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I GO UP INTO THE SUNSHINE.

Dwell who will in the valley below,
I go up into the sunshine!
Free and warm and glad is its play;
Light and life are in every ray,
Beaming to brighter and brighter day.
Let who will in the valley stay,
I go up into the sunshine!

Mists are down in the valley below,
Shadows and clouds wave to and fro,
The rivers go creeping sluggish and slow,
The very winds have forgotten to blow,
Dwell who will in the valley below,
I go up into the sunshine!

Down in the valley tread listless feet,
The pulses move with a measured beat,
The senses are steeped in a calm unmeet,
The soul is lulled by an opiate sweet,
Let who will to the valley retreat,
I go up into the sunshine!

On the golden summits the morning sings
Like a glad bird pluming her radiant wings;
The torrents flash like living things;
Sparkling and foaming the rivulet springs,
Every bright drop like a joy bell rings,
Away up there in the sunshine!

Then in the veins the life currents flow,
The heart with fervor is all aglow;
Trumpet calls the wild breezes blow,
The soul like a warrior forth would go.
Stay who will in the valley below,
I go up into the sunshine!

A PRAIRIE APPARITION.

"By heavens! I am lost!"

The words came from my lips under circumstances to excuse their seeming profanity. I was too much alarmed to be in a mood for blasphemy. I had strayed upon a prairie.

You may smile—ye who, except in the darkness of night, have never been out of sight of trees or houses—ye may scoff at the fear I confess having felt. Go to! Ye have never been in the midst of a treeless, trackless plain, with only the sky circle in sight—there alone and lost. That is a horror you have not had; and heaven spare you the sensation! It would drive mirth out of your mind—aye, wring a groan from the bottom of your breast.

That I was lost I no longer had doubt. Conviction had come, despite all my efforts to eschew it. I was on a prairie expanse, bounded but by the canopy of heaven. No hill, nor rock, nor tree to break the smooth monotony of its surface. For two hours I had been riding with eyes bent upon the sky line, in hopes of seeing something to guide me. I had been going, as I supposed, in a straight course; but I discovered my mistake on observing some red spots upon the grass. I knew it to be blood, and whence it came: from the antelope, whose carcass lay upon my horse. There I had killed the animal, packed it across the croup, and ridden away. Fancying myself at least ten miles off, I saw that I was back on the spot from which I had started!

How different my feelings now! I had killed the creature with a blow from the butt of a loaded whip—a *cuarto*—after riding it down with a relay of horses. It is a mode of chase peculiar to northern Mexico. On the steed I bestrode—my last and best—it had led me a long gallop. I had overtaken the animal, given it the *coup de grace*, and leaped down from my saddle to let out its blood. Triumphantly I turned to look for my hunting companions, whom I had left far behind. Far behind, indeed! They were out of sight. So, too, the hills, the rocks, ridges, and timber "islands," in short, everything that could serve me for a landmark. In prairie parlance, I was "out of sight of land." For all this I was not then alarmed, or not much. I could ride back upon my tracks; and this, after packing the pronghorn, I started to do. To try, I should rather say, for I soon found it impossible. The plain was a desert tableland, with turf hard as stone, the grass short and sunburnt. The hoofs of a horse scarce indented it, even going at a gallop. Besides, the antelope, in its last struggles to escape me, had doubled half a dozen times, carrying the chase through miles of eccentric zigzagging. To trace it back was beyond man's patience, even had there been hoof-marks discernible to make this possible. Which there were not; here and there only a scratch, where the iron had torn up the turf, through my horse suddenly turning.

What hope of my comrades coming up, or in sight? About as much as a man in mid-ocean, adrift in an oar-boat, might have of being seen from a ship. Such might pass within less than five miles of him, without any one aboard sighting the crown of his hat. I was in the middle of a prairie hundreds of miles in superficial extent. I knew it to be so. I had been upon it before, many times, in pursuit of a band of Indians, who had made a *maraud* upon the frontier settlements. Commanding a corps of Mounted Rifles, I had pursued the savages in discharge of duty. But then I was in company—at the head of my troop—with skilled trackers to guide us. Even then we had to go with caution; and on both occasions, to our chagrin, the red-skins escaped us. Now alone, and knowing myself lost, the sensation was altogether different. After first packing the game, and riding away, it had been sufficiently embarrassing. It grew quite painful as I passed on without sighting aught to guide me. When, after two hours' wandering, I came back to the same place, saw and recognized the blood drops, it was appalling. Then I had the surety of being lost. Then it was I made that speech savoring of profanity.

Quick followed the questions: "What am I to do? Dismount, and remain till morning?"

It was now near nightfall; about an hour or so before sunset, but no sun visible. There could be no object in riding farther that night. Unguided, I might go in the wrong direction. On the morrow there might be a sun in the sky that would point out the quarters of the compass.

I had made up my mind to remain, but lingered in the saddle, reluctant to alight. It seemed like surrendering to despair. Besides, I was suffering from thirst, as was also my horse. Should we make an effort to find water?

At that moment, as if answering me, the sky assumed a change. Its sombre, leaden surface became broken into ascending clouds, amidst which the sun burst suddenly forth—now low down. As the yellow light fell athwart the plain, I saw upon the horizon's edge a dark speck. Apparently a clump of aborescent *yuccas*, by the Mexicans termed *palmillas*. Such trees—true denizens of the desert—gave slight promise of the presence of water. Still, it would be better to sleep under their shade than *sub Jove*. Besides, they were a land-mark, and would serve for a point of departure in the morning.

I had gathered up my reins, and was about giving the spur to my tired steed, when a voice sounded in my ears, causing me to hold hard. It came from behind, pronouncing the hail, "hola!"

My horse answered it with a snort, and reared suddenly round. There was a woman upon the plain!

Though the hail had prepared me for this—for it was in a feminine voice—words cannot speak my amazement. But the moment before I had scanned the prairie round. It was level as the bed of a billiard-table, and smooth as a fresh-mown meadow. There was nothing on it inside a circle of ten miles diameter. And now within less than twenty paces stood a *woman?*

Whence had she come or sprung? Risen out of the earth? Or dropped down from heaven? I caught myself looking towards the sky, interrogating the clouds!

Was it in reality a woman? Or only a *lusus naturae*—some vision conjured up by my brain long laboring, or engendered by the atmosphere? I had been often mocked by the *mirage*. Was it a fresh trick this singular phenomenon was playing me?

Doubting, I rubbed my eyes, and set them straight upon the figure. As I have said, it was scarce twenty paces off, and, as I saw, approaching. Step by step it was coming on, drawing nigher and nigher. Surely it was no chimera of the brain, no atmospheric illusion, but flesh and blood. That, too, in its fairest form. Surely it was a woman.

Her words put the matter beyond doubt. "Adonde va, Ramon?" she said, still continuing to approach. "They are ready to start. They wonder at your being so late, and sent me to see if you were coming. What detained you? Why do you tarry there? Santissima!"

The final exclamation was in a tone very different from the rest of the speech. As she pronounced it she made a sudden stop, raising her hand to her forehead, to shade her eyes from the sun. With this low down, and directly behind me, she could but see some one on horseback. As her speech proved, she had mistaken me for another.

I saw that she was scanning me; and, without saying a word, awaited the result.

It came in a half suppressed cry, ending in the exclaim, "Valga me Dios!"

The tone told of surprise, chagrin, even anger. All these were commingled in her look.

She was turning, as if to retreat.

"Stay!" I said, entreatingly. "It is true I am not Ramon, but ——"

"But who?" she asked, again facing round, and coming to a firm stand, while a gun which she carried was dropped butt upon the ground.

"[redacted]
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As sh
she had d speaking, I occupied the time in taking a survey of her person.

The figure was that of a woman full grown, though not out of her girlhood. In size almost masculine, but only in this. In every line it displayed the true feminine contour; bust, body, arms, and limbs boldly, yet gracefully developed. The face was of a pronounced beauty, even when the scowl was upon it. In laughter it was lit up by a serrature of white teeth that showed neither speck nor flaw. These formed a pleasing contrast to a complexion more than sun-browned, further relieved by that damask blush on the cheeks which gives the picture-like look to damsels of a dark hue.

Around the face a framework of raven hair, spreading beyond both shoulders, and streaming like a torrent down her back, till it almost trailed the ground. Under this profuse *crinicre*, and partially concealed by it, was a costume corresponding to its wildness. Moccasins close fitting the feet; leggings continued to the knee, there met by a skirt fringed and bead-embroidered; above, a bodice elaborately adorned with stitching and stained porcupine quills; the whole surmounted by a circlet of painted plumes set off coquettishly on the head; pearl strings on the neck; wampum around the waist; with a profusion of bracelets on the arms and ancles; in short, the costume of a Comanche belle.

And yet she was evidently not an Indian. Half-blood she might be, by her complexion. But her speech—in Spanish almost pure—with something besides—betrayed the training of civilization.

As I gazed upon her face there came a thought into my mind that I had seen it before, somewhere, at some time, though where or when I could not imagine. It might be but fancy. Certainly I could never have encountered her in that guise, else I would not have forgotten her. The picture was too striking ever to fade from the memory.

Still contemplating it in wonder—wondering whether it was not all a dream—I was again roused to reality by her voice. She had ceased laughing, and once more assuming a stern look, asked—

"Who are you, sir?"

I answered by tossing back the skirt of a serape that hung over my shoulders. Feeling a little chill, after my hot gallop, I had put the garment on, so concealing my only article of dress that might be called distinctive. This was a shell jacket, the uniform of the corps of which I was captain. All my other apparel was Mexican pattern and fabric—even to the hat upon my head, which was a broad-brimmed sombrero. I wore it because it was the best kind of costume for the chase—for travel—for any sort of life upon the frontier. My horse, too, was caparisoned Mexican fashion. To all of which, with the sun in her eyes, was due the mistake she had made, in supposing me to be "Ramon."

As she looked upon the spread-eagle button an expression passed over her face that seemed anything but favorable to the wearer. On the contrary, it told of hostility. I might have expected so much, considering the tongue in which she spoke. The scene, the territory of Texas, where, after annexation to the United States, many Mexicans elected to remain. But, though submitting to the new regime, they preserved the old hatred in their hearts.

"You are alone?" she asked, glancing around the prairie to seek the answer for herself.

"I am alone, as you see."

"And what has brought you out here?"

"This," I said, pointing to the carcass on my croup. "I was led hither by the chase."

"Well, as you have succeeded in killing your game, I would advise you to go home with it."

"I would, if I could."

"Why can't you?"

"Because I don't know the way. I am lost!"

"Lost!"

"Yes. I have strayed. But will you be good enough to guide me?",

"Why should I?" she asked, disdainfully.

"Because you are a woman—a beautiful woman!"

I watched the effect; I soon saw that my flattering words were wasted.

"Vaya!" she exclaimed, with a haughty toss of the head. "Keep your soft speeches for those who are silly enough to listen to them. I was once vain, but not now. Ay de mi! 'Twas that brought me to——"

She suddenly interrupted herself, a shadow passing over her face. Perhaps some bitter remembrance! It appeared for a time to soften her; and thinking the [redacted]t opportune, I urged—

[redacted]u would not have me perish on the
? You will give me some clue to
ection I should take?"

[redacted]id not make immediate answer.
s apparently pondering on it. I
easy at her look, which had again
unrelenting. I feared a refusal.

agreeably surprised when she said,
enor; I will guide you. Follow
os vamos!"

e speaking she moved; and I set my horse in motion after her.

Suddenly she stopped, fixed her eyes upon the ground, and again appeared to reflect. I heard the word "no." It was low mattered, and not addressed to me, but as if spoken in soliloquy.

"She had repented her good intentions. A reward, and she will renew them."

With this idea I drew out my watch, and passed the guard chain over my head. Both were of gold. I detached a locket which contained a likeness. Handing her the watch and chain, I said:

"Take this as some recompense for the service you are about to render me."

"And that?" she asked, pointing to the locket, and holding out her hand. In greed she would grasp it too!

"I cannot part with that," I said, entreatingly. "It is of little value to any one save myself. You can have my serape—anything else but this."

"Caspita! you mistake me, senor. You men cannot understand the keenness of a woman's curiosity. I but wish to have a look at your lady-love; for no doubt she's the treasure you so jealously guard. Let me judge whether you are a man of taste."

I surrendered the trinket, though not without apprehension for its fate.

Touching the spring she laid it open, and looked inside. She had truly surmised. The locket contained the likeness of her to whom I had given my heart.

As her eye fell upon the picture she gave a start, and turning, regarded me with a fixed stare, while an expression I could not read came over her countenance.

"Is this the likeness of your novia, senor captain?" she asked.

I nodded an affirmative.

"Do you love her dearly?"

"As my life."

"And does she reciprocate your passion? She should."

"I hope so."

Again she gazed upon the portrait; then raised it to her lips, and kissed it! Her stern look was replaced by one tender and sad.

What could it mean! Surprise held me speechless. Before I had recovered from it, she came close up, put the locket into my hand, and threw the guard-chain over my neck, with the watch still appended!

"Take them back," she said. "Not from you, cavallero—nothing from you!"

"But you will guide me?" I may still follow you?"

"Not a foot farther. No—not a foot. To go with me would be to you certain death. Even now you are in danger. You must leave me. If seen here your life will not be worth a loaf of withered grass. A moment more—you have not a moment to lose. Go! go!"

"But whither? As I have told you, I am lost."

"Turn your eyes towards the setting sun. You see some trees yonder—far off on the horizon? Make straight for them. Once there, you will see other trees beyond; and again, beyond them a hill.—Strike for the hill—ascend it. From its top you can see the settlements. Leave me *capitan*. As I've told you, in my company there is danger. Aye, there may be death!

"How can that be? You are alone. I cannot believe——"

"Ah! you know not. I am not alone. There are those near whom you might well dread."

"Who?"

"No matter who. Spirits of the Prairie, and wicked ones. Invisible now they may at any moment appear, and——Go! I beseech you, go!"

"Senorita I cannot think of leaving you? You speak of trouble to yourself. Some misfortune has befallen you? I command a troop of brave men. Can I be of any service?"

"Some other time, perhaps," she said interrupting me; "not now. You must go—you must!"

Reluctant to part from her without further explanation—disbelieving in the danger—mystified—irresolute I still lingered.

Seeing it, she sprang to the head of my horse, grasped the rein, and turned his head towards the setting sun.

I noticed that she had a knife in her hand—for what purpose I could not divine.

Just then the horse gave a snort and jumped forward—his first bound almost shaking me from the saddle.

I clutched at the reins—hitherto out of my hands, and resting over the saddle-bow. I got hold of them, and hastily drew back. They came, but not tight along the neck of my steed. Instead I held but a piece of loose strap. The bridle on both sides had been cut!

The horse kept on in wild career, for I had now no control of him. With my voice I endeavoured to stay him, but in vain. The animal seemed maddened, as if stung by a tarantula.

The pieces of severed bridle were dangling, down from the bit-rings. Stretching forward, I tried to grasp them; but could not. I got hold of the headstall, however, and with this brought the horse to a halt.

Dismounting, I looked back. Great God! where was the woman? Since parting with her I could not have ridden more than two hundred paces. The sun was yet shining clear upon the plain. I could see its surface for miles in every direction. And again I was alone upon it!

"Surely it is a dream?"

This was my reflection, uttered aloud. But, while listening to the echo of my own voice, I saw that which caused me to say "No." I held in my hand the proof of reality—the broken bridle rein. And I also saw what had startled my horse, forcing him into that furious gallop. Blood was welling from his side.—Between his ribs I could perceive a punctured wound. I remembered the knife held in the hand of the girl.

Quickly knotting the severed reins, I sprang once more into the saddle, and commenced riding back. As near as I could, I headed towards the spot where I had parted with the woman. I rode at first in a straight line. But soon uncertain, I took to zigzagging, and was at length lost again. My brain was becoming bewildered, and I began to have thoughts of insanity.

To escape the weird fancies fast thickening around me, I once more faced westward—where the sun was still visible as also the clump of palmillas.

Heading my horse towards them, I gave him the spur in earnest; and in an hour after tied my bridle-rein around one of the trees.

It was now near night; too dark to see the other trees of which the woman had warned me. So, kindling a fire, I made supper on a steak from the prong-horn, and lay down to sleep under the shade of the palmillas.

Next morning, at sunrise, I descried the second copse, and rode on to it. There I saw the hill; and arriving at the summit, perceived to my great gratification, that I was upon known ground.

Before midday I reached the cantonment, where I found my brother officers—among them my late hunting companions—anxious about my safety. They were now curious to know the cause of my staying so long out, and overwhelmed me with inquiries. I was not in the mood to satisfy their curiosity. To say the truth, I was still under a superstitious scare. Besides, I feared relating an adventure savoring so much of the marvelous. I might be discredited, and myself made mock of.

Soon, circumstances arose that drove all such thoughts from my mind, replacing them by others more painful.

About an hour after my arrival at the Fort, a party of mounted men made their appearance on the parade-ground. Tney were settlers of all classes, armed and equipped for a fight. By their gestures it was evident that some event had arisen greatly to excite them.

It was soon communicated—a calamity such as is frequent upon the Texan frontier. A band of Indians had been making maurad upon the settlements, and these men were starting in pursuit.—They had come to claim the assistance of "the soldiers."

Where had the savages shown themselves? was the question put to the leader of the frontiersmen.

"At the hacienda of a Mexican, about fifteen miles from the fort."

"The name?" I asked, in trembling apprehension.

"Don Lorenzo Zavala. They've stripped the place of everything, murdered Don Lorenzo himself, with most of his domestics, and carried off his——."

"Oh, God!" I groaned in agony, without waiting the word. I knew it would be "daughter."

It was—she whose likeness was in the locket borne upon my breast.

I felt cowed, crushed, weak almost to fainting. Only for an instant. Then anger overmastering, roused me to the energy of action.

I stayed for no further details, but at once ordered "Boots and saddles!" to be sounded. In ten minutes after, we were on the trail of the despoilers.

At first there was a trail, easily taken up. Fast we followed it—I with saddened heart and brain half maddened. My heart felt yet more sad, my brain madder, when the trail became lost—as it at length did. It disappeared from a dry, desert plain, where neither hoof of horse nor track of man was discernable. It was the prairie on which I had late strayed, when in pursuit of the pronghorn.

We crossed and quartered it in every direction; spent two days in exploring its pathless wilds; but met neither white man nor Indian—saw not a sign of either.

With empty haversacks and hungry stomachs—suffering from thirst, too—we were compelled to return to the Fort.

This was now the third time the red freebooters had attacked that same frontier settlement, made a successful *coup*, and escaped across this accursed prairie. The newspapers had spoken disparagingly of myself and soldiers, alleging that we did not do our duty in protecting the citizens. They made reference to our fondness for the chase, adding that we gave a great deal more time to the hunting of pronghorns than the pursuing of redskins.

You may conceive the feeling of my brethren in arms, officers as well as men. To them it was a chagrin, but to me far more. My cup of bitterness had an ingredient of sorrow that none of them could know.

We had returned to the cantonment only to reprovision, give our horses a short rest, and again off. I had no thought of giving up the pursuit of the savages till I had recovered *her* if alive—or, if dead—avenged her.

It was night, and I had lain down my leathern *batre*, if possible to get a snatch of sleep. We were to start by early daybreak. It was close upon midnight, and my men were all abed, save the sentries—one stationed outside the door of my quarters. I tried to sleep but could not. Both heart and brain were too much excited; the latter giving way to weird fancies. Among them was that strange apparition of the prairie—spirit or woman, whichever it may have been. I could not help connecting her with the affair now before us; though in what way she could be concerned with a maraud of red Indians it was difficult to perceive, True, I had seen her in Indian garb; but for all that she was not Indian. Who were the "Spirits of the Prairie?" Might it not be the very band that had baffled us? Ah! might not Ramon be the ravisher?

It may seem strange I only thought of this after returning disappointed, and that I had not gone back to the place where the woman had been encountered. The explanation is, we had trusted to trackers, guides of great experience and skill and who led us in a very different direction.

I had now made up my mind to seek the spot where I had seen the prairie apparition, and I faucied I could easily find it. The hill, the copse of timber, the clump of pamilias—these, with the direction of the setting sun, would give me guidance. I would go that way now.

While astretch on my camp bedstead, thus cogitating, I became aware of a slight disturbance outside. It was an exchange of speech between the sentry and some one who had come up, and interrupted him on his rounds.

The colloquy was short, only a few words; and I could perceive that those spoken by the intruder were in a feminine voice.

I had no time to give way to wonder. Soon the sentry stood in the doorway of my chamber. After saluting me, he said:

"A woman, wishes to speak with you captain, on business of importance—very pressing, she says, else I shouldn't——"

"Show her in to the next room," I said, without waiting for the man to finish his apologetic speech.

Springing to my feet, and hastily dressing, I passed into the apartment that served as my sitting-room. There a light was still burning. The woman was before me, standing just inside the door. She was a Mexican, judging by her dress and, by the same token, of the class called *poblona*. She wore the shortskirted *enagua* with a *rebozo* over her head, covering her face, almost to the complete concealment of her features. The flash of a fiery eye was alone visible. She was of tall stature, her form aproaching *embonpoint*, withal indicating a very graceful contour under the drapery that shrouded it.

I had no time to make more minute observations. Almost on the instant of my appearance she said:

"Senor captain, you have lost your sweetheart?"

Surprise at the interogatory prevented me from making reply. She did not wait for it, but went on:

"What will you give to recover her?"

"Anything—everything—my whole fortune, if need be!"

Carrambo! A gallant speech! And he who makes it deserves to be rewarded. Come with me, then, and you shall once more see your *novia*."

"Safe?"

"That depends on time. She is safe as yet. To-morrow I might not answer for her. Once I am missed—but come! If you would rescue her, there's not an hour nay, not a moment—to be lost. How soon can you have your troopers in the saddle?"

"In twenty minutes at most."

"That will do. Give the order at once."

"But who——"

"*Santisima!* Don't stay to question. What matters who does you a service, so long as it is done? Ha! you still hesitate! Then look. Now do you remember me?"

She tossed back the robozo, discovering a countenance no one could look upon and ever again forget. It was that I had seen upon the prairie; the profuse *chevelleure* that framed it no longer hanging loose under a circlet of painted plumes, but "clubbed, and coufined by a comb.

"Quick, captain!" she cried. I tell you there's no time to be lost. Do you still hesitate?"

"What proof have I that you are not going to lead me into an ambush."

"*Vaya?*" she exclaimed, with a scornful toss of her head. "What proof do you require? Were you not in my power three days ago? And did I not then release you? Look at the locket—which I perceive still hanging on your breast. There you have the proof of my fidelity—the key to all my actions. If you want more I will give it. On the prairie I mistook you for a man named Ramon.—You remember that? All lies in one little word—jealousy. Now do you comprehend me?"

"I think I do."

"There's no time for talking. If you don't act at once she will be lost—your sweetheart, and what is still sweeter to me—revenge!"

The final word was enunciated with an emphasis that told of intense passion further accentuated by the angry flashing of her eyes. With a gesture of impatience she added:

"Are you ready to go?"

"I will be in twenty minutes."

In less time I was in the saddle and out upon the plain, the strange woman by my side, with about fifty troopers filing behind.

It was a moonless night; but there were stars, and these gave us guidance—she leading them for the direction. We traveled fast, most of the time, going at a gallop. This, by her advice, which I was but too eager to follow.

"We must get there before morning," she said, "before I am missed. If not we may still be too late."

I understood her meaning, and commanded the "double quick."

Day was nigh dawning, when we at length came too a halt. But the moon had now arisen, her beams bathing the prairie in soft silvery light, disclosing its surface to our view for miles around.—We saw nothing afar, but at our feet something that stayed us. It was a dark line, apparently a crack in the plain. In depth and width it was not more than an ordinary ditch; but as the eye followed its course it appeared to get deeper and wider.

"Dismount your soldiers!" saih the woman in a whisper. "Let them leave their horses here; they will be better without them."

I did as directed, without a word, except commanding my men to go afoot. A few took charge of the horses; the rest stood in readiness for what was to follow—whatever this should be.

It was soon made known by the guide dropping down into the dark cleft, where she was almost hidden from our view.—The mystery of her former disappearance as well as apearance—the strange suddenness of both—were now made known to me. We were at the entrance of a *barranca*-one of the singular chasms peculiar to the Mexican table-land stretching miles across the plain, yawning deep into the earth, unseen, till you stand upon the very edge of its escarpment. They begin in a mere crack, or *arrago*, the conduit of rains; growing deeper and wider as they descend towards some clift enclosed stream.

It was into this the woman had dropped, as into a trap on the stage of a theatre.

"After me!" she said, on descending; "keep close; tread lightly; and don't speak a word to one another. Make the slightest noise, and the Spirits of the Prairie may be roused. If so, then—— Hu sh! come on!"

As she finished speaking her head sank below the level of the prairie, and I saw she was keeping along the cleft, in the direction toward which it deepened.

Letting myself down, as she had done, I commanded my men to follow me.

Soon we fell into single file; so descending through a gap that gradually grew deeper, without becoming much wider. Its jaws on each side rose precipitous above our heads, until we saw but a streak of sky dimly discernible by the light of the moon.

For several hundred yards we continued to descend. Then the chasm opened, our path debouching into a ravine of greater width, with a torrent rushing along its bed. Into this we turned, followed our guide, who again cautioned us to silence.

The ravine soon became a valley with an opened meadow-like expanse, and trees growing around it. On its edge the woman stopped, and pointed to a spot overshadowed by the precipice rising above them.

Now, Senor captain," she said, "you see those are tents. In one of them is Dona Sacramenta Zavala. Go on and rescue her!"

I was aware of what the woman meant. On the way she had told me all.

With stealth we advanced upon the tents. Inside we found men—more than a dozen—and in one of them a woman. It was Sacramenta; she was safe!

Among the men was "Ramon," the chief of the robber band—white men and Mexicans—who, in the guise of Indians, had been accustomed to make descent upon the settlements of Texas. The friendship of a foster sister saved my Sacramenta, for in this relationship stood the "Apparition of the Prairie." No doubt, other motives had to do with it; as she herself admitted, jealousy and revenge. The robber chief was becoming too fond of his captive. Fear alone had hindered him from accomplishing her ruin; fear of the strange woman who led to their lair.

The dr ama had its *denouement* in some wholesale hanging. We carried the brigands back, and delivered them over to justices with their crimes already recorded, it was a short shrift for them; and all ended their career upon the scaffold.

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID.

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