesa to the South swept free of living things, the valley to the North filled with horrors, the ridges to the East and West, black and spectral, and the basin below with its dead bodies was too much for her sensitive soul. The desolation cloaked her until it forced her to draw Jack to her protectingly. A wounded, insensible man for protection!

A big wolf attracted by the dead cattle appeared on the ridge above. It whisked out of sight back on the plains and again appeared on the rim. This time it rolled out a long cry, a banquet summons to the others to feast. Its second long wall was cut short by a shot over near Garrett's. Louise looked down on the dead bodies and the dark objects lying in the cut-up earth one hundred yards away. Awe and terror plundered her reserve of courage and left her panic stricken, frightened. But the moonlight glinting from the barrel of Jack's gun reassured her, fed back strength to her unstrung nerves.

The suddenness of the tragedy startled her. That very afternoon she talked with Jack, had watched the shadows play on his sunburnt face and thrilled under the glance of his eyes. Now he lay unconscious in her arms, while broken bits of gun lightning made the night hideous. It brought her to the realization that she must get help from somewhere. The rustlers might attempt to escape that way. An idea flashed to her mind. Why hadn't she thought of the signal before? Accordingly she picked up Jack's gun loaded it with cartridges from his belt and fired five times, three long shots followed by two at close intervals. It was the call for help at the Trichell ranch.

Jack moved in her arms at the reports. She leaned close to his warm perspiring face and heard him murmur: "Block the gulch! Block the gulch! You can do it, Cordovan." She patted his face and forehead and ran her fingers through his tousled hair. A wind sprang up from the plains and touched his pulsating brow with her fingers. Both were soft, soothing.

Ten minutes later Sanders, Buster, Tulane and the remainder of the boys came riding down the gulch, fifty feet apart, peering in every direction. Some one shouted and they reined their horses. Sanders advanced cautiously to the dead body of the man lying in the sand.

"Bill Dorado!" he shouted. "Dead as he'll ever be. Both of 'em in the same night. Now ain't that a record. I just am wondering who got him. Looks as if he was trampled by the herd."

"Wooooooo! Wooooooo!" A long

familiar roll came up from the rocks of the pass.

"There!" cried Christian, pointing to the flinty buttress. "Tulane, don't show down upon the scene, enabling all to see the figure of Louise bending over Jack. Below in the sand at the very mouth of the pass lay the carcasses of Cordovan and the two steers. As the men closed in a coyote drew off into the blackjacks. It licked its lean mouth and flashed green eyes at the disturbers.

Louise was leaning over Jack's body as if whispering something into his ears when the men scaled the rocks and drew forth sparks with their dragging spurs.

CHAPTER IX.
THE BURDEN OF HER SOUL

Jack opened his eyes in wonderment. From the opposite wall the Madonna smiled down upon him sweetly. He was in surroundings unfamiliar yet carrying with them a hint of home. The room was large, light, while through the open windows passed a current of air. Cottonwood bloom pasted itself against the screen. Everything smelled sweet, the linen fresh, while the fragrance of calycanthus filled the air. Low, subdued voices mingled harmoniously with the cooing of doves and the early summer sounds. All seemed strangely in place. One window faced the west and through it Jack could see the drop in the landscape known as Navajo Gulch. Then he remembered. The stirring adventures of the night flooded back, the meeting with Sanders in the village, the ride of reconnoitre to the Gulch, the separation, the thunder of hoofs, the appearance of Tulane, unquestionably it was Tulane, the shooting, the wild ride to block the pass and the apparition of Louise upon the rocks. That was the final note in his memory. A pain stab from a feverish and burning wound in his shoulder made Jack turn over and mutter:

"That's some of Tulane's work. He was probably in league with the rustlers and helping them hustle off the cattle. Just like that fool to take a shot at me. But my best plan will be to keep quiet a while and see what comes of it."

Jack coughed. A door quietly opened and Mrs. Trichell appeared. "Come in," shouted Jack. "Awake so soon, Mr. Corcoran? A long sleep would have done you so much good."

"Sleep!" he ejaculated, "on a day like this. I want to get up and ride around Roundtop. Look at that sun streaming in there. That's enough to make a century plant bloom in an hour. Say, how did I get here anyway?"

"The boys brought you here late last night. Louise found you at the top of your shoulder. A pot shot from one of the Dorados, I suppose. John declares he'll never be able to repay you for blocking the steal. Why they cut away nearly a thousand head. Some of our best, too."

"Yes? Well, I'm sorry that I had to kill two," declared Jack, with regret.

"Two! Why bless your heart. If you hadn't killed those two the entire bunch would be down in Texas by this time. The boys say that it took more than an ordinary man to face that crowd. Pushed cattle are angry critters and they will hardly stop for anything. John realizes that you saved his herd and he's going to repay you. But I must slip out now because you must rest."

"Oh, I'm alright, Mrs. Trichell, I'll be up this afternoon," he remarked with confidence.

"No, not this afternoon, not until you rest a few days, with which she closed the door and left Jack to gaze out upon the mesa quivering under heat.

The warm breeze blowing in off the range threw open the land of Nod; the smell of hot sand produced sleep. It was not long before Jack was claimed by slumber.

When he awakened shadows had crept in past the waving curtains and he was themselves into arabesques upon the floor. But the evening brought another visitor. She stood near Jack's bed watching his heaving chest and recalled the night before when she placed her arm under his throbbing head.

Jack's eyes slowly took in Louise. A small smile crept from the corner of his mouth and overspread his face.

mounted to her cheek and then mantled her brow, giving her eyes the appearance of blue diamonds set in a mass of crushed rubies. At least Jack imagined so. But perhaps it was only from the rays of the setting sun in its dying chromatic play upon the range.

"I'm glad you're here too." The answer swelled naturally; it would have come had the situation not been so favorable for an opening of their hearts. She would have uttered those very words were they alone in the desert or high among frozen passes. His presence, his nearness, the light from his eyes would have provoked some expression of happiness through sheer proximity.

Impulsively Jack caught hold of her hand. He felt it pulsating under its white skin that reminded him of the soft underside of a moon flower, velvet-like, filled with life.

"What would I have done if you had not come to me last night? Perhaps I would be out there on the rocks yet. I owe a great deal to you Louise." His voice lowered and cracked as a child sobbing out a confession to his mother.

"Oh, Jack, that's absurd to say that. The boys would have found you. Beside, I felt that you were down there at the pass."

"Me down there at the pass? Why did you imagine that I was down there?" He questioned her eagerly, anxious to know why she had come.

"Jack, I can tell your gun a mile away. You see when Tulane gave the alarm we all rushed out to see where the cattle were. But somehow or other Tulane must have waited a long time to notify us or else he was not minding his business. It was his night on the fence watch and he should have told us long before they got such a start. Anyhow, the boys rushed to the corral for the horses and I went one on the back porch and listened. When I heard you shoot away down at the lower end of the Gulch I knew that you were having trouble so I saddled Thunderbird and started out toward the pass."

"Is that why you came?" "Well, I wanted to help a little. You see, when those rustlers act they act quickly. Let someone give the alarm right away and their work is undone."

"Would you have come if you had not heard me shoot?" Jack continued to analyse her feelings. Louise hesitated a moment. She knew what she wanted to say. A "No" rose to her throat but she forced it back. Then looking aside pensively she responded: "I don't know."

It was Mrs. Trichell calling from an inner room. "Jack held Louise's hand though she gently pulled. Then Mrs. Trichell appeared at the door, bearing a tray.

"Here it is supper time and our hero has had no nourishment since this morning. Hero's seat don't they Mr. Corcoran?"

"I don't know, do they?" Jack laughed at the idea. "You know I feel as if I am detaining you all. You could be out on the porch catching the evening air."

"There is no such thing as delay in ranch life. Ask Buster," commented Mrs. Trichell. "By the way, he was over here about noon to see you but the doctor gave orders not to disturb you. Sleep, he said, is what you need."

question of how we brought them up, we would say: "They themselves helped!" In little and big ways, my children brought each other up. Things that I taught Alfred, J., and Emily, my oldest son and daughter, they in turn taught Catherine and Arthur and Walter. And the little ones kept their elders from growing careless.

A sense of personal orderliness is a characteristic which I have tried, from the beginning, to cultivate in my children. When my oldest boy was born my husband and I lived in a little four-room apartment. When there were two babies we had only five rooms. In such close quarters it was especially necessary that the children should take care of their own belongings; but, indeed it seems to me that every mother of a large family quickly becomes a drudge unless she trains her children to feel responsibility for the condition of their property and their persons. Even telling them, every time, to wash their hands before coming to the table, to pick up their playthings before going to bed, is an unnecessary burden upon her. These are not "little" things. They are the expression of self-respect and of consideration for others. And when I had taught the lesson of cleaning up and picking up to my older children I found that they passed it along to their juniors and one helped another to conform to the standard.

One of the lessons which the mother of several children soon learns is that their goodness—or "badness"—is so much a matter of health and of habit. Health itself depends on habit.

There was no secluded, sound-proof nursery in that little apartment of ours. There was no nurse even if we had had a place to put her and the mother and her wages. I took care of my children myself; it is a pleasure which I cannot imagine leaving to others. But being the mother of one's children should not mean being their slave. When it was time for my babies to go to sleep, they were laid down in their cribs, in a darkened room, and they went to sleep. I didn't rock them; I didn't sit beside them, there was no succession of wailing calls for my presence. I started them with the right bedtime habit and they kept it up. I nursed them, of course, and thus their food habits started right.

I did all my own work when my babies were little, but it was planned that I could take them for their outings at regular times. Their habits made them healthy, and I had to contend with little or none of that peevish fretting which, in children, is usually traceable to strained nerves or to some other physical maladjustment.

Another factor which I think has helped greatly in the rearing of my children has been the happiness of our home life. It seems to me that youngsters bloom in an atmosphere of cheerfulness and serenity, just as buds open in sunlight. My husband and I have tried, always, to suppress our worries and irritations when we are with our children. A friend of ours says: "There are no grouches in the Smith home, no glooms." During all the early part of our married life we had only a small income—many persons would have called us poor. We were in no respect more fortunate than tens of thousands of American families. But we tried to keep our days free from anger, our nights free from anxiety.

It never occurred to me and I know it never occurred to my husband that there was anything in the world which we wanted more than our children. Simply regarded as an entertainment, but it was the place of so much that childless couples find necessary for their enjoyment of life. My children have always interested me. Spending the evening with them has given me greater returns in pleasure than a theatre or restaurant could offer.

My youngest boy, Walter—my "baby," although he is twelve now—is a whole vaudeville show in himself! I do not mean that I think children should be flattered, or their precocity exploited—although praise is fully as useful as blame in dealing with them. But because their father and I have always shown that we liked them as well as loved them, that we enjoyed their society, that they added definitely to our happiness, they have, I believe, "played up" to our appreciation of them. The subconscious thought that they were a "trouble" or a "trial" has never poisoned the air they breathe.

No woman, however hard she tries, can keep the sun shining in her home—alone. The title of this article on "how I brought up my five children" ought really to read, "how we brought up our children." The children's father has helped so much in their bringing up.

He is never so happy, I think, as when he is spending his time with them at home, and he has had that habit ever since they were tiny babies. I cannot imagine how a mother brings up her family with an absentee father who spends not only his worktime but his playtime away from home.

My husband could bathe and dress our babies as well as I could—and he did it often. He says that one of the proudest purchases of his life was the small carriage and pair of goats, for which he laboriously saved the money when Alfred and Emily were little.

He has helped me to impress the children with the importance of



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