



# CARMEN OF THE RANCHO

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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WNU Service

## SYNOPSIS

Don Alfredo, wealthy, Spanish owner of a Southern California rancho, refuses to heed several warnings of a raid by a band of outlaws, Sierra Indians. One day after he has finally decided to seek the protection of the nearby mission for his wife and family, the Indians strike. Don Alfredo is killed and his two young daughters are torn from the arms of the family's faithful maid, Monica, and are carried away to the hills. Padre Pasqual, missionary friend of the family, arrives at the ruins of the rancho and learns the story of the raid from Monica. After a trying and difficult trip across the plains and mountains from Texas to California, youthful Honey Bowie, a Texas adventurer, with his friends, Ben Pardaloe and Simmie, an Indian scout, sight the party of Indians who have carried off the two little girls. The three Texans attack the war party of fifty odd Indians and through a clever ruse, scatter the savages to the hills. The girls are saved. The group makes its way out of the hills and meets the distraught Monica, the children's maid. The girls are left with Monica and the friendly Padre at a mission, and the Texans proceed to Monterey. Here Bowie completes his business for Gen. Sam Houston of Texas, who has commissioned him to deliver an important message. Bowie decides to have a look at the wild untamed country that California was in the middle Nineteenth century. Bowie disappears from California but returns eight years later and makes the acquaintance of a friendly Spanish family at the Rancho Guadalupe. He is attracted by the lovely Carmen, daughter of Don Ramon, the rancho's owner.

## CHAPTER VI—Continued

Bowie listened, indeed, to the words of Don Ramon; but he heard the cadences of another voice—a voice of sweet-throated music, strange to the ear but bewildering in utterance. For the first time in his life the Texan, without realizing it, began to love the strange tongue in which Californians spoke and to listen for every syllable that might fall from the lips of the young Spanish girl. The clinging black of her gown did not hide the tender slope of her shoulders; it contrasted with the ivory of her slender neck; and above this, from a perfectly poised head, fell soft masses of brown hair. They framed the features of one just at the threshold of full-bloomed adolescence: lips filling with promise of a richer maidenhood; eyes that retired under long dark lashes and opened with a searching light.

"You want to start tomorrow?" Don Francisco was asking. Bowie nodded.

"But I have an idea," suggested Francisco. "My uncle is having matanza this week. He is slaughtering surplus cattle for the tallow. Captain Davis, with whom my uncle trades, is in port at Monterey from China. He will want much tallow for South America and Boston—it will be a big matanza. You should see one. Much attention, much excitement, much work. Stay over a day or two. The streams will then be fordable, and you and your scouts, in the meantime, will be well entertained. Plenty of bears!"

"Bears?" echoed Bowie. Francisco nodded. "Dozens. They come down from the mountains at night after the matanza offal. Plenty of chance for a bear fight if you like one."

The Texan showed interest, asked more questions, and said he would talk to his scouts.

The next morning Bowie and his host rode out to where the matanza was in progress. Pardaloe and Simmie were already on the scene, watching every move of the vaqueros as one rode quietly into the corral, lassoed a steer by the horns and brought him outside.

When the rider had the beast well placed, a second vaquero roped the steer's hind legs, threw him and, with two ropes taut, tied his feet in a bunch and, with a knife, gave him the golpe de gracia.

What interested the Texan, seasoned as to cattle and horses, was the skill and speed with which the vaqueros worked and the almost human intelligence of their horses—the perfection of their response to every hint of their rider in snaring and handling a steer. It was particularly this skill of the horses that made the work proceed rapidly without mishap or hitch.

For two days the work went forward speedily. The matanza ground was a scene of the greatest activity.

To the Texan the spectacle of such abundance, such profusion of waste and such indifference to everything but the work in hand was a source of amazement. A hearty lunch served to the family at noon was followed by a heartier dinner for the evening, with the difference that native wine accompanied the dinner. This was the family gathering

of the day at which the hostess and her daughter were formally dressed.

After the family had settled about the fire in the living room and the conversation had shown signs of lagging, Don Ramon made a request of Carmen.

Carmen took her place at the family harp, ran her fingers over the strings and sang a Spanish song. The conversation and the words of the song were lost on Bowie, but not the clear, true notes of the girl's voice.

Don Francisco explained that the song was the appeal of a lover to the stars to bear witness of his devotion to his mistress. Carmen sang again, a French chanson. It was very slight, but it echoed in Bowie's ears most of the night.

It bothered Bowie, that in these household meetings he could never manage to catch the eye of Carmen. He was discreet enough not to attempt to coax her glance his way—and old enough to be ashamed of himself for his curiosity. But curiosity persisted. Toward the end of his stay a natural resentment at the aloofness of one who had for a week enlisted his lively interest impelled him to practice such retaliatory measure as he could. The least satisfactory feature of his attempt to ignore her was that this made no apparent difference whatever to Carmen. If she were aware, there was no evidence of it—for her, he seemed not to exist.

Don Francisco, on the other hand, grew increasingly attached to Bowie. Everything about the Texan interested the youth. Especially was he fascinated by the plainsman's novel revolver. Indeed, the whole male population of Rancho Guadalupe marveled at a pistol that would shoot six bullets without recharging.

The matanza always brought down an army of bears from the hills, and Don Francisco, seeking excuse to prolong the stay of the hunters, promised them as many bear fights as they had stomach for—black bears, cinnamon bears and occasionally the famed monarch of the Sierras, the grizzly, the highly respected oso pardo, as Don Francisco called him. This prospect of adventure interested the two scouts. They added their appeal to that of Don Francisco, and Bowie—not loath to linger near the flame of the distant candle he had lighted for himself—consented.

Hardly had night fallen when the vanguard of the bears arrived from the hills. Tempted by the rejected meat and offal of the matanza, the bears would come down at nightfall for a feast. This gave the hunters, disposed for sport, their chance. Shortly the matanza ground was well filled with the hairy monsters, gorging, growling, fighting among themselves and snapping ferociously at those bolder coyotes who dared trespass on the preserves of their banqueting "betters."

The Texans watched. Don Ramon, circling a chosen bear, lassoed him by the neck; Don Francisco, watching his chance, executed the more difficult feat of roping the bear's hind legs; and the two horsemen, riding then in opposite directions, forced the bear to fight his utmost to save himself. In the end he was killed. The vaqueros made nightly sport with the big fellows. The Texans, seeing bear after bear brought to the knife, were not greatly impressed.

In the morning Don Ramon invited Bowie for a canter over the rancho. He particularly wanted to see how the rain had left the footbridge leading across the river to the grain fields which stretched in rolling acres toward the bay. Returning, he suggested a short cut through the hills. The two men were riding briskly abreast when, crossing a canyon, they stumbled suddenly, almost on top of a bear ambling along on her way with two cubs to the matanza ground.

"Mira! Cuidado! Oso pardo," cried Don Ramon.

The warning was well ordered. The bear, enraged, reared with the swiftness of a jack-in-the-box on her huge feet and sprang, as luck would have it, at Don Ramon. She struck him with a raking blow of her claw. It caught his trouser leg. The stout cloth, unhappily for the rider, held and the unlucky Don found himself torn from the saddle. In catapulting headfirst to the ground his foot caught in the stirrup, and his frenzied horse dashed down the canyon,

dragging the rider a dozen yards before the Don could release himself. As he kicked clear with a mighty effort his head struck a rock, and he sprawled on the canyon floor, half conscious. The bear dashed awkward but swiftly after the fleeing horse and the helpless rider. Bowie, close at hand, had barely seconds to head his panicky mount toward the angry beast and uncoil his lasso. Yelling to the Don to flee, Bowie flung his rope at the loping grizzly. It settled over her head and Bowie, spurring swiftly back despite the weight and size of the grizzly, jerked the monster around and threw her off her feet.

Only for an instant. Rolling over, the bear, doubly infuriated, seized the lasso in her claw and began reeling Bowie and his horse over hand toward her. The Texan perceived his peril. His horse strove vainly to pit his strength against the strength of his enormous enemy. It was a hopeless endeavor. Relentlessly the bear dragged horse and rider toward him. Luckily a sizable tree stood near. With shout and spur Bowie, plunging forward, whirled the horse and managed to circle the tree before the bear could take up all the slack. It gave the Texan an instant of respite, and he dismounted. But in that instant the bear charged him.

The tree between the two was of little consequence, as the hunted man was aware, and the grizzly's leap was far beyond the nimblest feat of a runner. Taking what was at best a merely desperate chance, Bowie, as he jumped, fired shot aft-



But in that instant the bear charged him.

er shot into the bear's mouth and head. Then he dropped the empty revolver, whipped out his knife and, waiting not a second, plunged directly into the bear's arms for what was likely to prove a fatal embrace. Only one of the two, he knew could come out alive.

The foreman Pedro was riding away from the corral when he saw Don Ramon's riderless horse racing out of the hills. The half-breed realized at once there was trouble. Shouting to near-by vaqueros to follow, he spurred for the hills. Before he reached them Bowie's horse, dragging the broken rope, shot out of the canyon and gave him the direction. At the same moment he heard pistol shots echoing down the canyon walls. Urging his companions who were stringing along behind to follow fast, Pedro galloped into the canyon.

His practiced eye told him the story as he rode. Whatever it had been, it was over, for the canyon was as still as the grave. On he galloped until, rounding a bend, he saw the bodies of the grizzly and the Texan lying less than ten yards apart, both apparently dead.

But Pedro dared take no chances. His horse was frantic, and he knew the deadly danger of a wounded bear. Casting a hasty glance at Bowie, who lay on his face, he urged his frightened horse closer to the fallen monster of the Sierras. The vaquero eyed the beast narrowly while he rode his horse, kicking and flinging, around him until he caught sight of the handle of a bowie knife sunk to the hilt between the ribs under the left forepaw. The grizzly lay quite dead.

Hastening to Bowie, Pedro slipped from his horse to examine him. Dust-covered and mangled, the Texan lay in a rapidly widening pool of his own blood. His heart was beating faintly, and Pedro, giving hurried orders to his comrades, raised the unconscious man in his arms, pushed up from one ear a flap of scalp torn from Bowie's temple, and, shouting for puffballs, plastered the dry spores as best he could over the unconscious man's head, shoulders and arms.

## CHAPTER VII

Bowie woke in bed to see a tall bald man in the brown woolen habit of a Franciscan padre sitting in a chair beside him and eying him with a suspicion of a smile. As Bowie opened his eyes the padre raised the forefinger of his right hand and laid it across his own lips as if to enjoin silence.

"Dos palabras, amigo, no mas!" he said in a low sympathetic voice. "Few words from you for some time yet. I want to see some nourishment for you before you expend any strength—you left most of that, amigo, in the canyon."

"Yes," he continued, still in English. "I know what you want to ask. You were brought back to the ranch house, given up for dead. When they sent for me at the mission I asked, 'Who is this man?' 'A Texan, mangled by a grizzly,' they told me. 'A Texan?' I repeated. And when they assured me you were, I said, 'The Texan is not dead; I have seen many men torn by grizzlies; but the Texan outlasts the bear.' However, I say to you seriously, few words and on your back till we can get more blood coursing through your veins."

Bowie lay so utterly weak he could hardly find voice, but speak he would. "Padre," he said, breathing with difficulty, "if the bear is dead I want my knife. My knife," he repeated with an effort, "and my revolver."

For answer the Franciscan rose, turned to the bureau in the bedroom, took from it the long knife and the Colt revolver. "They have been cared for, amigo, as you see. But I advise you to rest up for at least three months before you resume with a grizzly. . . . That is, indeed, a knife," remarked the padre, holding up the bowie knife for interested inspection. "Where did you get it, amigo?"

"The blade was made from a blacksmith's file," returned Bowie with a trace of pride in his weakness.

"And calls for a long strong arm to wield it," mused the padre.

Don Francisco entered the room on tiptoe. He greeted Bowie warmly. "Amigo!" he exclaimed. "Thanks to God that you are alive! Tell me: what happened in that canyon?"

The padre put up his hand. "He is too weak to talk."

"But in a few words," begged Don Francisco.

"In a few words," responded Bowie dryly, "we had more or less of a fight."

"Madre de Dios!" exclaimed Don Francisco. "I would call it more than 'less of a fight.' Pedro has never seen so big a bear—no, not in all his life, he truly says. But Bowie, you must know Padre Martinez. He has been our surgeon, amigo. We had none else to call on. Dr. Doane was in Santa Barbara. Doctors are scarce in California, very scarce. We feared you would die from all the blood you lost. But Padre Martinez, who graduated a surgeon in Spain before he became a missionary, came quickly to our aid—and you see!" Bowie weakly acknowledged his obligation by pressing the hand of Padre Martinez, who sat beside his bed, and the padre silenced Don Francisco by waving him out of the room and then following him.

At the door he encountered Don Ramon just coming to speak to Bowie and, in matter of fact, to apologize for exposing his guest's life to such danger. Don Ramon brought back his nephew Francisco for translator. "Only a few words, Padre," exclaimed Don Ramon. "But he saved my life. I must, at least, thank him."

Bowie, who in the everyday course of the life of a frontiersman would not have looked on his narrow escape as an extraordinary event, found himself the hero of the rancho. Pardaloe and Simmie, shining in the penumbra of his prestige and though secretly elated at the feat, put on airs of indifference among the vaqueros to intimate that where they came from such incidents were everyday occurrences.

The days went slowly, almost painfully, for an active man like Bowie. Dona Maria, realizing that her husband's life had been spared through the diversion of the bear's fury, was unremitting in her solicitude for the Texan's comfort. And when he was ready to sit up, Carmen sent flowers and a Chinese confection to him.

During the impatient days that followed, Bowie had one faithful attendant. Don Francisco spent hours at his bedside and entertained him with stories of California and of his people, the rancheros. Bowie was a good listener. One day while Don Francisco sat with Bowie a jar of Canton ginger was sent in with the compliments of Carmen. Bowie, assuming such indifference as he could muster, asked why Carmen wore black.

(TO BE CONTINUED)  
Carmen of the Rancho—7

## Declaration of War

Though the President of the United States may recommend a declaration of war, he cannot declare war. The U. S. Constitution specifically gives congress and congress alone power to declare war. Thus, while the United States entered the first World war upon the recommendation of President Woodrow Wilson, it was authorized to do so by congress. On April 4, 1917, two days after Wilson's recommendation, the senate, by a vote of 82 to 6, passed a resolution declaring a state of war existed between the United States and Germany. On April 6 the house approved the senate war resolution by a vote of 370 to 50.—Pathfinder.

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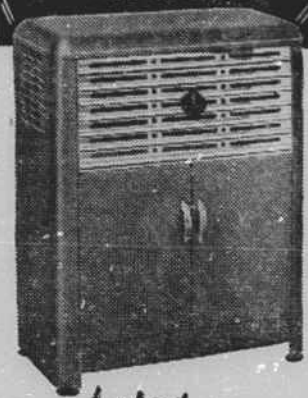
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## He and I

If a man should importune me to give a reason why I loved my friend, I find it could not otherwise be expressed than by the answer, "Because he was he; because I was I."—Montaigne.

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