

# The Revolt of Bismarck

less than that. then, his eyes dropped and his face turned as pale as it had red a few minutes before that. He grinned like a sick cat and turned away, and Guadalupe laughed and walked out of the dining-room. Right there I saw Lizzie bite her lip and look at Bismarck as if he wasn't there, and then, flip went her skirts, and the kitchen door swung to behind her. Pretty tough, eh?

"What devil got into Guadalupe I don't know. I don't think it was because he thought anything of Lizzie. I never seen any signs of it. It was just pure cussedness, I reckon, that made him pick on Bismarck from that time out. If it had been Lizzie, it seemed like he'd queered that game from the jump-off. No more special favors for the Dutch in Ferguson's. Bismarck might look as he pleased, but there was no danger of getting a flicker of an eyelash from the girl after that morning. She'd dump his dishes down alongside of him like he was ten miles away and she rather hoped he wasn't coming back. You can throw bricks at a man in such a way as to convey the impression that you ain't got a large amount of use for him, but it isn't a marker to white queen's-ware when it's dropped around by a dining-room girl who's soured on you. If it had been me, and there wasn't no other place in town for me to feed my glad young face, I'd have got me a cookstove and a couple of skillets and took risks on spoiling good raw material and an average fair digestion; but not so Bismarck; he never missed a meal, though there was never one that he didn't get a frost that would make your teeth chatter. Not only that, but there was always a chance that Guadalupe would be on hand, and, when that happened, there was other happenings. Sometimes it would be just plain insulting language; but, whether Bismarck understood it or not, that slid off him tolerable easy. Other times Guadalupe would make him pass his plate and empty a salt-shaker on his victuals, or take his pie away from him and eat it. If he came in and found Bismarck already setting at the table, he'd indulge in the same little pleasantry of pushing his head down on his plate, or jerking his chair from under him. The things he did were just like the mean tricks that one kid might play on another; but there was something in the way he looked while doing 'em that made you hold your breath expecting something more that wouldn't have no cheap foolishness about it. But Bismarck always acted as if he was going to roll over on his back and put his paws up. He'd give that sick grin and mumble something that sounded apologetic and that's all there was to it. He'd never look Guadalupe in the eyes in the way he did the first time he got manhandled. Maybe he saw all he wanted to then; I guess he did. I could see it glowing above that ugly, hooked beak every time the gentle joshing began.

"I took occasion to mention the hunch I had to Bismarck one time I overtook him on the road from the Morning Glory. There's times when the good advice I've got on hand is more than I can use myself. 'Bismarck, my friend,' I says, 'if you've got the sense of a summer sausage you'll keep out of Guadalupe Brown's way. You may think he's just having a little harmless fun with you, but I've seen a cat have sport with a mouse the same way, and there's always one end to it.'

"He stopped in his tracks and stared at me. Then he says, 'Mein Gott! how gan I? All der time he iss dere. Keep oweit ohf his way? I gannot.'

"I can tell you a darned good plan,' I says. 'Go get your time and climb aboard the Sidney stage. You might try Virginia City, or Coo-Stick, but it's my opinion, you'd be wandering back again in your weakminded condition, before a week was out. It don't matter where you go so long as you go far enough.'

"He shook his head. 'If you're thinking about Lizzie let me tell you the stuff's off,' I says. 'If you hang around here a thousand years it won't do you no good with her.'

"Darned the Dutch! Blamed if he didn't sit down right there and weep. I couldn't stand that. I quit him. It made me feel uncomfortable. He was a little fellow, but he seemed to hold a heap of anguish and it come out hard.

"I wondered if he wouldn't take my tip, but he was right on deck the next morning at breakfast, looking like a small bar of soap after a hard day's washing. Guadalupe wasn't among those present then. It was early hours for him, but he showed up at supper and took a chair right opposite to Bismarck. For a few minutes he didn't seem to take no notice of him. He smiled at Lizzie when she brought him his steak, and, as she didn't respond, went on smiling at the steak as he cut it up. Bismarck took a quick look at him, and the poor little rat's hands began to tremble. Guadalupe seen it, too, and smiled harder than ever. He smiled as he reached for a biscuit, and he smiled as he plunked it at Bismarck and hit him in the eye; but the next instant he wasn't looking cheerful by no means: he was standing up and clawing at his shirt collar and cussing. Just as the biscuit left his hand, Lizzie jerked the full of a cup of hot coffee at him, and it took him in the neck and face.

"You make any more breaks like that at this table and you'll hunt another place to eat,' says Lizzie.

"She made a picture as she stood there, her black eyes snapping and a patch of bright red on each cheek. Guadalupe stopped mopping his neck and laughed. Bismarck had jumped up, but when he heard the laugh he dropped back into his chair with a groan and wiped the sweat off his forehead with his paper napkin.

"I didn't know he was a pet of yours,' says Guadalupe.

"No pet of mine,' says Lizzie.



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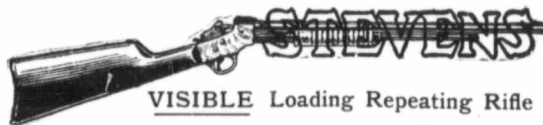
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