

mile, whence she had come, the infinite plains, blue and brown, billowed in deepening colours to horizons that could not limit them. To the west, soul-calling, in sheer and delicate hues, alluring and subtle as a woman's smile, tremendous valleys lunged and groped to other faery ranges. The girl's heart caught in her throat at the unexampled wonder of it, and she felt singing in her veins the spirit of the argonaut.

Dropping from mountain heights the journey was a little less picturesque, but of unceasing interest in its difference of life, and showing in patches truly Mexican. Then other ranges caught them up flinging them to the valleys of the Pueblo people. At length beyond San Antonio, beyond Isleta, and San Jose, at a very small station at the end of a spur track, the girl and her companion reached destination, and found Don Fontana awaiting them with saddle horses. And they rode into the fifteen-thousand-acre hacienda in which the Don had bought a quarter interest from her father, and was given over with grand courtesy at the ranch-house to Senora Rita, the Don's charming Mexican wife and to a welcome known only in a Spanish or Mexican heart.

"I feel that I am dead," she breathed before dinner. "But I know that after all I've seen, I am a much better woman."

During the next couple of days she did nothing much but rest and learn to love Rita who quickly became mother and friend. She loved the splendid Don, too, with his white mustachios and his look of dignity befitting a man who managed an estate as large as lots of ducal kingdoms. She recalled the story her father had told her about this man saving his life, and how when he had offered him a share in the rancho to get him to manage it, he had insisted on buying.

How delightful the big adobe house and its furnishings—the quaint, se-

clusive furniture, valuable Indian weaves scattered about, priceless Navajo blankets on the beds, odd pottery, Mexican modellings, the low-raftered roof, and deep long windows, with a clear New Mexican day burning steadily outside, and behind the house a sort of plaza filled with trees, flowers, and shrubs—an exotic garden spot abloom in endless, rolling, implacable brown!

She liked the coloured costumes of the Mexican riders who passed the door, and others quite as picturesque according to their pursuit, sometimes with the skins of animals thrown over their shoulders or on their saddles, the tall, lank cowboys in leather "chaps" and sombreros who worked on the rancho and appeared as nonchalant and deep-lifed as the cactus or cottonwoods.

Rita had told her of an Indian pueblo only thirty miles away and a distinctively Mexican hamlet about half that distance. She also regretted that Senor Wentley had ridden to Cubero. He was her husband's assistant, foreman of the *vagueros*, and he would be back the second day following. He would show the *Senorita* around, also he was young and good-looking.

The Latin woman's instinct for romance came out in the suggestion. But the girl was a different type, blithe and wholesome, but, maybe, to some degree blasé. Civilization in crowded and moneyed environments has a mental brand difficult to escape, a brand of the perennially artificial. Yet there was certainly a zest in these curiously new quarters, in this country that gave little yet caught both eye and heart, whose hospitality was as free and full as the laughing life of spring waters. Hilda thought she had never met a man as fine and big-natured as the Don, a woman as gently and considerately a lady as his buxom wife, who had never lost, though her waist had grown stout, the shining youth of her dark eyes. Yet all this, and all around that