

ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS;

OR, HIS FIRST AND LAST LOVE.

BY THOMAS A. JANVIER.

CHAPTER V.

Barwood seated himself on the stone from which Mary had just risen, and as he began to speak, he slowly rolled a cigarito in his brown fingers. Hardy leaned against the bluff, and, half turning away as he listened, looking out over the fringe of mesquite bushes and the great cactus-covered, sunny plain to the far mountains.

"I s'pose you'll allow," Barwood began, "that when I caught you huggin' my wife that w-y, I'd a perfect right t' shoot you without any talk about it?"

Hardy half turned and nodded. It was better, he decided, to let Barwood think what he pleased than to complicate matters by an explanation that he neither would understand nor believe.

"Very good, that's somethin' we can begin with agreein' to. Well, it's just the truth that I could 'a' shot you if I'd thought Mary was worth it. But I don't. You've just heard me say what I think about her an' I needn't say 't all over again. Th' short of it is that she's done me nothin' but had turns ever sence I married her, an' I'm sick of havin' her around. She's not worth shootin' anybody for, an' that's just th' everlastin' truth. Now you strike me as bein' a pretty stiff sort of a man, th' kind that's got sand an' is good 't tie to. I reckon me an' you could make a team, if only onct we could fix things so's we'd pull together. That's what I'm after now. You've got eyes in your head an' I guess—t' say nothin' of what I s'pose Mary's told you—you've sized things up here at Santa Maria pretty true. You got down pretty quick, I noticed. 't my little game about th' pump."

Hardy started.

"Yes, I seed you this mornin'. You was sharp, but you had a close call, all the same. I was watchin' you, an' I had my gun already an' I'd more 'n half a mind t' let it go off, too—but I didn't. Well, you struck on th' little matter 'n short order, an' th' way you tumbled to 't showed you 't be one of th' wideawake kind. That's th' kind I like—an' it's th' kind that has a chance t' make somethin' out of livin' here. I guess you credit me with too much hard sense t' think I'd stay in Santa Maria long just for th' fun of running that infernal pump? Not much! An' I'm not here for my health, neither. Now, I'm goin' t' talk right out t' you, man t' man—for th' way things stand between me an' you we've got t' have a fight or a settlement. An' I just tell you now that if 't comes to a fight, an' you lay me out, you won't make nothin' by it. My Greaser friends 'n know what I'm doin' an' are lookin' out after me. If I'm hurt you'll never get out of here alive. There's not so much sleepiness about this town as there seems t' be. We gave you this chance t' talk t' Mary—I knowed you both wanted it an' 'd take it fast enough—cause I allowed it 'd sort of bring things right down t' th' hard pan, quick an' comfortable. An' so 't has, you see. But there ain't a man in Santa Maria who ain't been listenin' all day, an' who ain't listenin' right now, for th' sound of a gun goin' off. They'll know quick enough what it means if they hear it. An' I tell you again, that if you should happen t' hurt me you'd be as dead inside of ten minutes as George Warrington."

Hardy was not a nervous man, but a shudder went over him as he thought of the eyes that had watched him all that day from the closed, silenced houses; of the alert peril that had beset him in the midst of what had seemed to him such slumbrous security. And this shudder went down into the inner fiber of his heart as he remembered the curious creeping thrill that had run through him as he stood—

—he knew, by Barwood's broken pipe. By th' way, he now menaced him. He knew there 'd be an extent could be the some-thing had thought of the back-ness

"try aces under th' table," he said. "Well, we had. An' we've got 'em there yet."

"An' now you've truly sized up the game, I can talk business. It's genuine business, too. You see, I'm at th' head of what I call an importin' outfit. It's not exactly reg'lar in th' way it works; but it's good for th' country, an' it's pretty middlin' good for ourselves. An' it's a sort of a moral institution, too, 'cause it takes away th' temptation of stealin' from th' Greaser custom-house officers. Savez?"

"You mean you're smuggling?"

"Why, yes," Barwood answered, with a fine frankness. "It is called smugglin' sometimes—but I think callin' it importin' sounds better. We're in th' cattle business, too; an' that's a very payin' branch of th' concern. An' in a general sort of way we're on th' make all round. I don't want to brag about myself, but it's only fair t' say that for a business that hasn't been ruinin' long we're doin' mos' uncommon well. I can't prove 't t' you from th' books, 'cause we don't keep none; but I can prove 't t' you fr'm th' dollars—them we've got stacked up in th' old church. I guess holdin' all them dollars is about th' best use that church ever was put to. It's th' first time I've ever knowed a church t' be of real practical account t' anybody. Would you like t' take a look at 'em?"

Hardy turned around and looked at Barwood squarely. "What are you drivin' at, anyway?" he asked.

"Drivin' at? Can't you see? I want you t' come into th' concern an' be a partner."

"Be a robber?" Hardy burst out.

"Drive slow. Don't get mad about it," Barwood went on coolly. "Gettin' mad's no way t' manage a business transaction. Now, I'm talkin' horse-sense. You're th' sort of man I've been lookin' for, an' if you'll chip in you won't be sorry for 't. Tain't many folks I'd make th' offer to. But unless I'm a good way up th' wrong tree, you've got th' nerve t' rustle things, and ain't th' kind in a tight place t' go back on your friends. Some of these Greasers are pretty good, but I never squarely can tell when they won't slip up on me; an' I want somebody around who has sand an' can be depended on. You're that kind, an' that's th' reason I want you."

"Now, that's my side. Your side is that I let you into a first-rate thing, where there's money t' be made quick, an' lots of it. It's a rattlin' good chance for you. What do you say? Will you ante?"

"I'll see you and the business hanged first," Hardy answered promptly.

"Don't be so sure about that. I haven't given you all the points yet. There are some more reasons why you'd better come in, an' th' biggest one is, now that I've talked in this free and friendly way with you, I can't afford t' have you stay out. I didn't intend t' talk this way unless I really had to; but I guess you're sharp enough t' see that after what I've told you, either you've got t' come in, or I've got t' use you as a sort of starter for that American graveyard we was talkin' about awhile ago. You know a little too much about our game for 't to be quiet healthy for you unless you take a hand yourself. Do you ketch on?"

"I guess I'd about as lief be shot now as have it done later by a file of Mexican soldiers, to say nothing of its being a good deal better than being hung by a sherriff if I happened to get caught on the other side of the line."

"There's somethin' in that," Barwood answered, in a tone of serious thoughtfulness. "Them little chances sometimes come in our business, an' we've got to take 'em. But what you ought t' look at is that they're nothin' but chances—an' this other shootin' that I'm talkin' about is th' dearest sort of a dead sure thing."

"Well, then, bring it along—you've got my answer," Hardy spoke with entire unconcern, and with obvious sincerity.

"Unfellowed you had sand!" Barwood said, in a tone of admiring approval. "You're the kind I want. It'll go agin my grain power-ful t' put you in that graveyard—an' that's th' everlastin' truth. If it's got t' be done,

I'll do it, of course; but I truly don't want to. Now, look here, Hardy, there's money for you in this deal, if you'll come in; an' you know what'll happen t' you if you stay out—now what do you say if I'll chuck in Mary to boot?"

Hardy faced around on Barwood sharply. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"Just plump an' clear what I say. If you'd had as much of her as I've had, or if you'd th' sense t' reason out from what I've told you about th' way she's used me, how more 'n wuthless she is, you wouldn't want her. But when it was a matter of women I never knowed a man yet as wasn't a fool, an' I s'pose you're like all th' rest. It's plain you do want her powerful. Well, if you'll make this deal with me you can have her. Tell me, is it a go now?"

Hardy turned very pale, and leaned against the rock heavily. He was genuinely horrified. He put his hand to his throat. Once or twice he made an effort to speak, but the words would not come. Although supported by the rock, his body swayed a little. At last, in a voice pitched very low, as though to give him more control over it, he said, slowly:

"You mean that you will get divorced, and that I—that I may marry her?"

"Well, I can't say that I'd thought of quite such fancy fixin's as all that," Barwood answered. "But it's a matter of no partic'lar difference t' me how you go about it. I guess Mary 'd like it that way; she always did go in for style." And then he added sharply, and with a tone of suspicion in his voice: "But we can't have no foolin' round after such Fifth Avenue trimmin's as divorces now. To get a divorce you'd have t' go t' th' States for 't, an' just at present that ain't by a great sight what we're goin' t' do. Oh, come, Hardy, what's th' good of makin' an infernal fussy fool of yourself this way? Just tell me, will, or will not, my throwin' Mary in for boot make you trade?"

Hardy's loathing for Barwood was intense, but he could not afford to show it. If he refused this offer squarely he knew that he would not live the day out, and with his death Mary's chance of escape would die, too. What little will power she ever had possessed her husband long ago had crushed out of her. Unless deliverance came to her from outside herself—and he alone could bring it to her—she surely was lost. By a great effort he steeled himself so that his voice should not betray his anger and disgust.

"Give me a little time to think," he said.

"Now that begins t' sound as if you meant t' talk sense," Barwood answered. "Yes, you can think things over a bit; that's only fair. But you mustn't fool away much time on it. I'll give you till ten o'clock t'-night t' make up your mind in. How'll that do? If you settle t' come in, you'll understand then why I couldn't give you longer. An' if you don't come in—well, if you don't come in, I don't think that understandin' or not understandin' 'll make any partic'lar difference t' you."

As Barwood gave this answer, in a tone that emphasized the sinister significance of his words, the sound of a locomotive whistle was heard faintly.

"I may as well mention," Barwood added, "that I've got some of my Greasers in that busted old adobe house clost by th' station. I'm goin' up with you now t' meet th' train, an' if you try t' come t' over us by givin' us away t' th' freight outfit, it'll be my unpleasant duty t' start th' shootin' right off, an' scoop in th' train hands along with it—which wouldn't be exactly a square deal for them, for it's none of their funeral, any way."

"We'd better be movin' now. I don't think you're likely t' try any monkey tricks with me; but I guess I'll let you walk ahead, all th' same."

Hardy pulled himself together and walked in front of Barwood through the bushes, and thence along the narrow path to the break in the bluff, up which the path ascended to the village. Having reached the level land above they walked together side by side, to the station. The freight train was in sight, half a mile down the line.

"Just t' show you that I'm not bluffin' an' that I really have th' drop on you," Barwood said, pleasantly, as they passed the partly ruined house, "you may as well take a look at my friends here. They won't mind it—an' secin' 'em 'll make you understand that t' won't do you no good t' try t' rope in th' boys on th' train."

The First Symptoms

Of all Lung diseases are much the same: feverishness, loss of appetite, sore throat, pains in the chest and back, headache, etc. In a few days you may be well, or, on the other hand, you may be down with Pneumonia or "galloping Consumption." Run no risks, but begin immediately to take Ayer's Cherry Pectoral.

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The roof of the adobe house had fallen in and part of the rear wall had crumbled down; but the front and side walls remained, and the heavy door still was in place. Having whistled softly, Barwood pushed the door open, and, by a gesture, invited Hardy to look inside. Within the house fifteen or twenty men were standing or sitting. All wore revolvers, and a dozen Winchester rifles stood in a row against the wall. The Alcalde, who seemed to be in command of these very irregular forces, stepped forward as Barwood opened the door.

"Will the gentleman join us?" he asked in Spanish.

"The gentleman seems well disposed," Barwood answered; but as yet he does not speak positively. I have the pleasure of showing him these gentlemen, our friends, in order to convince him that to ask assistance from the Americans now coming on the train will not be wise. You, Senor Alcalde, will oblige me by accompanying us to the station; and you, gentlemen, will understand what to do should any trouble arise."

And then he added, in English: "But I guess there won't be any rumpus; eh, Hardy? You'd only get left if you tried it on, you see."

Hardy was forced to admit to himself, as with Barwood and the Alcalde he mounted the station platform just as the train came to a halt, that an appeal for help would be worse than useless. It would do him no good, and it almost certainly would result