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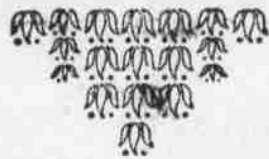
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IN THE GORGE



By Major Hamilton

COLONEL MILLER called Lieutenant Emerson to him and said: "Lieutenant, those Apaches were the thieves complained of by old Don Alvarez, whose hacienda lies down the Los Mexos, among the spurs of the Sangre de Cristi Mountains. The old gentleman will sleep far easier if he knows that we have driven the red devils across the range. Will you ride over with a word of our success to-morrow? He has a daughter whose beauty will repay you for the forty-mile jaunt, and the don will treat you like a prince. I dare not leave camp myself, and he would deem it an honor if one of my officers brought him word of the fight. You can have an escort if you wish. Will you go?"

"Nothing would give me more pleasure, colonel," replied the young man. "The young lady attracts me. But I need no escort; the trail is too plain. I'll start to-morrow at day-break."

"Thanks, my boy. Stay as you will—a week if need be. You have earned a leave. But take care of yourself—heart and all. The donna's eyes are glorious, but her admirers are jealous." Emerson laughed.

"I'll be careful, sir. Good night!" "Good night!"

And so they parted, each to his quarters, and the younger man to dream of something brighter than Indian watch-fires for the morrow. The Seventeenth were old frontiersmen, and Colonel Miller performed his duty to the government faithfully. Two days before, after a lively brush, his troops had routed a large body of Apaches, a score of miles above camp, and driven them over the range.

The Indians came from the southern country, where they had been committing many depredations, and it was to one of the greatest sufferers at their hands—old Don Alvarez, a rich Spaniard—that the colonel desired to send the comforting message announcing this discomfiture.

The morning dawned clear and golden—one of New Mexico's best—and ere the dew had faded from the cactus, or the breath of the night wind left the mesquite thickets, Lieutenant Emerson, in fatigue uniform, armed with pistols and sabre, was amount and miles upon his way along the winding trail toward Hacienda Alvarez.

The March sun was warm at noon-tide, as the lonely traveler paused beneath the shadow of a great rock to rest his horse and smoke a cigarette, but its backward-hung rays from the Far West had grown weak and faint, and the dim shadow of on-coming night fell athwart the narrow pathway, ere the white wall of his destination caught the eye of the young lieutenant.

Riding slowly down the broad plateau toward the hacienda, thoughts of rest and supper in his mind, Emerson suddenly started in his saddle, and, checking his horse, his hand grasped his sabre-hilt with a soldier's intuition.

Just before him, and a little to one side of the path, standing apparently helpless from either fatigue or fright, was a half-naked peon child—a dusky-faced girl—gazing fixedly upon a coiled snake that lay before her, its glistening crest raised and swaying to and fro, while its angry eyes burned into those of the fascinated child.

An instant more and the venomous reptile would have buried its fangs in the trembling form before it, when, flashing through the air like the wing of the plunging hawk, the trooper's sabre fell between the girl and the snake, and the head of the moccasin flew twenty feet away through the air.

Then Emerson caught the girl to his saddle-bow and rode forward.

For a moment she trembled, speechless, as she lay within the strong

arms of the soldier; then, with a soft cry, she strove to escape. They were now close to the gate of the hacienda, and even as the child was dropping to the ground—for the lieutenant instantly released her—a young and beautiful woman appeared and with a glad cry the little peon sprang toward her.

Emerson reined in his horse and raised his cap.

"Pardon, mademoiselle, but the girl was in danger—a moccasin was—"

He was interrupted by the beauty herself, into whose ear the child had poured her story.

"Sir, you need no pardon. I thank you in the name of my father and his most valued servant, Jacque Dumox, for having saved the life of this girl. May heaven bless you! But will you not enter, sir? You seem weary, and night is at hand."

And so, following the beautiful Guadalupe—for it was she—Lieutenant Emerson entered, for the first time, the Hacienda Alvarez.

Five hours later, while the old don and the young soldier sat over their coffee and smoked, each telling to each tales of the strange Southwest, a peon entered. The master looked up, then waved his hand encouragingly.

"This is the gentleman, Dumox, who saved the life of your daughter."

The man advanced. He was a genuine South American—a peon, a body-servant of the old don—who had followed his master north from Peru, with a gesture of absolute homage, he prostrated himself at the feet of the trooper, and kissed the lieutenant's sabre-tip.

"My life is yours, master, at all times and forever!" he whispered; then he arose, and before Emerson could speak he was gone.

"A splendid servant, lieutenant," said the don, as he refilled the cups; "perfect, and a man worthy to be your friend even. You have saved his daughter, his all, and you can depend upon him. He is your slave, for that act, to the death!"

So began Emerson's acquaintance at Hacienda Alvarez; and as the morning came, bringing with it the pleasures of a home where wealth and beauty reigned, long unenjoyed by this rugged young soldier of the border, and dark-eyed Guadalupe put her hand in his to thank him for the news he brought, and asked him to stay as a friend where he came as a messenger, a thrill ran through his pulses, and he stayed—stayed until he felt that his colonel must be wondering, for his week was long gone; stayed until dusky-browed Juan d'Inray, cousin and suitor of his beautiful hostess, frowned upon him; stayed until his heart throbbed wildly and his ears drank as divine music the rich voice of the donna—until the girl's cheeks glowed beneath his fervent glance, and her bosom heaved when his hand touched hers; stayed too long, and then rode away with a positive promise to the urgent old don to return—with a single glance from Guadalupe that might mean words—with a scowl and curse from Juan that betokened a hatred deep and fierce; and last of all, with a single gesture of unspeakable fealty from poor Dumox at the gate.

"Ah, lieutenant!" cried old Colonel Miller, as Emerson appeared before him on the morning following, "the donna was too many for you! But I consent. Make the marriage soon, and bring the beauty to camp."

The young man colored.

"The marriage will be with Juan d'Inray, colonel. Rumor says she is affianced to him."

But the colonel shook his head.

"Bah! that imp! His habits are worse than those of a Mexican. The donna is a wise girl, as well as a beautiful one, and an American can win her, especially when that American is a young and good-looking soldier, lieutenant, if you want that girl, and I believe you do, and don't go in and

win her away from that Spaniard, I'll—I'll order you under arrest for a year!"

And, with an emphatic shake of the head, the brave old colonel turned away.

Emerson laughed long and hearty at his colonel as a "matchmaker!" but when it so happened, two weeks later, that the post-commandant found another message for Hacienda Alvarez, it also happened that the lieutenant was ready to carry it; and the bearer found a stronger attraction than before in the eyes of Donna Guadalupe—forgot the evil lurking in these of Juan d'Inray, and remained three days at the table of his friend, the old don—three days of heaven to him, crowned at last, one glorious night, by the sweet, sweet words which made the beautiful girl his forever.

For his love overpowered him, and he confessed it—confessed it to know that her heart was his, even as his belonged to her, and had been from the first. Together they strayed beneath the arbors of the garden. The soldier's horse stood waiting at the gate, the moon smiled down upon his lonely northern way; but his arms encircled the most perfect figure in New Mexico; his eyes gazed into hers, filled with love and longing even as were his own; his lips plucked from her lips kisses more luscious and passionate than ever before melted the heart of man; and Guadalupe told him, by word and eyes and heart, that she loved him.

But at last midnight warned them, and with one parting embrace, close and long, the young man watched his darling slip from his hold and flee toward the now silent rancho, while whispering her last words as benisons, the sweetest of confessions in the sweetest of tongues, "Yo te amo," he sought his saddle, and rode slowly away into the gloaming.

His way took him over the broad plateau and down the narrow trail toward Los Mexos, until, upon the little bridge that crossed the wild stream at a point known as "La Gorge de Diable," he paused and dismounted a moment to tighten a loosened girth.

Then again he breathed the words of his love, "Yo te amo!"

The girth was fastened and the trooper's foot in the stirrup, when, rising from the dim obscurity behind him, a dark figure whirled its arm quickly in the air, something shot silently toward the soldier, and an instant later a lariat fell about his neck, half-strangling him. He was suddenly jerked backward to the floor of the shaking bridge, and as his frightened horse sped snorting up the winding path, he heard at his ear the low, fiendish laugh of his rival—Juan d'Inray had caught him!

For a moment Emerson lay stunned where he had fallen; then he sprang to his feet, and his hands tore at the tightening rope about his neck; but a second time the cord was pulled, and again he fell.

Then, before he could rise, strong arms bound him, and again the demoniac laugh rang in his ears.

"Ha, blue coat! Americanos! Dog! You would steal my bride! Did you think a d'Inray would retire because you had entered the field? Fool! See, I am going to drag you at my horse's heels back to Hacienda Alvarez, and fling you carcass before the gate! Donna Guadalupe will think the Indians have killed you. She will weep, then marry me. Do you hear—at my horse's heels? How you will bound along the way!"

A shrill laugh rang among the ragged rocks, as though the fiend himself were present in the gorge that bore his name.

Emerson's heart stood still. Death was a soldier's fate—a noble death his honor! But this—Heavens! it was too horrible.

"Pray, Snake, dog, spawn—pray, while I mount!"

With a whistle, the Spaniard called his horse from the shadows behind him and sprang to the saddle, one end of the lariat fast about the pommel.

The horse and the two men were together now upon the narrow bridge, which creaked beneath their united weight, while the angry waters foamed madly on a hundred feet beneath them.

The soldier's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He could not pray—and Guadalupe's kisses yet warm upon his lips.

"In thirty seconds we start!" hissed Juan, drawing his lariat taut, and gathering the reins in his nervous hands. "Pray, poor fool, for in less than a moment you die!"

The lieutenant heard him not. Three words only rang in his ears, "Yo te amo!"

A cloud drifted across the face of the moon; a shadow crept by the mounted Spaniard along the narrow bridge, and paused close to where Emerson lay. The murderer turned in his saddle.

"Come," he hissed, hoarsely, "we must go!" and he stuck spurs to his horse.

But even at that moment the moon reappeared, a steely gleam flashed across the tightened lariat, it parted, and, rising from the shadow by the victim, stood Jacque Dumox, a long knife gleaming in his hand.

With a yell of rage, the maddened Spaniard turned, and made as though he would have ridden both soldier and peon down; but Dumox raised his weapon and hurled it at the advancing steed with deadly aim.

The heavy steel hissed through the night air, and buried itself to the hilt in the brown flank of the plunging animal. There came a single agonized, half-human scream, ringing with a shudder through the silence about, and then, rearing madly, with one blind spring, the horse and rider shot downward into the black abyss beneath—downward to headlong death below—and Los Mexos roared on!

Lieutenant Emerson and his beautiful bride moved to California, and the old don lived with them. His New Mexico hacienda was sold, and the servants were discharged, except one old man and his daughter, who are still attached to the person of Alvarez. But the story of that terrible night upon the bridge in La Gorge de Diable is known only to two. The third and principal actor therein has never since been seen. Los Mexos never gives up its dead!—Saturday Night.

THE HOUSE OF CLOSETS.

Old Sherman Mansion in Connecticut Has Sixty.

Among the trials of housekeepers none is more common than that of lack of closet room. If she could only plan a house herself! many a busy housewife thinks. Her imagination revels in the vision of big linen closets and dainty china closets, of preserve closets guarded by lock and key, of hall closets for the children's straying overshoes, of magazine closets for the constantly accumulating periodicals. She is certain that she could not have too many.

There is, however, one house, described in "An Old New England Town," which has closet room enough to satisfy the most ambitious housekeeper; indeed, it is possible, considering the inexorable demands of housecleaning times, that one might even be willing to dispense with a few of the treasure places. The house is the old Sherman mansion, of Fairfield, Connecticut, and is said to contain no less than sixty closets—closets within closets and closets within closets within closets.

At the time that it was built it was the finest residence in that region. Tradition declares that when the parlor carpets, ordered from abroad, arrived seven feet too long, it was decided to build an extension at each end of the parlor in order to accommodate them. Certain it is that the wings were added and cellars—it has three—and closets.

During the last years of her life Mrs. Sherman was an invalid and unable to go into the second story, yet so marvelous was her memory that she knew precisely all the contents of her great family of closets, and constantly dispensed the linen, flannel, calico, hams, pickles and preserves, kept in their separate hiding places.

Of late years the old mansion has become church property, and Mrs. Sherman's successors have found the closets a not wholly unmitigated delight. It is said, however, that the minister submits with grace, cultivating a spirit of levity when a dog, a book, a child, a suit of clothes, a pot of jam or next Sunday's sermon goes into strict retirement for an hour, a month or a year. It is sure to be discovered sooner or later in one of the closets.—Youth's Companion.

To Cement Glass and Iron.

Common alum melted in an iron spoon over the fire forms a good cement for joining glass and iron together. It is useful for holding the glass reservoir of a lamp to its metal base and for stopping cracks about the base. Its great merit for this purpose is that paraffin will not penetrate it.

THE COMPOSITE GIRL.

The eyes of fair Jenny we'll give her,
The smooth classic brow of dear Lou,
The nose of Marie then deliver,
The red, smiling mouth of sweet Prue;
The hair of Amanda, the figure
Of Gertrude, of Helen the smile—
And then if you'll add but the fortune
Of Sally, I'll take her on trial.
—William Wallace Whitelock, in Puck.

Humor of Today

Lena—"What made Fred act so funny when I accepted him?" Emma—"Oh, he's just in love with you, goose. He will soon get over that."—Brooklyn Life.

"Now, then," said the professor at the dental college, "what are the last teeth that come?" "False teeth," replied a bright freshman.—Philadelphia Ledger.

"Say, pa, it says here in 'Lady Clare,' I trow they did not part in scorn. What does that mean?" "That's the poetic way of saying 'you bet.'"—Chicago Record-Herald.

Bertha—"How shall we seat the famous antiquarian collector?" Ethel—"Oh, put him next to grandmamma; she'll tell you some scandals many years old."—Brooklyn Life.

Bill—"I see they are talking of having a chair of football in one of our colleges." Jill—"I suppose it will be in order to have a broken back and a fractured leg."—Yonkers Statesman.

Truth crushed to earth will rise again,
Sadder, perhaps, and wiser;
And sometimes, not until she's ta'en
A little early riser!

—Milwaukee Sentinel.
First Child—"My father's got so much money he doesn't know how to spend it." Second Child—"That's nothing. My father's got so much money that mother can't spend it."—The New Yorker.

The Peroxide's Husband—"I notice that dark hair is coming back into vogue. I suppose that means you'll be wearing it again." The Peroxide Blonde—"Me? I'll dye first!"—Baltimore American.

"He wanted to bet, but I just told him that 'betting was a fool's argument,' and that settled the discussion." "Oh, I can't believe that you shut him up that easily." "I'll bet you I did."—Philadelphia Press.

The natives of hot Mozambique
Called one of their number a frigue,
He wore for a job
A china door-knob,
And an earring he stuck in his chinque.
—Columbia Jester.

"So," demanded the cross-examining lawyer, "you desire to make a categorical denial of all these charges, do you?" "No, sor," answered the witness, "but I'll say there ain't a word of truth in any of them."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Teacher (to class in English grammar)—"Class, what is the feminine corresponding to the masculine 'stag'?" No answer from class for some time. Hand finally raised in corner. Teacher—"Well, John, what is it?" Pupil—"Afternoon tea."—Judge.

"Do you know the wages of sin?" asked the dominie sternly of Johnny, who was busily tying a can to a dog's tail. "Is dis a sin?" queried John, without looking up. "It certainly is." "Well, I don't want no wages fer dis; I'm doin' it fer fun."—Houston Post.

"Your first duty as a lawyer," said the old judge to the young attorney, "is to see that justice is done." "Oh, of course," replied the youthful disciple of Blackstone. "I've noticed that the lawyer who succeeds in doing her the oftenest gets the biggest fees."—Chicago Daily News.

Mrs. Newlywed—"No, I can't say that I think much of my new sewing machine. It is disappointing." Mrs. Oldgirl—"Why, it is a very good make. What seems to be the trouble?" Mrs. Newlywed—"I don't know exactly, but when I tried to sew some buttons on Mr. Newlywed's shirts yesterday it broke every last one of them."—Cincinnati Times-Star.

Child's Point of View.

A large and stout woman called on a friend, and while waiting for her was stared at so intently by the friend's little children that she asked one of them:

"What are you staring at, little girl?"

"Why, you see, mamma said you were so narrow in your views, and I was wondering what view she got."—Philadelphia Ledger.