

The Heptaderm

table, sat a supper party of three—two men and a woman—in enveloping dust-coats, and a third man in chauffeur leather serving the sitters. Back of the group, and with its detachable search-light missing, stood a huge touring-car to account for the picnic hamper, the dust-coats, the man in leather, and, doubtless, for the apparitional eye which had appeared and disappeared at the mouth of the upper gorge. Also it accounted, in a purely physical sense, for the presence of the picnickers, though the whim which had led them to cross the desolate Buckskin Desert for the dubious pleasure of making an all-night bivouac on its eastern edge was not so readily apparent.

Being himself a Bedouin of the desert, Brouillard's first impulse was hospitable. But when he remarked the ample proportions of the great touring-car and remembered the newness and rawness of his temporary camp he quickly decided that the young woman member of the party would probably fare better where she was.

This being the case, the young engineer saw no reason why he should intrude upon the group at the cheerful camp-fire. On the contrary, he began speedily to find good and sufficient reasons why he should not. That the real restraining motive was a sudden attack of desert shyness he would