

THE SENORITA'S VOW.

Among the most respectable and reliable Texo-Mexican citizens during the Garza raids was one Senor Don Camillo, whose ranch was tucked away in a bend of the Rio Grande, about half-way between Brownsville and Laredo. This ranch was a cozy enough place when the Gulf breezes sang through its peach orchards and the mesquite grass grew green to the doorstep, and the bluejays and mocking-birds swam and sang in the sunshine. A fit setting, indeed, it seemed, for old Camillo's motherless daughter, the handsome Margarita. A strange, new phase of life was old Camillo's talk of war to the innocent Margarita whose only conception of battle was the bold raid of the rangers after a horse thief, a fence cutter or a road agent. She listened to the grave talk of her father and the padre, as she ground her tortillas, or sat in the sunshine stringing the long pods of chile into scarlet festoons, and her Spanish heart thrilled at the mention of such high-sounding words as "right," "liberty," "adventure" and "booty." She almost wished that she were a man, so she might swell the rank of the demanding people. As it was, she would wait till Sunday and tell Philippe about it. Philippe was her lover, a young sheep herder, whom because of his empty purse and lowly calling, old Camillo thought not a worthy suitor for his daughter's hand.

Philippe Mendez was the type of a peculiar class of men in the West. Though not educated, his mind was stored with the very best kind of knowledge—the knowledge which comes of experience, independence of thought and reflection. Herding his sheep on the still mesas, alone with creatures dumb only as to human speech, communing with the wind, the sun and stars, reading of the great writers, he had arrived at conclusions and defined meanings which could not be false, having nature and mind at their base.

Having been drilled in the public schools in the foundation of language, he was enabled to appreciate books, which, as he had them not in superabundance, were to him treasures not to be lightly thought of. Yet he lived on simply and crudely. He had tried when he was younger to live in town, clerking in a dry goods store, and availing himself of "society" as it is in a border Texas town, but he could not endure it. It was during this attempt at "civilization" that he had met Margarita Camillo, a shy little maiden attending the convent in the same town, spending her Saturdays and Sundays at the house where Philippe was boarding.

The two untamed young hearts had leaped warm to each other, and both had gone back gladly to the prairies, the herds, the freedom and beauty of ranch life.

Camillo's disapprobation of her lover was the one wrinkled leaf in the rose bed of the happy Margarita's life, and quick leapt her eager, loving little heart to a plan of revealing her Philippe in his true light to her father. She could scarcely await the passage of each long sunny spring day till Sunday should bring her lover. But at last the day came. She heaped old Mergo about her work all the morning, in order to kill time; then she strolled off, languid of foot, but eager of heart, toward the river. As soon as she was out of sight of the house she ran, skimming along the trail by the river, to the place where she was in the habit of meeting Philippe. Soon she heard the sound of his horse's feet, keeping time to his voice as he was singing "La Golandrina," the song which to the Mexicans is the same as our "Home, Sweet Home" to us:

Alondra, la veleta y fanizada,
La golandrina que da que si va?
O si en el aire gemiera extraviada
Buscando abigo y no lo encuentra.

She hid behind a tree and waited till he was just opposite her; then springing forward, caught his bridle rein and demanded in mock bravado: "Quien vive?"

"Margarita!" exclaimed Philippe, dismounting and taking her in his arms.

"No, senor!" she went on teasingly, trying to free herself from his clasp. "Not Margarita, but a friend of Garza! The pass word of your life!"

"That and that!" said Philippe, kissing her on each cheek. "Now tell me what you know about Garza?"

"Everything," she answered, proudly; "even that on this revolutionary ladder of Garza's favor you, my Philippe, must rise to the less honorable but to us more important favor of my father."

"Why, what a little plotter you are!" exclaimed Philippe, kissing her again.

"Where and when have you learned all these State secrets?"

"At home from my father and the padre. They talk Garza and la libertad all the day and night, Philippe. I listen and resolve 'now shall my Philippe prove to them what a brave and noble man he is! Now shall he join the revolutionary forces, and by gallant deeds rise up, up—captain, colonel, general, commander-in-chief, who knows?—till my father will be proud to take his hand and say: here is my poor little Margarita. Don Philippe Orndez, take her if she be good enough for thee.' And then the dear padre will bless us and make us one."

Philippe looked proudly and tenderly into her eyes. Then folding her again to his heart said: "No!"

"No, what, dearest?" she asked, looking up at him.

"He will not," sighed Margarita.

"No, he will not," echoed Philippe. They had turned off the main trail and had reached a little nook in the brush where they were wont to have these meetings. Seated upon the ground they chatted and made love, as happy, heedless lovers ever did and ever will. It was near sunset when they parted; he to gallop back to Laredo and she to stroll by a roaster's cabin on her way home, so that her conscience no less than her face might be at ease when she told her father that she had been to see Benevides' sick child.

So the border war raged, covert it is true and striking in the dark and from the thicket, yet striking hard enough to make its blows felt by two great nations. Vaguely it was felt by the United States, and especially so as it occurred at a time when the entire country was up in arms against Chili and her affront to the American flag. Scarcely more keenly was it felt in old Mexico, where Diaz sat not quite so comfortably on his throne called chair, and his people saw and whispered in the secrecy of their adobe walls of insurrection against tyranny. Still more keenly was this little rancorous war of the chaparral felt on the border of Texas, the hospitality of whose soil had been abused by making it the battlefield of a nation at war with itself.

Down in the bend of the Rio Grande the little ranch was all out of tune with its mocking birds and peach blossoms. Old Camillo was solicitous for his daughter's safety; the padre was his adviser, and Si Murdock pushed his suit unobtrusively, while his more patriotic rival was in the field.

Murdock was a scout, a white man of good family and some money. His father was a well-to-do ranchman, and Si had been sent to St. Louis to school, but book learning had passed through his head as the learning had passed through the head of a young man of letters through the head of a young man of letters.

He was born of an old and for the prairies, the chaparral, and the cañons. He knew every inch of Southern Texas, from the Rio Grande to the Sabine. Yet when it came to putting his knowledge into practical use for his country's good Si weakened. He was simply a vain, boastful fellow, fond of sporting firearms and "cutting a figger." For the sake of gratifying this vainglory of his he had gone to Austin and got out special ranger papers, signed duly by the Adjutant-General of Texas, which papers authorized him to wear arms and take a hand in the well ordering of his country whenever and wherever the occasion demanded it. On the strength of this authority he proceeded to backle on his six shooter and bowie knife, and to strut about very importantly among his neighbors. He had come over to old Don Camillo's this afternoon, more to "show off" to Margarita than for any better purpose.

The girl had grown thin and pale, but a new-born hope or resolution shone in her eyes.

"I wish not to see thee, Si Murdock, nor to speak to thee," she said, dropping into the use of the old-fashioned pronoun as she spoke English.

Si ignored her repulse. "But, Margarita," he urged, "one of two things has happened to Philippe. He is either dead or cares no more to see you."

"Neither has happened, Si Murdock," she answered wearily.

"Then why has he not come to see you, or written or sent a message?"

"Because he is too busy liberating his country, which will not await his pleasure as I do."

"You shall marry me!" said Si, seizing her hand.

"Father!" she cried, wrenching her hand away, and springing up with flaming eyes and cheeks.

Old Camillo came hobbling from the house, querulous and drooping.

"How long, senor, am I to be persecuted by this man?" she asked excitedly.

"Just so long as he pleases, my daughter and you are so foolish as not to encourage him."

The girl turned and walked slowly away from them.

"What is to be done, senor?" asked Murdock, as though some refractory colt had refused the girth and bridle.

"Leave her to me; I will send for the padre and set him to work on her. She fears and respects the holy church as she never will man, be he father or husband."

Margarita walked down the river trail. She had no real hope of meeting Philippe there, for she had been there every afternoon for the past three weeks and no Philippe had come to meet her. As she pushed the brush away with both hands she was startled by a horse's head thrust over hers. She looked up, and behold! It was Stranger, Philippe's own pony, and there was Philippe lying face downward on the earth. Was he dead? Merciful heaven! She sprang to his side and he started and looked up. Then they were weeping in each other's arms.

"It was my first and probably last chance to see you!" he said. "I have been ordered to the interior, and am now on my way to the lower Rio Grande."

"I will go away with you, Philippe," she said suddenly.

"You, darling? You cannot. We are watched and hunted like wild beasts. We are spied upon and betrayed, and shot down without mercy. A woman alone! It is out of the question."

"But I will not be a woman!"

While the wife brought the clothes Margarita stood before the little cracked mirror and cut off her beautiful long hair just even with the nape of the neck, as the "Greasers" wear theirs. The clothes fitted her admirably, except an extra length to the toes of her boots, which the wife filled out with cotton. When the costume was complete the two women had a hearty laugh, notwithstanding the serious nature of the undertaking. Hurriedly belting on her pistol and cartridges, Margarita kissed the wife and the little ones and started for the rendezvous. They arrived there at almost the same minute. Benevides had taken his own saddle, which he had hid in the brush on the roadside, while he went up to the house to get the horse, so all was ready for the mount. The pony shrank from Margarita's hand on the bridle, until she said, "Why Mio Bonito, dost thou not know thy mistress?" Then the pony rubbed his head against her shoulder as much as to say: "Ah, my lady, may be you are misled by strange clothes and cropped hair, but not a horse."

Philippe was almost speechless at the success of the transformation. "We must hurry Margarita," was all he said. "I must be in Brownsville by to-morrow noon." He wrung Benevides' hand. "I will see that you are paid full price for your outfit, my friend," he said gratefully, and away went the two gay caballeros to the war.

"Where is Senor Garza?" asked Margarita, as they rode along in the dusk.

"In Mexico."

"What is he doing there?"

"Mastering secret troops in the capital."

"But suppose they should capture him?" Margarita asked.

"He'll never be taken alive, and if they should kill him a hundred capable men would spring up to take his place."

So these two free lances rode along, too much absorbed in the issues of the war to think of each other and their mutual danger.

The night grew dark and threatened rain. Toward midnight Margarita grew very tired and faint, but Philippe cheered her up and persuaded her to take occasional sips of the whiskey which he had in his canteen.

About 3 o'clock in the morning Philippe said: "I see that you are utterly worn out, darling. We will stop and let you have a little rest before daybreak, for then we cannot afford to stop a minute, but must push on as fast as we can, trying to avoid both the regular army troops and the Rangers."

"I wouldn't mind the Rangers," the girl answered and smiled.

"Things are different with us, now, my dear," Philippe answered, sighing. Turning into the thicket, he soon made her comfortable with the two blankets and his overcoat.

"Sleep sweetly, little one, he said kissing her and tucking the coarse covering about her neck. "I will keep guard, and the ponies are ready to mount at an instant's warning."

She was asleep in a few moments, her fair, sweet face gleaming like a flower against the thicket.

Philippe sat with his back against a tree and his eyes fixed on her, while his keen ears took in every fall of a leaf or flutter of a bird in the thicket.

In the meantime Si Murdock had left the Camillo ranch without waiting for Margarita, being in truth afraid to be out alone after dark.

Old Camillo had returned to his chair on the veranda, supposing that Margarita had gone to Benevides' as usual, and would be back for supper.

Dusk came. The cows came up and lowed outside the pen; their calves set up a plaintive bleating outside, and old Mergo waddled down to them with her tin pails and calf rope. The cackling chickens sought their roosts, and great droves of Paradise birds settled down in the trees for the night. The long red lines of the setting sun fell slanting along the parched fields, and peach tree aisles, and the murmuring voice of the river came clear and soothing on the twilight air. Creak, creak, creak, went old Camillo's rocking chair, and nod, nod, nod, went his drowsy head. Once he thought he heard footsteps about the fence, but they were dim, and the air was so soft, and the birds' chatter was so monotonous, and the river's song was so sweet, he slept on, and recked not of war or treachery.

Si Murdock rode briskly, but had not gone more than three miles when he heard the tramp of many horses' feet and the sound of voices. His first impulse was to run, his second to hide his arms, his third to pat his breast pocket containing the papers, and put on a look of loyal citizenship.

"Who goes there?" called the voice of Capt. J. S. McNeel of the State Rangers.

"A citizen of Texas," was the calm answer.

"Your name, friend?"

"Si Murdock."

"By what authority are you carrying fire-arms, Mr. Murdock?"

Nervously Si drew his precious papers, and handed them to the captain. McNeel examined them carefully, at the same time taking in the appearance and character of the bearer.

"All right, Mr. Murdock," he said, "we are just hunting a man like you. I see you are a reliable scout. We want to get to the nearest safe crossing on the river. Just fall in and lead the way."

of your coat. How selfish and thoughtless I am."

She held his coat while he put it on, then buttoned it up, giving him a kiss for each of the three buttons.

"That warms me!" he said smiling, and turned to help her on her horse, but she stopped him as she said laughingly: "What would the Rangers think if they should see one Greaser helping another on his pony?"

She sprang to her saddle and he followed suit. They travelled quite briskly for about an hour and a half. This brought them into the country of Hidalgo, near a place called Four Corners.

While Margarita chattered on, merry in spite of her danger, Philippe kept his head partially turned, and seemed to be listening to something behind them.

"Suppose we turn off here a little, Margarita," he said, leading the way almost at right angles to that they had been travelling.

"That is out of our course, if you want to reach Santa Juanita," she said.

"Not much, and it is less liable to be traveled."

"You are uneasy, Philippe," she said. "You are not wise to keep things from me; I've been watching your face, and I know you are worried. What is it?"

"Well, I think I heard horses' feet—a good many of them. It may be a herd of cattle, it may be the troops or Rangers, and it may be our own men."

By this time the sound was drawing so near that Margarita herself could hear it.

"It is not our men," Philippe continued.

"How do you know?"

"The horses are large footed, and I can not quite tell which way they are coming."

They had left what might be called a trail in that trailless country, and were huddled out of sight in a denser growth off to one side. The tramp of hoofs grew nearer, and there soon came in view a band of rangers following the course they had taken.

"They are tracking us," Philippe said.

"Holy mother, direct me what to do!"

The section they had just crossed from the trail was thickly grown with low brush and mesquite grass. It was possible that the Rangers might not notice the break in the tracks and continue their forward course. The minutes seemed hours to those terrible seconds of anxiety. Like a succession of flash lights there darted through his mind the hundred different and equally perilous things to do. He thought of the girl's peaceful and protected life at home, and for the first time blamed himself for bringing her away. He feared to continue into the jungle, for fear the sound of the cracking brush would attract attention. If he had been alone he would have given up to them, depending upon the plausibility of his appearance as a harmless traveler, together with such corroborating evidence as he was sure to get from any of the Mexicans in that section. But the girl—

The Rangers hesitated, stopped and looked to the right and left. In two minutes they came galloping that way.

"Now to run for our lives!" he said, quickly tightening the girth of Margarita's saddle.

Into the brush they plunged, the noise of its snapping and rustling in their ears the sound of their pursuers. On and on blindly and desperately they plunged, the sensible horses choosing the clearest way, while the riders bogged the brush. Once turning his head Philippe saw the blood trickling down Margarita's face, where a thorn had scraped the tender skin clean across the cheek. That in itself hurt him worse than a pistol shot.

The girl's face was white. Yet her lips were firm and she whispered something cheering to him as they came side by side.

They must have run this way fully a mile when they heard the brush cracking close behind them, and knew that the Rangers were upon them.

Wheeling his horse sidewise in front of hers, Philippe prepared to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Yet, thinking of the sweet life in his charge he weakened, and called out clearly, "We surrender!"

The Rangers halted, their rifles lowered and the captain said something to him, but as he spoke a form darted from the rear, and Philippe saw Si Murdock's murderous face before him. Bang! went a gun and Philippe, stunned, terrified, heard a cry and a gurgle behind him. He whirled around and caught Margarita in his arms as she fell from her saddle shot through the breast. Drawing her from her horse to his pommel, he held her against him and emptied every shot of his revolver into the ranks of the enemy. They would have made short business of his life had not their captain commanded "cease firing."

Right in the muzzle of Philippe's pistol Capt. McNeel rode quickly and alone to his side.

"There is some mistake here," he said. "I heard you offer surrender."

But Philippe was not listening. He had dismounted and laid the dying girl on the ground. He longed to throw himself beside her and put a bullet through his own heart, but he dared not arouse suspicion as to her sex.

"Leave me alone! It is all the mercy you can show me now," he pleaded, as he forced some whisky between Margarita's lips, while her pony came nearer, neighing and trying to touch his mistress.

Capt. McNeel turned to his men and said: "There was no need of firing that shot. Who did it?"

None answered.

"My God, what have I done," he cried.

"Murdered a woman, you brute," answered the captain.

Philippe and Murdock each refusing to give any further information on the subject, the former was arrested and the latter given to understand that he would have to account for firing without orders.

"Continue the march!" commanded the Captain, and they pushed on into Brownsville Philippe sullenly holding the dead girl in his arms, and apparently oblivious to everything else, until his eyes fell upon Murdock.

Then his face became purple with rage and agony, and he said: "We'll meet in a fair field before this war is over, and when we do neither man nor God shall keep me from killing you!"

SNARING A BULL CARIBOU.
It Was Unsportsmanlike, but Then Jules Tristram Was Mad.

Well, I'm sorry we missed that caribou," said my guide, "but I bet we can catch one."

I was on a hunting trip with Jules Tristram in the neighborhood of Eagle Lake. The third day out he had struck the track of a caribou, sighted it once or twice, but never came near enough to get a shot, though for eighteen hours we tramped and ploughed our way through the thick woods and treacherous undergrowth on the trail.

"Go ahead," I said, though I was a trifle incredulous, having never trapped anything larger than a rabbit myself. But if it could be done I certainly wished to see the trick.

Our camp was pitched on the shore of a small pond, and the country around it was thickly timbered. A couple of miles to the north Jules had noticed a caribou run, leading in from the foothills to the water, and it was along this pathway winding in and out among the trees like a clearly defined mule trail that he proposed to put his plan into operation.

I shall not forget the morning we started out. It was intensely cold, the thermometer having fallen from ten degrees above to ten below zero.

By way of appliances, Jules carried an axe, and a coil of stout wire; and selecting a spot where the trees were thickest and the most regular he was soon at work. His scheme was simple, and looked effective, if the denizen of the wood would only help play his hand, which was asking, I thought, a good deal.

It was to erect a barrier immediately across the run, leaving an opening in it about four feet from the ground and adjust a noose, fastened to a sapling, in such a manner that a caribou, in attempting to force his way through, would get hung like a jack rabbit.

The barrier was built of freshly cut branches, woven in and out to give the appearance of a natural hedge, yet stout enough to offer considerable resistance to an animal attempting to pass it. A hole was left in it about in the middle large enough for a caribou stopping to get its antlers through. The noose was just the size of the opening, cunningly concealed from view, and the young tree to which it was attached stood some twelve feet back, like a tall executioner, tough and strong.

Two hours was Jules—no more, no less—in constructing his extempore gallows, then turning to me he offered to bet that inside of three days it would have an occupant. I took him up, and a new hat hung on the hanging of that caribou.

The efficiency of the trap rested on the fact that animals of the horned species once accustomed to a run can not be easily turned out of it, but will try to effect a passage through anything in their way, and as the hole seems the weakest part it is into this they plunge—only to feel the tightening noose.

Early next morning we were both on hand, as the guide said, to pick up the pieces, but to my surprise and his disgust, the hedge was broken and wire noose gone. The caribou had been caught round the antlers instead of round the neck, and with a desperate jerk had freed itself. This Jules said he had never known to happen before, and it was with more than usual care that he repaired the trap and readjusted it for a second attempt.

The day following found it untouched, but on the third day a noise of tremendous thrashing among the trees told us as we approached that the noose had done its work, and a captive awaited us. Nor were we mistaken for, sure enough, there swung a bull caribou, a beauty, pulling for all he was worth and choking to death as the noose tightened and cut into his throat.

A ball from my rifle soon put the animal out of its misery, and Jules had won his bet. The caribou weighed 480 pounds.

On the whole, though, I am not anxious to see another caribou caught that way. In the first place I think it cruel, and in the second place unsportsmanlike.

Tunnel Between Ireland and Scotland.

A proposition is made to connect Great Britain and Ireland by a tunnel driven under the North channel of the Irish sea at its narrowest part, between County Antrim in Ireland and Wigtown in Scotland. The length of the tunnel would be some twenty-seven miles. A number of eminent engineers declare the project entirely feasible. It is admitted the tunnel would not be commercially profitable, but much is claimed for it in the way of natural advantages, and the proposition is that it should be a national undertaking.

She Can't Help It.

Misleading statements have been printed concerning Lady Henry Somerset's ownership of licensed shops and inns where intoxicating liquors were sold, which seemed rather inconsistent with her zeal in the temperance cause. It is now some 10 years since Lady Somerset inherited her father's property, and though she has closed eight of the licensed houses at the expiration of the leases, several other landlords still hold ground leases which have not as yet expired, with the licenses of which Lady Henry has no right to interfere.

The Halo Didn't Fit.

First Commuter—They've doubted the number of afternoon trains; that's good!

Second Commuter—I don't know—it doubles the chances of missing a train, you know.