

Thrilling Tales of Love and Adventure

The Fall of Pride

By Elsie Endicott

UD OAKLE—he was still Bud in spite of the grizzled age that was creeping upon him—was of the sort that does not count in the West. Not even a galvanic force could find judgment in that indecisive mouth or those pale eyes so serene and conciliatory. His head bowed toward a dust cloud in the distance. The new stage ought to be on it today. The man in the chair whittled, rested upon his hands, then passed to the store cutting to a flat-footed squaw in a blanket. "I demanded. Matt was a man of few words. They say. Just out from the store. No more questions. But the moving of his eyes one could see the restlessness of the beast of prey. The Santa Rita stretched her back as a killer, but even without that knowledge one would have held by that something strong and cruel lurking in the bleak, cold shape of the thin, tight in the Springcolled alertness of the man that did not count spoke to the sense that Pride was anxious, and with apineless facility he slipped himself to the other's mood. "You're jollier, from Peoria, Ill. A sure to be a smart aleck. You know it?" "The man's teeth showed for an instant. He was still looking at the girl, the girl, and his eyes were both sullen and proprietary. He said nothing. "I'll try it with Allie, and he'll be some-uppings. She wouldn't mind. Me neither. Not jollier, the invertbrate. He was the father of the girl within. That she was to be the wife and property of the stage descended a young man with a suitcase. Slight, pallid, a little stooped, he was unmistakably a product of the city. His gentle face seemed to apologize for his respectable face, was a letter of introduction. For the eyes blinking behind the glasses were as honest as an Arizona sky. "He stood at the top of the steps a man on his lean, hard face, and swept the newcomer, and one contemptuous word he turned a fluting heel. "The tenderfoot had been appraised, and dismissed from mind and sight. "Before Pride had taken three steps, he wheeled again angrily. Allie looked at him, her eyes shining resentment, and was offering her to the insulted clerk. "The new storekeeper, aren't you, Alice Oakle. I help in the store. We're glad to meet you." "Same old Oakle. Yes, I'm the storekeeper. My name is Arne—Joe Arne." "You passed inside together. Pride's eyes flashed furiously, and his fists clenched till the veins swelled.

"Looked like he was aimin' to throw the kid off the porch and stomp him into the ground. If he had I reckon they would have had to pick him out of the dust with a pair of pincers." Bud Oakle explained later. The bad man strode to his horse, swung himself into the saddle, and rode blindly away. Jealousy surged through him in heavy gusts. Alice Oakle, promised to him by her father though she was, had never looked on him with such kindly eyes as she had given this puny boy. His bloody spurs roweled mercilessly the half-tamed horse he rode. Joe Arne fell into his work easily and inconspicuously. The reservation Indians called him Four Eyes, and liked his courtesy to them. There was nothing about his quiet, friendly reserve to tempt the rough horseplay of the Santa Rita riders who sometimes drifted in to buy a rights and talk with pretty Allie. Nor would she have permitted any liberties. She liked the tenderfoot, his gentleness, his shyness, his inability to meet the frontier on its own ground. Moreover, he was opening to her a new world, one she had known only in books. There was in both of them a touch of the poet, the facile imagination that interprets and takes hold of the unknown. His experience complemented hers, and neither of them were ever tired of hearing about that strange life the other had lived. For her the cities were pregnant with romance. She saw New York and Chicago through that hazy light that never was on land or sea. He made of subburnt Arizona—especially in that evening atmosphere when velvet dusk was over the valley like a sea of soft and tempered light—an Arcady primeval, helped to it no doubt because of the slender, light-footed friend who watched with him the mellow violet haze upon the saw-toothed peaks. Emotions new and poignant had come to disturb the calm of both their lives. It came to pass as the weeks slipped away that the frankness of their comradeship was gone. Alice, whose eyes had looked at men simply and directly as those of a boy, was becoming self-conscious. She learned the trick of blushing at times when she least expected. "Unusually, too, she was aware that Pride was watching Arne. She had the sense that he was stalking them as a cougar does its kill, with the same stealthy, relentless patience of that mountain terror on its soft-padded crouching hunt. More than once while she was in gay, happy talk with the storekeeper, a sinister shadow fell across them. Pride's cold, deadly eyes met her startled ones. A shiver would run down her back, for she had not known him to be within twenty miles. A premonition of danger haunted Allie. Her knowledge of the man was enough to teach her he would let nobody stand between him and the things he coveted. It had always been so. His outrageous defiance of justice, the contempt with which he had trampled on the pride of the Apache braves, had taken their horses at his own price, and ignored their tribal laws, all these had won the undying hatred of the natives. Yet he went his own way and rode over them heedlessly, trod down as if they had been childish complaints the remonstrances of these old-time man-hunters who had left

the trail of blood along the border. From such a one no terms of surrender of the girl he wanted was to be expected. Yet, as always, red tragedy when it did come leaped upon them unexpectedly. On a Sunday evening Pride rode to the store and found the whittler on the porch alone. "Evenin', Matt. In for plumb hot weather, looks like." "Where's Allie?" "Out with Peoria, Ill. I told her, for jollies, she hadn't ought to go. I ain't responsible. Nowadays a father ought to have the say-so over his own daughter. Don't you know it? I reckon I'll have to have a talk and lay down the law to that young lady. Eh, Matt?" Pride's face was a picture of resentful malice. "I'll do the talking. Which way did they go?" "Took the Box Canyon trail: said they wasn't going to walk but a little ways." "Pride strode up the steep path, the trail scarce two hundred yards before he came on those he sought. They were in a little grove of live oaks into which the sifted moonlight filtered softly. A moment sooner, and he would have been in time to see their first kiss. As it was, they stood with hands locked, looking into each other's eyes with the ecstatic absorbed look of newly confessed lovers. "Pride's smothered oath brought them back to earth. Their hands fell apart hurriedly. In the eyes of both lives, the startled, telltale look of children caught stealing gain. "Matt!" the girl cried, as the man came striding toward them. "He ignored her completely. To young Arne he spoke, the veins in his forehead swollen with rage. "Gee! I've had enough of you! Clear out of the country pronto!" "Out of the country," Joe repeated in amazement. "You heard me." "But, Mr. Pride, I can't do that. My living is here. Besides, why should I?" "Because I'm going to fill you full of lead if you're here this time tomorrow. I've had a plenty of you." "I haven't done you any harm," the youngster retorted, with a flash of spirit. "This is a free country. You can't drive me out." "Go or stay, I don't care which. But if you stay, it'll be for good." The ranchman laughed, and the sound of it was appalling. "Allie cut in, white to the lips. "You mean that you're going to—murder him?" "I've served notice. It's him or me." He turned to go. Lighly she twisted in front of him and barred the way. "Wait." She stood lance-straight, a slender slip of a girl he could have crushed with one hand. But in the challenging flash of her deep eyes a new fire had been lighted. Man of small imagination though he was, it was impossible to miss the gallant spirit his throat had struck to life. "If you do this—if you touch a hair of his head—as surely as you do I'll never speak to you again, never look at you any more than I would at a rattlesnake." He stared, fascinated, his eyes narrowed and smoldering slits. "So that's it. You're making a play for to stand between him and me." "Yes, I won't have it! I won't have it!" she cried, a little wildly. "You won't? Why not?" His voice was silken soft, but she knew that beneath the surface the anger in him was cold and hard as granite. Under the brave, tilted chin a pulse was beating fast in the soft round throat. All her life she had been afraid of his sullen and vindictive anger, of the quality in him that had dominated her father and herself. But with this, too, had always been admiring of the stark force of the man. The courage of him had cloaked his vices. Now she saw him as he was, hard, cruel, vicious, bad at heart to the core. Gusty the revolt of years in her boiled over. "Because I love him. Because I'm going to marry him. That's why." Again he laughed, and in his mirthless laughter all the evil of him appeared to find expression. "You better hurry, my dear. For he ain't got long to live. Look at him. See how yellow he is. Right now he's an awful sick pup. I'll be a right short honeymoon. You'll be maid, wife, and widow all in twenty-four hours." His black, beady eyes focused once more on the Easterner. "Remember, tomorrow at sunset, I'll be here like I said. And you needn't try to pull your freight. I've changed my mind. You and me will see this out to a finish." With that he was gone, leaving behind him a distress beyond words. Allie leaned against a live oak, her interlaced fingers writhing in impotent despair. She was no heroine of romance, but what the sun and the wind and a clean, sweet spirit had made her. If she could be brave, she could be afraid, too, especially for those she loved. Now terror held her heart in an icy clutch. She did not deceive herself. Matt Pride would take care her lover did not escape, and when the time came he would snuff out his life ruthlessly. "Don't you, Allie! Don't you take on so!" Arne pleaded. "It's all my fault. If I hadn't told him you might have slipped away, but now—" "He shook his head. "No, I wouldn't have gone." The girl roused herself. The eagerness of hope came into her eyes. "You can get away by the Mal Pais trail. He'll not think of that. Ride hard and you can reach the railroad tomorrow night." "And leave you here?" "What does that matter? I can join you later." "No, I'm going to stay." Her gaze read his thoughts. No man under fire could run away from the woman he loved and hold his self-respect. It might be an unequal battle, but he could not shirk it and leave her alone to cope with this wolf. Face to face with Pride, her lover had been entirely inadequate to the situation be-

Carnations And a Horse

By Joe Busche

LMIRA ANN chanced to be looking from the window when her father came home. He carried a bunch of white carnations and a small white horse. "Tell me something," she urged, "won't you, dad, about your old home? It must have been a mighty interesting place, from the little I've heard about it." Dad brightened visibly and instantaneously. Usually one of the most silent of men, he became actually garrulous, he became actually garrulous, he became actually garrulous, he became actually garrulous. "You ought to go there some time, Sis," he said. "There's no place like it, to my mind. There's a brook running through the meadow just below our old house. Many's the fine trout I've caught there. It flows into the river half a mile farther down the glen. There's a jolly camping ground at the bend in the river." He paused a moment, smiling as his mind roamed through the old haunts, and Allie could scarcely believe this was her quiet, retiring, shy father as he rambled on—of birds and rabbits and squirrels, of blackbirds scooting through the masses of mountain laurel; of the secrecy and the silence of the still woodland ways; of the wide meadows of buttercups, the tangled masses of wild flowers, campion, violets, starworts, purple ground ivy and hyacinths. He described a lake where swallows at evening dipped and circled and flashed over the dark surface. He recalled travels through the pine woods and meetings under great oaks and yet almost agitated, as she recognized the longings in the sudden avalanche of memories she had, all unwittingly, evoked. She felt the hot tears of pity dimming her eyes. Was this happy historian "father"? Father, who was popularly presumed not to possess a thought or desire in the world separate from his family and their aspirations?

ter find out. Whatever they bring is yours. "Your loving aunt." "ALMIRA ANN." They were of late. When Almira had disposed of them, to her grateful wonder and joy, she held a hundred dollar bill in her hands. To all the various suggestions offered as to its investment she turned deaf ears. The night before his vacation began she went to her father with the money. "Dad," she said softly, "wouldn't it be simply great if you and I could go out to your old home and spend your vacation going around to all the dear old places? The trout stream, the orchard where the Northern Spies and Pound Sweets grow, the woods road lined with mountain laurel, the picnic grounds and the pine grove; visit the little schoolhouse and—?" Here she was interrupted by her father. "Child, child," he said nervously, "are you like I did your cousin?" "Does this look like it?" she answered, as she placed the wonderful talisman in his trembling hands. When he tried to thank his daughter she puzzled him by remarking that he must not thank her, but himself, Mother's Day and Harrison's old white horse. "And so father had his brief day of pleasure and the memories that were to sweeten all the possible bitterness of future life and strife; and whether Almira, her aunt, Harrison's horse or his own usefulness brought it makes small difference.

A Few Things
"HATE men!" declared the girl in brown, with vehemence. "Goodness!" cried the girl's best friend. "You know that 'hate' is a feeble word. What's the matter?" "Oh, I don't want to talk about men at all! I'd rather discuss the old ladies' home or the porch or wherever it is that I'll decide to go when I grow old! One thing I know—my old age won't be passed with Bob!" Her friend turned sympathetic and interested eyes toward her. "Just tell me what happened and cut out the verbal frills," she said soothingly. "Well, I don't believe in letting a man think that he's the only possible man in the world, do you?" So when Bob and I became engaged and I had been giving him my whole heart and soul for about three months, and he began to show signs of thinking that I couldn't possibly care for any one but him, I began to do some thinking myself. "I can't imagine anything worse

Wasted Effort. Said a lady who lived out in Manitowish: "I can sing and I play the piano, too— It's as easy as pie. But as hard as I try I just can't teach my young sister Anna to—" Changed His Mind. "Do you think the motor-car has come to stay?" asked one man of his neighbor. "Well," replied the other, "there was one out in front of my house today which I thought had, but they got