POOR DOCUMENT

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The Missourian

By Eugene P. Lyle, Jr.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.—(Continued.)

The customary yelling and straining began, and men grunted as they heaved against an axle. After a long seance of such effort there came a sharp exclamation, like an oath, and the confusion fell to a murmur of dismay. Someone jerked open the door, and Dupin's grizzled head appeared.

"Mademoiselle, I regret to have to announce that a wheel is dished in."

Jacqueline's gray eyes regarded him quizzically. The sardonic old face spread to a grin, but deftly readjusted itself to the requisite respair.

Not a carriage except the wrecked one was in sight. Only the Tiger's whelps, by the hundred, surrounded her.

"And the others? Her Majesty?"

"The others did the sensible thing. They know that you will catch up with them when they themselves are mired. Her Majesty, being ahead, is probably still in ignorace of your accident."

"But the wheel"

"If mademoiselle wishes it mended?"

"Is it so bad?"

Dupin caught her expression. "It will take six hours," he said mercilessly.

"Oh, dear!" said Jacqueline.

"There's a settler's cabin a mile from here. If you will accept my horse, and Mademoiselle Berthe can mount behind——"

"Poor Berthe," sighed Jacqueline. But she nodded eagerly.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Lacking Coincidence.

"Achilles absent was Achilles still."—The Iliad.

Colonel Dupin helped first one and then the other of his charges upon the same horse and wrapped them about in the same gaudy serape till only two pair of pretty eyes peeped forth at the rain. The Vera Cruz highway clung to the mountain side, but the Contra Guerillas took a venturesome little bridle path, which dropped abruptly down into he rich valley of a thousand or more feet below. Emerging from the dense tropical growth of the highland, they beheld a vast emerald checkerboard of cultivation, field after field of sugar cane, and set in each bright square a little house of bamboo with a roof of red piping. After the dreary black gorges behind them, the light of the sun seemed boxed in here under a leaden cover of cloud. Coming suddenly out of the chill and mist, the two girls felt the very rain gratefully warm and the fragrant smells of the wet earth a thing of comfort. As the beauty and the cheer of it subtly gladdened her mood, Jacqueline thought that here at any rate was an adequate mise-en-scene for whatever tremors might befall.

There was one circumstance that already seemed a portent, and got on a person's nerves like the stillness of nature just before a Kansas cyclone. This was the curious absence of all human life. Except for the grimly expectant troop around her, and the clanking of metal as the Contras rode, she had no token of a fellow creature. The first of the plantations was deserted, and likewise the next. But the house doors were open. Nothing showed preparation for departure. The riddle was uncanny. At the third Jacqueline stated that she would go no farther. She hated to tramp down a man's field when the man himself was not about to express an opinion, and the ruthless swath made by her escort through the cane gave her shame. Besides, it was too much like wading, the way her skirts brushed the long leaves and knocked off glistening drops by myriads.

The third cabin was abandoned too, but there were inducements within for any houseless creature. A hammock was hanging from corner to corner in the front room, probably to thwart the fauna of tropical stingers, and there was that comfort unfamiliar to French women, a rocking chair, before a most inviting fireplace, itself a luxury rare in Mexico. The two girls removed their cloaks, and settled themselves to dry their shoes before a roaring fire which the men lighted for them. Then the Cossacks, including their colonel, left on some stealthy business without, and Jacqueline and Berthe were alone.

Jacqueline tried the rocker, found it good, and smoothed her skirts over her knees to the warmth of the blaze. "We've only to yawn at the flies, eh, ma cherie?" said she.

"Not a thing else, madame," came a cheery voice from the hammock.

Jacqueline was at once suspicious. "You absurd little mouse," she said, "don't I understand that gaiety of yours! And all the while you are really trembling in fear of terrible bandits. For months now you grieve because you imagine that I—well, that I am sad. But you'll not make me hilarious, you won't, Berthe, as long as it's 'madame.' Child, child, will you not let me have my friend in you, I who have none, nor a mother or sister! There now, if I'm not to be—ah—pensive—remember there's no 'madame' between thee and me, dear!"

The Bretonne's gentle eyes filled suddenly. Jacqueline had before sought to change their relations, ever since Berthe's part in Driscoll's rescue from execution, but she had always tried to bring it about by playful bantering. Now, however, Berthe was given to see the utter loneliness of an orphaned girl in one who for all the rest of the world was the disdainfully independent little aristocrat, who had met the proffered intimacy of the French empress with a sneer, who was the cold princess when among princess of the Blood. The loyal child of simple Breton folk sprang impulsively to the arm of the rocker, and was herself clasped no less impulsively.

"But there," said Jacqueline, laughing rather brokenly, "we're forgetting the flies."

A belt over the fireplace caught her eye, and she unexpectedly discovered that her breath had quickened. She stared fascinated at the letters on the buckle. "C. S. A.," she murmured. Then her startled gaze roved hurriedly over the walls. It became even frightened before a faded gray cape-coat of the Confederate cavalry and a battered white gauntled sticking from the pocket. Involuntarily, trembling foolishly, she looked to see if there might not be an old cob pipe also. There was not, but the other familiar objects made her imagination leap fearfully to what might be. Both hope and dread will always override common sense, and convoy imagination preforce. If he did life here—if they should meet! Could such a coincidence happen, could it, outside the neat ordering of a book or play?"

She sprang to her feet and began investigating. She went awesomely as one would tiptoe over a haunted house. In the next room she came upon what was an odd treasure trove for an isolated bamboo cabin tucked far away under the Tropic of Cancer. It was a printer's shop, after a fashion. The case was a block of stone, in whose surface the little compartments had been chiseled. They were sparsely accoutred with type and plentifully with cigar ashes. As for a press, there was none. But a form had been made up on a slab of marble, and near by were a tiny hillock of ink, a roller and a mallet. The mysterious printer could at least take proofs. There was one now on file. Jacqueline pulled it off, and contemplated a minature American newspaper, of one sheet, printed on one side only, and no larger than a magazine cover. At the top she read the legend, in German caps: The Cordova Colonist—Weekly Independent."

"Is that a pun?" she wondered.

But now at least she could identify the ghostly company of the valley, though not its scribe. That word "Cordova" gave the clue. A year ago one thousand hardy men had ridden into the capital from the north. Their leader was a fiery, black-whiskered little man with a plume in his hat and the buff sash of a brigadier general around his waist. They were the Missourians, detamed as "Shelby's horse thieves and judges of whiskey," honored as "The Old Brigade," and so feared and respected under any name that the City fairly buzzed and stared goggle-eyed. But Maximilian again refused their offers to enlist under his standard, and they could only disband. Some took ship to hunt for Kidd's treasure in the Pacific, others went to Japan and the Sandwich Islands, and a number joined a congenial regiment of veterans, the Zouaves. But the majority, she remembered now, had been settlers, persuaded thereto by their countryman, Commodore Maury, who was Imperial Commissioner of Immigration. Maury had secured a grant of land near the town of Cordova, within a hundred miles of Vera Cruz. There were one-half million acres of rich land, suitable for three Big C's of southern countries, cotton, cane and coffee. But until now the strip had not been cultivated. The Church had held it fallow. Then the Republic had nationalized it; and the Empire was selling it to the Americans at $1.25 an acre. The hopeful settlement bore the name of Carlota.

So the cape-coat and those other things were explained. She was denied her coincidence. But as there was so much of a plot forward anyway, she ought to have been satisfied—as an artist, she ought. She craved an ecstasy of peril or of terror, not as the former dilettante of emotions, but as the lotus eater who exacts forgetfulness.

Meantime she read editorials, and got interested. The Colonist never advanced beyond the proof-sheet stage, but as such it circulated with avidity over the valley. Eloquence flowed serene under mashed type and variegated fonts. The editor persisted in viewing the Empire and Republic as political parties, and the horrors of civil warfare as incidents of an electoral campaign. He had congenial scope for his unpartisan and independent pen, advising with owl-like sagacity or abusing with peppery virulance, and either, for either side, with blithe impartiality. At times, though, the strained analogy between ballots and bullets evidently cracked, and rather floored the editor.

"Why," cried Jacquelne, "what an animal disputans it is!" She perceived an ink bottle, and exclaimed, "Ah, more milk from the black cow!" Taking up a wad of copy paper, on which a future editorial was already begun, she read, and quickly her amusement changed to a livelier interest.

"Rumor goes," she read under the caption, Ardentia Verba, "that Father Augustine, political manager for the administration, vice Eloin, is soon to leave for Europe. He goes to have a pourparler with the Pope. He will concede everything, since the Empire no longer hopes to win over the moderate Mexicans. But the obstinate though Holy Father will negotiate a concordat on one basis only, and that is the return to the Mexican church of all nationalized church lands.

"Men of the colony, attention now! We each own something like three hundred acres apiece of these lands. And we are paying for them, we are cultivating them, and we have to defend them against both guerrillas and contra-guerillas. And now they are to be confiscated! Our new homes are to be taken from us! Alas, we who are peaceful settlers, to think that we were Trojans on a time!!! Fellow citizens, with us it's a severe case of e pluribus unum. Oh, for a leader! But our incomparable chief of yore will not stir. Yet there was one, gallant cavalier of the South, peerless captain, just the dauntless heart for any forlorn hope under the starry vault of heaven, if he were only here! If he, John D. Driscoll were only—"

The matter stopped abruptly. More than that, by force of habit the scribe had ringed the figures "39" underneath. They meant time. The editor had known, then, that he would not return to end his harangue.

"A flea bite," muse Jacqueline, "would interrupt the penning of an Alexandrian line. Now, I wonder who or what the flea could have been, and what—"

But there, she would ask herself no question concerning the editorially mentioned "John D. Driscoll."

It was mid afternoon when Colonel Dupin, like a shaggy, dripping bear, returned to the house and begged leave to dry himself. Standing before the fire, he reloaded his holster pistols. They were tremendous, elegant utensils of French make, with a nine-chambered cylinder, and a second barrel underneath that carried a rifle ball. Where no prisoners were taken on either side, the owner of such a weapon usually reserved the murderous slug for himself, and the loading of that lower barrel became a sort of ghastly rite. Jacqueline shuddered as she watched him fix on the cap.

"How do you explain your desertion of Her Majesty?" she asked. "Our Fra Diavolo should thank me for drawing you off."

The Tiger adjusted the double hammer so that it would play on the cylinder first. A rumbling chuckle came from the depths of his thoat.

"I should be honored with mademoiselle's approval," he said, "for at court mademoiselle is a guileful warrior. The casualties there may not be so sanguinary, but the strategic principle is the same. Know, then, that Rodrigo Galan employs a spy whom I own, body and soul. By now Rodrigo has learned from this spy that the Imperial coach broke down, and that tonight Her Majesty rests—here. So you see that she is not likely to be attacked—"

"But I see that we are, parableu"

"Of course," and the Tiger unctuously rubbed his hands in the blaze. "It's my chance to trap him. He has only three hundred men."

"And you, monsieur?"

"Our mutual spy has told him that I have less than two hundred men. The brigand knows that I was forced to leave a garrison at Tampico."

"But how many have you, really?"

Dupin motioned her to the window. But she saw not a man, not a musket. She saw only the wet fields of cane, and the black mist-shrouded mountains beyond.

"Just the same," the Frenchman assured her pleasantly, "they are there, full five hundred of my little tribe. Does mademoiselle approve?"

"It looks like the curtain on 'Fra Diavolo,'" she replied, shuddering.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Missourians.

"Men sententious of speech and quick of pistol practice."—Major John N. Edwards.

An hour before nightfall the guerillas attacked. Jacqueline was standing at the window, when she heard a jubilant din and saw a tawny troop charging through the fields toward the house. They yelled as they came, waving machets and carbines. It was the usual theatrical dash of Mexicans. Like savages, they thought first to frighten their adversaries.

"Won't you come and see, Berthe? It's like a hippodrome."

She felt sorry for them. The dulcet cane grew thorns. Under the leaves the black soil was become clay red with leather jackets. The Cossacks had fixed sword-bayonets to their muskets, and were waiting on their knees.

Stung by the hidden barbs, the first horses reared in air, pawing and screeching frantically. Many sank down again, and they were limp as the life ebbed. Others crashed backward, their riders underneath, and those behind plunged over them, unable to stop. Soon it was a fearful jumble; men and beasts, hoofs and steel, curses and shrill neighing. Then the firing began, a woof of fine red threads through the warp of pale-green reeds. The guerillas yet fought. The myth of their own heavier numbers kept them from panic. Ragged fellows with their feet bare in the stirrups leaned over to slash at heads between the tasseiled stalks. They squirmed like snakes from under kicking horses, and fainting, got a carbine to the shoulder at aim, and someway, pulled the trigger. Then they were taken in the rear. One-half of the Contraforces, mounted, had waited, had waited under the sapling growth of the nearest foothill. Now they sprang from cover, bloodthirsty whelps trailing the Tiger. The guerrillas could not turn back. To retreat they must cleave the way in front, and they did, by sheer desperation. Falling in the mesh at every step, they at last gained the large open space around the cabin.

Then it was that Jacqueline got a view of Don Rodrigo. He was superbly mounted, and his long body made a heroic figure on the curveting charger. He frowned, and his mustochios bristled fiercely, and his shouts of oommand were heavily ominous. The wind turned the folds of his black cloak. It was faced with scarlet silk, and the charro elegance beneath was black and resplendent. All told, he was a very outburst of glitter; breeches, jacket, sombrero, saddle, stirrups, and bridle; not of silver, but of gold. Good carbines for his vagabond Inditos, magnificence for himself, these had come from that fabulous theft of the bullion convoy. And he had arrayed himself this rainy day to dazzle a princess of the Blood. So now he wielded his sword with a conscious flourish, glancing toward the window to see if he were seen.

"The poseur, never out of his role," murmured his audience there. "How will he enjoy running, I wonder?"

But to her astonishment he did not run, though Dupin was cutting closer and closer through tangled bodies, eager to grapple with his old-time slippery foe. Don Rodrigo raised in his saddle, and looked anxiously in all directions. Suddenly his dark face lighted, and wheeing round, he called to his men, and in his turn strove as furiously to reach the Tiger as the Tiger had striven to reach him. Jasqueline could not now tell which side to feel sorry for. But she exulted in the thrill of it, even as she wrung her hands at sight of the red agony.

Then something happened, which even the Tiger, who knew his warfare so well, had never known; which got into even his dried and toughened marrow. It was the Rebel yell. It rose over a sudden thunderous rush of hoof beats. And next, as a puff of air, a herd of horsemen, a wild mud-spattering streak, surged past the house. On across the open, and straight upon the fray, they merged everywhere, and made bigger and livelier the blotch of mad swarming. Some wore slouch hats, others straw sombreros, and all were ruddily burned. They fought with revolvers, and often one would pause between shots to spit tobacco. They brought to the battle one thing above all else, and that was vim, vim unbounded, vim that simply had to have vent.

Jacqueline caught her breath. What race of men were these? Exalted, quivering, she watched them doing as workmen what fell to their hands, yet ever with that whirlwind of vim.

"The Missourians—of course!" she cried.

Through powder smoke and misty rain the figure of one horseman slowly grew familiar. She caught fleeting glimpses of him, as he darted into a melee, as he spurred round to find a hotterfield. Suddenly her eyes widened, and she pressed a hand hard against her breast.

"The coincidence!" she gasped, trembling from head to foot. "It is the coincidence!"

Her nose flattened against the wet pane. She remembered how that general of the Missourians had told Charlotte about this man, for the Empress had asked. And the general had related how the troop had dubbed him the Storm Centre.

"And no wonder!" she breathed. "Mon Dieu, how he enjoys it!—But, oh—he will be killed—oh!"

Yet nothing of the kind happened. When she uncovered her eyes, his assailants were in flight. Every Cossack survivor was in flight. The Storm Centre wheeled and confronted Don Rodrigo, who raised his sombrero effusively.

"Rebellion makes strange comrades," thought Jacquelne. "But no, my—the—chevalier—does not take his hand."

Indeed Driscoll was looking the guerrila over with little favor. "So," he exclaimed, "it was you I was to help here!"

"And what better patriot, senor——"

"Never mind that. Why didn't you wait till dark to attack? Weren't those the orders, or—that is, the suggestion?"

"But whose suggestion? Perhaps, senor, you know who El Chaparrito is?"

"Haven't the least idea, nor anyone else. But it's certain, Rod, that this is your first experience of Shorty. Another time, and you'll have sense enough to take his hints. Now then, where's the emperor we were to catch?"

Fra Diavolo's smile was Satanic. "Your Chaparrito was either mistaken about the Emperor, or," and he glanced toward the window, "or he deceived you into helping me capture a beautiful young woman."

"How? What——"

"I mean that His Cautious Majesty did not come, however much El Chaparrito seems to want him. But—" and Rodrigo's tone lowered heavily, "but his August Spouse came instead. She is in that cabin now. It is well, senor, for vengeance in kind is just. It is righteous, it is biblical. Since fate has thrown——"

"E-a-s-y! Easy, boy. Of course, if we've gone and netted an empress, we'll ask 'em to please take her back. This ain't a woman's game."

"Give up a queen's ransom?"

Driscoll nodded cheerfully.

"I believe, caballero," said the brigand with awful dignity, "that I command here."

Driscoll looked at his Missourians returning from the chase. "Well," he laughed, "you might try it on, and see how they take it."

Behind Jacqueline the door opened. She almost jumped. Of the hundreds likely to enter there, her startled fancy pictured only one. But the new comer was a stranger.

"Oh-ho, come a-visiting, eh?"

The voice was cordial, robust, Western.

"Missouri!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

"Yes'm, Cooper county."

She turned, won to friendliness, and beheld a man who, to use her mental ejaculation, was "of a leanness!"

"Monsieur——" and she paused.

"Boone, ma'am. Daniel, your most obedient servant. If I'd known—Sho', we might of had things spruced up a bit. Are you the queen, maybe?"

The lady's laugh rang as clear as a bell. Taken aback, Boone sought to correct his mistake. He saw that Berthe was seated in the hammock. She, then, must be the Empress.

"I'm downright sorry we went and captured Your Majesty," he began.

"Her Imperial Highness does not understand English," Jacqueline explained.

Then to her surprise the man proceeded in French. He was evidently greatly disturbed because Missouri hospitality did not harmonize with war. "It was a blunder," he apologized earnestly, "come of our deciding just this morning to make you Europeans vacate our continent. But don't let that worry Your Majesty. Here, under my roof, the decision doesn't hold, at all!"

Berthe lifted her head quickly. It was her second promotion in the social sale that day. She had trembled when the door opened, for she knew that Rodrigo's side had triumphed. But this tall stranger brought relief to one's nerves, and somehow she had watched him trustingly. He was of the same race as Monsieur Driscoll, to whom also she had once turned instinctively for help. But when the tremendous young fellow addressed her with reverence due a queen, she felt only the respectful admiration due a pretty young woman. It unexpectedly awakened in her the knowledge that she was a pretty young woman; and with a winsomeness that amazed and delighted Jacqueline, to say nothing of its effect on Daniel, she gently put him right as to her identity.

"It doesn't matter," Boone protested, stoutly, "you ought to be one!"

The door opened again. It struck the wall with an insolent bang, and in strode Don Rodrigo. Jacqueline noted who it was and indifferently seated herself in the rocking chair, with her back toward him. The Mexican advanced to the centre of the room. The brief twilight had fallen, and the place was in half light except for the blazing logs. He stopped rigid and flung his scarlet-lined cloak back over his shoulder.

"Where," he demanded in the huge tones of a victorious general, "is the tyrant's empress?"

No one volunteered as to where the tyrant's empress might be. The toe of Jacqueline's boot was indolently busy with the embers on the hearth. The heads of both girls were in shadow.

Rodrigo's furrowed brow creased more deeply. "Which of you is she?" The heavy syllables dropped one by one. He stepped tentatively toward Berthe. So did Boone.

"Stand aside, senor!"

"Can't, dear brigand," said Daniel.

Then Berthe spoke. "Please, messieurs," she began, "Her Majesty is not—"

"It's only a maidservant," Rodrigo exclaimed in chagrin.

"Don't make any difference," said Boone, "she's come a-visiting."

"If, Seigneur Brigand," spoke a clear voice, "you had not interrupted Mademoiselle Berthe, you would stand informed by now that Her Majesty is not here. Will you deign to close the door?"

Rodrigo knew well those bell-like tones. Forgetting the question of an empress, he drew nearer to the lady of the rocker. She gave him no heed, but her profile against the red glow was very soft and beautiful. His chagrin vanished. Here was a more ravishing triumph.

"A vengeance in kind," he muttered, wetting his lips. "Ha, he took nobody's wife, as to that; and his wife may go. But in the matter of sweethearts—ah!"

Bending, he laid a hand caressingly on her neck, against the tendrils.

At the touch she sprang to her feet, and Boone leaped forward with his fist drawn back. But both stopped. Her face changed from fury to pallor. Boone's expressed approval.

The room had filled through the open door with men and torches, but the first man among them had come as far as Rodrigo's shoulder even as the insult occurred. From behind, the man's arm had straightened under Rodrigo's chin, and twisting to a lever, was gradually forcing back his head. Rodrigo groped for a knife, but half way to his waist the fingers clutched vainly in a sharp spasm, and all involuntarily flew up and gripped at the vise under his chin. Yet another ounce of pressure, and it seemed his neck must snap like a dry twig. Suddenly his spine bent limp. Muscles relaxed. The whole body capitulated. Then the man behind stooped a little, and Rodrigo began to rise. Slowly at first, and next, as from a catapult, the brigand shot backward over the man's shoulder and struck his length on the floor.

"No, not that, boys," said the man. "Don't kick him. Laugh at him, it hurts more."

He spoke more particularly to one "Tall Mose" Bledsoe of Pike county who was purple with indignation that a "saddle-colored Greaser should dare lay hands on a white woman."

But there were also "Rube" Marmaduke of Platte, "Mac" Crittenden of Nodaway, the "Doc" of Benton, "Cal" Grinders from the Ozarks, Clay of Corroll, and Carroll of Clay, besides a ruddy sprinkling from the county of Jackson. Among the latter was "Old Brothers and Sisters," a plump little young man with cherubic eyes behind round brass spectacles. Clem Douglas had been ordained in the M. E. Church (South), and became thereupon the Rev. Mr. Douglas. "Old Brothers and Sisters" was a theological degree of later acquirement, lovingly bestowed by the Iron Brigade. But in his more recent gospel of pistol practice, Clem Douglas was not a backslider. He was simply all things Southern to all men. Like the others in the cabin, his hat was off, his muddy boots scraped; and, like the others, he was not unaware of the two girls.

"Rather showery out," he observed, genially, wiping the mist off his glasses, and imagining weather a livelier topic than battle.

Jacqueline did not hear. Her eyes were still on the man who had disdained to strike Rodrigo from behind, who had flung him away instead, as one would a dog. She stood motionless, and her face was very white. She saw that he wore loose leather "chaps," a woolen shirt, and an old coat, with only stained shoulder straps, green braid on dark blue, to indicate a uniform. His wet black hair was curly. His brown eyes flashed whimsical contempt on the resplendent guerrilla at his feet. He was the Coincidence; he was the Storm Centre. He turned, expecting to see the Empress, and he met her eyes. His own darkened with a new anger, and involuntarily, he swung round, himself to kick the Mexican who had insulted her. But a flood of memory swept over him, the memory of what he had seen at Cuernavaca. Not for her could he touch a fallen man.

"Take him into the back room, two of you."

Red, red to the neck, he was turning to follow, when he saw Berthe.

"Miss Burt!" he exclaimed.

Heartily he shook hands with her. "It's my first chance, you know, to mention what you did for me over a year ago. But I sure appreciate having my life saved, you know that. There now, you're not to worry over this present mess. We'll have it straightened out, just in no time."

He stammered as he spoke, and when he turned and left the room, his bearing was constrained. Jacqueline's eyes followed him until the inner door closed behind him. Then, with a half shrug, she sat down and pensively resumed the building of fiery mounds on the hearth.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

If a Kiss Were All.

"A man, a woman, a passion—what else matters?"—Sardou.

"Tall Mose" Bledsoe and the Rev. Mr. Douglas conveyed Don Rodrigo to the back room, and here Driscoll and Boone joined them. They did not disarm the Mexican. It did not occur to them that any man would risk drawing a weapon in such company. And as to Fra Diavolo they surmised correctly. He sulked a little at first, for there were sore tendons that ached. But in the end he grew reasonable, and his white teeth gleamed acquiescence to all that the senores were pleased to say. He agreed to bivouac his men apart from the Missourians and go his own way at daybreak. The Contras were routed. The Tiger had barely escaped. There was no further need of combined forces. Indeed, Don Rodrigo feared a night attack so little that he meant to reward his men with many copitas of aguardiente. Might he send a barrel over to his esteemed allies?

Mose Bledsoe turned a pleading look on the parson, and to his surprise the Rev. Mr. Douglas beamed tolerant benevolence. "Why yes, my friend," he himself said to Don Rodrigo, "good liquor is always acceptable, especially when soldiers must sleep on the wet ground."

The brigand was then allowed to depart, and Old Brothers and Sisters explained. It was best to let Rodrigo send the brandy, for then one knew what to expect. Otherwise the Christian brother and rascal would hatch up some other plot, and any other plot might take them off their guard.

When an hour later, Rodrigo did in fact attack the presumably somnolent Americans, more happened than either he or they expected. A third was also waiting to strike for the sake of a woman. He was Dupin, who wanted nothing better than the allies at each other's throat. Crouching warily near, the Tiger sprang at both of them. In the rain and the black night, the three-cornered fight raged like firecrackers under a tin bucket. The guerrillas, repulsed by the Americans, fled upon the Contras, whereat the Americans swept them both back indiscriminately. Instead of a lady, the Tiger carried off Don Rodrigo, and was quite glad to carry himself off. But Boone, scouting near, reported that Rodrigo was held a prisoner instead of being executed at once. This meant something. It meant beyond any doubt that the Mexican and the Frenchman would combine, Rodrigo for his life, Dupin to rescue Jacqueline.

The Missourians held council in Daniel's sanctum. To restore the captives to Dupin had been Driscoll's intention from the first. But now it was a question of trading them against Rodrigo. Dupin must know the American offer before he and Rodrigo should attack. Driscoll proposed for himself alone the errand to the Tiger's camp. Rising to his feet, he left his protesting friends without a word further. But he had to pass through the front room first, to get the cape coat hanging there. It was, in fact, his own. The two girls were seated before the fire, Jacqueline still in revery, Berthe nervously agitated from the late racket of battle. Daniel Boone had laid before them a ranchman's supper with tropical garnishing, but it was untouched. Driscoll nodded, crossed the room, took the coat from its nail, and started for the outer door as he drew it on.

"Snubbing—an acquaintance," spoke an impersonal little voice, "is cheap."

He stopped, waited.

"Of a gentleman, I reckon you'd say," he interrupted uneasily. "Maybe not, but a ruffian's got his instincts too. When he's afraid of hurting someone, he hides himself."

"I was mistaken," she said gravely, with that quaintest inflection of the English he had ever heard, "yes, mistaken. He mais—but it is just that the complaint. You hurt more by not speaking."

"But there's nothing to say," he faltered. "I'm just going to Old Tige's—to Dupin's camp, and get him to come here for you."

"Monsieur, Monsieur, you fight for your captives only—only to give them up?"

"That's not the question. You can overtake the Empress yet. Dupin will——"

"But it is not that I want to overtake empresses at all. I—Berthe, would you mind carrying back these supper things? —I," she continued, when they were alone, "have no wish to go back to Paris. I shall return to the City."

Again the liasion with Maxmilian, he thought bitterly. And Charlotte away! It was infamous. However, he had no right to be concerned.

"Very well," he said, "then Dupin can take you to the City, or wherever you wish."

"Ma foi, what trouble to be rid of your prisoners, monsieur, and after two battles too!"

"That's got nothing to do with it."

She meant, though, to have him confess that she had had a great deal to do with it. She was taken with the self-cruel fancy to lay bare and contemplate his love for her, that she might feel more poignantly the happiness she had lost. But he abruptly turned again to leave, and all else was forgotten in terror.

"You go to that Tiger!" she cried. "Do you not know that——" She darted between him and the door—"that he recognizes no rules of war? He will shoot you, he will, he will!"

Driscoll laughed.

"Oh, I'll be safe enough all right, thank you. Dupin holds Rodrigo, we hold you. So it's simply an exchange of prisoners. And he'll not do anything to me, for fear of what might happen to you here. You're not a hostage, sure not, but as long as he thinks so, I'll profit by it."

"You are right," she admitted, yet not heeding his anxiety to pass. "Dupin will not even detain you. He will judge you Missouriens by himself. So, viola, he frees Diavolo. He comes for me. And—and you, monsieur?"

"Me? W'y, I'll wait for the boys at Dupin's camp, after he takes charge here. Then we'll march."

"And—you do not come back?"

"No need to. Now will you please get away from that door?"

"Not coming back!" she repeated. Could the Coincidence be for naught after all? Could not real life be for once as complacent as art? He was going, and when, where, in the wide world, in all time, might they ever meet again? And he was going, like that! Except for her, he would not even have spoken.

But—if he were the man to hold her, despite herself? If he were primal man of primal nature, the demigod raptor who seizes his mate? Yes, she would forgive him—if only he were that man, if, as such he would but hold her from her duty, from her sacrifice, despite herself, if—if—— And so her daring fancy raced raced as desire and hope to outrun sorrow. And why not? She could look him in the eye with that honesty which pertains to woman, for she knew that the shame he thought of her was only to the evidence of what he had seen, of what he had heard the world say, and not—no, not in fact. And for the kindness of that fact she thanked Providence. Then, daring to the end, her insane hope for happiness gave her to remember that there was a clergyman among those Americans, and to see in that the ordering of fate.

But Reality was still there, grim and greater than either Providence or Art. The man was waiting for her to step aside, and when she did, he would pass through the door and out of her life. She gazed, as for the last time, on his stalwart shoulders, on his splendid head, the head of a young Greek, on his flushed face, his mouth, and those obstinate little waves of his hair. How good he was, to look upon—for her, that is! No, no, she could not let him go.

(To be Continued.)

KINGSTON NEWS

Successful Concert to Aid Macdonald School Piano Fund--Dr. Keith Sells Out His Practice to Dr. King.

Kingston, March 23—On Wednesday evening the members of the St. John Glee Club gave a delightful entertainment in the public hall. Standing room in the hall was at a premium, and all present thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated the different items on the programme. Special mention must be made of the banjo solo, Nearer My God to Thee, by Geo. S. Hoyt, which was given as an encore. On all sides were heard very favorable comments on the excellence of the music and the singing. The programme was as follows:

Selection by banjo and mandolin quartette—Uncle Sammy.. ....
Messrs. Hoyt, Smith, Hoyt and Donald.
Vocal solo—Starlight.. ....
Bayard Stillwell.
Mandolin duet—Bashful Bachelor.. .. ....
Messrs. Hoyt and Smith.
Comic sketch—Mr. Stebbin's Faith.. .. ..
S. H. Riley.
Vocal solo—Sweet Adeline.. .. ..
Wm. Plummer.
Selection by quartette—Moonlight.. .. ....
Messrs. Hoyt, Smith, Hoyt and Donald.
Comic solo—Everybody Works But Father
Wm. Donald.
Banjo solo—Maud S. gallop.. .. ..
Geo. S. Hoyt.
Vocal solo—When the Bees Are in the Hive.. ....
Arthur Stilwell.
Selection by quartette—Yankee Grit.. ....
God Save the King.

The young men were conveyed by van to and from Jubilee Station. Although the admission fee was small the receipts were $35. Of this the club donated more than $30 to the school piano fund. The teachers and pupils of the school most heartily appreciate the kindness and generosity of the boys and thus publicly thank them. May they and their club prosper.

Within a few weeks the Kingston school will give a concert. One of the enjoyable features will be a laughable farce, Who is Who. A "scart drill" by several young ladies will be very pretty. There will be many other attractive items. It is expected that several members of the Holder family, the famous singers, will be present and give several selections.

Dr. F. E. Keith, who has efficiently served the people of this section for several years, will leave next week for Richmond, Indiana, where he will resume the practice of his profession. Dr. S. S. King, a graduate of McGill, has taken Dr. Keith's practice here.

ANOTHER BLOODY BATTLE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Manila, March 26—According to advices received today, the recent fight at Magtaon, Samar, between the constabulary and Pulajanes was the result of base treachery on the part of the natives. As a result of the fight thirty Pulajanes were killed and sixteen of the constabulary were killed or wounded.

A despatch received from Capt. Jones, of the constabulary at Magtaon, says that on March 23 Governor Curry, Judge Lobinger and Supt. of Schools Hoover arrived there and camped over night near the Pulajanes. The presence of the officials was made known to the rebellious natives and their leader announced that he would surrender his force the next day. As a result of this promise the Americans returned to the town of Magtaon accompanied by Colonel Aguilar, a Pulajane chief. The next day four chiefs of the Puljanes with over 100 men and 14 guns appeared at Magtaon and lined up in front of the constabulary barracks. Between the barracks and the Pulajanes stood the group of American officials.

One of the chiefs expressed a wish that his party be photographed in the act of surrendering, and Supt. Hoover in compliance with the request, was adjusting his camera when the Pulajanes leader blew a whistle and gave an order to advance. The entire party of natives thereupon rushed upon the American officials who escaped to Magtaon river and swam to the opposite bank. When the treachery of the natives was apparent the constabulary immediately opened fire and a fierce fight ensued in which the constabulary gained a decisive victory. The Pulajanes were chased to the mountains but the pursuers lost more guns than they captured.

The American officials were later found with the exception of Governor Curry. He was last seen being chased by Pulajanes and it is now believed he is hiding in the dense brush in that locality.

Three hundred constabulary are now on the trail of the fugitive natives and searching for Governor Curry.

CAPE BRETON PRIESTS GOING ON LONG TOUR

Sydney, N. S., March 25—(Special)—Rev. Neil McDonald, of Whitney Pier, and Rev. Father McInnis, of Reserve Mines, will leave tomorrow for an extended trip abroad. They will be joined at Antigonish by Rev. Dr. Thompson, rector of St. Francis Xavier. The party will visit Rome, the Holy Land, Japan and China, returning by way of Vancouver about September 1.

Fathers McDonald and McInnis were both presented with substantial purses by their parishioners today.

O. H. Horne Critically Ill.

Dorchester, N. B., March 26—(Special)—O. H. Horne, well and favorably known here, is very critically ill with appendicitis. The family physician is in constant attendance.

STEAMSHIP OWNERS AGAINST SUNDAY LAW

Petition Presented to Parliament Yesterday Objecting to It

Ottawa, March 23—(Special)—The preliminary proceedings in the House of Commons, today consisted of the presentation of petitions in favor of observance bill and the introduction of a number of private bills. One petition was presented by the Montreal Shipping Federation in opposition to the Sunday Observance bill.

The house went into committee of supply taking up the estimates of the department of justice. On an item of $77,000, salaries and allowances to the Yukon Territory, R. L. Borden asked if any reduction could be made. Mr. Fitzpatrick replied that after a careful enquiry and report of Judge Craig he was compelled to say no. Mr. Foster questioned the value of a report from such an interested source. Why had not some person less interested looked into the whole matter.

Mr. Fitzpatrick was of the opinion that an officer from the auditor general's office had made an inquiry, but was not sure. He noticed that while the total salaries were $39,000 the allowances were $33,000. He suggested that the item should stand over and this was agreed to.

Mr. Paterson's estimates followed. On an item of $1,214,000 for customs collection, Mr. Zimmerman, of Hamilton, gave an instance of the rigid economy of the department under its present head. In 1897 the staff at Hamilton numbered 34; in 1905 it was 33, yet the revenue had increased by $614,000. The receipts had more than doubled, yet there was one man less on the staff.

A discussion on the rate of taxation followed. Mr. Paterson said that the customs revenue of the dominion this year would total $44,435,000. The customs taxation had been reduced from 18.28 per cent. under Conservative rule to 16.04 per cent. less under Liberal rule. The contention of the Conservatives was that as the amount of revenue collected was larger under the Liberals than the Conservatives therefore the amount of taxation was greater. They did not take into consideration the increased volume of business. Some of them argued that in calculating the rate of taxation free goods should be eliminated.

All the customs estimates, except one item, were passed and nearly all the post office items.

In asking to be relieved of the operations of the Sunday observance law the shipping federation of Montreal say that Noah got seven days to build the ark.

POLICE GUARDING SISTER OF BOY STOLEN AND TAKEN TO AMHERST

South Portland, Me., March 22.—Policemen Fowler has arranged to escort daily between her home in Hartford place and her school, Edith Savory, ten years of age, whose little brother was recently kidnapped in Lynn (Mass.), and taken to Amherst (N. S.) It is alleged, by his uncle, Mrs. Annie Lowe, the foster mother, today consulted a Portland detective and arranged with him to render immediate assistance in case any attempt to get possession of the child should be discovered.

Charles Palmer, a boarder at Mrs. Lowe's, has taken a great interest in the child and has been on constant watch. "If any one attempts to take her when I am around home he will have to reckon with me," said he. It is Mr. Palmer who claims to have seen on three different nights a man watching the house.

The child is extremely pretty and displays a motherly care over two smaller children of a boarder. She appears to be perfectly contented with her home and evinces a pathetic fondness for her foster mother. The home is a very unpretentious, double-tenement house, much in need of repair and renovation.

"We can't afford luxuries," said Mrs. Lowe, "but the child has had as good a living as we in the four years she has been with us, and she will never want as long as I have a cent.

"Perhaps they would give you a much better home than we have." Mrs. Lowe remarked to the child today, when speaking of the desire of relatives to get the custody of her.

"I don't want any better home," the child replied. "I want to stay here with you."

BORDER SMUGGLERS PLEAD GUILTY

Augusta, Me., March 24—Charged with the misappropriation of the funds of the Hallowell post office, Denny K. Jewell, for eleven years postmaster of that city, was arraigned this afternoon before Commissioner Butleigh. The complaint against Postmaster Jewell was made by Wm. B. Robinson, a post office inspector, who has been investigating alleged discrepancies in the