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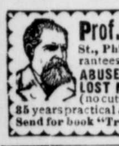

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THE KNIFE THROWERS

By FREDERIC VAN RENSSELAER DEY,
Author of "Not Like Other Men," Etc.

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If ever a man hated deception of any sort, Craig Wyndham was one. The interview with Carmen, the exercise and the conscious force of his own strength had given him a new and strange confidence, and while he was returning from the park he made up his mind that there should be no more of that. With the knowledge he now possessed he believed that he could not only defy the machinations of Carlos Escudera, but that he need no longer pretend friendship for a man he hated; also he resolved that he would make no effort to conceal from him or his followers—if he possessed any—what he should do that day. In other words, he felt entirely competent to care for and protect Carmen Pendleton. There may be some who read who have had this same sensation and can understand better than it can be described here the sensations by which he was actuated.

It was in consequence of these several emotions—if they may be defined by that word—that at the appointed hour of noon Craig appeared at the door of the hotel where the sister of his friend was stopping and, without any attempt at concealment, drove away with her and the duenna. Nor was it with surprise that, as they drove up the avenue, he was saluted with raised hat and flourishing bow by Carlos Escudera.

Carmen's seat in the carriage was such that she did not see the Mexican, and it was therefore supposable that the Mexican did not see her. The duenna, being on the front seat, was, of course, unseen, and Wyndham smiled when he realized that after all it was only his own movements that Escudera and his hirelings were watching. As yet Escudera did not even suspect the presence of his cousin in the city.

At Mount St. Vincent they sought a far corner of the restaurant. The duenna, Maria, was given an adjoining table. A tip to the waiter made it impossible for other guests to occupy the nearby tables at an hour when there were so many that were vacant in other parts of the room, and thus Wyndham felt confident that they would be undisturbed.

They had been seated scarcely half an hour and had not yet got beyond mere generalities in their talk when there came a most unexpected interruption.

Wyndham, who sat with his back toward the door, saw Carmen make a sudden start and then turn deathly pale, and he heard her exclaim, almost under her breath:

"Dios mio! Carlos esta aqui!"

He understood her words as well as if she had spoken in English, but he remained perfectly calm and unmoved. He did not even turn his head, but he could hear the footsteps of a person approaching them, and his ears were so well attuned to time that he recognized the step of Carlos Escudera.

"Be calm, Carmen," he said rapidly and in a low voice. "Remember that you are not in Mexico now."

She recovered herself instantly, but the next moment Escudera was beside them.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, senorita," he said coldly in Spanish, ignoring utterly the presence of Wyndham. "I did not know that my fiancee was in the city."

Wyndham saw that he was deadly pale and that he was struggling with all his strength of will to speak calmly. This man, usually so self possessed, for once had lost his power of self repression. His eyes seemed sunken back in his head. His white teeth gleamed ominously under his black mustache. His hands trembled with excitement. Craig thought, somewhat vaguely—for he was intent upon watching the man—how fortunate it was that Carmen had told him that she was affianced to Escudera! He realized in that moment how appalling the statement would have been had he not already been fortified against it. At the same instant he decided that it was best to treat the Mexican in a perfectly natural manner. Anybody who has found himself at some time in a critical position realizes how rapidly one can and does think at such moments.

He sprang to his feet before Escudera had ceased speaking and exclaimed in a tone that evidenced both surprise and pleasure, for Escudera did not know that he understood Spanish.

"Hello, Escudera! This is an unexpected pleasure. I supposed you were sleeping the sleep of the just after last night. Permit me, Miss Pendleton, to present my friend, Senor Escudera. He comes from your own country, by the way. Escudera, Miss Pendleton."

It was a shot that told, for it staggered Escudera utterly.

If such a thing were possible, he became a shade whiter than before, and for once in his life he was outdone in presence of mind.

It was clever, too, on the part of Wyndham, that assumption for Carmen of the name of Pendleton, for it explained without further words their presence there together.

Escudera bowed with a gesture that was truly Mexican, and he smiled with an insolence that he did not try to conceal, and while he bowed and smiled he made another heroic effort to control himself. In that, however, he was only partly successful, for he still ignored Wyndham. He could not play the game with the cool head of his antagonist. There were mileposts beyond which he could not travel.

"I do not think that I require an introduction to you by this fellow or by anybody," he said in Spanish, believing that Wyndham could not understand him, "but I do require an explanation of your presence here."

"You have it," she replied calmly, "in the letter you sent to me announcing the death of Burr Pendleton, in which you refrained from telling me the truth."

It was a delicate method of telling him that he had lied to her, and it angered him beyond endurance.

"Shall I tell you why I deceived you?" he demanded hotly, forgetting that he had demanded an explanation and that instead he was making one. "It was because I respected your feelings; because I believed the knowledge of how your half brother came to his death would shock you; because already I knew the name of the man who killed him and only awaited evidence to convict him of the crime, and that man, the man who killed Pendleton, is your present companion—this man who sits opposite you at the table."

Wyndham rose slowly from his seat and, taking a step forward, confronted Escudera.

"Senor Escudera," he said, also speaking Spanish, "it is my misfortune or good fortune, whichever you choose to call it, to understand you. It is certainly my good fortune to recognize in you a despicable scoundrel. Will you leave us quietly, for the sake of the lady, or shall I call"—

He did not have time to complete what he would have said, for the Mexican, who now lost every vestige of self control, started back and with a rapid motion thrust his right hand into the opening of his waistcoat.

In an instant it was out again, and something—even the quickness of the eye could not determine what it was—gleamed in his grasp.

The hand was drawn back. Carmen uttered a low cry. Wyndham started forward, for he knew perfectly well the meaning of that gesture, the one that had hurled death into the heart of Burr Pendleton, and he intended to seize the Mexican before he could cast the terrible missile. But Escudera's wrist was seized from behind, the weapon was torn with a sudden wrench from his grasp, and he stood before them like a writhing serpent whose fangs have been drawn.

Nobody had noticed Maria, the duenna. Her presence was utterly forgotten, but she was a Mexican Indian woman, and she knew the man who had interrupted the luncheon. During the scene she stole behind him, as if she anticipated what he would do, or suspected that he might do it, and when he drew back his hand to cast the weapon she tore the implement from him and left him harmless.

In the excess of passion under which the Mexican struggled it is not strange that his rage turned upon the woman who had disarmed him. He wheeled like lightning and seized her by the throat with both hands, but his fingers had scarcely time to tighten before

He seized her by the throat.

two powerful arms reached around him, one on either side. His wrists were seized in a grasp that was tenfold stronger than his own, his fingers relaxed and loosed their hold, his arms were drawn resistlessly behind him, and he was pushed unceremoniously though not rapidly toward the door.

The waiter, who happened to be the only witness to all that had occurred, obeying a nod from Wyndham, preceded them and opened the side entrance, and there Craig lifted the Mexican bodily from his feet and dropped him outside. Then he closed the door and returned quietly to the table.

"I think, Carmen," he said—"I think we may now proceed with our luncheon."

And she looked at him with eyes that spoke all too plainly of the admiration she felt.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

You can find almost any kind of boy except the one whose sympathies in a fight between a cat and dog are with the cat.

HE KILLED THE CASE

FATAL EFFECT OF BROTHER SPEARS' MUSICAL TESTIMONY.

After the Jury Heard It They Acquitted the Naughty Children Who Laughed In Church and Disturbed the Religious Assemblage.

A well known lawyer of Lancaster, Mo., related the following legal incident: One of the most original lawyers I ever met in my life was Sam Dysart, who many years ago was a resident of our county. Sam was a born humorist and could have made his fortune in the lecture field. When he lived up our way, he was engaged on one occasion to defend a lot of boys and girls charged with disturbing a religious assembly out in the country. "Laughing and giggling" is the way the information read. The case was tried before Squire A. C. Bailey, a good old man who has long since gone to his final reward. Like all cases of the sort, it attracted an immense crowd from the vicinity of the alleged outrage.

T. C. Tadlock prosecuted, and he was instructed by the church people to spare no pains to convict the disturbers, who were very much frightened by being dragged into court. All the defendants were children of good families, and it was their first offense. They candidly admitted they laughed out in church, and the state insisted that by their own mouths they were condemned.

Brother Tice Spears, a righteous man of Puritanic type, was the main prosecuting witness. He had conducted the service, and he testified that the peace was sadly disturbed by the unseemly behavior of the "rioters." After he told his story in chief he sat down with clasped hands, waiting for the defendants' attorney to begin on him. He didn't have long to wait. The examination began like this:

"Brother Spears, you led the meetin' that night?"

"I did, sir."

"You prayed?"

"I did, sir."

"And preached?"

"I tried to."

"And sang?"

"I sang."

"What did you sing?"

"'There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood,' sir."

Here Mr. Dysart pulled a hymnbook from his pocket and handed it to the witness with the remark:

"Please turn to that song, Brother Spears."

The witness did so.

"That's what you sang that night?"

"It is, sir."

"Well, stand up and sing it now, if you please."

"What!"

"You heard what I said, Brother Spears."

"But I can't sing before this sort of crowd."

"Brother Spears," with much apparent indignation, "do I understand that you refuse to furnish legitimate evidence to this jury?"

"No, no—but, you see"—

"Your honor," said Mr. Dysart, "I insist that the witness shall sing the song referred to just as he did on the night of alleged disturbance. It is a part of our evidence and very important. The reason for it will be disclosed later on."

There was a long jangle between the lawyers, and the court finally ordered the witness to get up and sing.

"And mind you, Brother Spears," said Dysart seriously, "you must sing it just as you did that night. If you change a note, you will have to go back and do it all over again."

The witness got up and opened the book. There is a vast difference between singing to a congregation in sympathy with you and a crowd of courtroom habitues. Brother Spears was painfully conscious of the fact. You know how these old time hymns are sung in the backwoods settlements? You begin in the basement and work up to the roof and then leap off from the dizzy height and finally finish the line in the basement.

That's the way the witness did. He had a good voice—that is, it was strong. If Gabriel's trumpet ever gets out of whack he could utilize that voice and wake the dead just as readily. It seemed to threaten the window lights. The crowd didn't smile, it just yelled with laughter. The jurymen bent double and almost rolled from their seats. The court bit his corncob pipe harder and looked solemn. It wasn't any use. There were only two straight faces in the house. One belonged to a deaf man and the other to Sam Dysart. The singer finished and sat down. He looked tired. Sam immediately excused him.

When the time for speechmaking came Sam remarked to the jury: "If you gentlemen think you could go to one of Brother Spears' meetings and behave better than you have here, why you may be justified in convicting these boys and girls."

That was all he said, but it gave the jury lots to think about. They brought in a verdict of not guilty, with the request that Brother Spears sing another song. But that gentleman had gone home and court adjourned.—Macon Republican.

Look the Other Way.

There are many thousand fathers who are terrorizing their little sons by seeing too much. Let all such learn to look the other way at times. Don't see everything your boy does. Give him some latitude and longitude. Don't keep the little fellow in a shiver of apprehension lest you find out some peccadillo. He must have his fun or die. If you see too much, he grows thin. Look the other way.—New York Press.

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