

square of our parade formation, the dense mass of Indians surrounding the barrack fence, the crowd of white men. Then I heard a sudden tremendous gasp of amazement, of general consternation, and a single triumphant voice rang out from the scaffold.

I turned, could not believe my eyes, stared wonder-struck; then ran as hard as I could pelt toward the platform.

The prisoner, with one great sweeping gesture, rose to his full height, lifting the blanket apart until he held it behind him with widely outstretched arms, disclosing the scarlet tunic, breeches and gleaming boots, the four gold chevrons on his forearms of a staff-sergeant. The blanket dropped; he snatched away the long gray braids of hair, and cast at his feet a wig. There, with his curly raven-black hair, his laughing eyes and milk-white teeth, in the prime of radiant health, laughing hysterically, was Brat la Mancha!

"Drugged!" he yelled. "He wouldn't go, but I drugged him. He's escaped! He's in Montana by now!"

Sam had leaped on the scaffold before I got there, and never have I seen a man in such a blazing rage as my commanding officer was then. "What does this mean?" he asked through his teeth.