CARMEN OF THE RANCHO

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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CHAPTER XI—Continued

—11—

"Maybe you had to obey orders, Kit. But I'd never think it of you. Your brother Mose never would have done that—you know that as well as I do."

"Well, it's done," snapped Kit, much put out at the rebuke, "so, anyway, there's no use talking about it. Where you goin', Henry?"

Bowie had risen, picked up his rifle and was shaking his legs. "I'm going, just as I told you, up the river to Sutter's."

"But, bears 'n' Injuns, hold your horses till you talk to the old man."

"I'm not talking to him, Kit. He can't hire me to murder decent peaceable boys like the De Haros."

"Sh! don't talk so loud, you old bullfrog. Stay overnight and think it over. You've picked on the only mean job he ever put on me, Henry."

"Kit, I'm on my way." No effort at persuasion availed. Bowie shook hands with Kit and his friends and exchanged raillery with them but went his way.

Everything at Sutter's Fort pleased him. Captain Sutter had charged the whole atmosphere with his own magnetic personality. When he persuaded Bowie to remain for a time with him it was to be on Bowie's own terms, if Bowie would name any. In the end Sutter named for his new recruit so liberal a percentage on his fur business that Bowie himself insisted on reducing it.

Captain Sutter had at his command the services of former mission Indians who, on the despoiling of the missions by the freebooting Mexican politicos, had found themselves adrift and thrown on their own resources. Some fell back into savagery and pillage, imitating their Mexican despoilers. Others, of the better stripe, sought service where they could; many were in the employ of Sutter. These men were tractable and were expert with the bow and the gun. Even Bowie, who was placed in sole charge of these hunters, was often amazed at their skill. No less a source of amazement to him, although he had thought himself familiar with the country, was its limitless wealth in game and fur-bearing animals. Elk supplied tallow worth more commercially than that of cattle. Deer were a pest, and bears were hunted for their heavy pelage.

The rivers and the tule beds swarmed with beavers and land otter. The quantities of skins brought in by the Indians astonished Sutter himself, and with every shipment down the river he deposited with Nathan Spear, his factor at Yerba Buena, a sum of money for Bowie's credit. For to Bowie, Sutter ascribed the unlooked-for increase in the returns from his Indian contingent.

The lively frontier atmosphere at the fort—the daily excitement owing to the constant succession of strangers, wanderers and travelers arriving, singly and in groups, in large and small companies with amazing stories of hardship, adventure, conflict, discovery, treachery, starvation, stark tragedy and even cannibalism — served to keep Bowie's mind busy with interest in the strange frontier characters he encountered and in their strange tales of deserts, mountains, valleys, rivers, snow and ice.

All their stories had a common feature—their deserts were vast, their mountains towering, their valleys like paradises, their rivers swift, treacherous and mad to destroy. Some told of trees so great of girth and so tall that no listener could believe his ears; others of mysterious valleys where boiling water gushed hundreds of feet into the air and ice froze on the edges of their pools.

But even marvels lose their thrill. Even the adventure of the chase becomes commonplace when at last routine. For nearly two years Bowie made an active part of the enterprise of Captain Sutter. Still, something suppressed but gnawing at his feelings urged him to seek new scenes, new excitement, to deaden a vague sense of loneliness. When he told Captain Sutter he was leaving him there was an explosion. But it was a good-natured one, and the two parted friends. Bowie promised to come back sometime if he could make it.

Leaving the valley with one pony, Bowie worked South along the Sierras, sleeping under the stars and killing such small game as he needed for food until, passing the Tehachapi range, he stopped at the Mission San Gabriel, only to learn that a state of war existed between Mexican factions and that the southern end of the department was, for one side or the other, under arms.

CHAPTER XII

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Bowie had no intention of mixing in a squabble between Mexican California grafters, and to avoid the sham battle lines he kept well inland in order to reach San Diego. He meant to outfit there and strike across the desert for Texas, which he had not seen for years.

He reached San Diego late at night. He had intended to sleep outside the town overnight. But toward night fall rain had begun to fall and when he reached the presidio there was a heavy downpour. He rode up to the presidio gate, where he was challenged by a sentry, whom he answered in good Spanish and asked for shelter.

The sentry called the captain of the guard out into the rain from a game of seven-up.

Whether this was unpleasant for the captain, whether the call spoiled a winning streak, or whether the captain had had too much pulque, Bowie never could figure out. But he was very brusque. He ordered Bowie to dismount, ordered him searched and disarmed. No answer that the Texan could make to his insolent questioning would satisfy him. He pronounced Bowie a spy, put him under arrest and sent him to the guardhouse.

The Texan's surprise was equaled by his annoyance and his contempt for his captors. However, he reflected that a night in the dry guardhouse would be better than a night in the rain. But to find himself for the first time in his California life without his knife, his revolver, or his rifle and his ammunition was something to disturb him. He tossed all night and could console himself only by thinking that in the morning he would easily satisfy the comandante that his arrest was owing to the drunken stupidity of the guard.

After much palaver the next morning he was brought before an underling of the governor and subjected to a grilling that astonished him. His own simple tale of who he was and what he was doing in San Diego was brushed aside as of no value, and he was questioned closely as to what his relations were with the faction that Governor Pico of the department feared was planning an attack on him personally.

After hours of examination which naturally developed nothing Bowie was remanded to the guardhouse. There he fretted and fumed day after day until his resentment wore itself dumb. He was summoned at last before the governor himself. This, the prisoner felt sure, would be the end of it.

Such was not the case. Pico bore a name that inspired all who sought justice at his hands with foreboding. But the Texan knew nothing of the mentality that characterized this leader of the mission spoilers.

Again Bowie told his story; it fell on deaf ears. The strange revolver taken from him was not merely evidence but proof conclusive in Pico's judgment that Bowie was a spy. His protestations availed him nothing.

At three o'clock he was notified that he would be shot as a spy next morning. Bowie took the message, silent and hard featured, from the guard who brought it. But with his wits keyed high by the amazing news, he studied closely through the bars of the peephole in the cell door the features of the Indian soldier who bore the message. It flashed suddenly on Bowie that he had seen that man before. "Sanchez," he said calmly, "I thank you for telling me this."

The Indian started at the utterance of his name. "I thank you, Sanchez," continued Bowie, unmoved by the stolid guard's amazement, "because you and I are old friends. You do not recognize me; I am covered with half a beard and unwashed and eaten by vermin. Look closer, Sanchez"—Bowie lowered his voice—"look closer. I am Bowie, whom you knew at Guadalupe. We fought together in the canyon of the Santa Maria—did we not?"

Sanchez stared hard at him. Bowie's very quiet pierced the sluggishness of his Indian nature.

"Senor," he stammered, speaking low and with the utmost caution. "I remember all. I did not know you. How can I help you? If I let you out they will shoot me."

"Do nothing of that kind. Only, as soon as you can, bring me something to eat and pass me a good knife. That's all—go. Tell them I will be ready."

Sanchez proved not ungrateful. Bowie's contempt for everything and everyone concerned in his imprisonment was not lessened by the threat of immediate death. But he set to work, within a minute after the knife was in his hand, to dig himself out of his crude surroundings.

Working feverishly for an hour in the clay underlying the stone floor, he had made progress in his tunnel when, although no sound reached his ear, the scant light through the peephole of his cell door lessened just enough to make him realize someone was looking in.

Expecting a bullet in the back of his head, he turned as unconcernedly as possible from the bunk near which he was working. Behind the bunk lay the loose earth scooped from under the floor. He glanced toward the peephole. A face was there. But the aperture was so narrow and high that he could see only the face itself. Bowie, sitting on the bunk, studied keenly the eyes that studied him. For a long moment there came a calm voice from the barred window.

"My son: I am a padre. May I speak a moment with you?"

Bowie was annoyed but prudent. "Certainly, Padre."

He stepped to the cell door. "What can I do for you?" he asked in a courteous manner, though inwardly resentful.

"The guard will be here presently," continued the padre. "He will open the door."

"That is not necessary, Padre. We can talk here face to face quite as well."

"Not quite so well, my son. I would rather sit down with you a few moments that we may speak undisturbed."

"Padre mio," said Bowie firmly, "I am at my devotions; please leave me in peace. I have but a few hours to live."

"That is why I wish to speak with you, my son. You were at your devotions. That is well. Are you a Catholic?"

Bowie was stumped. "I—well, not exactly, Padre. You see . . ."

Footsteps were heard outside. "Here comes the guard," said the padre, turning to look. "Let him open the door just a moment, my son. I promise I will not annoy you."

After locking the cell door, the guard had gone, leaving the two men in Bowie's narrow quarters. "My leg is not very good. You notice my limp," said the padre. "May I sit down?"

Motioning his unbidden guest to the one three-legged stool and seating himself on his bunk, Bowie

"Maybe you did, Kit, but I'd never think it of you."

hoped the padre's searching eyes would detect nothing of the loose earth piled underneath it. Yet to the uneasy prisoner it seemed almost too much to hope. His industry had made noticeable progress.

"They tell me, my son, that you are a spy," began the padre casually."

"So they tell me," returned Bowie, slightly acid in his tone.

"I ask, is it true?" continued his questioner.

"It is not," answered Bowie bluntly. "I have had no trial; not a shred of evidence lies against me. The truth is, Padre mio, your governor wants for himself a new and unusual firearm—it is called a revolver—that his men took from me. And he is putting me out of the way to get a clear title to it."

"Do not, my son, say 'your governor.' I am not an officer of the Mexican government. I am a Spaniard. My sole earthly quest in California is the salvation of souls. You may be a spy—though I do not believe it, for the whole story has been told me—or you may be twenty times a spy; that matters nothing to me. But since you are condemned to death let me ask: what of your soul? what of eternity? You are an Americano?"

"No, Padre."

"Not Americano—what then, my son?"

"A Tejano."

"A Tejano," echoed the Franciscan, still searching Bowie's face narrowly and speaking as if musing or as if placing in his mind a fact at a time to serve as tesserae for a possible mosaic. "When did you first come to California?"

"Some ten or twelve years ago, Padre. What," demanded Bowie impatiently, "has that to do with this trumped-up charge against me?"

"Nothing, nothing whatever, my son. But if you will be patient it may have something to do with what I have in mind. By what route did you come to California?"

"Across the Rio Colorado and the desert of the South."

The padre's interest seemed to grow. He spoke on with slight but increasing keenness. "Then you must have come in not very far from San Diego," he persisted, still musing.

"I did so come."

"I presume," continued the padre gently insinuating, "that you spoke Spanish when you came to California?"

"When I came to California neither I nor my companions could speak a word of Spanish."

"You did not come alone, then?"

"Two Texan scouts came with me."

"Three of you." The white-haired man, his penetrating eyes bent closely on Bowie, hesitated an instant. He spoke then intently. "My son, did you and your companions hear about that time of Indian murders?"

"I have heard of many Indian murders since coming to California."

"I speak of a raid and a murder in which a Spanish ranchero and his two vaqueros were killed, his house burned and two of his little girls carried into captivity by the Indians."

Bowie eyed the Franciscan for a moment without speaking. He was completely surprised. The priest's features were immobile. "I do remember such an incident, yes, Padre," returned Bowie impassively. Then with his curiosity aroused: "Why do you ask?"

The questioning padre straightened on his stool. "Because," he said slowly, "you are the Texan who brought those two girls back from the mountains. I am the priest in whose care you left them. I have been looking for you for twelve years."

"Twelve years ago! Is it that long? It must be. These years have taken their toll of your health and strength. Give me the stool; you take the bunk. It is a little better. If I were a Catholic I would confess to you that the reason I did not ask you to the better seat is because . . . I do not think you will betray me." He lowered his voice. "I'm digging a tunnel to get out of this place."

"I had already perceived as much!"

Bowie laughed, in spite of himself, as the dry avowal.

"It is certainly strange, Padre, that you and I should meet again after twelve years, under circumstances such as these! Well, queer things happen in California. Those were two nice little girls—I remember them well. But they were scared dumb. Whatever became of them?"

"My son, I have not seen these girls for almost ten years. They live far north in California . . . But to your present position." He lowered his voice to a whisper. "Should your attempt to escape fail, you face a terrible alternative. You may face a firing squad within a few hours."

"No, Padre mio. I shall face no squad. These Mexican dogs—I should feel disgraced to be shot by such curs. If you sympathize with my predicament, dismiss your fears—for myself I have but one perplexity: where to find a horse when I get out."

"A horse?"

"A man on foot in California! Only you padres can stand that."

"I have a thought," whispered the padre. "But if I could provide a horse how could you, a stranger here, find it?"

"Please sit here with me on the bunk." Bowie spoke in whispers to one on whose good faith he was practically staking his life. "I shall not use this tunnel. It is a blind, Padre, to protect a friend. I shall walk out of the door tonight. A guard, to whom I once did a good turn, will aid me. Before daybreak I shall be gone."

"If I can have a horse at the back of this guardhouse at a certain time tonight, can you get to it?"

"I certainly can and I will thank you forever."

"But the time—"

"If I could see the stars I could tell you," said Bowie. "But I have no way. A signal? I could hear that. What time will the moon rise?"

"Not until after midnight."

"Then, by ten o'clock. All will be quiet here. Padre, you could not get two horses?"

"As easily as one."

"Then the guard will go with me. Two low whistles will tell me the horses are there. I shall be eternally grateful."

"Shortly after dark," said the padre, "I shall pass your cell door. Be alert. If I do not speak, the horses will be there. And now we must think about eternity. If you are discovered escaping, you will be instantly shot."

A heavy footstep approached in the corridor. It was the guard. He knocked roughly with his keys on the cell door.

"Is my time up?" asked the padre quietly as the guard stuck his face against the bars of the peephole.

"You're long past your time," he answered in surly tone. "Come out."

"Give me but two minutes," pleaded the padre.

"No."

"One minute."

"One minute—no more," roared the guard.

"He's drunk," whispered Bowie.

"You do not know how to make confession of your sins?" whispered the padre to his neophyte.

"I do not, Padre."

"But tell me—for I think your heart is good—now, in the face of possible death, tell me you are sorry for your sins. Can you honestly do this, my son?"

Bowie hesitated. "I see no reason, Padre mio, why I should not do as you ask," he said at length.

"And being sorry for your own sins, tell me, my son, that you forgive those who have sinned against you."

"That is different, Padre."

"It only seems so. These men are nothing in your life—you will forget them. Forgive them. Tell me you do."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

The Washington MERRY-GO-ROUND

DREW PEARSON & ROBERT ALLEN

Washington, D. C.

RUSSIA AGAIN BUYING COTTON

Here is big news for the South. Soviet Russia is back in the American cotton market.

She already has purchased 58,000 bales, of which 18,000 are en route via Vladivostok in Greek ships, and has indicated the total orders may run as high as 500,000 bales.

To facilitate transportation, the maritime commission last week granted sub-charters to Amtorg (the Soviet trading agency) for three U. S. freighters, the Carleton, Export and motor ship Excelsior, which will load the cotton at Houston and Galveston.

The last time Russia bought U. S. cotton was in the early 1930s.

Official Russian explanation for the U. S. purchases is that under the latest five-year plan, her spinning equipment is so rapidly expanding that she needs more cotton than she produces. According to the Soviet buyers their spindle capacity will reach a point in 1942 which will require a 40 per cent increase in cotton supply.

The matter of possible Russian reexport of the U. S. cotton to Germany was one of the subjects discussed by Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles and Soviet Ambassador Oumansky, who gave positive assurances that the cotton was strictly for Russian use.

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DIPLOMATIC CAPITAL

It looks as if San Francisco is slated to become the capital for Axis diplomacy in the United States.

For several years, the city has been the headquarters of Capt. Fritz Wiedemann, Hitler's World war commander and personal representative in this country. And now he has been joined by a new Italian consul general of equal behind-the-scenes eminence. He is Carlo Bossi, who ranks as high in inner Mussolini councils as Wiedemann does in Hitler's.

Bossi, who is carefully avoiding the limelight, played a leading role in Italy's support of General Franco against the Spanish Loyalists, and is credited with directing the capture of Barcelona, the blow that crushed the Republic. He is strongly anti-British and has close ties with both Nazi and Japanese bigwigs.

It was no accident that Bossi assumed his San Francisco post shortly before the announcement of the Axis-Japanese alliance. From the Pacific coast city, and working closely with Wiedemann, he will be in a strategic position to represent Il Duce in the Far East.

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NEW SYSTEM FOR ARMY BUYING

Nothing has been said about it publicly, but the defense commission has persuaded the army to make a revolutionary change in its purchasing methods. It will mean juicy orders to hundreds of factories which never had a look in before.

The new system junks the old procedure of advertised bids and substitutes a modified plan of negotiated contracts. Instead of buying shoes, shirts, or raincoats in huge quantities from a few large concerns, the army will purchase these goods as far as possible within each of the nine corps areas.

This means that small local factories will have a chance to obtain a chunk of the army's business.

On the basis of orders already granted under the new system, experts say costs will be no higher than under the old procedure.

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WINNING ISOLATIONISTS

Very quietly, the administration is waging a campaign to win over Midwest isolationist sentiment. Most striking feature of this campaign is the distribution of the Bullitt speech given at Independence hall in Philadelphia.

This distribution has now reached the amazing figure of 2,384,000.

After his speech, Bullitt received no less than 9,000 letters and telegrams, with unsolicited contributions totaling more than $6,000. This paid for distribution of the speech.

Three people saw the Bullitt speech before it was delivered. One was Stanley Hornbeck, state department adviser on Far Eastern affairs, who urged, without success, that Bullitt tone it down. Another was Archibald MacLeish, librarian of congress, who was elated with it. The third person was the President.

Note — Highlight of the Bullitt speech was the warning: 'The United States is in as great peril today as was France a year ago . . . Unless we act now, decisively, to meet the threat, we shall be too late."

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MAIL BAG

S. R., Philadelphia—Any man not yet 21 may become subject to the draft whenever the President sets another registration day. Under the law he may designate future registration days, and those who have reached 21 in the interval are then required to register.

L. P. A., San Mateo, Calif.—Robert Montgomery is not an alien. He became an American citizen many years ago. As such he was wholly within his rights in introducing Willkie in Hollywood.

Things to do

Pattern 6757.

BEGINNERS, make an impression with your handiwork! This medallion, Peacock Plumes, so easy to crochet, will make you as proud as the peacocks who inspired it.

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Pattern 6757 contains instructions for making medallions; illustration of them and stitches; photograph of medallions; materials needed. Send order to:

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Enclose 15 cents in coins for Pattern No.....

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Strange Facts

Superfine Lines
Wind the Musician
Seatless Temples

¶ The finest ruled lines in the world are Nobert's lines, made by diamond points on the glass plates used to test the power of microscopes. Some of the plates have more than 225,000 of these hairlines within the space of one inch.

¶ Fingal's cave on Staffa, one of the Hebrides islands off Scotland, is believed to be the only cavern in the world in which one may hear natural musical sounds. It was this "music," produced by the wind playing around the prism-shaped pillars, that inspired Mendelssohn to write his famous overture, Fingal's Cave.

¶ More than half of the people in the world worship in temples that have no seats and that prohibit the wearing of shoes within their doors.—Collier's.

The Pleasant Way to Correct Constipation

Why let yourself in for all the discomfort of constipation—and then have to take an emergency medicine—if you can *avoid both* by getting at the *cause* of the trouble?

If your difficulty, like that of millions, is due to lack of "bulk" in the diet, the "better way" is to eat Kellogg's All-Bran. This crunchy toasted cereal—a natural food, not a medicine—has just the "bulk" you need. If you eat it every day, it will help you not only to *get* regular but to *keep* regular, month after month, by the pleasantest means you ever knew!

Eat All-Bran *often*, drink plenty of water, and "Join the Regulars." Made by Kellogg's in Battle Creek. Sold by every grocer. If your condition is chronic, it is wise to consult a physician.

Mark of Guilt

The thief at every sound doth jump, and sees an officer in every stump.

WOMEN IN YOUR "40s"

Read This Important Message!

Do you dread those "trying years" (38 to 52)? Are you getting moody, cranky and NERVOUS? Do you fear hot flashes, weakening dizzy spells? Are you jealous of attentions other women get? THEN LISTEN—

These symptoms often result from female functional disorders. So start *today* and take famous Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. For over 60 years Pinkham's Compound has helped hundreds of thousands of grateful women to go "smiling thru" difficult days. Pinkham's has helped calm unstrung nerves and lessen annoying female functional "irregularities." One of the *most effective* "woman's" tonics. *Try it!*

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CREATING NEW WEALTH TO ORDER

● Advertising creates new wealth by showing people new and better ways of living, and as it creates new wealth it contributes to the prosperity of everyone touched by the flow of money which is set up. In this way, don't you see, advertising is a social force which is working in the interest of every one of us every day of the year, bringing us new wealth to use and enjoy.