# CARMEN OF THE RANCHO

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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**SYNOPSIS**

Don Alfredo, wealthy, Spanish owner of a Southern California rancho, refuses to heed several warnings of a raid by a band of outlaw, Sierra Indians. One day after he has finally decided to seek the protection of the nearby mission for his wife and family, the Indians strike. Don Alfredo is killed and his two young daughters are torn from the arms of the family's faithful maid, Monica, and are carried away to the hills. Padre Pasqual, missionary friend of the family, arrives at the ruins of the ranch.

**CHAPTER II—Continued**

—2—

"Padre, first make sure bad Indians are gone. They might kill you," cautioned Diego.

"No, no," exclaimed the padre, as near impatience as he ever allowed himself to stray. "That is nothing, nothing!"

"They might kill me, Padre," suggested Diego darkly.

As the wind, blowing in a gust, dies suddenly into calm, the mission veteran changed. "True, Diego," he murmured, gently reproachful of himself. "You might be in danger. Remain here, hidden in the wheat. I will go forward and report if there is danger."

Both men were striving for their own ends: the padre to keep his devoted servant from harm, Diego to keep his infirm master from harm.

"Tell me, Diego," said the padre, agitated, "can you see anyone?"

"I see a woman and a boy. They are fighting. She holds him and beats him with a stick."

"It is Monica," said Diego in his staccato accents. "Now the boy gets loose. He is running. She chases. He is running into the wheat to hide. Slower, Padre. Have care! You will fall!"

Protests were lost on the aged man. With his hands outstretched in eager appeal as he stumbled on he sought to stay the angry Monica. She was already in the tall wheat, furiously pursuing her escaping victim. The two were running down the trail through the grain which must soon bring them into the padre's arms when his shout reached the ears of both pursued and pursuer.

The Boy, seeing the advancing priest, halted, dumfounded. But only for an instant—then, tearing into the tall grain with the swiftness of a rabbit, he could only be followed with the eye as the swaying wheat heads told of his flight.

Monica dashed ahead. Even the sight of the padre did not check her hysteria. "Diego!" she cried loudly to the padre's neophyte. "After him! Do not let him go!"

Diego stared but made no move. He looked at the rapid parting of the grain heads that marked the boy's race to escape; but most of all he stared at the strange Monica in front of him. Her scant gown was in rags. Her features were distorted with grief and rage. Her eyes, strained and tear stained, bulged in their sockets, and still she shouted at Diego in the Indian tongue as she pointed after the fleeing boy.

"Woman!" exclaimed Padre Pasqual. "Woman!" he repeated in sterner command, for she scarcely heeded him. "What are you doing? Who are you?"

The half-crazed creature suddenly looked at him. The stick dropped from her grasp. She clasped both hands to her haggard face and with a dreadful cry threw herself prostrate on the ground at the padre's feet.

"Who—who," gasped the sorely bewildered priest, "are you?"

"Padre," said the stolid Diego collectedly, "do you not know? It is Monica."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the padre. "Monica whom I have known for so many years—whom I baptized! Aid her, Diego. Rise, my poor child. Rise! Speak!"

"Monica!" he exclaimed as Diego helped the sobbing woman to her uncertain feet. "Monica! What is the meaning of this? What is the meaning of this? Where are your master and mistress?"

Monica, falling again to her trembling knees, lifted her face as she caught at his right hand. "Woe is me, Padre! My master cruelly slain! My mistress shamed unto death. Carmelita, Terecita, stolen by the wicked Indians. Only Alfredito left. Woe to Los Alamos!"

Stunned, the missioner and the neophyte listened to the horrible recital of the murders of the day before.

Padre Pasqual listened to the end. He stood infirmly, leaning again on his staff with heart and mind lifted to heaven, poured out his grief in prayer to his Maker.

The awesome spectacle of the venerable man, heart-broken but silent, in petition before his God steadied Monica.

"At last," she said, gasping with emotion, "the soldiers came. Alfredito brought them. The house is burned; the quarters and the granary are burned. They rode away to pursue the savages; Alfredito rode with them. Oh, Padre, he is so brave, the poor boy. He worshiped his mother and his little sisters. What—what will become of them? The soldiers followed the trail far into the hills, but in the mountains the Indians fought and wounded so many soldiers with their arrows, the soldiers had to come back. They buried the poor vaqueros on the hill and carried the body of Don Alfredo to the presidio. And my dear mistress, she is lost, lost. And my lovely, lovely children! My Carmelita lost forever!"

"And Dona Juana, where is she now?" asked the padre patiently.

"In the home of her sister, Dona Teresa, at the presidio. I walked all the way back here today to find, if possible, some garments for my unhappy mistress."

"And had Don Alfredo no warning of this attack?" pursued the padre.

Monica almost shrieked as she clasped her hands. "Warning upon warning, Don Alfredo had! For a week I warned him. The cook told me the attack would come. I begged my master to flee with the family to the presidio. He only laughed. 'Have I not had for a time the boy of the chief Sobriano here in my household?' he would say to me. 'Sobriano will control the young men. He will not allow them to attack us. We are as safe as Los Alamos, Monica, as they are at the presidio.'

"Only Sunday night the cook said to me: 'Tomorrow they come!' I told Don Alfredo. The Senora begged him to heed the warnings. He was impatient but he yielded. 'Tomorrow morning, then, we will go, querida mia,' he told her. And then—next morning when he went to get the horses they swept down on us. Woe to Los Alamos!"

Diego asked a question—his first—in the Indian tongue. Monica answered in Spanish. "It was that boy," she cried, "that Indian fiend, Yosco! Still my master would have escaped with his life but for him. When Don Alfredo and the two vaqueros saw the Indians come they fled to the house for firearms. Yosco, accursed boy, barred the front door against them! They could not get into the house; they were slaughtered, all three, on the portico before the barred door—barred by this young fiend. And this morning, back he came to steal the silver in the house. I caught him. It is he that I was beating, and now he has escaped."

The three moved slowly on through the wheat toward the ranch house.

**CHAPTER III**

Too cold and too hungry to sleep, Bowie sat looking into his dying campfire, speculating on what still might be ahead of him and his companions. His thoughts reverted less willingly to what he had left behind: the acute agony of thirst, the steady gnawing of hunger, the fiendish heat of the desert, the killing of the last pony for food.

But at least the horror of this was behind him. The mountains could not be worse; they might be better.

The sky was overcast and the night air, drifting silently down from the higher Sierras, chilled him to the bone. On the other side of the campfire embers, stretched asleep on the rocky ground, lay a lanky Missourian, the scout, Ben Pardaloe, with his feet so close to the fire that it seemed as if they might blaze up any minute. His sleep was fitful, like that of a famished man, unlike his normal sleep with which Bowie, after three weeks of hard camp life, had grown too familiar. Pardaloe, tall and gaunt, twisted and turned, drew up his legs and thrust them desperately out again. From his open mouth there issued sighs and burbles. Even the familiar snore was lacking; Ben was too weak to snore.

The third man, Bob Simms, a half-breed Creek Indian, lay sleeping more quietly a little apart from the restless scout — not, perhaps, more inured to hunger and hardship than his fellow adventurers but certainly more stoical in endurance.

Hunger and the piercing night air presently roused Bowie from a troubled sleep. He started off to find kindling chips.

Later, while he was stumbling along in the faint light of dawn, feeling here and there as his feet kicked into fragments of bark and rotten branches fallen from trees, he became aware of an object distantly silhouetted against the eastern horizon. Noiselessly he sank flat to the ground to look and listen. He thought the thing might be alive. Some moments passed before he could determine. Luckily he had it between him and the light. Patience and the rapidly growing dawn rewarded his vision. He was able to see the object more clearly. Nor was he long in identifying with it a pair of antlers. Caution was necessary. The adventurers were starved men. They had not tasted meat for ten days nor food for more than three days; that buck meant relief from hunger pangs.

He crept stealthily back to camp, if such their halting place for the night might be called. Since sleep is the only substitute for food and drink his companions were still asleep. He shook the scout carefully and with a cautioning "Hist!" The suppressed sound woke the Indian also. Ben Pardaloe stirred. "Wake up, Ben," whispered Bowie. "A buck. Wake up, Simmie," he added to the Creek, "a buck."

Not a word answered him; no further word was needed. The two men were on their feet together. They picked up their cold rifles. "Which way?" snorted Pardaloe, peering about.

"To the east in the chaparral, likely hiding from panthers. Don't waste ammunition. We've none to spare."

"All right, Simmie," murmured Pardaloe, addressing the Creek by his nickname, "you stalk him."

Minute after minute passed, with Bowie and the scout anxiously waiting. The mere prospect of food had so excited the dormant salivary glands of the hungry men that each minute after the first was almost torture. Yet both knew no more could be done than the Indian would do. If the scout Pardaloe tried to help the stalk he might only spoil things. They must wait and lick their hopeful chops.

"What's keeping him half an hour like this?" grumbled Pardaloe.

"Half an hour nothing, Ben. Patience," counseled Bowie.

The words had barely left his lips when they heard the distant crack of a rifle.

In a moment both men were running in the direction from which the report had come.

It was some job to keep up with Pardaloe's long legs. He was as graceful as a camel, but the ground he could cover in an emergency was a caution. When, by dint of calling and answering, two hungry men found the Indian, he was actively cutting up the handsome buck.

The scout needed no instructions. He put down his rifle and began hunting chips for a fire. Bowie got his flint and tinder ready.

"No, I don't feel like traveling today. Been traveling for three weeks now. Today I put away for eatin'. What say, Injun?"

Pardaloe spoke after the first hour of a repast that promised to last

"Monica, what is the meaning of this?"

all day. "I'll ask you one question, Henry," continued Pardaloe after getting no response from Simmie, and speaking now to Bowie. "Be we or been't we in Californy?"

Bowie was disposing of a venison shank. "Ben," he said reassuringly, "we 'be.' Where did you think you 'be'?"

Pardaloe, gnawing at what was left on the bone of his venison saddle, spoke at ease. "Well, up to about a hour ago I thought I was in hell. But I guess this must be Californy. Things seem to be comin' our way since Simmie brought down this deer. Now, boys," he added precatorily, "hang on to every scrap of this meat—every scrap; might not sight another for a week. Mountains is big around here, they sure are. The highest is behind us. And I say, now while our stomachs is full, push on till we get down where there's plenty of game. We're started downhill but we're too high yet by near a mile, and going downhill a mile is a long way unless you fall down."

Pardaloe stretched out on the ground. "If I had a pipe of tobacco I'd call this a fair enough country. But there's too much snow on them high fellers—nights are too blamed cold. Well, Henry"—so the scout addressed Bowie—"if you say go, it's go; but give me one more hour at this deer—then I'll make a start.

Lazily, but with a more hopeful view of life, the little party of Texans made their way down the western slope of the Sierras. The difference between empty stomachs and full stomachs cheered them on their way, and the substantial remains of their feast they carried in sacks, crudely skewered from the buck's hide.

It was a rough and forbidding terrain they were following. "Ain't seen hide nor hair of a livin' critter all day," Ben rambled on as the sun sank in the west. "Well, we chewed dry leather three days after we finished your pony, Henry," he said to Bowie. "Guess fresh deer hide will keep us goin'. Why ain't this a good place to camp for the night, right here? What say, Henry? Here's water handy."

Bowie was willing to camp, and the peaceful Simmie never interposed objection on a minor point.

The spot they had reached was close to the brink of a long ledge that broke away below them into an open flat. A mountain brook gurgled hard by. They built a fire, laved, drank, and opened their reserves of raw venison. As they sat peacefully around their frugal fire they mourned for the tobacco they had squandered in more prosperous days.

Deprived of this, their only consolation, the three indulged in a Barmecide feast of the longed-for weed. The scout descanted on the beauties of well-cured Kentucky leaf crushed in the pipe; Simmie spoke up modestly for willow Killickinnic; Bowie thought just one cigar—only one—would make him perfectly happy. It was while this futile discussion was going on that Simmie, lying, like his companions, on his back, pricked up his ears. Next he sat up and began to look around. "What's a matter, Injun?" asked Pardaloe indolently.

"What's that noise?" asked the half-breed in turn.

"You tell," retorted the scout. Bowie, lost in thought, only heard the questions and listened for sounds. Neither of the whites heard anything, but as the Indian walked quietly toward the edge of the long ledge both men sat up. Simmie, behind a pine tree, looked down the great canyon and into the west. His instinct was not at fault. He beckoned cautiously to his companions. When they joined him, he whispered to Pardaloe to scatter the embers of the fire, come back and lie down.

Peering together from this partial cover, the Texan could make out at a considerable distance below a straggling procession of men on ponies, winding their way up the long canyon grade. Reaching a wide-open space after some further travel, the procession broke and its horsemen made ready for a halt. For a long time the hidden men watched the scene with rapt attention, speaking in whispers.

"Injuns," said Pardaloe at length. After a further pause Bowie turned to crawl back from the brink of the ledge, signaling to his men to follow. Reaching a point where they could speak more freely, the talk began. Bowie spoke first.

"Indians, sure enough."

"And a bunch of 'em," added the scout.

"What do you make of 'em, Simmie?" The question was addressed to the Creek.

"I'd have to get closer to make things out. Looks to me like a raiding party, maybe heading for their mountain hide-out."

"What makes you think it's a raiding party?" asked Bowie.

"Most of 'em don't know how to handle their ponies. Looks as if they've been run off, eh, Ben? And no squaws as far as I can see. Some of them are carrying loot," he added. "You can see them unloading stuff. And there was some mix-up at the front when they halted."

"All right, what we going to do?" asked Pardaloe, appealing to Bowie.

"Looks as if they're heading for us, doesn't it?" returned Bowie. "If they keep on up the canyon they're bound to run foul of us. If we turn back we've got a good ten miles of a climb to get away from them. We never could do it—they've got horses . . . I'll tell you, Simmie; get in close and make sure what they're doing."

Simmie was gone a long time, so long that the white men began to wonder. Then they heard his careful footsteps.

"Thought they'd caught you, Simmie," said Bowie. "What did you find out?"

"Not much more than I knew before. It's a war party on their way home — not a squaw anywhere around. Some of those ponies have Spanish saddles. They've raided a rancho."

"Any sign of wounded?"

Simmie shook his head. "If they had any wounded they must have died on the way up—no sign of any now. They've been chased—that's sure. Some of those ponies are in bad shape—they've been run to death."

"Horses!" boomed Pardaloe, but cautiously. He licked his chops. "We've got to get a chance at them." He peered at Bowie. "What we going to do, Henry?"

Bowie turned to Simmie. "How many of them are there?"

"Near as I could count, fifty or fifty-five."

"The question is, how to keep out of their way," said Bowie, reflecting. "If they come up this way in the morning we'll have to mix with them whether we want to or not. Shall we turn back or try to dodge past 'em tonight?"

"Injuns got good ears," observed Pardaloe grimly.

"But no guns," retorted Bowie, still thinking. "I believe," he went on, "we can get around them tonight without losing any hair.

"They've got what looks to me like a couple of prisoners," remarked Simmie casually.

"Prisoners?" echoed Bowie. "Why didn't you say so before?"

"I might be all wrong," continued the impassive Creek. "I wanted to get closer to make sure, but I thought I was down there too long."

Bowie acted as if an electric shock had galvanized him. "Hell!" he snapped testily. "That's a horse of another color. I've heard these California Indians are close to cannibals. They may have camped to make a meal of their prisoners. We've got to look into this—come along."

*(TO BE CONTINUED)*

# Sportlight

By GRANTLAND RICE

"I like," said the Duffer serenely,
"To read of the faults in this game,
Of faults that are almost obscenely
Blockading the highway of fame,
Of those who are stymied or bunkered,
Who don't pivot right on the tee,
So please print a lot of the incorrect clutch
Of those who are swaying or ducking too much
(Just any old fault is a personal touch)
For that's what's the matter with me.

SARATOGA, N. Y.—The top horseman of the world today is in the general direction of his eightieth year—high up in the seventies. He schooled his first steeplechaser 61 years ago—and after 61 years he is still many lengths in front under wraps. He is also one of the top sportsmen of all time, one of the most remarkable men I've ever known in sport.

Grantland Rice

His name is Thomas Hitchcock, father of Tommy Hitchcock Jr., who will stand as the all-time polo player until some superman comes along. And there are no supermen.

Everyone has admired the efficiency of Connie Mack, 77, and Lonnie Stagg, 77, at baseball and football. But the name of Thomas Hitchcock belongs in this slender group of amazing veterans who have thrown clocks and calendars away and ignored time. They have made the years their vassals, ignoring such puny details as half-centuries.

*Training Winners*

I met Mr. Hitchcock just after one of his horses had won another steeplechase.

I wanted to know how he did it. I asked him first why it was that he never had the front feet of his jumpers shod.

**"This," he said, "is quite a simple matter. A horse gets his drive and balance from his hind feet. His forefeet have a tendency to expand. His hoofs will nearly always spread. Now if you encase these hoofs in an iron band there can be no expansion. There can be no give. I have known this after some 60 years of study and observation. That is the reason my jumpers are never shod to the front.**

"The trouble most horses have is with their hoofs or legs. I have never had any such trouble."

*Other Angles to Consider*

I asked Mr. Hitchcock just what system he followed to bring about such an amazing success.

"First of all," he answered, "I would say the word is 'patience.' You can't drive a horse at a barrier and force him over. Not consistently. I want natural jumpers. Not synthetic jumpers. So I start them in this direction when they are less than a year old. I give them minor jumps to make on their way to eat—jumps of less than a foot. I gradually increase this height. I get them to feel that a jump is a part of their lives—something they have to make before they can eat.

**"These jumps are made higher and higher. But there is no force about it. There is nothing new about it. It is something that belongs to their earlier memories—something they handle instinctively."**

I asked Mr. Hitchcock about other details.

"For one thing," he said, "you must know and love horses. Few are alike. They have their own whims and personalities. But to get them accustomed to people I have young riders, 10 or 12 years old, who ride or play with them as yearlings. I get them accustomed to the problems they must face later on. I get them used to other horses which may be crowding in.

"All this," he said, "takes a world of patience. The horse must be schooled over and over and over. What you want him to do must be made a habit that he understands.

**"The same thing goes for polo ponies. I have known experts who went out for speed. But a polo pony must be trained and taught to turn in a split second. Speed, of course, is a factor. But so is turning agility. These are things that take time.**

"To my mind a horse doesn't reach or approach his prime until he is six years old. This applies especially to jumping and to polo. You haven't time to teach young horses what they need to know at these two sports."

*Back Over the Years*

"Just when did you begin this schooling work?" I asked.

**"When I was at Oxford, in 1881," he said. "No, it was before that. Probably around 1879. I was a little younger then," he added, "than I am now."**

That was 61 years ago. But I doubt he was younger then.

**"There is so much to do," he said rather plaintively, "and so litt'e time in which to do it. When you must be patient you must have time in which to work."**

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## Better Instincts

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