

THE BLUE BOOK

KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN, Editor

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Two Fascinating Serials

The Cartwright Gardens Mystery By J. S. Fletcher 1

The fine art of detective-story writing has been brought to an unusual proximity to perfection by Mr. Fletcher, and in his latest novel you will find one of the most enjoyable stories of the year.

White Indian By Edwin L. Sabin 98

The concluding chapters of this splendid epic of pioneer life in the Rocky Mountain West are stirring indeed, and the climax will live long in your memory.

Twelve Spirited Short Stories

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This is the moving story of a prize-fighter who was a very real human being, and of the crisis in his valiant life.

The Light in the East By Frank Parker Stockbridge 37

Here we have a new story of the famous Buried Alive Club wherein these modest adventurers take cards in a most exciting game.

Gun Play By Michael J. Phillips 51

A vivid drama of the West Western, by the talented author of "Salome—Where She Danced."

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In "Wine-Vaulting Ambition" Mr. Atkey details in his characteristically amusing style a specially interesting exploit of these two amiable rascallions.

Lobo's Return By Forrestine C. Hooker 64

A grim little episode of Western life, seen through the eyes of a lone and thirst-harried wolf.

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Lobo's Return

*A grim little Western episode without sugar—but
a story you will recall with lively appreciation.*

By FORRESTINE C. HOOKER

LOBO limped painfully over the sharp rocks. His head swung low; his eyes were bloodshot, and his dry tongue lolled between his gleaming teeth.

Two days and nights had passed since he had found water. He was not hungry. Jackrabbits are easily caught when a wolf is not heavy from drinking. Lobo was very, very thirsty. He sniffed the hot air. No scent of water rewarded him.

Wearily he plodded along.

Over the crests of high mountains, down the slopes into dry cañons where horned toads scurried, or the whirr of a hidden rattler sounded, he padded stubbornly. His sharp nose was pointed toward the north—pointed toward a place where he knew that he would find water.

The lame paw grew more painful. He stopped and lay down so that he could lick and soothe the place where no hair covered an old scar. But his hot, dry tongue scraped the tender spot. Lobo arose slowly and went on his way. The stones burned his feet; sand sifted between his raw toe-pads and cut the sensitive flesh. The dry air in his lungs increased his thirst.

But he knew that each step, however painful, was bringing him nearer a small adobe house where a gaunt, flapping windmill creaked complainingly as it sent spurts of water into big troughs.

Last summer green grass had covered

valleys and mountains, and water had filled the rock tanks in the cañons. Cattle had wandered contentedly, or rested in shady places, chewing their cuds and watching sleek calves that romped in groups.

It had been then that Lobo, for the first time, had ventured curiously from the mountains and down into the heart of a wide valley, lured by the gleam of a lake.

SMOKE drifted lazily from the chimney of a little house. Lobo feared men, but he was very thirsty and knew that he would have to travel a long distance back to the nearest rock tank. Cautiously he sneaked to the edge of the pond, keeping his eyes steadily on the house, until he had slaked his thirst. Then satisfied, he turned with dripping jaws to seek once more the shelter of cañons and mountains far from the trails of his enemy, man.

Crash! Snap!

Lobo leaped and yelped in agony. Sharp steel teeth clutched his front paw. With all his strength he jerked to free it, but each struggle caused the points to sink more deeply into his flesh. Maddened by the pain, he bit and chewed his slender leg just above the jaws of the trap. His white teeth scraped the bone and the tendons.

A man stood at the cabin door.

"A wolf! A loafer wolf!"

Lobo heard the shout. He saw three

men running toward him. Something that was like a long, shining stick was in the hand of one. Lobo saw and understood.

He stopped chewing his leg and squatted on his haunches, while his green eyes turned slowly, fearlessly from one grim face to the other. The men talked. He read their faces. Lobo was only a wolf, but he did not cringe.

Something fluttered back of the men. They stopped talking. Then a voice different from anything Lobo had ever heard began to speak quickly. Lobo looked at the pink flutter, his eyes traveled upward until, for the first time in his life, he saw a woman's face.

"You shall not kill him!" she cried defiantly, pushing between the men. "It is cowardly to trap, then kill! You shall not do it, I say!"

She stamped a little foot. Her outstretched arms made a barrier between the men and the animal. Lobo's wonder made him forget the ache in his paw. She turned and looked at him, saw the mutilated flesh where the teeth of the wolf had cut beside the teeth of steel.

"Oh, you poor thing!" her voice quivered, and her eyes filled with tears.

Then he who held the gun smiled at her and nodded. "All right! The boss says to turn him loose!"

Very cautiously two crowbars were inserted between the steel teeth that gripped the animal's leg. Lobo paid no attention to the men. He watched the woman's face. He knew men.

Click!

He leaped away free and darted toward the distant hills, glancing back often as he ran. He saw the men walking back to the house, a flutter of pink with them.

And after that night, he had returned again and again, unafraid, because the woman was there. He soon learned that when she fed her dog she would toss a bit of meat for the wolf while she would hold the dog's collar. After that, she would bring out a deep dish and place it on the ground, and then a crow with a broken upper beak would fly from the top of the mud corral and eat the soft food while she and her dog kept the chickens away.

Winter screamed on the tops of the mountains and rushed down the broad valleys. Lobo sought the shelter of the deepest cañons, and the spirits of his ancestors drove him along distant trails. His mate traveled with him.

Then spring passed by, and summer returned. Lobo trod the trail alone. He had lingered beside his dead mate until the drought had forced him to search for water. Slowly he had groped his way. Sometimes he found water, but more often there was only a dry mud-hole with shriveled carcasses of cattle lying beside it.

NOW Lobo pressed on. He was going back to where the woman lived—to where there were water, food and safety.

The sun was setting as he reached the place where he could look down upon the house. Eagerly he pushed forward. His body was drawn and gaunt; his legs trembled with weakness. Sometimes he stopped and stood with head hanging low; then with an effort he would stumble up the rugged hill. At intervals his tongue twisted around his gray nose. He gained the top of the hill.

No smoke curled from the chimney of the home. No windmill rose high against the angry red sunset.

Lobo limped nearer.

The doors of the house were gone. Black holes yawned where window-curtains had fluttered. He crawled warily past brown stalks that had once been masses of gay flowers. Lobo peered into a room. Nothing was there—nothing but bare walls.

As he shivered and turned wearily away, he stumbled, and stopping, sniffed at a bunch of draggled black feathers—the crow with the broken beak.

Then the wolf skulked slowly toward the pond. Only a dry mud-hole was there. The troughs were empty. Withered leaves fluttered from the bare branches of a dead willow tree. They fell upon a recently made mound. The wolf nosed it curiously, but the leaves did not tell him that the woman slept beneath the mound.

The sun dropped below the horizon. Twilight and pale stars beckoned the night.

Lobo squatted beside the mound of earth, and his hot tongue twisted crookedly over his nose. His sunken green eyes looked at the mud-hole, looked at the deserted home; and fear—fear of something he could not understand—shriveled his heart as the hot, dry wind had shriveled the leaves on the mound of earth.

The hair on his back rose in a stiff ridge.

Everywhere was silence—silence, desolation and death.

Lobo lifted his sharp nose toward the gray sky and pale stars, and howled.