CARMEN OF THE RANCHO

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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CHAPTER XIX
—19—

Bowie, leaping his horse into the jungle as he crouched in the saddle, knew he had one more pistol slug to face; and knew that only his knife was left him for a hand-to-hand fight. Yet such was his tradition and his training that, of all weapons available to him, the bowie knife would be his choice in a short arm struggle. He plunged into the jungle without qualm and headed his horse through the thicket by the sounds of the struggling horse ahead.

Then came a silence as Bowie, with his shattered arm, pressed forward. A pistol shot from the squatter rang and echoed through the jungle. The slug whistled past Bowie's head. His only answer to it was a cry, a plainsman's cry.

Blood spurred to the right, close to a huge sycamore. Bowie's horse was struggling up to its knees in mud and slime with every leap like to be its last. Suddenly there came a whirring, clashing sound ahead, and a terrible cry choked short.

Through the tangle of vines and branches before him Bowie caught a glimpse of a riderless horse, lying bogged. What did it mean? Slowing up, the Texan peered through the screen of leaves ahead. He worked his way closer to the giant sycamore, when his horse shied violently.

Half submerged, face downward in the marshy water, lying so close that Bowie's horse almost trampled it, he saw the sprawling figure of a man. Clutching his knife in his left hand, the Texan slipped from his saddle, plunged through the slime and, watching narrowly for a trick, lifted the man's head by the hair out of the ooze. As he took the head in his hands it turned, disjointed at the neck; the squatter was quite dead.

With one arm disabled, Bowie could do no more than partly drag the trunk of the body closer to the roots of the big tree. He stood for a moment in bewilderment and confusion, stunned by the gruesome sight. Almost at his side lay the squatter's pony, only its heaving flanks showing life.

The Texan stood hatless beside his panting horse, wiping beads of sweat from his forehead and trying to decide what to do.

The instinct to hurry away from the tragedy must be denied. If he left the body it would be virtually impossible to find it again, and it would almost certainly be mangled by coyotes before it could be recovered. Nor could Bowie, partly disabled, get it on his horse—the squatter was a large man—to carry it out of the swamp. Nor had he a pistol in hand to load for a shot.

But he had still a stentorian voice. He knew Pardaloe and Simmie would trail him to the Melena. He sent out a slow high cry and listened. No response greeted his ear. After a long wait, for even breath was precious in his predicament, he tried a second call and sat down to figure out what had befallen Blood. Soon he heard in the distance a pistol shot. He knew it was a signal. Again he gave the plainsman's shrill plaintive cry, and there came at last an answering call.

It was frontier wireless long before the day of wires. Patience and calling and answering brought Pardaloe and Simmie, swearing their way into the heart of the Melena to where Bowie stood leaning with his left hand on the sycamore tree.

"Henry, you been hit! Where? Dog it, man, you've lost aplenty blood. Set down. Where's Blood, Henry?"

Pardaloe was concerned. His questions came fast. Bowie pointed to the fallen squatter. Simmie pulled at his beard reflectively—the only sign he ever gave of excitement. Pardaloe stared a moment, pulled the body around, but he saw no blood.

"Henry," he asked, peering, "where'd you hit him?"

"I had no pistol. We were going fast. I was within ten yards of him when we got here. He jumped his horse past the tree without seeing this pool. The horse went down." Bowie pointed upward. "See that old grapevine hanging across from the trunk to the branch? That's what did it."

Late that morning Carmen, after searching the horizon since daybreak with straining eyes, perceived a little party of horsemen riding slowly toward the ranch house.

Most of all she searched among them for the caballero to whom she had given her life in promise. Her acute agony of suspense ended when she made out his broad hat and tall figure in the saddle.

Carmen had promised herself she would be very collected when he returned. All night and all the morning her prayers had been poured up to heaven for his safety, and with her prayers answered and her lover, out of the saddle, clasping her close, everything went black before her. She disgraced herself by fainting in Bowie's one good arm.

"I saw the flames in the night along the river," she sobbed when she came to. "Oh, Henry, if you ever ride into danger again, I ride with you. I must. Never again can I stand such a night. What's this?" she exclaimed, catching sight of the blood-soaked bandage on Bowie's right arm. "You are hurt! You are wounded! Madre de Dios! You will die!"

Bowie laughed as he held her. "I will, but not yet, querida. Not yet."

Despite his assurances, she was atremble. "Come into the house, quick, querido. You do not know how bad you are hurt. Come."

As the couple entered the living room the excitement began all over again. The next moment the senorita and the senora, breathless with fear, had the serving women running, hot water splashing, sheets torn up and enough bandages ready to equip a small hospital. The rough bandages were soaked off. Carmen calmed herself until she saw the ragged wound of the slug in the arm as it was bared. Whereupon, without even apologizing, the excited girl fainted again.

When Dr. Doane took charge he, too, laughed at Carmen's fears. "All

In your honor and mine—

that I wonder at," he said insincerely, "is that you would send for me to attend to a little thing like this. Bowie, my boy, you'll be swinging a reata next week." He successfully concealed his anxiety lest Bowie should suffer a stiff forearm from the shattered bone.

Carmen's confidence in Dr. Doane was very great, but her solicitude for Bowie was unabashed. She tried, for the most part unsuccessfully, to keep the Texan in bed; and failing this, to keep him in the house. "Cease protesting," she would say decisively. "This is my hour, Enriquito. I have been waiting for it. God sent me once a protector; it was no credit to you, big man, that he chose you—"

"No credit to me, pobrecita, but it is the only thing in my life that I count."

"He sent me a protector—why shouldn't I persecute him? Why shouldn't I persecute him?"

"You're too young to be cruel," he retorted.

"I don't care! He's mine. I've had too many tragedies in my life not to value a protector. Had only you been there that dreadful day at Los Alamos!"

"Querida! My right arm is getting quite strong again. But Dr. Doane says it must be exercised regularly so it won't be stiff. How about exercising it a little now?"

"My darling, you must take no chances! You might strain it, you know."

"Tomorrow then?"

"Perhaps tomorrow if you behave yourself. Do you realize, bad Texan, how I've already cast to the winds the rigid etiquette of centuries? I'm sure if Don Ramon knew how bad I've been—and all through associating with you—he would disown me. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to impose so on the weakness of a poor girl like me. And I don't believe you are a bit ashamed. What sort of people live in Texas? And you did say something, if I remember rightly, about marrying me—not?"

"If I have so imposed on your lovely nature, querida, I want, of course, to make amends."

Then Carmen spoke, "In the morning, Henry, I want you to take me over to the valley of the strawberries. Will you? I want to go to that redwood tree where we sat. Do you think you could find it? There were two close together."

"I could find it, Carmen, if there were two thousand close together."

"Leave the horses here, Henry. I want to walk the rest of the way up the hill just with you."

"This is the tree, Carmen. Tell me now, from your beating heart, what you told me that day, my Carmen."

"And tomorrow, Henry," said Carmen a week before the wedding day, "we must go to Monterey to engage the musicians. I want a violin and a flute and a guitar. They will ride with us in the procession to the mission and play on the way—won't that be nice? And Henry, we will take the horses from Don Ramon's caballeria of blacks—they are such beauties. You and I will ride together, then Don Ramon and Dona Maria, then the music, and then everybody else!"

"How many?"

"Oh, a hundred or so."

"My! Carmen, this business of getting married in California seems to be important."

"Important, Henry?"

"Why, for a week now, every servant, every vaquero, everyone in the household, has been getting ready for our marriage."

"Ah! But, Enriquito, it's not all for you and me that the fatlings have been killed, the game brought in. Not all the champagne, the wines, the cordials and the sweet potatoes and cocoanuts and Chinese ginger and Island sugar and the strong cigars have been brought in just for you and me. No, no, Guadalupe will be host to a hundred guests—every ranchero in the valley, with his wife and sons and daughters and his guests, will be here every day for a week. So will all the De la Guerras from Santa Barbara."

"A week!"

"Yes, and they will laugh and dance and sing and play and get very hungry, Enriquito. They will dance every night and all night for a week, in your honor and mine."

"Then all our Monterey cousins and friends and our San Diego cousins and friends—"

"Heaven protect us, pobrecita!"

"You may well say that. I hope we shall have a little time to ourselves after two or three days—don't look for it before that."

"But where will all these people sleep?"

"Oh, nobody sleeps while the celebration lasts! Only perhaps an hour or so after sunrise. They sleep where they can. Then in the morning come the meriendas—like yours and mine," she whispered. "Don't you remember?"

"I remember nothing else, querida mia—only that day and you."

[THE END]

Mountain Named in Honor of Indian Genius

GATLINBURG, TENN. — The shadows of late afternoon were slanting down from the surrounding mountains as Wiley Oakley, the "Roamin' Man of the Mountains," pointed a brown hand off toward a peak that poked its nose 6,000 feet into the blue and said:

"That's Mount Sequoyah, named for the greatest of my race."

The government named the peak to perpetuate the memory of the uneducated Indian who, without books or tutors, attained in a few years what was developed through several ages of Phoenician, Egyptian and Greek wisdom.

Sequoyah invented the Cherokee alphabet.

Cherokees will tell you the Great Spirit sent Sequoyah. But history shows he came from the marriage of a peddler named Gist and an Indian girl.

Gist ran away and left his wife with a baby who became so great that the greatest trees in the world were named in his honor.

"Yes," said Wiley Oakley, himself part Cherokee, "Sequoyah was a great man. He gave us the Cherokee alphabet."

It took Sequoyah many years to invent the alphabet, and the task seemed impossible, for the language is not made of words but of syllables.

The genius, himself unschooled, finally solved the riddle by using symbols for syllables and the only Indian alphabet was created.

His mother labored and taught him and sent him on his way with a name from the language of her people so that he might never know of his father. He lived alone with his mother. He had no old man to teach him the use of the bow or to enlighten him on the religion and morals of an ancient people.

As he grew older he showed a mechanical genius in carving articles from wood. His mother encouraged him. She contrived to get a petty stock of goods and traded with her people. She taught Sequoyah to be a good judge of furs and sent him on expeditions with the hunters and finally placed him with the responsibility of bartering with the English and the Spaniards.

That was how Sequoyah became the greatest silversmith of his people.

For his furs, Sequoyah received broad silver pieces from the Spaniards. He beat them into rings and broad ornamented bands for the head, devised breast-plates, necklaces, bells for the ankles, rings for the toes.

Sequoyah did not share the belief of his people that the written speech of the white man was a gift of the Great Spirit. He boldly declared it to be a mere ingenious thing the Red Man could master if he would try.

Sequoyah tried to invent symbols to represent words. This proved an unhappy experiment. Three years of hopeless struggle with the mighty debris of his symbols left him a mighty man of words.

But through that heroic effort, unaided, Sequoyah gained the first glimpse into the elements of language.

Kathleen Norris Says:

Being Good Is Sometimes Being Dull

(Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.)

When a mother of young daughters makes no effort to help them socially; ignores their longings for parties and companions; is out of sympathy with their inexperienced efforts to make their home a pleasant place in which to gather their friends, she is as much to blame as if in babyhood she had left them for days without care.

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

THE problem of the decent girl, who at the same time is young, pretty, and eager for life and companionship, is a complicated one. Girls who want to retain their high ideals of self-control, to preserve their standards of purity and dignity, have a hard time. That is, some do.

Others have mothers and fathers who remember that once they were young themselves. They encourage youthful home entertainments from the time the girls are in grammar school. They build about them a ring of young friends; they cure shyness and awkwardness by all sorts of encouraging and unsuspected devices and their girls go naturally from a gay and hospitable home to gay and hospitable homes of their own.

But all parents aren't like that. And it is to the other mothers and fathers that I'm directing this article, rather than to the girl who wrote me the poignant letter that I'm presently going to quote.

Up to Mother.

When a mother of young daughters makes no effort to help them socially; ignores their longings for parties and companions; is out of sympathy with their inexperienced efforts to make their home a pleasant place in which to gather their friends, and at the same time harshly forbids their going about at night with the fast little crowd that frequents night clubs, roadhouses, questionable dance halls and coarse variety shows, she is as much to blame as if in babyhood she had left them for days without care, or in childhood had refused to have them instructed in the three Rs.

Every mother of girls ought to ask herself just what she is doing to prepare them to meet their associates on even terms. How free are your girls to say to any chance attractive young man they may meet "Mother'd like you to come in to supper on Sunday. We always have supper and dance or play games." How free are they to bring young men to the house with the idea that if Dad likes them and Mother likes them, then new friendships are in the making? Is your house a house where hamburger sandwiches and chocolate bars and hot coffee and pencils and tablets and Victrola records are part of the Sunday night program, or do your girls giggle and apologize and fall into silent embarrassment and vainly search the ice box when the new young man in town bashfully calls?

Hilda's family is completely spoiling her life. This is part of Hilda's letter. She couldn't possibly be your daughter, could she?

Hilda's Problem.

"Dear Mrs. Norris," she says, "I am one of five daughters. We are 27, 25, 21, 17 and 13 years old. I'm the 25. We're none of us bad-looking; the oldest and the youngest are blondes, the rest of us dark. My father is a chemist; he has never gotten over the sorrow of losing my only brother, the fifth child, who died as a baby of three 12 years ago. My father despises women, he rarely speaks to us, listens at the table as if he were under pressure, and spends all his evenings in his laboratory.

FUN AT HOME

Kathleen Norris feels it is lamentable when a young girl is denied the use of her own home to entertain friends and have a good time. She says it is a mother's duty to give her daughter a happy home so that they may later have gay and hospitable homes of their own. Miss Norris suggests that parents help their daughters make their home a pleasant place to entertain their friends.

"With my mother, we are six women. The house is full of dresses, hats, powder, hair brushes. We make beds, sweep halls, wash dishes, plan meals, cook together. Of course we gossip, and of course little things are important to us; weddings, babies, illnesses, scandals. Our friends are all women. Girls come in and sit with Mother in the kitchen.

"We have never had a party, my father not permitting it. He always says that we ought to find enough amusement among ourselves. To tell you the truth the one thing we would dread above all others would be necessity of having a party. We know so many girls, and hardly any boys at all. To have 30 girls arrive, and 7 men, would be too horrible!

"My mother is an angel, but she is too gentle, endures too much, and is far from well.

Father Forbids Change.

"My older sister, Alma, and I have been school teachers for five and three years. Now Alma has been offered the superintendency of a high school in a town 200 miles away. We have a car; her salary would be ample for us both, and she wants me to go with her. My father and mother flatly forbid it. At least my father does, and Mother says 'you must obey Pa.'

"Alma has accepted, for January first. But if we go we go against bitterness and threats, and against the tears of three little sisters, who say, 'Now NOTHING will happen, if you two are gone!' Mother says she needs me to give her her alcohol rubs and cook her special food. But Grace, who is strong, 17, and much at home could do that.

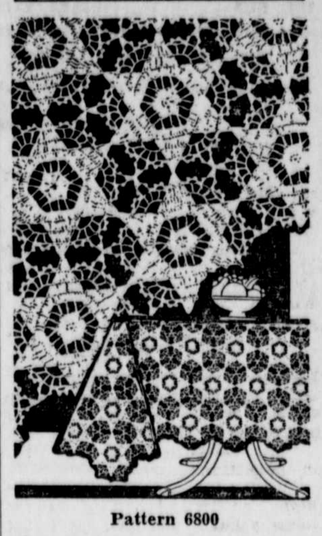
"What shall we do? We've always been 'nice,' even though the girls who go a very different path seem to have all the fun. But there's never been any question of any one of us doing anything wild or wrong. If Alma and I go away it'll be as gentlewomen. My father needn't worry about that. But shall we go?"

Build a New Life.

My answer is "Go." And it would be "go" if you two were the only girls of the family. Get away from that stifling atmosphere. Set up your own little establishment. Make a few friends, make them slowly and carefully, and when you feel ready for it begin with informal little suppers, and be ready with pencil games. The smartest folk I know never attempt to get through an evening without some casual plan for entertainment. Keep a pleasant easy conversation going, grow confident and natural in manner because everything you attempt is natural and simple.

After a while, when you and Alma are happily engaged, send for the next girl in line, and then the one after that, and so gradually do for yourselves what a selfish, cold father and a weak mother haven't been able to do for you.

Things to do



Pattern 6800

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* * *

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