

# CLAY CHIMNEY TRAIL

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need of encouragement that all was well and that she had a friend to serve her, that with a rush of sudden sympathy I would—indeed I could have kissed her upon the forehead, if not upon the lips themselves.

It was an impulse well-night overmastering; an impulse that must have dazed me so that she saw or felt, for a tinge of pink swept into her skin; she withdrew her hand and settled composedly.

"Good-night. Please sleep. In the morning we'll reach the stage road and your troubles will be near the end."

Under my own robe I lay for a

"No," I hazarded. "All warriors, I should guess."

"All warriors. But squaws would be worse."

On they cantered; indeed, seemed to be diverging from our ambush and making more to the west. And I had hopes that, after all, we were safe.

Then her hand clutched mine firmly. A wolf had leaped from cover in the path of the file; loped eastward across the desert, and instantly, with a whoop that echoed upon us like the crack of doom, a young fellow darted from the line in gay pursuit.

Away they tore, while the file slackened, to watch. Our trail of flight bore right athwart the wolf's projected route. There was just the remote chance that the lad would overrun it, in its eagerness; and for that intervening moment of grace we stared, fascinated, hand clasping hand.

"He's found it! He's found it!" she announced, in a little wail.

In mid-career the boy had checked

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long time debating over what she might have done had I actually kissed her to comfort her.

Daniel had been disposed of, Montoyo did not deserve her; I had won her, she could inspire and guide me if I stayed; and I saw myself staying, and I saw myself going home, and I already regretted a host of things, as a man will when at the forking of the trails.

When I awakened we were still enshrouded by the fleece of fog. As I gazed sleepily about I could see Edna's eyes were open. She looked at me.

"Sh!" she warned, with a quick shake of head. The same warning bade me listen. In a moment I heard voices.

They were indistinguishable except as vocal sounds.

"I've been hearing them some little while," she whispered.

"Adam's men trailing us?"

"I hope not," she gasped, in sheer agony. "If we might only know in time!"

Suddenly the fog was shot with gold, as the sun flashed in. Gradually the earth appeared in glimpses.

"There!" she whispered, pointing. "Look! They are Indians. We must get away before they see us."

We worked rapidly, bridling and saddling while the fog rose with measured steadiness.

"Hurry!" she bade.

The whole desert was a golden haze when having packed we climbed aboard.

The fog lingered in patches. From patch to patch we threaded, with many a glance over shoulder.

At last we came to a rough outcrop of red sandstone, looming ruddily on our right. Edna quickly served for it.

"The best chance. I see nothing else," she muttered. "We can tie the mules under cover, and wait. We'll surely be spied if we keep on."

In a moment we had gained the refuge. The sculptured rock masses, detached one from another, several jutting ten feet up, received us. We tied the mules short, in a nook at the rear; and we ourselves crawled in until we lay snug amidst the shadowing buttresses, with the desert vista opening before us.

We had been just in time. Rounding a knoll there appeared a file of mounted figures, Indians unmistakably.

"A war party! Sioux, I think," she said. "Don't they carry scalps on that first lance? They've been raiding the stage line. Do you see any squaws?"

his pony so shortly that the four hoots ploughed the sand. He wheeled on a pivot and rode back for a few yards, scanning the ground, letting the wolf go.

The youth flung up a glad hand and the band galloped to him.

"Yes, he has found it," she said.

"Now they will come."

"I'll do my best, with revolver," I promised.

"Yes," she murmured. "But after that—?"

I had no reply. This contingency—we two facing Indians—was outside my calculations.

"Shall we make a break for it?" I proposed.

"It would be madness on these poor mules," she murmured to herself.

"Yes, they're Sioux! I must talk with them."

"But they're coming," I rasped.

"They're getting in range. We've got the gun, and twenty cartridges. Maybe if I kill the chief—"

Ere I could stop her My Lady had sprung upright, to mount upon a rock and, all in view, to hold open hand above her head.

The sunshine glinted upon her hair; a fugitive little breeze bound her gown closer about her slim figure.

They had seen her instantly. The chief rode forward, at a walk, his hand likewise lifted.

"Keep down! Keep down, please," she directed to me, while she stood motionless. "Let me try."

The chief neared until we might see his every lineament—a splendid man, his eyes devouring her so covetously that I felt the glowing thoughts behind them.

He called inquiringly: a greeting and a demand in one, it sounded. She replied. And what they two said, in word and sign, I could not know. Then he cantered back to his men, while Edna stepped lightly down; answered my quering look.

"It's all right. I'm going, and so are you," she said, with a faint smile, oddly subtle—a tremulous smile in a white face.

"Where? We are free, you mean? What's the bargain?"

"I go to them. You go where you choose—to the stage road, of course. I have his promise. No, no," she said checking my indignant cry. "Really I don't mind. The Indians are about the only persons left to me. You can go home, and I shall not be unhappy. Please believe that! The wife of a great chief is quite a personage—he won't inquire into my past. But if you try to stay here you will certainly be killed, and I shall suffer, and we shall

## HOLD HEARING ON DAM SITES ON HIAWASSEE

A public hearing will be held in the courtroom of the courthouse at Athens, Tennessee, at 2:00 P. M. Friday, May 6, 1927. The purpose of the hearing is to enable those interested to present to the U. S. District Engineer, Chattanooga, Tennessee, such statements of fact or opinion as it is believed should be considered in connection with the pending application for preliminary permit for the construction of certain power dams on the Hiawassee River in Polk County, Tennessee.

The application is that if the Hiawasse Power Company for five water power developments on the Hiawasse River in Polk County, Tennessee and located between Austral and the Tennessee-North Carolina State Line Later the application may be modi-

gain nothing. You must take my money. Please do. Then good-bye. I told him I would come out, under his promise."

(Concluded next week)  
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