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 outlaws, 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 and learns the story of the raid from Monica. After a trying and difficult trip across the plains and mountains from Texas to California, youthful Henry Bowie, a Texas adventurer, with his friends, Ben Pardaloe and Simmie, an Indian scout, sight the party of Indians who have carried off the two little girls. The three Texans attack the war party of fifty-odd Indians and through a clever ruse scatter the savages to the hills. The girls are saved. The group makes its way out of the hills and meets the distraught Monica, the children's maid. The girls are left with Monica and the friendly Padre at a mission.

CHAPTER V—Continued

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"And a brief word to the misioneros on the way, so that if you are sick you shall be cared for. If you are hungry you shall be fed, and for your repose you shall have a place to sleep," continued the padre.

Bowie felt overcome. "It is too much," was all he could urge.

"Far from enough for what you have done. Since you have done it for these, His little ones, my son, you have done it for Him. What religion have you?"

"Padre, I started right. But how could I have any left after living all my life on the frontier, far from all religion? As a boy I slept on the plains and fought Indians and rode with cattle . . ."

He did not finish—he felt he might say too much.

"You leave me most grateful, Padre," he added, "yet with but one sore need."

"What is that?"

"Powder and ball, Padre. We need some protection from savages and wild animals."

"You shall have both. But you will take no human life except in defense of your own—do you promise me that?"

"I promise."

"Padre," added Bowie gravely, "I'd like to ask one question."

"What is that, my son?"

"May I ask your name?"

"Padre Vicente Pasqual."

"Are there many men in California like you?"

"Not so many as there used to be. There are now but few Franciscan padres in Alta California."

Bowie looked sheepish. "I didn't mean exactly that, Padre. I meant, are there many men who would do for a stranger what you are doing for me? If there are, I'd like to meet more of them. Or better, be fixed myself to do something for them."

The streets of Monterey were alive with strange-looking men—men from every quarter of the globe—when Bowie, followed by his staring scouts, sought the office of Thomas O. Larkin, respected citizen of Monterey.

Frontiersmen, removed from their habitat of desert, valley and mountain and thrown into city streets, are as confused as children. The Texans themselves were objects of curiosity to other men of the capital. Their garb, in part Californian, thanks to the kindness of the missioners, and in part reflecting the hardships of the desert trail; their long-barreled and carefully carried rifles and powder horns; and the long deep-sheathed knives suspended from their belts were a novelty to the naval officers, the seafaring Yankees, the Mexican supernumeraries and the rancheros who, ever averse to walking, rode richly caparisoned horses up and down the narrow streets.

Bowie himself, though more sophisticated than his scouts, found much to gaze at. His eye swept the beautiful harbor. Within it lay a coasting vessel from San Blas, a Lower California port. A shrewd-looking Yankee trader with sails innocently furled, trim and fast sailing, doubtless hailed from Boston. A clipper-built ship from Hong Kong and the Sandwich Islands lay under the bluff, and, most interesting of all to the young Texan, a United States sloop of war, rocked by a gentle swell, surveyed the harbor scene from a dignified distance.

The coaster brought soldiers, freight and dispatches from Mexico, and passengers from San Diego, San Pedro and Santa Barbara. The Yankee trader brought merchandise for sale to merchants of Monterey and Yerba Buena, for barter with California rancheros and the missions of Santa Clara, San Francisco de Asis and San Jose. The Yankee clipper brought from the Orient the silken stuffs of Cathay for the further adornment of women already so notable in beauty, dignity and charm that they dazzled the imagination of every traveler who visited California and attempted to describe its women. The sloop of war was there for a purpose; but a purpose unknown to any not in the councils of the very elect.

Bowie found Larkin at his home and was received in the darkened parlor. Perhaps the Spanish-speaking women of California had an inherited fear of sunshine, for even after a century of expatriation from Spain and Mexico they still fear it in their California living rooms. Or perhaps the aversion was born of sad experience with Yankee-dyed fabrics, their colors too perishable for the honest sunshine of the Pacific slope.

When Larkin entered the room Bowie introduced himself and his companions. "Mr. Larkin, you know General Sam Houston?" suggested the Texan.

"By reputation, yes. Do you come from him?"

"I come from him. Mr. Larkin, we've broken away from the greasers down our way. We're flying our own flag in Texas. I'm here just to learn what I can and report back to the man that sent me."

Larkin studied his visitor closely. "What are your credentials, Mr. Bowie?" he asked.

"All in my head. I was directed to speak to you and make no move without your sanction. Had I brought any writing with me and been caught by the greasers it would have gone hard. By pulling together, Mr. Larkin, Texans and Californians can establish an empire that will reach from the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of California. That's what some of our people have got in their heads. That's the reason I'm in California."

He waited for Larkin's response.

The latter hesitated some moments. When he spoke his attitude was not unfriendly but plainly it was not enthusiastic.

"Things are very different with us here in California from what they were in Texas when you started your fight. Most of our white men are not greasers, as you call them. They are of Spanish blood, just as white as you and I. These big land grants near here—anyway, in several cases that I know of—come direct from the king of Spain. When you talk about changing the flag you've got to deal with Californianos of that kind of blood—and let me tell you, they hate the Yankees like poison. They are the kindest-hearted, most generous people in the world, but they don't want to get mixed up with Russians or English or Yankees. They are proud, and they are gentlemen, and they are very independent. So you see what little there is in any situation here, just at present, to interest General Houston.

"At the same time you will see, if you stay a while, as I strongly advise you to do, that things are kind of—well, say—unsettled here, just as they are down your way. There's no denying that. What's going to come out of it no man can tell much better than you can.

Bowie offered a few of his own thoughts. "I'm beginning to like this country. I'm going to stay a while, anyway. I'd like to live among the kind of people you describe. But I'll admit right off, I'm death on greasers and Indians."

"Well, boys, we're here," remarked Bowie that evening to his two scouts. "There's nothing to take us back to Texas till we look around. And inasmuch as the sovereign republic of Texas has not supplied its ambassadors with any funds, we'll have to forge along, best we can. We've got our rifles and, thanks to old Padre Pasqual, a little powder. You can see for yourselves, boys, there's plenty of game in this country for everybody; I reckon nobody will object to our taking our share."

Bowie's wound in his shoulder, long neglected, called urgently for a surgeon's care. The American frontiersman never gave a wound much attention; he had, without asking, the best of remedial agents at hand: the pure air of the plains and mountains and the hardiest of constitutions. Neglect, not care, was the rule for any wound not completely disabling.

But Bowie had for once relied too much on nature unaided and at Monterey was obliged to seek a surgeon. Fortunately for him a good one was at hand; Larkin introduced Bowie to him.

Dr. Doane was an Irishman and justly proud of it, and he took an Irishman's fancy to Bowie.

The doctor was a good prober, both physically and mentally. He had been a world traveler and was a man of parts.

"I suppose I ought to say, Doctor," began Bowie, "that I haven't, just at present, got a cent in the world."

"Did I say anything about money?" demanded Doane sharply. "Take off your shirt."

After some weeks Bowie complained that the doctor's treatment was taking a good deal of his (Doane's) time.

"Young man, you ought to be thanking God you haven't lost an arm instead of talking about the time it has taken to save it," snapped Doane. "You Texans, I hear, are a quick-trigger lot. But some things take time. How do you like California? What brought you out here? Why do you talk about going back to Texas?"

The doctor asked questions in bunches. Bowie was slow in giving his confidence, but he finally did so. Doane was immensely interested, but he took Larkin's view of Houston's dream.

"And why did he send you out here as ambassador? Are you in the general's cabinet?" asked the doctor.

Bowie was nettled. "Far from it. He needed an ambassador, as you call it, who could cut through half a dozen Indian tribes athirst for ambassadors' scalps; who could negotiate a thousand miles of hell's deserts and climb half a dozen Sierra ranges and swim forty or fifty rivers with a mule, just for exercise; who could get fat on lizards, frogs, bugs and leather belts, and drink blue sky for water."

Dr. Doane listened without betraying all he felt at Bowie's impatient outburst.

"You've seen service," blurted out Doane one day. He was examining some scars on his patient's torso. "For a boy of nineteen you've been busy. Where did you do your fighting, son?"

"Well, we've had several little brushes with the greasers. You've heard of our troubles along the Rio Grande. Santa Ana kept us on the run a while. But for every Texan he slaughtered at the Alamo, and for every Texan murdered at Goliad, we've taken toll. I followed Sam

"You've seen service."

Houston through. He gave me a captain's furbelow."

"But there's no peace down there now, is there?"

Bowie smiled. "Not so you could notice it. It's guerilla fighting a good deal of the time along the border. The greasers are busy in bunches all the time, and our rangers cut up once in a while. But no other man in California knows that much about me. So forget, it please."

CHAPTER VI

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Bowie disappeared from California as silently as he had come to it; but he did not forget the Irish doctor. In fact, eight years later Bowie appeared once more at the door of Doane's office with as little ceremony as if he had left it the day before. There was laughing and greeting; then something close to a fight. Bowie, about to take his leave after a happy hour of talk, threw a bag of coin on the table. The doctor's ear was alert to the clink. "What's this, son?"

"Souvenirs of the Rio Grande, Doctor."

"Hold on. Keep your souvenirs, son."

"They are to cicatrize that old Indian wound, Doctor."

"That old wound is outlawed. So is the fee. I never want to hear of either again. I mean it."

"So do I mean it, Doctor."

The words grew warm. Both were inflexible. It was finally agreed to leave the Spanish doubloons in the doctor's safe in suspense, and after a bottle of wine and a lunch at Da Guerre's the old cordiality—which had never really been impaired—reasserted itself.

"So you've come back," mused the doctor. "Glad you had that much sense. Henry, this is the garden spot of the world. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know yet. I've heard talk of a man up the river who built a little fort up there and is dealing in furs. I've got the same scouts with me. They're trappers and want to look the thing over. The man up there is a Swiss and I hear him well spoken of."

The following day Bowie traded in the travel-worn horses of the long trail for fresh stock. In the afternoon, with his two scouts, Pardaloe and Simmie, Bowie headed north for Sutter's place up the river. They traveled light, meaning to depend on their rifles for food in a country rich in game.

They camped early in the evening on a hillside near a clump of live oaks, and while Pardaloe skinned a rabbit, one of a brace he had brought in for the evening meal, Simmie cut up the other and Bowie built a fire. A stone's throw below where they had camped, a well-marked trail wound around the brow of the hill, and while they broiled their meat, impaled over the fire on pointed sticks, two horsemen appeared on the trail below. In the dusk of the evening these men saw the glow of the small fire and, turning their horses, walked them up the hill toward the Texans. From the appearance and apparel of the two, Bowie judged them to be master and servant, the servant riding somewhat behind.

"Buenas noches, amigos," said the leading horseman in salute. Bowie held up his hand deprecatingly.

"No habla espanol," he exclaimed, rising and realizing at once that he had a gentleman to deal with.

"Ah! Rusos?" asked the Californian pleasantly.

Bowie understood that much. He shook his head.

"No?" Questioned the horseman again. "Then Yanquis?"

Again Bowie comprehended but denied more vigorously.

"Que mas?" asked the puzzled stranger, though still politely.

Still shaking his head, Bowie tried to explain. "Sorry, but I can't speak Spanish."

"Ho! Americanos!"

"Texans!" exclaimed Bowie with emphasis. "Not Yankees."

"Ah, I understand!"

"You speak English?"

"A little, senor. I have heard of your Texans. Brave fellows even though they do not get on with their Mexican brothers."

Again Bowie dissented vigorously. "Not brothers, senor!"

The don was not to be ruffled. "Neighbors, then, if you like," he suggested good-naturedly.

"Neighbors, senor. But for Texans, bad neighbors."

The visitor shrugged his shoulders. "Have it as you will, amigo. A Mexican, of course, might tell another story. But you are, besides Texans, travelers and evidently preparing to spend the night al fresco. This gives me some concern because it is certain to rain before morning, and rain will find you much exposed. And when it rains here it is likely to rain—what do they say in Texas?—pitchforks."

While the Californian spoke he sat his horse with the ease of one seasoned to the high-peaked Spanish saddle. His trappings were elaborate; the eyes of the two scouts were glued on them. Saddle and bridle were richly chased in silver.

Bowie, without overlooking these things of interest, paid closer attention to the horseman himself. He was young and dandified—it was just his unaffected good nature that checked in the rough-and-ready Bowie any feeling of resentment at his highly particular rig.

His hat, with its low crown and broad, straight, severe brim, seemed in keeping with the dignity of the wearer. His aspect was dark, but his mustachios, the most commanding of his rather small features, were of contrasting lighter color and lent something agreeable to the frank, open expression of his eyes. His voice, as he chatted, was pleasant.

The youth wore a short dark bolero jacket heavily embroidered in silver and knee breeches edged below with silver lace. His soft buckskin leggings were highly but pleasingly stamped with the fanciful devices of a Mexican artisan. From head to foot he presented a picture of distinction and detail, yet he was quite simple in manner.

"I see," said the Californian presently. "You are hunters."

"That's why we are heading for the hills," explained Bowie, "to bring in some game—and," he added jokingly, "among other things, to buy some salt."

"I love to hunt," returned the don. "And nothing I like better than the hunter's supper out in the open, like this. In fact, I confess it was envy that turned me up this way when I saw the fire and the party, though I was far from being in hunter's rig myself."

"Where," asked Bowie, "did you learn so much English?"

"I have a sister married to a Boston man, a ship-owner. I had two years at Georgetown University."

"Georgetown! I had one year there myself," said Bowie. "May I ask your name?"

"Francisco Estradillo; and yours, senor?"

"Henry Bowie. I'm a long way from Texas. This is Ben Pardaloe, and this is Simmie."

Francisco nodded. "My uncle, Don Ramon Estrada, lives not far from here—about ten miles. I am visiting him. You are on his rancho. You tell me you are hunting. Day after tomorrow we are to have a hunt at the rancho. You should join us. Come! Why sleep out tonight? Come with me to Don Ramon's."

The Estrada rancho, a royal grant, embraced a tract eleven leagues by eleven leagues. The two-story ranch house crowned the brow of a gentle rise in the fertile Santa Clara Valley and looked toward the distant heights of Santa Ysabel.

To the north of the ranch house a group of buildings sheltered the Indian servants and the vaqueros.

Don Francisco did not escape a wetting. It was raining hard when he rode with his three Texans up to the ranch house and, first of all, despite the downpour, looked up quarters for his guests. Pardaloe and Simmie he lodged with the vaqueros. Bowie he took with him to his own room in the ranch house.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Trick of Reclaiming The Discarded Chair

By RUTH WYETH SPEARS

THERE were two of these old bent-wood chairs — both with cane seats gone and a badly scarred varnish finish. "Get them out of my sight!" their owner said, "I can't stand the thought of wood bent and forced into unnatural curves." In the end she did get them out of sight and used them too. The trick was done with slip covers made, as shown here.

The one you see in the sketch became a side chair for the living room dressed in richly colored

cretonne in soft red and blue-green tones with deep wine bindings. The legs of the chair were sandpapered and stained mahogany to tone in with the cover. The cane seat was inexpensively repaired with a ready made seat of plywood reshaped to fit by first cutting a paper pattern to fit the seat of the chair and then using the pattern as a guide as indicated here. Next week I will show you how the other one of these old chairs was used.

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