

In Man's Clothes

Girl's Adventurous Effort to Get Rich

All along the Rio Grande the boys are talking about how the goat king of Mexico turned out to be an American girl. That she managed to conceal her sex all the years she has been on the frontier is a marvel. Some of the boys say they suspected her all the while, but the truth is that for seven years Johnnie Rollins played his, or rather her, part so well that no one thought she was other than she seemed, relates the St. Louis Republic. The first appearance of Johnnie in the southwest was in 1893, when a slender, undersized tenderfoot applied at Nemmer's ranch on Devil's river, west of San Angelo, for a job. The boy rode well and was willing, but was so small and looked so unequal to the hardships of a cowcamp that the boss was about to tell him he had no use for more help just then, when, seeing the look of disappointment in the youngster's face, he asked if he could cook. "Yes," said the boy, "but I'd rather ride after the cattle." Johnnie left the Nemmer ranch and got a job herding goats. For this he got \$40 a month. He was so faithful that at the end of the year his wages were raised. He lived alone in a cabin out in the mountains, as wild a region as there is in all the Devil's river district. His nearest neighbor was 10 miles away, but with his dogs, his goats, and good Winchester he bore his lonely life stolidly and uncomplainingly. Of all the herders in the Devil's river valley Johnnie was the most faithful. After a time he got a reputation for courage and honesty that led one of the richest stockmen in west Texas to turn over several thousand goats to him to care for and manage on shares. This was the turning point toward fortune. Johnnie secured a big tract of grazing land across the Rio Grande in Mexico, bought all the goats he could get with the money at his command, and by exercising the strictest honesty in all his dealings got a credit with the frontier banks that was enjoyed by no other person in similar circumstances along the Rio Grande. The herd grew and before Johnnie realized it he had earned the sobriquet of the "Goat King of Mexico." But all this time Johnnie

Rollins was unhappy. He had plans for selling out and going away to the land from which he came. Not long ago he went to Del Rio. Passing along the street Johnnie saw a well-dressed stranger, who seemed to be dying slowly of consumption. The invalid was leaning on the arm of a woman. Johnnie followed them to the hotel and then went to his own room, to which several trunks, which had arrived from the north, had been sent. No one knows how the transformation came about, but at dinner a beautiful woman entered the dining-room, glanced toward where the invalid and wife were seated, and the next moment there was a commotion. The invalid had turned to see who the newcomer was, and then, arising hastily, his pallid face becoming ashy, fell to the floor in a faint. His wife screamed, the other guests flocked about to assist in restoring the sick man, and during the commotion the handsome woman retired to her room. When the sick man revived and was asked what had caused his sudden faintness he inquired if the handsome woman he had seen was not Johnnie Rollins. He was told that Johnnie Rollins was a rich man and the goat king of Mexico, but Johnnie Rollins was not a woman. "Johnnie Rollins was the girl I was once engaged to marry," said the sick man. "That was Johnnie Rollins I saw enter the dining-room. Johnnie was the name she was always known by." That evening the handsomely dressed young woman who had caused the excitement called a few friends to her room and told the story of her life. The man who was dying in another part of the hotel, she said, was the man who more than seven years before had jilted her. Miss Rollins said that her sole ambition had been to become rich and return to the north and shame the man who had jilted her because she was poor and because a girl with money was willing to accept him. When asked about her plans for the future Miss Rollins said: "After I get used to wearing dresses I mean to take a trip to my old home. I do not believe I would ever be content to live there, however, and I mean to continue raising goats."