

**MASTERPIECES OF
ADVENTURE. IN FOUR
VOLUMES. STORIES
OF DESERT PLACES**

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Masterpieces of adventure. In four volumes. Stories of Desert places by Nella Braddy

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NELLA BRADY

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ADVENTURE. IN FOUR
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OF DESERT PLACES**

Masterpieces of Adventure

In Four Volumes

STORIES OF DESERT PLACES

Edited by
Nella Braddy



Garden City New York
Doubleday, Page & Company
1922

GRATEFULLY DEDICATED
TO
BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS, PH.D.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In these volumes the word *adventure* has been used in its broadest sense to cover not only strange happenings in strange places but also love and life and death—all things that have to do with the great adventure of living. Questions as to the fitness of a story were settled by examining the qualities of the narrative as such rather than by reference to a technical classification of short stories.

It is the inalienable right of the editor of a work of this kind to plead copyright difficulties in extenuation for whatever faults it may possess. We beg the reader to believe that this is why his favorite story was omitted while one vastly inferior was included.

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Masterpieces of Adventure

STORIES OF DESERT PLACES

I

THE BARON'S QUARRY*

EGERTON CASTLE

OH no, I assure you, you are not boring Mr. Marshfield," said this personage himself in his gentle voice—that curious voice that could flow on for hours, promulgating profound and startling theories on every department of human knowledge or conducting paradoxical arguments without a single inflection or pause of hesitation. "I am, on the contrary, much interested in your hunting talk. To paraphrase a well-worn quotation somewhat widely, *nihil humanum a me alienum est*. Even hunting stories may have their point of biological interest: the philologist sometimes

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pricks his ear to the jargon of the chase; moreover, I am not incapable of appreciating the subject-matter itself. This seems to excite some derision. I admit I am not much of a sportsman to look at, nor, indeed, by instinct, yet I have had some out-of-the-way experiences in that line—generally when intent on other pursuits. I doubt, for instance, if even you, Major Travers, notwithstanding your well-known exploits against man and beast, notwithstanding that doubtful smile of yours, could match the strangeness of a certain hunting adventure in which I played an important part.”

The speaker's small, deep-set, black eyes, that never warmed to anything more human than a purely speculative, scientific interest in his surroundings, here wandered round the sceptical yet expectant circle with bland amusement. He stretched out his bloodless fingers for another of his host's superfine cigars and proceeded, with only such interruptions as were occasioned by the lighting and careful smoking of the latter.

“I was returning home after my prolonged stay in Petersburg, intending to linger on my way and test with mine own ears certain among the many dialects of eastern Europe—anent which there is a symmetrical little cluster of philological knotty points it is my modest intention one day to unravel. However, that is neither here nor there. On the road to Hungary I bethought myself opportunely of proving

The Baron's Quarry

the once pressingly offered hospitality of the Baron Kossowski.

"You may have met the man, Major Travers, *he* was a tremendous sportsman, if you like. I first came across him at McNeil's place in remote Ireland. Now, being in Bukowina, within measurable distance of his Carpathian abode, and curious to see a Polish lord at home, I remembered his invitation. It was already of long standing, but it had been warm, born in fact of a sudden fit of enthusiasm for me"—here a half-mocking smile quivered an instant under the speaker's black moustache—"which, as it was characteristic, I may as well tell you about.

"It was on the day of, or rather, to be accurate, on the day after my arrival, toward the small hours of the morning, in the smoking-room at Rathdrum. Our host was peacefully snoring over his empty pipe and his seventh glass of whiskey, also empty. The rest of the men had slunk off to bed. The baron, who all unknown to himself had been a subject of most interesting observation to me the whole evening, being now practically alone with me, condescended to turn an eye, as wide awake as a fox's, albeit slightly bloodshot, upon the contemptible white-faced person who had preferred spending the raw hours over his papers, within the radius of a glorious fire's warmth, to creeping slyly over treacherous quagmires in the pursuit of timid bog creatures (snipe shooting had been the order of the day)—