

Nan of Music Mountain

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN
Author of "WHISPERING SMITH"

De Spain ran into the office. Face ashen, his horse, stripped the rifle from its holster, and hurriedly began to load. Heaters running through the barn called spring back and forth, and De Spain springing up the stairs to his room provided what he wanted for his hurried flight. When he dashed down with coats on his arms, the head of Lady Jane was clattering down the stairway. A stable-boy slid from her back, and she side as Bill Page threw the saddle across her from the other; hostlers caught at the cinches, while others hurriedly rubbed the legs of the quivering mare. De Spain, his hand on McAlpin's shoulder, was giving his parting injunctions, and the barn door, half closed, and eyes cast furtively on the scattering snowflakes outside, was listening with an attention that recorded indelibly every uttered syllable.

Once only, he interrupted: "Henry, you're riding out into this thing—don't do it."

"I can't help it," snarled De Spain impatiently.

"It's a man killer."

"I can't help it."

"Don't do it, if he's here, 'nd never let you do it. I'll ride with you myself, Henry. I worked for your father—"

"You're too old a man, Jim—"

"Henry—"

"Don't talk to me! Do as I tell you!" thundered De Spain.

McAlpin bowed his head.

"Ready?" yelled Page, buckling the rifle holster in place. Still talking, and with McAlpin's hand on his elbow, De Spain vaulted into the saddle, caught the lines from Bill's hands, and strode the Lady as she stepped nervously—McAlpin following close and dodging the dancing hoofs as he looked earnestly up to catch the last word. De Spain touched the horse with the reins, she leaped through the door way and he rested a backward hand to those behind. Running outside the door, they relined a chorus of cries after the swiftly-moving horse, and, clustered in an excited group, watched the Lady with a dozen great strides round the Calabasas trail and disappear with her rider into the whirling snow.

She fell at once into an easy reaching step, and De Spain, busy with his reflections, hardly gave thought to what she was doing, and little more to what was going on about him.

No moving figure reflects the impressive more than a horseman on the mountains, on a long ride. Though never so swift-horned, the man looking neither to the right nor to the left, moving evenly and sturdily against the sky, a part of the very best under line, against the very picture of indifference to the world around him.

The great, swift wind spreading over the desert emptied on it snow-laden puffs that whirled and wrapped a cloud of flakes about horse and rider in the symbol of a shroud. De Spain gave no heed to these skimming eddies, but he knew what was behind them, and for the wind, he only wished it might keep the snow in the air till he caught sight of Nan.

The even reach of the horse brought him to the point where Nan had changed to the stage wagon. Without a break in her long stride, Lady Jane took the hint of her swerving rider, put her nose into the wind, and headed north. De Spain, alive to the difficulties of his venture, set his hat lower and bent forward to follow the wagon along the sand. With the first of the white flurries passed, he found himself in a snowless pocket, as it were, of the advancing storm. He hoped for nothing from the prospect ahead; but every moment of respite from the blinding whirl was a gain, and with his eyes close on the trail that had carried Nan into danger, he traced the Lady on.

When the snow again closed down about him he calculated from the roughness of the country that he should be within a mile of the road that Nan was trying to reach, from the gap to Sleepy Cat. But the broken ground straight ahead would prevent her from driving directly to it. He knew she must hold to the right, and her curving track, now becoming difficult to trail, confirmed his conclusion.

A fresh drive of the wind buffeted him as he turned directly north. Only at intervals could he see any trace of the wagon wheels. The driving snow compelled him more than once to dismount and search for the trail. Each time he lost it the effort to regain it was more prolonged. At times he was compelled to ride the desert in wide circles to find the tracks, and this cost time when minutes might mean life. But as long as he could he clung to the struggle to track her exactly. He saw almost where the storm had struck the two wayfarers. Neither, he knew, was insensible to its dangers. What amazed him was that a man like Duke Morgan should be out in it. He found a spot where they had halted and, with a start that checked the beating of his heart, his eyes fell on her footprint not yet obliterated, beside the wagon track.

The sight of it was an electric shock. Throwing himself from his horse, he knelt over it in the storm, oblivious for an instant of everything but that this tracery meant her presence, where he now bent, hardly half an hour before. He swung, after a moment's keen scrutiny, into his saddle, with fresh resolve. Pressed by the rising fury of the wind, the wayfarers had become from this point, De Spain saw too plainly, hardly more than fugitives. Good ground to the left, where their line of safety lay, had been over-

looked. Their tracks wandered on the open desert like those who, losing courage, lose their senses in the confusion and fear of the impending peril.

And with this increasing uncertainty in their direction vanished De Spain's last hopes of tracking them. The wind swept the desert now as a hurricane sweeps the open sea, snatching the fallen snow from the face of the earth as the sea-gale flattens the face of the waves, rips the foam from the frantic waves to drive it in wild, scudding fragments across them.

De Spain, urging his horse forward, unhooked his rifle holster, threw away the scabbard, and holding the weapon up in one hand, fired shot after shot at measured intervals to attract the attention of the two he sought. He exhausted his rifle ammunition without eliciting any answer. The wind drove with a roar against which even a rifle report could hardly carry, and the snow swept down the sinks in a mad blast. Flakes torn by the fury of the gale were thickened by the bitter wind into powdered ice that stung horse and rider, coating away the useless carbine, and pressing his horse to the limit of her strength and endurance, the unyielding pursuer rode in great, cooling circles into the storm, to cut in, if possible, ahead of its victims, firing shot upon shot from his revolver.



Hoping Against Hope for an Answer.

and putting his ear instantly against the wind for the faint hope of an answer.

Suddenly the Lady stumbled and, as he cruelly reined her, slid helplessly and scrambling along the face of a flat rock. De Spain, leaping from her back, studied her trembling and looked underfoot. The mare had struck the rock of the upper lava bed, drawing his revolver, he fired signal shots from where he stood. It could not be far, he knew, from the junction of the two great desert trails—the Calabasas road and the gap road. He felt sure Nan could not have got much north of this, for he had ridden in desperation to get ahead of or beyond her, and if she were south, where, he asked, in the name of God, could she be?

He climbed again into the saddle—the cold was gripping his limbs—and, watching the rocky landmarks narrowly, tried to trace the dead waste of the half-furrowed flow. With chilled, awkward fingers he filled the revolver again and rode on, discharging it every minute, and listening—hoping against hope for an answer. It was when he had almost completed, as well as he could compute, the wide circuit he had set out on, that a faint shot answered his continuing signals.

With the sound of that shot and those that followed it his courage all came back. But he had yet to trace through the confusion of the wind and the blinding snow the direction of the answering reports.

Either and thither he rode, this way and that, testing out the location of the slowly repeated shots, and signaling at intervals in return. Slowly and doggedly he kept on shooting, listening, wheeling and advancing until, as he raised his revolver to fire it again, a cry close at hand came out of the storm. It was a woman's voice borne on the wind. Riding swiftly to the left, a horse's outline revealed itself at moments in the driving snow ahead.

De Spain cried out, and from behind the furious curtain heard his name, loudly called. He pushed his stumbling horse on. The dim outline of a wagon, a storm-beaten man—all this passed his eyes unheeded. They were bent on a girlish figure running toward him as he slid stiffly from the saddle. The next instant Nan was in his arms.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Truth.

With the desperation of a joy born of despair she laid her burning cheek hysterically against his cheek. She rained kisses on his ice-crusted brows and snow-beaten eyes. Her arms held him rigidly. He could not move nor speak till she would let him. Transformed, this mountain girl who gave herself so shyly, forgot everything. Her words crowded on his ears. She recognized his name in an ecstasy of welcome, drew down his lips, laughed, rejoiced. Knew no shamefulness and no restraint—she was one freed from the stroke of a descending knife. A moment before she had faced death alone; it was still death she faced—she realized this—but it was death, at least, together, and her joy and tears rose from her heart in one stream.

De Spain comforted her, quieted her, cut away one of the coats from his horse, slipped it over her shoulders, incased her in the heavy fur, and turned his eyes to Duke.

The old man's set, square face surrendered nothing of implacability to the dangers confronting him. De Spain looked for none of that. He had known the Morgan record too long, and faced the Morgan men too often, to fancy they would flinch at the drum-beat of death.

The two men, in the deadly, driving snow, eyed each other. Out of the old

man's deepest eyes burned the red-glow of a hundred stings faced before. But he was caught now like a wolf in a trap, and he knew he had little to hope for, little to fear. As De Spain regarded him, something like pity may have mixed with his hatred. The old outlaw was thudly clad. His open throat was beaten with snow, and, standing beside the wagon, he held the team reins in a bare hand. De Spain cut the other coat from his saddle and held it out. Duke pretended not to see, and, when not longer equal to keeping up the pretense, shook his head.

"Take it," said De Spain curtly.

"No."

"Take it, I say. You and I will settle our affairs when we get Nan out of this," he insisted.

"De Spain!" Duke's voice, as was his wont, cracked like a pistol. "I can say all I've got to say to you right here."

"No."

"Yes," cried the old man.

"Listen, Henry," pleaded Nan, seeking shelter from the furious blast within his arm, "just for a moment, listen!"

"Not now, I tell you!" cried De Spain.

"He was coming, Henry, all the way—and he is sick—just to say it to you. Let him say it here, now."

"Go on!" cried De Spain roughly.

"Say it."

"I'm not afraid of you, De Spain!" shouted the old man, his neck bared to the flying ice. "Don't think it! You're a better man than I am, better than I ever was—don't think I don't know that. But I'm not afraid of ever a man I faced, De Spain; they'll tell you that when I'm dead. All the trouble that ever come 'tween you and me come by an accident—come before you was born, and come through Duke Sassoon, and he's held it over me ever since you come up into this country. I was a young fellow, Sassoon worked for my father. The cattle and sheep was on us, north of Medicine Bend. The Peace river sheepmen raided our place—your father was with them. He never did us no harm, but my brother, Ray Morgan, was shot in that raid by a man name of Jennings. I started out to get the man that shot him. Sassoon trailed him to the Bar M, the old De Spain ranch, working for your father."

The words fell fast and in a fury. They came as if they had been choked back till they strangled. "Sassoon took me over there. Toward night we got in sight of the ranchhouse. We saw a man down at the corral. That's the Jennings," Sassoon says, I never laid eyes on him before—I never laid eyes on your father before. Both of us fired. Next day we heard your father was killed, and Jennings had left the country. Sassoon or I one of us killed your father, De Spain. If it was I, I did it never knowing who he was, never meaning to touch him. I was after the man that killed my brother. Sassoon didn't care which it was, never did, then nor ever. But he held it over me to make trouble sometime 'tween you and me. I was a young fellow. I thought I was revenging my brother. And if your father was killed by a pitched bullet, his blood is not on me, De Spain, and never was. Sassoon always shot a pitched bullet I never shot one in my life. And I'd never told you this of my own self. Nan said it was the whole truth from me to you, or her life. She's as much mine as she is yours. I nursed her I took care of her when there weren't no other living soul to do it. She got me and herself out into this, this morning. I'd never been caught like this if I'd had my way. I told her 'fore we'd been out an hour we'd never see the end of it. She said she'd rather die in it than you'd think she quit you I told her I'd go on with her and do as she said—that's why we're here and that's the whole truth, so help me God!"

"I ain't afraid of you, De Spain. I'll give you whatever you think's coming to you with a rifle or a gun any time, anywhere—you're a better man than I am or ever was, I know that—and that ought to satisfy you. Or, I'll stand up trial, if you say so, and tell the truth."

The ice-laden wind, as De Spain stood still, swept past the little group with a sinister roar, insensible alike to its emotions and its deadly peril. Within the shelter of his arm he felt the yielding form of the indomitable girl who, by the power of love, had wrung from the outlaw his reluctant story—the story of the murder that had stained with its red strands the relations of each of their lives to both the others. He felt against his heart the faint trembling of her frail body. So, when a boy, he had held in his hand a fluttering bird and felt the whirling beat of its frightened heart against his strong, cruel fingers.

A sudden aversion to more bloodshed, a sickening of vengeance, swept over him as her heart mutely beat for mercy against his heart. She had done more than any man could do. Now she waited on him. Both his arms wrapped round her. In the breathless embrace that drew her closer she read her answer from him. She looked up into his eyes and waited. "There's more than what's between you and me, Duke, facing us now," said De Spain sternly, when he turned. "We've got to get Nan out of this—even if we don't get out ourselves. Where do you figure we are?" he cried.

"I figure we're two miles north of the lava beds, De Spain," shouted Morgan.

De Spain shook his head in dissent. "Then where are we?" demanded the older man rudely.

"I ought not to say, against you. But if I've got to guess, I say two miles east. Either way, we must try for Sleepy Cat. Is your team all right?"

"Team is all right. We tore a wheel near off getting out of the lava. The wagon's done for."

De Spain threw the fur coat at him. "Put it on," he said. "We'll look at the wheel."

Continued next week

The Inside.

Nature students, quick now—which side of a peacock does the moss grow on?

PARIS DESIGNERS DOOM OLD GOWNS

Changes Shown in New Models Even More Drastic Than Prophets Expected.

WILL FOLLOW FRENCH STYLE

However Patriotic They May Be, American Women Will Adopt the Fashions Originating Across the Sea.

New York.—There are quite enough changes in the new clothes arriving from Paris to make every woman shake her head in despair and say that she must have a new gown, whether or not her dress allowance can be stretched to cover it.

There are women who hold out that the gowns of autumn can be renovated to meet the demands of spring, and the forehanded person has already been at work in the sewing room having her skirts reshaped and her bodices built up or down to meet the requirements of the hour.

The dressmakers are divided into two classes of opinion; those who are worried over the seeming similarity between the spring gowns and those of last autumn, and others who are blowing the trumpet loudly to proclaim that the modern silhouette compels every woman to discard whatever she has and buy things that are new.

Paris has spoken, however, and no matter how intense our patriotism, we listen and hearken to the words that come from the city by the Seine. That is the phrase one hears on every side among the commercialists. We know what we should wear. The gowns have been shown our buyers, and as many as possible have been shipped to this country. We may talk all we please about our own fashions following our own flag, but all fashions become ours after they have had their source in Paris, in a limited district of the city.

The Drastic Changes.

A mere cursory glance at a foreground of French gowns may convince the casual onlooker that nothing is to be feared from the new styles. Old gowns will do; old suits will serve; old wraps are not thrown in the



This Gown of Dark Blue Gaberdine Shows the Type of Barrel Skirt Which the Americans Have Accepted. Its Trimming Consists of Rows of Machine Stitching With Gray Silk Thread, and the Neck is Filled in With a Tiny Vest of Gray Tulle.

shadow; and last summer's hat can be revived to meet this spring's need.

That is the opinion of a most casual observer. The truth is that the changes are more drastic than even the reporters and prophets felt they would be. Paris has been insidious in introducing a silhouette that will grow as the days lengthen and that will soon make the gowns of yesterday look too old-fashioned for even trivial uses, unless they are altered by a skillful hand.

What is known as the American uniform was conspicuously lacking during the first openings in Paris. But Mme. Paquin, Doeuillet and Drecolle came out with tailored suits that met the expectations of the American buyers.

The Paquin ones were particularly good, but no one style was emphasized. Mme. Paquin has always liked the three-quarter coat and she was the first person to revive it a few years ago. It was then regarded as too old-fashioned for any American woman to take up, and yet, a year after, it was universal in this country.

The knee-length jackets that the house of Paquin showed have the barrel effect between the waist and knee and are worn over an exceedingly narrow skirt that is from two to four inches longer than what the women have worn over here for two years. Paquin also revives the redingote with a narrow hem and slender waist line, but the barrel effect is given it

the middle. This house also insists upon the short coat. It is made somewhat like an old-fashioned basque, with a short peplum that clings to the body, although it is cut circular. Paquin introduced a coat like this last autumn which was exceedingly liked by the women who had turned away from the long coat, and it is probable that with its revival for this spring it will gain headway before June.

Paquin, like Jenny and Fremet, uses the unusually wide, loose girdle on all gowns. She does not touch the simple waistline, which nearly all the other houses show in two or three

of the best course of their collections, and she does not go in for the traditional girdle, which has not been relinquished by every other designer, but insisted to the best over the normal waistline.

Reyant's New Coats.

The house of Reyant, which is not as well known to the public as it should be, but sufficiently well known to our buyers to have the fashions brought to this country every few months, has sent out an exceptionally good looking coat to match each one-piece frock. It is a diversion from the winter top coat, which often turned out to be a troublesome problem, although as a garment it is well-nigh indispensable.

This new coat is like a cape that has little fullness and hangs limply against the body. It is slashed at each side from the hem up to above the knees, and the sleeves are loose and bell-shaped. The only trimming used, no matter what the color of the coat, is a pointed, fluted design of machine stitching. This stitching is by no means commonplace; it is easily done in America, but it is very expensive. It is a loose chainstitch that must be perfectly done in order to carry out the sharp, interesting outlines of the design. Hence, string cutlery and dark blue are used for these coats, and the material is a sort of soft broadcloth. The machine stitching is in black.

Reyant has made a great name in Europe for one-piece frocks, or sport suits, which can be worn on the street with dignity. The best gown sent over from this house is such a decided contrast to everything we have been wearing, that it was eagerly accepted by the Americans who saw it.

The skirt is exceedingly narrow, is laid in machine knife plaits and hangs in a plumb line from waist to ankle. The belted jacket is in a straight line from shoulder to hips, cut on slim measurements in order to make one look youthful, and its surface is covered with this machine chainstitch in opiate white. The sleeves are plain, small and quite long, finished with a narrow band of white satin that flares over the hand, and a row of pearl buttons that keeps it tight at the wrist. From the bottom of the jacket comes a sash that goes straight around the figure at the hips and is looped over into two ends at the back.

Driscoll and the Redingote.

Jenny is not the only important designer in Paris who put out the redingote for the spring. Her house has never relinquished the redingote idea, but has played upon the one theme in different ways.

Paquin and Driscoll come back to the actual redingote in the form of a slim coat with a slight curve below the hips to show that the oval silhouette, as the French call it, is approved.

Driscoll has always had a high reputation for coat suits and for whatever is tailored, and he makes the straight redingote which opens in front over a narrow skirt of satin or crepe de chine, as opposed to the worsted fabric of the coat. He also combines foulard and serge and crepe and serge.

The house of Driscoll is one of the few that makes afternoon gowns with full skirts. It is true that this fullness is not displayed as much at the hem as it was last autumn, but there is not the straight, pull-down line that the buyers feel is entirely new and will be accepted.

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COSTS \$653 TO DRESS WELL

This is the Dictum of Executive Board of Fashion Art League of America—Doesn't Include the "Extras."

To be well dressed in 1917 a woman must spend \$653—plus. The \$653 doesn't include house dresses or lounging robes or any of the little trinkets so dear to the heart of a woman.

The amount to be spent is the dictum of the executive board of the Fashion Art League of America.

This is the way the bill for a well-dressed woman will appear to the fond husband:

One tailored gown.....\$ 75
One top coat, tailored..... 150
One afternoon gown..... 150
Two waists for suit..... 40
One evening gown..... 128
Two pairs of shoes and one pair of slippers..... 24
Two hats..... 25
One corset..... 5
Three pairs of gloves..... 6
Underclothing..... 50
Stockings..... 20
Total.....\$653

A Curtain Hint.

The hot sun shining through the glass always rots the bottom of the curtain before the upper half is near worn out. So this spring, whatever new curtains you get, make them with hems of equal size at both ends. Each time before they are taken down to wash, mark the bottom with a thread. Then when they are put up again, put that end on the pole.

This is a very little trouble and lengthens the life of a curtain considerably.

WOMEN

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