CARMEN OF THE RANCHO

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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CHAPTER XVII—Continued
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Hardly had the two faced about when the clatter of hoofs behind them indicated they were being followed. They broke the ponies into a swift lope; their pursuers rode faster. Fortunately, the distance was but short, and, as dusk fell, Felipe and Carmen dashed safely through the opened doors into the mission compound and Felipe, leaping from his horse, closed the clumsy gates behind them.

The clattering horsemen pulled up in front of the church and with many shouts and oaths scattered over the plaza, demanding admission.

Felipe, though mild, was game in a pinch. He caught up a blunderbuss from the guards' quarters and coaxed two neophytes to arm and appear with him in the church tower. The raiders yelled at them and one of them, a renegade mission Indian, shouted insolently to Felipe to open the gates or they would break them open. Felipe, equally defiant, declared he would shoot the first man that attempted it.

There were hesitation and wrangling threats among the horsemen. They milled around the plaza, while within the church Padre Martinez and all in the mission enclosure were on their knees before the Blessed Sacrament, beseeching heaven for aid in the extremity. An hour or more passed, with the raiders churning about the plaza but shy about testing Felipe's marksmanship from the tower.

At length the renegade rode up to the tower for a talk with Felipe. He explained that the party were squatters from the Melena and had no grudge against the mission if they were treated right. The only man they wanted to square accounts with was Bowie, and if he were sent out they would leave.

Felipe, less shrewd than the renegade, told him at once that Bowie was not there. This was really what they wanted to know, inasmuch as he was the only man they were afraid of. The renegade rode away, and presently the attack on the gates was renewed. Fortunately, a few of the young Tularean Indian mission boys, inflamed with the spirit of their warlike ancestors, had seized muskets from the guardhouse, and they fired at the raiders through the portholes. They did little damage, but they scared the cowardly squatters enough to hold them off.

The renegade, after a long time, rode back to the tower for another talk with Felipe. The party, he said, were ready to leave, provided the padre would set out a cask of wine as a gesture of good will.

Felipe sent the message downstairs. Padre Martinez had retreated to the sacristy. He called in Padre Gomez, his assistant. The assistant was for the proposal, the padre, against it. Carmen was called in. She listened to all that was urged and without hesitation sided with the assistant. "Only," she added coolly, "set out a cask of brandy, not of wine. Those wretches will be less dangerous drunk than sober. If it should occur to them to set fire to the quarters, heaven knows what would happen to us."

Her counsel was followed. The gates were opened. A cask of brandy was rolled out, and a basket with drinking gourds was sent along. The renegade, with a heavy stone, broached the cask, and an orgy of drinking began. It absorbed the interest of the revelers for a time, to the exclusion of all else.

For an hour that was long and anxious to the mission defenders the drunken yelling and singing went on. Then there came a knock at the sacristy door. Panic seized the little group. A whispered consultation followed. Knocking, growing momentarily more impatient, continued. Only a wax candle lighted the room and, with faces blanched as they listened to the pounding, Carmen was told in whispers to slip out and hide in the house. Padre Martinez had already given absolution to his assistant and received it from him, firmly believing their hour was at hand. The venerable man now blessed himself, asked for protection from above, took up the candle in an unsteady hand and, summoning St. Michael to his aid, threw open the door.

From the dark came a tart question: "What is the matter here?" And Bowie, booted and spurred, stalked into the room. "Why did you not open the door?"

"An angel from heaven!" exclaimed Padre Martinez.

"Padre Martinez," demanded Bowie, "Senorita Carmen has not come home. She was here. Where is she?"

"Still here, senor!"

"Thank God for that!"

"She left this room when your knocking began."

"Why so?"

"We feared it was the drunken raiders in front. They know she is here. What shall we do, senor?"

"Where are your soldiers?"

"San Jose was threatened this morning by the same men, and they went down to offer protection. They have not returned."

"And they won't," predicted Bowie, "till this fight is over."

"What shall we do, senor?"

"We will wait for two more angels, Padre Martinez," suggested Bowie. "Pardaloe and Simmie will be here any minute. What I want to do is to find the senorita quick, to quiet her fears."

It was only his searching voice in the house that drew Carmen from her hiding place to find refuge in his arms. "We've been frightened to death at home, my dearest," he whispered. "Tell me what's happened? Carmen, you are safe, darling, safe. Tell me."

A gleam of light flamed through the high window.

"What is that?" whispered Carmen.

"Nothing to worry about. They were getting wood together for a bonfire when I scented the outfit. You see, my precious one," he continued gravely, "this is what this beautiful country is coming to. These ruffians are as bad as the savages and with no more regard for women. Come back with me to the sacristy. Pardaloe and Simmie will be here very soon."

But Pardaloe and Simmie, arriving soon, brought disquieting news. The disturbance in the plaza had all been made by six or eight of the

To square accounts with Bowie.

backwash from the squatters. The two scouts in their search for Carmen had reconnoitered the river and the Melena. From a squatter straggler they had learned that Blood was back with his friends but that supplies were low and they were talking of raiding the mission that night.

"If Blood undertakes this tonight it's not a good place for our Senorita," said Bowie in the sacristy conference that followed. "He won't leave without plenty of fight. But—we'll see."

The Texan declared that Carmen should be spirited away. "We'll have our hands full to take care of the Indian women if Blood starts in on brandy."

They had scarcely finished their talk when a chorus of cheering yells out in front gave notice of fresh arrivals. Had there been any doubt as to this, a loud knocking came at the outer door. The padres looked to the Texan for guidance. He whispered to Carmen. She disappeared from the room. The knocking grew violent.

"Put out the candle, Padre," said Bowie. "Then open the door."

"Open the door?" echoed the blanching man as it was pounded loudly from the other side.

"Don't be afraid," murmured Bowie. "No one will come in. Stand back, the rest of you, and keep out of range of the door."

The Texan took his place just to the side of the door itself. "Throw it wide open," he directed.

Open went the door. A flicker from the bonfire outlined the burly figure of the man who was knocking; other eager ones stood behind him.

"Who's in there?" demanded the raider loudly.

"Nobody's that's deaf," retorted Bowie. "What do you want, Blood?"

"Oh! It's the rancho pet, eh? Well! I'm glad you're here."

"Don't waste your breath. You may need it. Say what your business is, or get off this property."

Blood laughed truculently. "My Texan friend, I'm here to tell you you'll get off this property before you are a half-hour older. I talk to Padre Martinez."

"Here he is. Say your say."

"Senor Blood," asked the padre, "what do you want?"

"I want supplies for twenty-five men—flour, bread, meat, wine and brandy—presto."

"Senor Blood, you know no hungry man is turned from this door, for you have been fed here more than once. But I have not such supplies in the mission tonight for five men, much less twenty-five."

"I demand these supplies right now, in the name of the United States of America."

"And what will you do if you don't get them?" interposed Bowie casually.

"Shut up, Bowie! My men must be fed. Padre, you've got tons of food. If you can't find this food in your old mission, I can and will find it for you!"

"It's a dark night, Blood," suggested Bowie. "Better wait till morning."

Blood stamped ferociously on the tile pavement. He roared at Bowie. He stormed at the padre.

"Don't depend on me to hold these hungry boys back. I can't do it. They want money and they want supplies and they'll burn this place to the ground if they don't get both."

"Blood, you're wasting your breath," intervened Bowie. "If you or your ruffians try to touch so much as a strip of bacon here tonight somebody will get killed. Now I'm going to shut this door and go to bed, and I advise you to do the same."

"Bowie, I've got a long score to settle with you—"

"Wait till daylight, Blood. I'm going to bed." He slammed the door shut. Clamor outside grew to a roar. A hasty conference took place in the sacristy—the despairing fathers, the Texans and Felipe, with Carmen anxiously listening.

Bowie did not seek to disguise the situation. With twenty or thirty men behind him, Blood's boast that he would clean the mission out might be a serious one. Simmie noticed that Bowie looked grave. He knew the Texan was not squeamish about facing odds. But Carmen's presence was another matter. Should anything happen to him in the fight, what might happen to her?

He asked Carmen to step outside a moment. He then spoke to Padre Martinez. "I'm put in an awkward position, Padre. I don't like to seem to run away from you in face of these drunken devils. But my first responsibility is for Senorita's safety, and if they made good their threat to fire the mission, she might find herself in the worst kind of danger."

Padre Martinez laid his hand on Bowie's arm. "I understand perfectly, my son. I ask you to take, before all else, whatever measures are necessary to protect our Senorita—for, as our benefactress, we feel that she is ours as well. Whatever may happen here, it is your duty to protect her."

Bowie called Carmen into the conference. He laid the situation before her. Padre, his hands clasped in anxiety, listened. She looked from one to the other and back to Bowie in confidence. "You know best, Don Henry," she said trustfully.

He called in Pardaloe and Simmie and told them what he meant to do. Felipe he dispatched to scout the quadrangle and search for an opening not covered by Blood's men. Felipe came back with no good news. He shook his head. "Those men are everywhere."

"Ben," he said to Pardaloe, "when the big gate is thrown open by Felipe, fire your pistols, you and Simmie and Felipe, straight into the crowd outside. I'll be shooting both pistols from the saddle while we dash through the bunch before they can shoot back. Cover Felipe with your rifles, boys, while he shuts and bars the gate after us. Is it all clear?"

"Clear as daylight, Henry," mumbled Pardaloe. "Just say when."

Felipe, aided by a neophyte, was bringing up the horses. Bowie began to check over the cinches. "Felipe," he said in surprise, "what's the matter with these horses? They are trembling with sweat."

"Senor, I know. I saw it. Quien sabe? All the horses in the stable are sweating and nervous. I do not know why." Padre Martinez came out with Carmen.

"Padre," said Bowie, "what does this mean—these horses? See how they sweat and tremble."

"Hasten, hasten, my son! Something may happen. They know more than we do. Hasten!" exclaimed the agitated padre.

Bowie mounted his restive horse. Pardaloe passed Carmen up into his arms to face him. "Clasp me under the arms, querida, so as to leave my arms free. Hand me the hackamore for the Senorita's horse, Felipe."

Bowie fastened this with knots for some play to the horn of his saddle. With Carmen snuggling low against him, he drew his pistols.

"When the gate is opened," he said to the scouts, "send your pistol fire straight into their faces and yell like Indians. Then poke our horses hard, and away we go. Are you ready? Open!"

The dash out was a shock to the score of men, some on foot but most in the saddle, who were crowded around the big gate. The pistol fire, the yelling, the two horses prodded and spurred, trampling and charging into the raiders, threw them into momentary confusion.

Bowie, yelling, discharged his pistols to the right and left. The raiders ducked and dodged as their horses reared on one another. A volley of oaths, an enraged yell from Blood, went up; a scattering flash of rifle and pistol fire lighted the plaza for an instant. But the gate had clanged shut, and the phantom riders had melted into the darkness of the night.

Long afterward Bowie learned that no two of the stunned guerillas agreed on who had ridden out through the big gate or just what had actually happened. Bowie did not slow the almost uncontrollable horses until they had reached cover in the doubly dark alameda. Carmen parted from his embrace slowly: it seemed such a natural place to rest her head, and in her ear close to his breast she had heard his heartbeat.

Suddenly she remembered herself. "Darling, are you hurt? Tell me quick!"

"No, vida mia, no. But you?" he whispered.

She laughed low and cautiously. "I am not. Thank God, we are safe."

"I think so, but we may be pursued. I hope not. Now I will give you a more comfortable seat."

"What is that, 'Quito mio?" Carmen spoke from her own saddle and her voice betrayed her acute alarm.

Bowie noticed the low sharp rumbling. But he was so alert to the danger of pursuit that he did not at first comprehend.

He was not left long in doubt. The rumbling grew instantly louder. The horses became unmanageable. They shook with terror. A deafening roar burst on the ears. Of a sudden Carmen and Bowie were rocked in their saddles—the earth was heaving in terrifying waves. "Temblor!" gasped Carmen. "Temblor!"

Bowie seized her bridle. The feet of the frantic horses sprawled, their legs sank toward the ground. So abrupt was the halt that Carmen was pitched over her horse's head as he scrambled to keep his legs under him.

The savage roar of the temblor as it wrenched the earth was earsplitting. Bowie leaped from his horse to raise Carmen from the ground, and he stood with her trembling in his arms, trying to keep

Towering trees whirled in circles.

his own feet while he supported the half-conscious girl.

Nature tossed and heaved in an agony of convulsion. Towering trees whirled in circles, whipped to the ground, now prostrate, now upright, or snapped like matches at the base. And over the moaning and crashing of the troubled darkness there spread a faint ghastly light such as never has been looked on save at moments such as this. In a fearful instant a silent and peaceful landscape had been flung into an inferno of appalling destruction. Shock followed shock as the mighty temblor shook the earth in a cataclysm and tore yawning gulfs across its face, as if bent on making horror complete.

Bowie, breathing hard and completely unstrung, held Carmen's head against him as she shook from head to foot, praying low and beseechingly.

Bowie pulled himself somewhat together. "Surely the worst is over, Carmelita," he exclaimed. "Let's look for the horses."

But the search, punctuated by receding quakes, was in vain. "There's nothing for it, Carmen, but to go back to the mission for horses."

"But 'Quito," said Carmen, fearful, "we shall be killed by those guerillas."

He tried to laugh: his throat had gone dry. "Never fear," he managed to say, "those wretches are miles away before this. It is a walk, but we must try. I will carry you, vida mia."

"Not so. I am drag enough on you as it is. Vamos, querido."

The rising moon began to shed a ghostly light over the desolate landscape. The shock of the night of terrors keyed Carmen up to making the long walk back without feeling it. Nearing the mission, a strange phenomenon confronted them. Their eyes were closely bent on discovering hidden guerillas before they themselves should be discovered. Every clump of shrubs was skirted gingerly; every tree, prostrate or standing, was a possible hiding place for a skulker.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Sportlight

By GRANTLAND RICE

WITH football's 1940 story told, it might be just as well for all colleges to move over just a trifle more to the sporting side.

Ohio State's charges against Carl Snavely were ridiculous for two reasons—

1. It was Francis Schmidt, the Ohio coach, who broke two rules in the Purdue game that were largely responsible for 10 of Ohio State's 17 points. His double illegal substitution of tackle Maag had a vital effect on the game.

Grantland Rice

2. If St. John and Schmidt were so certain that Snavely was directing most of the signals their first move should have been to notify the officials at once—or at least between halves.

It is to Purdue's credit—Purdue which had a legitimate squawk—that George Ade's alma mater made no official protest of any sort. Ohio State could have made a neat sporting gesture by refusing to accept credit for a double illegal victory.

Out of Print

Not all the squawks reach the headlines. I have heard from many sources that certain winning plays, such as passing the ball forward on laterals, have been on the illegal side.

This was the charge made against both Michigan and Columbia in the Penn and Georgia games. A Georgia photographer dug up the first protest, but the angle a camera takes can make a difference of 10 or 12 feet. So that one's out. The officials, after all, are in charge of the game and doing the best they can.

Football is a completely impossible game to judge, or handle perfectly. Looking down on the field with no obstruction, I've seen many penalties that should have been called, but were overlooked in the action of 22 men who often shut off an official's vision.

But no good comes from any postgame squawk — especially on the part of the loser.

In regard to illegal forward passing, most laterals are hairline decisions. It is impossible to pass a ball backward to a runner in front of you. So more than a few of the laterals are technically illegal. But they are matters of double-split seconds, difficult to follow.

Another Angle

It has gotten so today that most colleges with winning football teams are immediately thrown under suspicion.

Not long ago I ran across two well-known Yale and Harvard men. They told me the squawks emanating from their campus reservations was largely due to the fact that Cornell and Pennsylvania were digging up soft courses for certain stars who couldn't last two weeks in Harvard, Yale, Columbia, etc.

"The Ivy league," one of them said, "was supposed to belong to a group playing under exactly the same conditions—especially those conditions regarding proselyting and scholastic requirements. Today Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Army, Navy, Princeton, Columbia and Brown wouldn't be far apart.

"You know what happened when Cornell met Army and Penn met Yale and Princeton. All they scored was 141 points in the three games—I mean Penn and Cornell."

Too Much Guesswork

In the first place, Yale and Harvard and the others who believe they have a squawk coming should first be sure of their facts. As it is now they are merely guessing.

For example, there is the course in physical education. Bo McMillin tells me that at Indiana this is one of the harder courses, involving a good part of the training needed to finish in a medical school.

These are things that, for the good of football, can be ironed out back of the curtain, in place of vague charges that carry no proof of any sort. A Cornell or a Pennsylvania degree still ranks with any that I know about.

The idea today, in too many quarters, seems to be that all winning teams must be made the targets for the beaten.

College football, in many places, could use more of the sporting side. There is no law forcing any institution to schedule football games with any suspicious rivals.

The main purpose of football was supposed to be recreation and sport for sport's sake. It was never intended as a part of Nero's schedule in the old Roman coliseum.

It is a great game—one of the greatest—but it is also a game that is gradually developing entirely too many termitic habitats in its own system.

I still say it would be a far better game if every student in every college and university were treated exactly the same as every other student in regard to proselyting, scholarships, jobs and financial handouts. Then we'd have a true test of college football ranking. I believe that this would prove itself a real boon to the game.

Coat Hanger Animal Delights the Children

By RUTH WYETH SPEARS

THREE wire coat hangers, two old bath towels, some fine wire hair pins and needle and thread made this cunning woolly lamb. All the directions are in the sketch. The wire hangers are bent and bound together with hair pins to make the foundation. A ball of

soft cloth is fastened inside the loop that forms the head, and is covered with a square of the toweling bound and sewn as shown. The rest of the body is all padded and shaped by winding and sewing four inch strips of the toweling, as shown.

* * *

Someone has just thumbtacked a letter on my drawing board to give my day a good start. It is from a reader who says, "I have all five of the sewing booklets and every time I look through them I find some exciting new thing to make that I have not seen before." Hurrah! I am certainly happy when people say they like those booklets. I have been so interested in doing them and now Book 6 is ready for mailing. It is full of new ideas for making new things for the home. I am pretty excited about it and hope you like it and use it again and again just as so many of you have written me that you have used the others. This new Book 6 contains a description of each of the other five booklets of the series. Send order to:

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Your Opinion

Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate.—Henry David Thoreau.

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Unknown Griefs

If the internal griefs of every man could be read, written on his forehead, how many who now excite envy would appear to be the objects of pity.—Metastasio.

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If more people were aware of how the kidneys must constantly remove waste that cannot stay in the blood without injury to health, there would be better understanding of why the whole body suffers when kidneys lag, and diuretic medication would be more often employed.
Burning, scanty or too frequent urination sometimes warn of disturbed kidney function. You may suffer nagging backache, persistent headache, attacks of dizziness, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes—feel weak, nervous, all played out.
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