

BLACK SOMBRERO

by CLIFFORD KNIGHT

Elsa Chatfield, Hollywood artist, is dis-
 tributed by her Aunt Kitty, who died
 from an overdose of morphine. Hunt
 Rogers and Barry Madison go to Mazatlan,
 Mexico, to solve what they believe
 to be Kitty Chatfield's murder. On ar-
 rival they find that Elsa's party had pre-
 ceded them by plane. During a festa at
 the ranch of Elsa's father, Sam Chat-
 field, James Chesebro is murdered. Lom-
 bardo, chief of Mexican police, ques-
 tions Pedro, the pulque man, who is
 required to identify the slayer. Pedro,
 star witness, escapes during re-enact-
 ment of the murder. Search for him is
 made in the mountain country. Lom-
 bardo arrests Reed Barton on suspicion
 of murdering Chesebro.

CHAPTER XII

"Buenos dias, senores," he said
 in Spanish, including the guard in
 his greeting. The latter saluted. Sam
 Chatfield reached an impulsive
 arm through the bars to shake hands
 with Reed. "I'm sorry, Barton,"
 he said in English. "I came as
 soon as I heard the news. Drove
 in at once. There must be some
 mistake—unless you've confessed
 that you did it?"

Reed Barton grinned. "Hardly
 that, Mr. Chatfield. I didn't kill
 Chesebro."
 "That's good. Have they treated
 you all right?"
 "Very well, indeed; no com-
 plaint."

"I rather think there'll be no cause
 for complaint, Barton. I'll use my
 influence, of course. Berta and I
 have powerful friends, and we'll
 see that you are comfortable so
 long as you are here. Which I
 hope will not be long."

"Thank you, Mr. Chatfield. That's
 very kind of you."

Sam Chatfield thrust his short
 arm again through the bars and
 took Reed's hand in a vigorous
 grip. Rogers and I likewise shook
 hands with the prisoner, and with
 assurance that we would stand by
 him, we took our departure together
 with Sam Chatfield.

On the sidewalk outside, however,
 we separated after a brief ex-
 change.
 Hunt and I went aboard the Ori-
 zaba to discover that Dwight and
 Margaret were absent in the
 launch; the sailing master pointed
 it out to us well up in the Estero del
 Astillero, but headed back in our
 direction. It came eventually along-
 side, and Margaret and Dwight
 climbed up the ladder to the deck.

"No luck!" said Margaret wear-
 ily, looking up to spy the two of us
 leaning over the rail. "Dwight's lit-
 tle playmate ran away from us."
 "I'll say he ran away from us.
 No strike; no sign; no anything.
 Saw him break water just once. This
 is no place, of course, to go fishing
 for marlin. I guess that particular
 one wandered into the bay by mis-
 take."

He stepped upon the deck and
 leaned his rod against the rail. It
 was Margaret who detected some-
 thing unusual in our manner.
 "What's happened?" she deman-
 ded. Dwight looked sharply at us
 at her question as if to discover the
 reason for it.

"Any new development—about
 last night?" he inquired.
 "Rather an awkward develop-
 ment—for Reed Barton," Rogers re-
 plied, rubbing the side of his large nose
 with a forefinger.
 "What? Tell us."
 "Reed's in jail, charged with the
 murder of Chesebro."

Rogers hastened to explain why
 Reed Barton was in jail, giving
 them an account of our search for
 Pedro, the pulque seller, and our
 visit to Lombardo.
 "Oh, I'm so sorry!" exclaimed
 Margaret when he was done.
 "That's bad luck. I wonder what
 Elsa thinks about it."

"I don't know whether she knows
 it or not," I said. "Sam Chatfield
 didn't say, when we were talking
 with him."
 "We'll find out, of course, when
 Elsa comes on board this after-
 noon," said Margaret. "We're real-
 ly going fishing tomorrow, you
 know—"

A hail from the water drew us
 to the ladder, and Margaret, who was
 closest, waved both arms in wel-
 come, and called out excitedly:
 "Oh, hello! So glad you could
 come. But—why didn't we send the
 launch for you? Why, we could just
 as well not. I'm sorry."

Greetings from several voices be-
 low responded, and, looking over
 the rail, I discovered a boat contain-
 ing Berta and Elsa, and on the seat
 behind them Sam Chatfield and
 George Rumble, the latter wearing
 his black sombrero with its silver
 trimming which glittered in the af-
 ternoon sun.

"It's Reed, of course," Elsa said
 dispiritedly in answer to my com-
 ment as I gave her a hand at the
 top of the ladder.
 "We'll have him out in no time,"
 I comforted her.

"That's what Papa says too, but
 I'm afraid, Barry."
 To what lengths of extravagant
 promise I might have gone at that
 moment I'll never know, for with a
 sudden, bewildering sound of break-
 ing water, a huge silvery dark fish
 leaped from the bay not fifty feet
 from the Orizaba's sleek sides,
 soared almost even with the rail in
 its mighty leap and fell back with a
 resounding crash. I could hear the
 slap of his gills, so close was he;

almost, I fancied, I could smell him.
 "Come on, you fishermen!" shout-
 ed Dwight, making for the ladder.
 The rowboat had sheered off, its
 native owner rowing as if for his
 life, and those of us now intent
 upon the pursuit poured into the
 launch, across which the occupants
 of the rowboat but a few moments
 before had had to clamber to
 reach the Orizaba's ladder.

The launch had been rigged for
 swordfishing. Two leather-cushioned
 swivel chairs were mounted side by
 side in the stern of the boat. There
 were seats behind these for those
 not engaged in trying for marlin,
 or who were content to fish over
 the side. Sam Chatfield had climbed
 into the seat beside Dwight. He
 was endeavoring to disengage a rod
 rigged with heavy tackle which lay
 alongside on the floor. I helped
 him with it. George Rumble sat be-
 side me, his huge black sombrero
 crushed down upon his round skull,
 so that it would clear the awning
 overhead.

Dwight glanced up, his outfit
 ready, and for the first time looked
 about to see who had come along
 with him. He recognized Sam Chat-

field at his side and smiled, then be-
 came solicitous of his welfare.
 "Are you comfortable, Sam?" he
 asked.
 "Oh, yes; quite."
 Dwight half rose. "Take this seat,
 Sam. I think it is the better of the
 two."
 "No, thank you, Dwight. I prefer
 this side. As a matter of fact, I'm
 going to ask you now if I may sit
 here tomorrow on our little jaunt up
 the coast."

"You certainly may, Sam. Take
 whichever side is most convenient
 for you."
 Rumble removed his huge black
 sombrero to let the breeze cool his
 head; his dark oily hair lay close
 to his round skull. He dropped the
 hat at our feet where it lay beside
 a small wrench. Rumble eyed the
 latter for a moment, then picked it
 up and turned it thoughtfully about
 in his hands. Sam Chatfield finished
 baiting the huge number twelve
 hook at the end of its steel wire
 leader, took a firm grasp on his rod
 and made a cast, sinking back into
 his chair, which creaked under the
 strain.

My gaze for the moment was on
 George Rumble; there was an odd
 look in his eyes. He was not inter-
 ested in the cast; his attention
 seemed to center upon the straining
 swivel mechanism underneath Sam
 Chatfield's seat. His gaze came
 back to the wrench in his hands. He
 turned it about, then of a sudden
 dropped it beside his sombrero as
 if the metal had suddenly become
 hot.

Looking back on that evening
 ashore in Mazatlan, I now can see
 how freighted it was with tragedy,
 but it began and ended, apparently,
 as only a gay adventure. Berta and
 Margaret remained on board the
 Orizaba; Elsa, George Rumble and
 I went ashore together in the
 launch. Dwight, Rogers and Sam
 Chatfield had not been ready to go
 with us, and the launch returned
 for them.

Elsa had only one purpose, and
 that to go to the jail to see Reed
 Barton. She kept pushing us along
 until finally Rumble halted at a
 street corner and said, "Look here,
 I'm not so keen on visiting that guy
 down at the jail."
 "You don't have to go if you don't
 want to," Elsa retorted. "That guy
 probably isn't interested in seeing
 you, either."

"That settles it, sweetheart,"
 Rumble replied in his husky voice.
 "Nothing like speaking your mind.
 I'll see you later."
 "Where?" demanded Elsa.
 "How do I know? I'm going to the

hotel and get my things together.
 Margaret's orders. See you on the
 boat, anyhow, if not before."
 Rumble stood on the street cor-
 ner, a curious figure in a yet more
 curious throng of native life.
 "Goodby," said Elsa.
 "Goodby, sweetheart."

The jail, standing in all its medi-
 ocricity close by the church, its scal-
 ing, cracked, pseudo-Gothic exterior
 softened now by the night's warm
 shadows, seemed less an eyesore
 than in the hard light of the sun.
 "Elsa," I began, halting on the
 steps, "perhaps I'd better take you
 over to the hotel, and I'll call on
 Reed myself—"

"Don't be silly," she said, advanc-
 ing through the doorway with such
 precipitate energy that the splen-
 did creature preening his mustaches
 leaped nimbly to one side to avoid
 being run down.
 But there was no Reed Barton in
 the jail. Elsa did not at first com-
 prehend the information which was
 offered in response to our inquiry,
 and neither did I.

"Por que no?" she demanded in
 Spanish of the jail guard.
 "El hombre no esta aqui," the
 man replied. "No se por que no."
 "I hope they haven't taken him
 out and shot him," Elsa said, turn-
 ing to me, an odd light in her gray
 eyes, which were now round with
 apprehension. "They do things like
 that."

"Forget it," I said. "Your father's
 influence probably got him out.
 Donde esta el hombre?" I in-
 quired of the guard who in reply
 merely shrugged his shoulders, in-
 dicating that he had no idea where
 Reed was to be found.

We made our way to the plaza
 where I hoped the old, old Mexican
 custom once more was being ex-
 hibited. But when we arrived only
 a handful of youthful caballeros en-
 circled the kiosk, and a smaller
 number of senoritas were moving
 slowly, leisurely in the opposite di-
 rection. One caballero, bolder than
 the rest, halted before his favorite
 and with a bow presented her with
 a flower. Round and round they
 went, while the band played the
 arias of "La Boheme." Motor cars
 were parked at the curb, a haven
 of parental refuge for any senorita
 who grew weary.

"I've seen this before," said Elsa
 after we had watched it for some
 moments. "I never realized until
 now, though, but I've been doing
 this same thing for years. Every
 girl has. Parading myself, my body,
 my soul, all that makes up the pit-
 tiful little me, hoping for the approval
 of some gay caballero."

"Your gay caballero stands on
 your right against the trunk of that
 tree."
 "Where?" Her head jerked sharp-
 ly in the direction I indicated. Reed
 Barton stood leaning lightly, easily,
 against the tree as he gazed at the
 scene in the plaza. He pulled his
 watch from his pocket and looked at
 it, unmindful that we were near by.
 Elsa left me instantly and flew to
 greet him, and I walked over more
 sedately to congratulate him on his
 release.

"Elsa had visions of your being
 stood against a wall at dawn and
 dying romantically to the rattle of
 musketry," I said.
 "Really?" He grinned, pocketing
 his watch.
 "Don't mind what he says," Elsa
 implored him.
 "But how did it happen, Reed?" I
 asked.

"It was just one of those things,"
 he said. "They came and opened
 the door to the cage and said to the
 bird within, 'Fly away, my sweet,
 and I flew away to freedom.'"
 "As simple as that?" said Elsa
 with a sarcastic note in her voice.
 "What I think happened was that
 they discovered I was not just a
 peon who could be thrown into jail
 and forgotten. Perhaps your father
 helped, Elsa; perhaps the consul
 had something to do with it. Any-
 way, it's nice to be out. Neither
 your father will accept my thanks,
 nor the consul; 'twas a mere noth-
 ing. Glad to do it, and all that.
 Saw your father, down the street a
 while ago, Elsa."

"He was coming ashore—Oh—
 you're going with us tomorrow."
 "Where and what?"
 "Fishing. You'll have to come
 aboard tonight with your things;
 we're leaving early. And now—"
 She halted, a wistful look in her
 level gray eyes. "Isn't there a dance
 going on somewhere tonight, Reed?
 Can't we dance and be romantic?"

"Oh, sure. There's a dance at
 the hotel tonight. Come along and
 observe the fower of Mexican youth.
 You'll see something! These little
 kids here in the plaza with their
 hand-me-downs and New York mod-
 els are a bit tawdry. The newer
 youth of Mexico is elsewhere. Com-
 ing, Barry?"

"Of course not!"
 Later I looked in upon the dan-
 cers. Reed Barton was right; the
 flower of Mazatlan was present.
 Youth, in any land, of course, is
 synonymous with beauty, but here
 it was to be found in extraordinary
 measure.

I looked on for a while entranced,
 then wandered away. There was a
 crowd in the bar, and I stood for
 a while drinking the excellent beer.
 I wondered where Rogers was, where
 he had gone, and presently he came
 in and joined me.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



FIRST-AID
 to the
AILING HOUSE
 By ROGER B. WHITMAN

Roger B. Whitman—WNU Features.

INSULATING ROOF

Last fall one of my correspond-
 ents insulated his roof. His first
 step was to line the under side of
 the roof between the rafters with
 tar paper, and then to put in four
 inches of rock wool. Before the
 winter was over, he found that the
 rock wool was dripping with mois-
 ture. He asks how this can be pre-
 vented. He seemed to think that
 the rock wool had the property of
 absorbing moisture; but this is not
 the case. The trouble came from
 the penetration of water vapor in
 the house air. Passing through the
 rock wool the water vapor came into
 contact with the tar paper, which
 of course, was chilled by the roofing
 boards. Condensation took place,
 and as the water that formed could
 not pass through, it was absorbed
 by the rock wool. He could prevent
 this by protecting the rock wool with
 something through which the water
 vapor could not pass. For this he
 could use hard and glossy tar paper,
 nailed to the exposed edges of the
 rafters. There would then be no
 condensation, for this layer of tar
 paper would be protected against
 outside temperature by the thick-
 ness of the rock wool. As a matter
 of fact, pads of rock wool and sim-
 ilar materials can be had enclosed
 in envelopes of tar paper. Had my
 correspondent protected his roof
 with these instead of the loose rock
 wool that he used, his trouble would
 have been avoided.

Stained Ceiling

Question: After the last heavy
 rains the ceiling around the brick
 chimney showed brown stains.
 Where do the stains come from?
 Answer: The stains may be
 caused by leakage through the flash-
 ings where the chimney passes
 through the roof. If the flashings
 prove to be in poor condition, you
 can close the leaks with a heavy
 coat of plastic roofing cement. An-
 other possible reason for the leaks
 may be a failure of the mortar be-
 tween the chimney bricks. If so, the
 bricks could be repointed.

STARCH FOR WALLS

Question: I want to paint my ceil-
 ings an off-white. Then I would like
 to starch each year and wash off.
 How would I go about it in detail?
 Answer: The formula is as fol-
 lows: Soften the lumps of a cup of
 laundry starch with cool water and
 add boiling water with constant stir-



ring until the starch is cooked and
 stiff. After cooling, add cold water
 to make a thin liquid, stir in one
 quart of buttermilk, and strain
 through cheese-cloth. Apply with a
 whitewash brush. Brush marks can
 be taken out by patting with a short
 bristle brush before the starch dries.

Damp House Air

Question: We began building our
 house last September, and had to
 move in December 1. Some furni-
 ture was put in the attic and the
 rest in the basement until the main
 floor rooms were ready about Christ-
 mas time. Many of the roofing
 boards are mildewed and also books,
 furniture, and household things that
 stand on the north side of the attic.
 Who is to blame, the contractor or
 the roofer? Have the roofing boards
 been weakened by the mold?
 Answer: No one is to blame, ex-
 cept yourselves for having moved
 into the house before the concrete
 and plaster had dried out. With
 your heater going, water from these
 parts should be drying out very
 rapidly. But even so, the house air
 may not be thoroughly dry until
 some time next winter. I greatly
 doubt if the mildewing has gone far
 enough to damage the roofing
 boards.

Paint for Fireplace

Question: We have an all-brick
 fireplace in our living room that I
 should like to paint. What kind of
 paint should I use?
 Answer: You can use a cement
 base paint, which is intended for
 masonry. It is a powder to be mixed
 with water, and it can be had in
 colors as well as in white. Ask for
 it at a mason material yard. I am
 presuming the brick never has been
 painted.

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ASK ME ANOTHER?

A General Quiz

The Questions

1. Who was known as the modern iron man of baseball?
2. Can you name three prominent movie stars with the surname of Powell?
3. The figures carved by Borglum in the Mt. Rushmore memorial are scaled to the proportion of men how tall?
4. How many persons lost their lives in the great Chicago fire?
5. In what year was the Constitution of the United States submitted to the people?
6. What dynasty was in power during the period that China was the foremost civilized power of the world?
7. What is the oldest known toy?
8. What is the vocation of a person who vocally labored under a burden?

The Answers

1. Lou Gehrig.
2. William Powell, Eleanor Powell and Dick Powell.
3. Of men 465 feet tall.
4. About 300.
5. In 1787.
6. The T'ang dynasty.
7. The doll.
8. A singer. (A burden is a chorus or a refrain.)

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