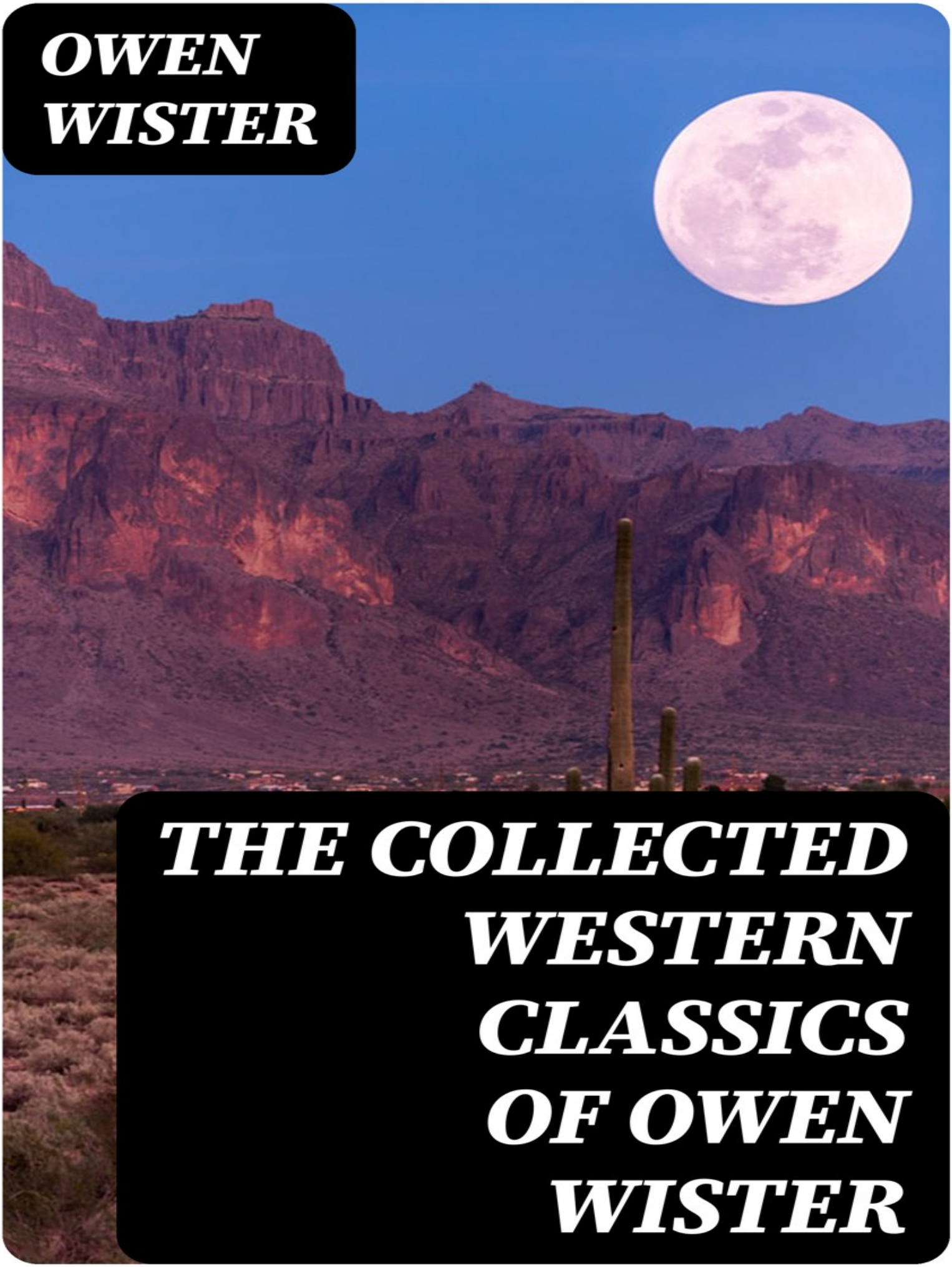
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Lin McLean

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DEDICATION

MY DEAR HARRY MERCER: When Lin McLean was only a hero in manuscript, he received his first welcome and chastening beneath your patient roof. By none so much as by you has he in private been helped and affectionately disciplined, an now you must stand godfather to him upon this public page.

Always yours,
OWEN WISTER
Philadelphia, 1897

HOW LIN McLEAN WENT EAST

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In the old days, the happy days, when Wyoming was a Territory with a future instead of a State with a past, and the unfenced cattle grazed upon her ranges by prosperous thousands, young Lin McLean awaked early one morning in cow camp, and lay staring out of his blankets upon the world. He would be twenty-two this week. He was the youngest cow-puncher in camp. But because he could break wild horses, he was earning more dollars a month than any man there, except one. The cook was a more indispensable person. None save the cook was up, so far, this morning. Lin's brother punchers slept about him on the ground, some motionless, some shifting their prone heads to burrow deeper from the increasing day. The busy work of spring was over, that of the fall, or beef round-up, not yet come. It was mid-July, a lull for these hard-riding bachelors of the saddle, and many unspent dollars stood to Mr. McLean's credit on the ranch books.

"What's the matter with some variety?" muttered the boy in his blankets.

The long range of the mountains lifted clear in the air. They slanted from the purple folds and furrows of the pines that richly cloaked them, upward into rock and grassy bareness until they broke remotely into bright peaks, and filmed into the distant lavender of the north and the south. On their western side the streams ran into Snake or into Green River, and so at length met the Pacific. On this side, Wind River flowed forth from them, descending out of the

Lake of the Painted Meadows. A mere trout-brook it was up there at the top of the divide, with easy riffles and stepping-stones in many places; but down here, outside the mountains, it was become a streaming avenue, a broadening course, impetuous between its two tall green walls of cottonwood-trees. And so it wound away like a vast green ribbon across the lilac-gray sage-brush and the yellow, vanishing plains.

"Variety, you bet!" young Lin repeated, aloud.

He unrolled himself from his bed, and brought from the garments that made his pillow a few toilet articles. He got on his long boy legs and limped blithely to the margin. In the mornings his slight lameness was always more visible. The camp was at Bull Lake Crossing, where the fork from Bull Lake joins Wind River. Here Lin found some convenient shingle-stones, with dark, deepish water against them, where he plunged his face and energetically washed, and came up with the short curly hair shining upon his round head. After enough looks at himself in the dark water, and having knotted a clean, jaunty handkerchief at his throat, he returned with his slight limp to camp, where they were just sitting at breakfast to the rear of the cook-shelf of the wagon.

"Bugged up to kill!" exclaimed one, perceiving Lin's careful dress.

"He sure has not shaved again?" another inquired, with concern.

"I ain't got my opera-glasses on," answered a third.

"He has spared that pansy-blossom mustache," said a fourth.

"My spring crop," remarked young Lin, rounding on this last one, "has juicier prospects than that rat-eaten

catastrophe of last year's hay which wanders out of your face."

"Why, you'll soon be talking yourself into a regular man," said the other.

But the camp laugh remained on the side of young Lin till breakfast was ended, when the ranch foreman rode into camp.

Him Lin McLean at once addressed. "I was wantin' to speak to you," said he.

The experienced foreman noticed the boy's holiday appearance. "I understand you're tired of work," he remarked.

"Who told you?" asked the bewildered Lin.

The foreman touched the boy's pretty handkerchief. "Well, I have a way of taking things in at a glance," said he. "That's why I'm foreman, I expect. So you've had enough work?"

"My system's full of it," replied Lin, grinning. As the foreman stood thinking, he added, "And I'd like my time."

Time, in the cattle idiom, meant back-pay up to date.

"It's good we're not busy," said the foreman.

"Meanin' I'd quit all the same?" inquired Lin, rapidly, flushing.

"No—not meaning any offence. Catch up your horse. I want to make the post before it gets hot."

The foreman had come down the river from the ranch at Meadow Creek, and the post, his goal, was Fort Washakie. All this part of the country formed the Shoshone Indian Reservation, where, by permission, pastured the herds whose owner would pay Lin his time at Washakie. So the young cow-puncher flung on his saddle and mounted.

"So-long!" he remarked to the camp, by way of farewell. He might never be going to see any of them again; but the

cow-punchers were not demonstrative by habit.

"Going to stop long at Washakie?" asked one.

"Alma is not waiter-girl at the hotel now," another mentioned.

"If there's a new girl," said a third, "kiss her one for me, and tell her I'm handsomer than you."

"I ain't a deceiver of women," said Lin.

"That's why you'll tell her," replied his friend.

"Say, Lin, why are you quittin' us so sudden, anyway?" asked the cook, grieved to lose him.

"I'm after some variety," said the boy.

"If you pick up more than you can use, just can a little of it for me!" shouted the cook at the departing McLean.

This was the last of camp by Bull Lake Crossing, and in the foreman's company young Lin now took the road for his accumulated dollars.

"So you're leaving your bedding and stuff with the outfit?" said the foreman.

"Brought my tooth-brush," said Lin, showing it in the breast-pocket of his flannel shirt.

"Going to Denver?"

"Why, maybe."

"Take in San Francisco?"

"Sounds slick."

"Made any plans?"

"Gosh, no!"

"Don't want anything on your brain?"

"Nothin' except my hat, I guess," said Lin, and broke into cheerful song:

"'Twas a nasty baby anyhow,
And it only died to spite us;

'Twas afflicted with the cerebrow
Spinal meningitis!'"

They wound up out of the magic valley of Wind River, through the bastioned gullies and the gnome-like mystery of dry water-courses, upward and up to the level of the huge sage-brush plain above. Behind lay the deep valley they had climbed from, mighty, expanding, its trees like bushes, its cattle like pebbles, its opposite side towering also to the edge of this upper plain. There it lay, another world. One step farther away from its rim, and the two edges of the plain had flowed together over it like a closing sea, covering without a sign or ripple the great country which lay sunk beneath.

"A man might think he'd dreamed he'd saw that place," said Lin to the foreman, and wheeled his horse to the edge again. "She's sure there, though," he added, gazing down. For a moment his boy face grew thoughtful. "Shucks!" said he then, abruptly, "where's any joy in money that's comin' till it arrives? I have most forgot the feel o' spot-cash."

He turned his horse away from the far-winding vision of the river, and took a sharp jog after the foreman, who had not been waiting for him. Thus they crossed the eighteen miles of high plain, and came down to Fort Washakie, in the valley of Little Wind, before the day was hot.

His roll of wages once jammed in his pocket like an old handkerchief, young Lin precipitated himself out of the post-trader's store and away on his horse up the stream among the Shoshone tepees to an unexpected entertainment—a wolf-dance. He had meant to go and see what the new waiter-girl at the hotel looked like, but put this off promptly to attend the dance. This hospitality the Shoshone Indians were extending to some visiting Ute friends, and the

neighborhood was assembled to watch the ring of painted naked savages.

The post-trader looked after the galloping Lin. "What's he quitting his job for?" he asked the foreman.

"Same as most of 'em quit."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Been satisfactory?"

"Never had a boy more so. Good-hearted, willing, a plumb dare-devil with a horse."

"And worthless," suggested the post-trader.

"Well—not yet. He's headed that way."

"Been punching cattle long?"

"Came in the country about seventy-eight, I believe, and rode for the Bordeaux Outfit most a year, and quit. Blew in at Cheyenne till he went broke, and worked over on to the Platte. Rode for the C. Y. Outfit most a year, and quit. Blew in at Buffalo. Rode for Balaam awhile on Butte Creek. Broke his leg. Went to the Drybone Hospital, and when the fracture was commencing to knit pretty good he broke it again at the hog-ranch across the bridge. Next time you're in Cheyenne get Dr. Barker to tell you about that. McLean drifted to Green River last year and went up over on to Snake, and up Snake, and was around with a prospecting outfit on Galena Creek by Pitchstone Canyon. Seems he got interested in some Dutchwoman up there, but she had trouble—died, I think they said—and he came down by Meteetsee to Wind River. He's liable to go to Mexico or Africa next."

"If you need him," said the post-trader, closing his ledger, "you can offer him five more a month."

"That'll not hold him."

"Well, let him go. Have a cigar. The bishop is expected for Sunday, and I've got to see his room is fixed up for him."

"The bishop!" said the foreman. "I've heard him highly spoken of."

"You can hear him preach to-morrow. The bishop is a good man."

"He's better than that; he's a man," stated the foreman —"at least so they tell me."

Now, saving an Indian dance, scarce any possible event at the Shoshone agency could assemble in one spot so many sorts of inhabitants as a visit from this bishop. Inhabitants of four colors gathered to view the wolf-dance this afternoon—red men, white men, black men, yellow men. Next day, three sorts came to church at the agency. The Chinese laundry was absent. But because, indeed (as the foreman said), the bishop was not only a good man but a man, Wyoming held him in respect and went to look at him. He stood in the agency church and held the Episcopal service this Sunday morning for some brightly glittering army officers and their families, some white cavalry, and some black infantry; the agency doctor, the post-trader, his foreman, the government scout, three gamblers, the waiter-girl from the hotel, the stage-driver, who was there because she was; old Chief Washakie, white-haired and royal in blankets, with two royal Utes splendid beside him; one benchful of squatting Indian children, silent and marvelling; and, on the back bench, the commanding officer's new hired-girl, and, beside her, Lin McLean.

Mr. McLean's hours were already various and successful. Even at the wolf-dance, before he had wearied of its monotonous drumming and pageant, his roving eye had rested upon a girl whose eyes he caught resting upon him. A look, an approach, a word, and each was soon content with the other. Then, when her duties called her to the post from him and the stream's border, with a promise for next day he

sought the hotel and found the three gamblers anxious to make his acquaintance; for when a cow-puncher has his pay many people will take an interest in him. The three gamblers did not know that Mr. McLean could play cards. He left them late in the evening fat with their money, and sought the tepees of the Arapahoes. They lived across the road from the Shoshones, and among their tents the boy remained until morning. He was here in church now, keeping his promise to see the bishop with the girl of yesterday; and while he gravely looked at the bishop, Miss Sabina Stone allowed his arm to encircle her waist. No soldier had achieved this yet, but Lin was the first cow-puncher she had seen, and he had given her the handkerchief from round his neck.

The quiet air blew in through the windows and door, the pure, light breath from the mountains; only, passing over their foot-hills it had caught and carried the clear aroma of the sage-brush. This it brought into church, and with this seemed also to float the peace and great silence of the plains. The little melodeon in the corner, played by one of the ladies at the post, had finished accompanying the hymn, and now it prolonged a few closing chords while the bishop paused before his address, resting his keen eyes on the people. He was dressed in a plain suit of black with a narrow black tie. This was because the Union Pacific Railroad, while it had delivered him correctly at Green River, had despatched his robes towards Cheyenne.

Without citing chapter and verse the bishop began:

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him."

The bishop told the story of that surpassing parable, and then proceeded to draw from it a discourse fitted to the

drifting destinies in whose presence he found himself for one solitary morning. He spoke unlike many clergymen. His words were chiefly those which the people round him used, and his voice was more like earnest talking than preaching.

Miss Sabina Stone felt the arm of her cow-puncher loosen slightly, and she looked at him. But he was looking at the bishop, no longer gravely but with wide-open eyes, alert. When the narrative reached the elder brother in the field, and how he came to the house and heard sounds of music and dancing, Miss Stone drew away from her companion and let him watch the bishop, since he seemed to prefer that. She took to reading hymns vindictively. The bishop himself noted the sun-browned boy face and the wide-open eyes. He was too far away to see anything but the alert, listening position of the young cow-puncher. He could not discern how that, after he had left the music and dancing and begun to draw morals, attention faded from those eyes that seemed to watch him, and they filled with dreaminess. It was very hot in church. Chief Washakie went to sleep, and so did a corporal; but Lin McLean sat in the same alert position till Miss Stone pulled him and asked if he intended to sit down through the hymn. Then church was out. Officers, Indians, and all the people dispersed through the great sunshine to their dwellings, and the cow-puncher rode beside Sabina in silence.

"What are you studying over, Mr. McLean?" inquired the lady, after a hundred yards.

"Did you ever taste steamed Duxbury clams?" asked Lin, absently.

"No, indeed. What's them?"

"Oh, just clams. Yu' have drawn butter, too." Mr. McLean fell silent again.

"I guess I'll be late for settin' the colonel's table. Good-bye," said Sabina, quickly, and swished her whip across the pony, who scampered away with her along the straight road across the plain to the post.

Lin caught up with her at once and made his peace.

"Only," protested Sabina, "I ain't used to gentlemen taking me out and—well, same as if I was a collie-dog. Maybe it's Wind River politeness."

But she went riding with him up Trout Creek in the cool of the afternoon. Out of the Indian tepees, scattered wide among the flat levels of sage-brush, smoke rose thin and gentle, and vanished. They splashed across the many little running channels which lead water through that thirsty soil, and though the range of mountains came no nearer, behind them the post, with its white, flat buildings and green trees, dwindled to a toy village.

"My! but it's far to everywheres here," exclaimed Sabina, "and it's little you're sayin' for yourself to-day, Mr. McLean. I'll have to do the talking. What's that thing now, where the rocks are?"

"That's Little Wind River Canyon," said the young man. "Feel like goin' there, Miss Stone?"

"Why, yes. It looks real nice and shady like, don't it? Let's."

So Miss Stone turned her pony in that direction.

"When do your folks eat supper?" inquired Lin.

"Half-past six. Oh, we've lots of time! Come on."

"How many miles per hour do you figure that cayuse of yourn can travel?" Lin asked.

"What are you a-talking about, anyway? You're that strange to-day," said the lady.

"Only if we try to make that canyon, I guess you'll be late settin' the colonel's table," Lin remarked, his hazel eyes

smiling upon her. "That is, if your horse ain't good for twenty miles an hour. Mine ain't, I know. But I'll do my best to stay with yu'."

"You're the teasingest man—" said Miss Stone, pouting. "I might have knowed it was ever so much further nor it looked."

"Well, I ain't sayin' I don't want to go, if yu' was desirous of campin' out to-night."

"Mr. McLean! Indeed, and I'd do no such thing!" and Sabina giggled.

A sage-hen rose under their horses' feet, and hurtled away heavily over the next rise of ground, taking a final wide sail out of sight.

"Something like them partridges used to," said Lin, musingly.

"Partridges?" inquired Sabina.

"Used to be in the woods between Lynn and Salem. Maybe the woods are gone by this time. Yes, they must be gone, I guess."

Presently they dismounted and sought the stream bank.

"We had music and dancing at Thanksgiving and such times," said Lin, his wiry length stretched on the grass beside the seated Sabina. He was not looking at her, but she took a pleasure in watching him, his curly head and bronze face, against which the young mustache showed to its full advantage.

"I expect you used to dance a lot," remarked Sabina, for a subject.

"Yes. Do yu' know the Portland Fancy?"

Sabina did not, and her subject died away.

"Did anybody ever tell you you had good eyes?" she inquired next.

"Why, sure," said Lin, waking for a moment; "but I like your color best. A girl's eyes will mostly beat a man's."

"Indeed, I don't think so!" exclaimed poor Sabina, too much expectant to perceive the fatal note of routine with which her transient admirer pronounced this gallantry. He informed her that hers were like the sea, and she told him she had not yet looked upon the sea.

"Never?" said he. "It's a turruble pity you've never saw salt water. It's different from fresh. All around home it's blue—awful blue in July—around Swampscott and Marblehead and Nahant, and around the islands. I've swam there lots. Then our home bruck up and we went to board in Boston." He snapped off a flower in reach of his long arm. Suddenly all dreaminess left him.

"I wonder if you'll be settin' the colonel's table when I come back?" he said.

Miss Stone was at a loss.

"I'm goin' East to-morrow—East, to Boston."

Yesterday he had told her that sixteen miles to Lander was the farthest journey from the post that he intended to make—the farthest from the post and her.

"I hope nothing ain't happened to your folks?" said she.

"I ain't got no folks," replied Lin, "barring a brother. I expect he is taking good care of himself."

"Don't you correspond?"

"Well, I guess he would if there was anything to say. There ain't been nothin'."

Sabina thought they must have quarrelled, but learned that they had not. It was time for her now to return and set the colonel's table, so Lin rose and went to bring her horse. When he had put her in her saddle she noticed him step to his own.

"Why, I didn't know you were lame!" cried she.

"Shucks!" said Lin. "It don't cramp my style any." He had sprung on his horse, ridden beside her, leaned and kissed her before she got any measure of his activity.

"That's how," said he; and they took their homeward way galloping. "No," Lin continued, "Frank and me never quarrelled. I just thought I'd have a look at this Western country. Frank, he thought dry-goods was good enough for him, and so we're both satisfied, I expect. And that's a lot of years now. Whoop ye!" he suddenly sang out, and fired his six-shooter at a jack-rabbit, who strung himself out flat and flew over the earth.

Both dismounted at the parade-ground gate, and he kissed her again when she was not looking, upon which she very properly slapped him; and he took the horses to the stable. He sat down to tea at the hotel, and found the meal consisted of black potatoes, gray tea, and a guttering dish of fat pork. But his appetite was good, and he remarked to himself that inside the first hour he was in Boston he would have steamed Duxbury clams. Of Sabina he never thought again, and it is likely that she found others to take his place. Fort Washakie was one hundred and fifty miles from the railway, and men there were many and girls were few.

The next morning the other passengers entered the stage with resignation, knowing the thirty-six hours of evil that lay before them. Lin climbed up beside the driver. He had a new trunk now.

"Don't get full, Lin," said the clerk, putting the mail-sacks in at the store.

"My plans ain't settled that far yet," replied Mr. McLean.

"Leave it out of them," said the voice of the bishop, laughing, inside the stage.

It was a cool, fine air. Gazing over the huge plain down in which lies Fort Washakie, Lin heard the faint notes of the

trumpet on the parade ground, and took a good-bye look at all things. He watched the American flag grow small, saw the circle of steam rising away down by the hot springs, looked at the bad lands beyond, chemically pink and rose amid the vast, natural, quiet-colored plain. Across the spreading distance Indians trotted at wide spaces, generally two large bucks on one small pony, or a squaw and pappoose—a bundle of parti-colored rags. Presiding over the whole rose the mountains to the west, serene, lifting into the clearest light. Then once again came the now tiny music of the trumpet.

"When do yu' figure on comin' back?" inquired the driver.

"Oh, I'll just look around back there for a spell," said Lin. "About a month, I guess."

He had seven hundred dollars. At Lander the horses are changed; and during this operation Lin's friends gathered and said, where was any sense in going to Boston when you could have a good time where you were? But Lin remained sitting safe on the stage. Toward evening, at the bottom of a little dry gulch some eight feet deep, the horses decided it was a suitable place to stay. It was the bishop who persuaded them to change their minds. He told the driver to give up beating, and unharness. Then they were led up the bank, quivering, and a broken trace was spliced with rope. Then the stage was forced on to the level ground, the bishop proving a strong man, familiar with the gear of vehicles. They crossed through the pass among the quaking asps and the pines, and, reaching Pacific Springs, came down again into open country. That afternoon the stage put its passengers down on the railroad platform at Green River; this was the route in those days before the mid-winter catastrophes of frozen passengers led to its abandonment. The bishop was going west. His robes had passed him on

the up stage during the night. When the reverend gentleman heard this he was silent for a very short moment, and then laughed vigorously in the baggage-room.

"I can understand how you swear sometimes," he said to Lin McLean; "but I can't, you see. Not even at this."

The cow-puncher was checking his own trunk to Omaha.

"Good-bye and good luck to you," continued the bishop, giving his hand to Lin. "And look here—don't you think you might leave that 'getting full' out of your plans?"

Lin gave a slightly shamefaced grin. "I don't guess I can, sir," he said. "I'm givin' yu' straight goods, yu' see," he added.

"That's right. But you look like a man who could stop when he'd had enough. Try that. You're man enough—and come and see me whenever we're in the same place."

He went to the hotel. There were several hours for Lin to wait. He walked up and down the platform till the stars came out and the bright lights of the town shone in the saloon windows. Over across the way piano-music sounded through one of the many open doors.

"Wonder if the professor's there yet?" said Lin, and he went across the railroad tracks. The bartender nodded to him as he passed through into the back room. In that place were many tables, and the flat clicking and rattle of ivory counters sounded pleasantly through the music. Lin did not join the stud-poker game. He stood over a table at which sat a dealer and a player, very silent, opposite each other, and whereon were painted sundry cards, numerals, and the colors red and black in squares. The legend "Jacks pay" was also clearly painted. The player placed chips on whichever insignia of fortune he chose, and the dealer slid cards (quite fairly) from the top of a pack that lay held within a skeleton case made with some clamped bands of tin. Sometimes the

player's pile of chips rose high, and sometimes his sumptuous pillar of gold pieces was lessened by one. It was very interesting and pretty to see; Lin had much better have joined the game of stud-poker. Presently the eye of the dealer met the eye of the player. After that slight incident the player's chip pile began to rise, and rose steadily, till the dealer made admiring comments on such a run of luck. Then the player stopped, cashed in, and said good-night, having nearly doubled the number of his gold pieces.

"Five dollars' worth," said Lin, sitting down in the vacant seat. The chips were counted out to him. He played with unimportant shiftings of fortune until a short while before his train was due, and then, singularly enough, he discovered he was one hundred and fifty dollars behind the game.

"I guess I'll leave the train go without me," said Lin, buying five dollars' worth more of ivory counters. So that train came and went, removing eastward Mr. McLean's trunk.

During the hour that followed his voice grew dogged and his remarks briefer, as he continually purchased more chips from the now surprised and sympathetic dealer. It was really wonderful how steadily Lin lost—just as steadily as his predecessor had won after that meeting of eyes early in the evening.

When Lin was three hundred dollars out, his voice began to clear of its huskiness and a slight humor revolved and sparkled in his eye. When his seven hundred dollars had gone to safer hands and he had nothing left at all but some silver fractions of a dollar, his robust cheerfulness was all back again. He walked out and stood among the railroad tracks with his hands in his pockets, and laughed at himself in the dark. Then his fingers came on the check for Omaha,

and he laughed loudly. The trunk by this hour must be nearing Rawlins; it was going east anyhow.

"I'm following it, you bet," he declared, kicking the rail. "Not yet though. Nor I'll not go to Washakie to have 'em josh me. And yonder lays Boston." He stretched his arm and pointed eastward. Had he seen another man going on in this fashion alone in the dark, among side-tracked freight cars, he would have pitied the poor fool. "And I guess Boston'll have to get along without me for a spell, too," continued Lin. "A man don't want to show up plumb broke like that younger son did after eatin' with the hogs the bishop told about. His father was a Jim-dandy, that hog chap's. Hustled around and set 'em up when he come back home. Frank, he'd say to me 'How do you do, brother?' and he'd be wearin' a good suit o' clothes and—no, sir, you bet!"

Lin now watched the great headlight of a freight train bearing slowly down into Green River from the wilderness. Green River is the end of a division, an epoch in every train's journey. Lanterns swung signals, the great dim thing slowed to its standstill by the coal chute, its locomotive moved away for a turn of repose, the successor backed steaming to its place to tackle a night's work. Cars were shifted, heavily bumping and parting.

"Hello, Lin!" A face was looking from the window of the caboose.

"Hello!" responded Mr. McLean, perceiving above his head Honey Wiggin, a good friend of his. They had not met for three years.

"They claimed you got killed somewheres. I was sorry to hear it." Honey offered his condolence quite sincerely.

"Bruck my leg," corrected Lin, "if that's what they meant."

"I expect that's it," said Honey. "You've had no other trouble?"

"Been boomin'," said Lin.

From the mere undertone in their voices it was plain they were good friends, carefully hiding their pleasure at meeting.

"Wher're yu' bound?" inquired Honey.

"East," said Lin.

"Better jump in here, then. We're goin' west."

"That just suits me," said Lin.

The busy lanterns wagged among the switches, the steady lights of the saloons shone along the town's wooden facade. From the bluffs that wall Green River the sweet, clean sage-brush wind blew down in currents freshly through the coal-smoke. A wrench passed through the train from locomotive to caboose, each fettered car in turn strained into motion and slowly rolled over the bridge and into silence from the steam and the bells of the railroad yard. Through the open windows of the caboose great dull-red cinders rattled in, and the whistles of distant Union Pacific locomotives sounded over the open plains ominous and long, like ships at sea.

Honey and Lin sat for a while, making few observations and far between, as their way is between whom flows a stream of old-time understanding. Mutual whiskey and silence can express much friendship, and eloquently.

"What are yu' doing at present?" Lin inquired.

"Prospectin'."

Now prospecting means hunting gold, except to such spirits as the boy Lin. To these it means finding gold. So Lin McLean listened to the talk of his friend Honey Wiggin as the caboose trundled through the night. He saw himself in a vision of the near future enter a bank and thump down a

bag of gold-dust. Then he saw the new, clean money the man would hand him in exchange, bills with round zeroes half covered by being folded over, and heavy, satisfactory gold pieces. And then he saw the blue water that twinkles beneath Boston. His fingers came again on his trunk check. He had his ticket, too. And as dawn now revealed the gray country to him, his eye fell casually upon a mile-post: "Omaha, 876." He began to watch for them:—877, 878. But the trunk would really get to Omaha.

"What are yu' laughin' about?" asked Honey.

"Oh, the wheels."

"Wheels?"

"Don't yu' hear 'em?" said Lin. "'Variety,' they keep a-sayin'. 'Variety, variety.'"

"Huh!" said Honey, with scorn. "'Ker-chunka-chunk' 's all I make it."

"You're no poet," observed Mr. McLean.

As the train moved into Evanston in the sunlight, a gleam of dismay shot over Lin's face, and he ducked his head out of sight of the window, but immediately raised it again. Then he leaned out, waving his arm with a certain defiant vigor. But the bishop on the platform failed to notice this performance, though it was done for his sole benefit, nor would Lin explain to the inquisitive Wiggin what the matter was. Therefore, very naturally, Honey drew a conclusion for himself, looked quickly out of the window, and, being disappointed in what he expected to see remarked, sulkily, "Do yu' figure I care what sort of a lookin' girl is stuck on yu' in Evanston?" And upon this young Lin laughed so loudly that his friend told him he had never seen a man get so foolish in three years.

By-and-by they were in Utah, and, in the company of Ogden friends, forgot prospecting. Later they resumed

freight trains and journeyed north In Idaho they said good-bye to the train hands in the caboose, and came to Little Camas, and so among the mountains near Feather Creek. Here the berries were of several sorts, and growing riper each day, and the bears in the timber above knew this, and came down punctually with the season, making variety in the otherwise even life of the prospectors. It was now August, and Lin sat on a wet hill making mud-pies for sixty days. But the philosopher's stone was not in the wash at that placer, nor did Lin gather gold-dust sufficient to cover the nail of his thumb. Then they heard of an excitement at Obo, Nevada, and, hurrying to Obo, they made some more mud-pies.

Now and then, eating their fat bacon at noon, Honey would say, "Lin, wher're yu' goin'?"

And Lin always replied, "East." This became a signal for drinks.

For beauty and promise, Nevada is a name among names. Nevada! Pronounce the word aloud. Does it not evoke mountains and clear air, heights of untrodden snow and valleys aromatic with the pine and musical with falling waters? Nevada! But the name is all. Abomination of desolation presides over nine-tenths of the place. The sun beats down as on a roof of zinc, fierce and dull. Not a drop of water to a mile of sand. The mean ash-dump landscape stretches on from nowhere to nowhere, a spot of mange. No portion of the earth is more lacquered with paltry, unimportant ugliness.

There is gold in Nevada, but Lin and Honey did not find it. Prospecting of the sort they did, besides proving unfruitful, is not comfortable. Now and again, losing patience, Lin would leave his work and stalk about and gaze down at the scattered men who stooped or knelt in the water. Passing

each busy prospector, Lin would read on every broad, upturned pair of overalls the same label, "Levi Strauss, No. 2," with a picture of two lusty horses hitched to one of these garments and vainly struggling to split them asunder. Lin remembered he was wearing a label just like that too, and when he considered all things he laughed to himself. Then, having stretched the ache out of his long legs, he would return to his ditch. As autumn wore on, his feet grew cold in the mushy gravel they were sunk in. He beat off the sand that had stiffened on his boots, and hated Obo, Nevada. But he held himself ready to say "East" whenever he saw Honey coming along with the bottle. The cold weather put an end to this adventure. The ditches froze and filled with snow, through which the sordid gravel heaps showed in a dreary fashion; so the two friends drifted southward.

Near the small new town of Mesa, Arizona, they sat down again in the dirt. It was milder here, and, when the sun shone, never quite froze. But this part of Arizona is scarcely more grateful to the eye than Nevada. Moreover, Lin and Honey found no gold at all. Some men near them found a little. Then in January, even though the sun shone, it quite froze one day.

"We're seein' the country, anyway," said Honey.

"Seein' hell," said Lin, "and there's more of it above ground than I thought."

"What'll we do?" Honey inquired.

"Have to walk for a job—a good-payin' job," responded the hopeful cow-puncher. And he and Honey went to town.

Lin found a job in twenty-five minutes, becoming assistant to the apothecary in Mesa. Established at the drug-store, he made up the simpler prescriptions. He had studied practical pharmacy in Boston between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, and, besides this qualification, the

apothecary had seen him when he first came into Mesa, and liked him. Lin made no mistakes that he or any one ever knew of; and, as the mild weather began, he materially increased the apothecary's business by persuading him to send East for a soda-water fountain. The ladies of the town clustered around this entertaining novelty, and while sipping vanilla and lemon bought knickknacks. And the gentlemen of the town discovered that whiskey with soda and strawberry syrup was delicious, and produced just as competent effects. A group of them were generally standing in the shop and shaking dice to decide who should pay for the next, while Lin administered to each glass the necessary ingredients. Thus money began to come to him a little more steadily than had been its wont, and he divided with the penniless Honey.

But Honey found fortune quickly, too. Through excellent card-playing he won a pinto from a small Mexican horse-thief who came into town from the South, and who cried bitterly when he delivered up his pet pony to the new owner. The new owner, being a man of the world and agile on his feet, was only slightly stabbed that evening as he walked to the dance-hall at the edge of the town. The Mexican was buried on the next day but one.

The pony stood thirteen two, and was as long as a steamboat. He had white eyelashes, pink nostrils, and one eye was bright blue. If you spoke pleasantly to him, he rose instantly on his hind-legs and tried to beat your face. He did not look as if he could run, and that was what made him so valuable. Honey travelled through the country with him, and every gentleman who saw the pinto and heard Honey became anxious to get up a race. Lin always sent money for Wiggin to place, and he soon opened a bank account, while Honey, besides his racing-bridle, bought a silver-inlaid one,

a pair of forty-dollar spurs, and a beautiful saddle richly stamped. Every day (when in Mesa) Honey would step into the drug-store and inquire, "Lin, wher're yu' goin'?"

But Lin never answered any more. He merely came to the soda-water fountain with the whiskey. The passing of days brought a choked season of fine sand and hard blazing sky. Heat rose up from the ground and hung heavily over man and beast. Many insects sat out in the sun rattling with joy; the little tearing river grew clear from the swollen mud, and shrank to a succession of standing pools; and the fat, squatting cactus bloomed everywhere into butter-colored flowers big as tulips in the sand. There were artesian wells in Mesa, and the water did not taste very good; but if you drank from the standing pools where the river had been, you repaired to the drug-store almost immediately. A troop of wandering players came dotting along the railroad, and, reaching Mesa, played a brass-band up and down the street, and announced the powerful drama of "East Lynne." Then Mr. McLean thought of the Lynn marshes that lie between there and Chelsea, and of the sea that must look so cool. He forgot them while following the painful fortunes of the Lady Isabel; but, going to bed in the back part of the drug-store, he remembered how he used to beat everybody swimming in the salt water.

"I'm goin'," he said. Then he got up, and, striking the light, he inspected his bank account. "I'm sure goin'," he repeated, blowing the light out, "and I can buy the fatted calf myself, you bet!" for he had often thought of the bishop's story. "You bet!" he remarked once more in a muffled voice, and was asleep in a minute. The apothecary was sorry to have him go, and Honey was deeply grieved.

"I'd pull out with yer," he said, "only I can do business round Yuma and westward with the pinto."

For three farewell days Lin and Honey roved together in all sorts of places, where they were welcome, and once more Lin rode a horse and was in his native element. Then he travelled to Deming, and so through Denver to Omaha, where he was told that his trunk had been sold for some months. Besides a suit of clothes for town wear, it had contained a buffalo coat for his brother—something scarce to see in these days.

"Frank'll have to get along without it," he observed, philosophically, and took the next eastbound train.

If you journey in a Pullman from Mesa to Omaha without a waistcoat, and with a silk handkerchief knotted over the collar of your flannel shirt instead of a tie, wearing, besides, tall, high-heeled boots, a soft, gray hat with a splendid brim, a few people will notice you, but not the majority. New Mexico and Colorado are used to these things. As Iowa, with its immense rolling grain, encompasses you, people will stare a little more, for you're getting near the East, where cow-punchers are not understood. But in those days the line of cleavage came sharp-drawn at Chicago. West of there was still tolerably west, but east of there was east indeed, and the Atlantic Ocean was the next important stopping-place. In Lin's new train, good gloves, patent-leathers, and silence prevailed throughout the sleeping-car, which was for Boston without change. Had not home memories begun impetuously to flood his mind, he would have felt himself conspicuous. Town clothes and conventions had their due value with him. But just now the boy's single-hearted thoughts were far from any surroundings, and he was murmuring to himself, "To-morrow! tomorrow night!"

There were ladies in that blue plush car for Boston who looked at Lin for thirty miles at a stretch; and by the time Albany was reached the next day one or two of them

commented that he was the most attractive-looking man they had ever seen! Whereas, beyond his tallness, and wide-open, jocular eyes, eyes that seemed those of a not highly conscientious wild animal, there was nothing remarkable about young Lin except stage effect. The conductor had been annoyed to have such a passenger; but the cow-puncher troubled no one, and was extremely silent. So evidently was he a piece of the true frontier that curious and hopeful fellow-passengers, after watching him with diversion, more than once took a seat next to him. He met their chatty inquiries with monosyllables so few and so unprofitable in their quiet politeness that the passengers soon gave him up. At Springfield he sent a telegram to his brother at the great dry-goods establishment that employed him.

The train began its homestretch after Worcester, and whirled and swung by hills and ponds he began to watch for, and through stations with old wayside names. These flashed on Lin's eye as he sat with his hat off and his forehead against the window, looking: Wellesley. Then, not long after, Riverside. That was the Charles River, and did the picnic woods used to be above the bridge or below? West Newton; Newtonville; Newton. "Faneuil's next," he said aloud in the car, as the long-forgotten home-knowledge shone forth in his recollection. The traveller seated near said, "Beg pardon?" but, turning, wondered at the all-unconscious Lin, with his forehead pressed against the glass. The blue water flashed into sight, and soon after they were running in the darkness between high walls; but the cow-puncher never moved, though nothing could be seen. When the porter announced "Boston," he started up and followed like a sheep in the general exodus. Down on the platform he moved along with the slow crowd till some one touched him,