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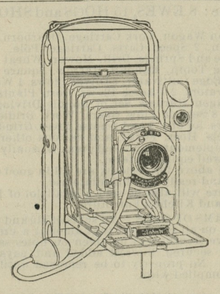
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BLANK CARTRIDGE.

A Southern Revolutionist Who Fell Into His Own Trap.

By OSCAR COX.

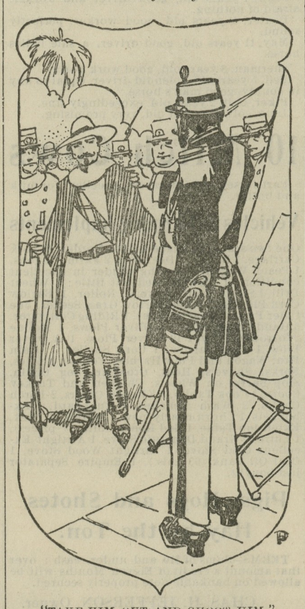
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A friend of mine who had been United States consul in Central America told me this story one evening while we were smoking on the deck of a steamer on our way from the isthmus to New Orleans:

You've heard of the Mancha family, I suppose, who did a bigger business at revolutionizing than any lot of men who ever put out the sign "Revolutions" in Central America. Well, Juan Mancha, the oldest brother, was head of the firm and was the keenest, the foxiest rascal of the lot. His eye was always on the loot, but he had the faculty of playing patriot with more emotional accompaniments than any revolutionizer in Central America. I was consul at Costa Rica when Juan Mancha engineered the revolution of 18— and knew all about the story of Diaz Valdez, the secretary of state, who finally went over to him with a satchel containing half a million dollars.

Mancha had got most of the people on his side and had stolen enough money to send to New Orleans for a cargo of arms and ammunition. He would have appropriated this find to himself, but it wasn't enough. He was not a small dealer in revolutions, but a big one, usually aiming for something like a million or two. But he was in need of more funds when Valdez, thinking that he was sure to win, concluded to go over to him.

Senora Valdez was a mighty pretty and a mighty bright woman. She had been a great coquette before Valdez married her and hadn't outgrown the habit, though you'll see from what I'm going to tell you that she was true to her husband. Well, Valdez told his wife one day that Mancha was sure to win in the end and that they'd better arrange to go over. He suggested that she go to Mancha and tell him that her husband was ready to join him with



"TAKE HIM OUT AND SHOOT HIM."

$500,000. But Valdez didn't wish to be considered a deserter from the existing government. To avoid this obloquy he would be on a certain day at a certain village midway between the government and the insurgent forces, and Mancha could send out a dozen or so mounted men and capture him. Senora Valdez was to secure Mancha's promise to permit the secretary and herself to take passage for the United States with $300,000 of the $500,000, the remaining $200,000 to go to the "cause of the revolution."

This was a very nice and looked like a very safe scheme to the secretary, but his wife, who was brighter than he, couldn't see why Mancha should be content with $200,000 when he could as well have the whole sum. However, she volunteered to go and make the deal. So, giving out that she was ill and shut up in her home, she went under cover of the night to Marcha's lines and in the morning, raising a white handkerchief on a stick in sight of the revolutionary vedettes, was taken in and conducted to Mancha.

Now, Senora Valdez did not propose to have her husband give himself up until she had swept those handsome but keen eyes of hers about her and learned something of the situation. The revolutionary army at that particular point consisted of between 100 and 200 men, and with a view to insuring her husband's safety she made up her mind to capture it. I don't mean that she, a woman, would take so many men prisoners, but she would win them to do her bidding in case of need. She didn't work openly before Mancha's very eyes, but secretly and principally among the officers, especially the commander in chief, a half breed Spaniard and Aztec not twenty-five years old, whom she proceeded to tie up in a bowknot.

When she had made due preparation she sent a messenger, or, rather, Mancha did, telling Valdez to be at the appointed place the next night. At the time agreed upon Valdez was there, quietly sleeping, so it was supposed, at an inn, when a troop of revolutionary soldiers swooped down on the place and carried him off. He reached the headquarters of the insurgents the next day and was conducted between two soldiers to Mancha.

"Take him out and shoot him," said the revolutionary chief.

"Before I die," said Valdez, "may I have a word with you?"

Mancha took him into a private room, where he unbent, grasped his hand and embraced him.

"Senora Valdez has assured me," said Mancha, "that you are especially anxious not to be known as deserting the government cause. Now, it has occurred to me that in order to preserve your good name it would be well to have you shot."

"What do you mean?" asked Valdez, blanching.

"I mean that if I place you before a firing squad whose guns are loaded with blank cartridges, they fire at you, you drop and are carried away, the news will go to the capital that you died a noble death. Meanwhile you and your senora can step on a steamer and remain dead in New York, Paris—wherever you find the climate most to your taste."

"Very well. I presume I shall have to remain under guard till I am executed. When will that occur?"

"At once."

"I suppose I may bid goodby to my wife?"

"Certainly."

Senora Valdez was called in and the matter explained to her. She thought a moment and said:

"Your plan is admirable, but you are making one mistake. The execution must not take place till just before a steamer leaves."

"Very well," said Mancha. "A steamer leaves tomorrow evening for New York. I shall appoint your execution to take place at 7 p. m. You will sail at 8."

Senora Valdez went at once to Gonzales, the commander of the army, and told him that her husband was to be stood up to be shot at, but no order would be issued to leave out the bullets. Gonzales looked knowing, and the senora secured his promise to inform her if she were correct in her surmises. She further plotted with him for his support in case Mancha should not give an order to use blank cartridges. If Gonzales would obey her order to get rid of Mancha and lead his men, with the secretary of state, to the capital to join the government forces the half million that Mancha had with him would be divided between him and his army, he having a hundred thousand for his share. To this, after some hesitation, he also agreed.

The next afternoon the secretary was marched out for execution. His weeping wife was there to see. Gonzales was there, too, and whispered to her that his men's guns were shotted by order of Mancha. She then openly requested him to send for the commander. Mancha appeared, wondering if there could be a hitch in his plan.

"I believe, general," said Senora Valdez, "that there is treachery. My husband will be fired at with bullets instead of blank cartridges."

Mancha did not know what to do or to say.

"Colonel Gonzales," continued the lady, "I have General Mancha's promise that my husband shall be fired at with blank cartridges. You are an honorable man. Make a test of your guns by firing them at General Mancha. If he has fulfilled his promise he will not be injured."

Gonzales, who was prepared for this, took a gun from one of his men, aimed it at Mancha, fired and shot him dead.

The act was the signal for a counter revolution, if it could be called such, where there were but some hundred and forty rascals led by a greater rascal than any of them. Of course Gonzales feigned astonishment that the piece he had fired at his chief had been loaded. Senora Valdez rushed to her husband and embraced him. Then, turning, she addressed the garrison, nearly all of whom had turned out to witness the execution.

"Soldiers," she said, "my husband and myself came here to make an offer by which you should all profit. That man," pointing to Mancha's body, "promised for the sake of appearances to pretend to execute my husband. You see that the traitor has been killed by one of the bullets intended for the man he would slay."

Then Gonzales told them that there was a treasure to be divided among them; that they were to march to the capital and have preferment among the government forces, which now that the treacherous Mancha was dead would surely be triumphant.

The first thing done was to bring out the treasure and turn it over to this valiant army, whose conscience was altogether too tender to see a man stood up to be shot down by bullets when he had been promised blank cartridges. There was a fine spree that night, and the next morning the army, with Senor and Senora Valdez riding in its front, marched to the capital. They received an ovation, for it was certain that the killing of Mancha and the defection of this small though relatively important portion of his army would end the revolution.

Senor Valdez gave out that the plot had been carried out exactly as it had been conceived. Of course there was a shortage of half a million in the accounts, but the people didn't mind a little thing like that since it had accomplished such a brilliant result. The outstanding revolutionary armies soon laid down their arms, and peace once more reigned in the state.

Senora Valdez came in for the credit of executing the scheme, though her husband was supposed to have conceived it. At any rate, she was the most popular woman at the capital and when the president's term expired Valdez was elected in his place.

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Supervisors' Notice.

The Supervisors of Elections for Kent county give notice to the following persons of their appointment as Registrars of Voters and Judges of Election:

Second District, Second Precinct—Samuel J. Comly, Rep.

They are hereby notified to appear before the board of Supervisors of Election at their office in the Court House,

On TUESDAY, Aug. 23, 1910

to qualify according to law.

At the meeting on Tuesday, August 9th, the Supervisors of Elections will appoint Judges and Clerks of Election.

JESSE H. USILTON, PRES'T.;
HARRY C. CACY,
A. PARKS RASIN,
Supervisors of Election for Kent county.
JOHN G. ROLAND, Clerk. aug13-tf

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48-inch Hand Woven Batiste, regular 75c value, only 50c.

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$1.25 Black Silk Ladies' Hose, only $1.00
75c Black Lisle Hose, only 50c
50c Black Lisle Hose, only 39c
3 pair for $1.00.
39c Black Mercerized Hose, only... 25c

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