THE DEMON OF THE FOREST

BY CORINNE ROCKWELL SWAIN.

PART II.

Senor Alvarez questioned several of his men, but gathered little that was helpful; but the next day, Randall, who had been making friendly overtures to some of the older servants, with a view to possible detective work of his own, came in with the news that two of Miguel Carea's cherished white ducks had been stolen and that his faithful dog had been wounded in a combat with the "demon."

"His dog?" queried the planter, with renewed interest. "Did Miguel tell what the wound was made with—claws, teeth, or what?"

"He described it as like the thrust of a broad knife, behind the shoulder."

"It is a clever beast, this demon," Senor Alvarez smiled musingly, with a humorous twinkle coming into his eyes. "The unexplored forest is not so many miles distant and one can never tell what new wonders our primeval wilderness will show."

"Do you suppose we shall capture it?" Randall's voice showed the excitement which any right-minded youth feels in the presence of mystery and adventure, especially when there is a chance that he may have a share in the affair.

"I am going to try, for now I have a new clue to follow; and you shall help me. We must first find the hiding place of the thief. I have already sent out several of my best men to search the woods within a circuit of three miles, but they found no hiding place, or any trail through the woods. I even had Juan search the only cave hereabouts, the mouth of the tunnel into the mountain, where the great spring flows out into the mill pond. When I was a boy I used to walk into it nearly a hundred feet; but Juan says that a big rock has fallen and closed it, some thirty feet from the entrance. No one could pass the rock unless he crawled under water."

A cave! The very word has a magic charm. Over Randall's face flashed a look of blissful eagerness and he followed up this new bit of information hungrily.

"I never knew there were caves in this part of the country. Caves are bully fun! What makes this one and where does it spring from?"

"The deep vegetable mold on the flat surface of the kitchen-agrden absorbs the rainfall, which, after sinking through the underlying gravel, forms channels in the rock and comes out in springs at the base. I think I will take a look myself, to make sure that Juan has searched the place thoroughly, and you shall go, too, if you wish. Juan says the best way to approach the cave is to climb down from the top of the hill in order to avoid the jungle along the banks."

The next morning they went to the point where the stream entered the mill pond and, after removing their shoes and rolling up their trousers, started on the water trail. So dense was the overhanging archway of foliage that a dim twilight prevailed and it was often necessary to thrust aside the bushes in order to pass. They had not gone very far when Randall, on the watch for the slightest clue, pounced upon a white feather which had lodged against the left bank.

"A goose or duck feather!" exclaimed Senor Alvarez, "and white at that. Look sharp, for if we find more it may mean that we are on the right track." Their search was rewarded a little later by several feathers and a little tuft of down such as grows underneath the bodies of all water-fowl.

At last the opening was reached. They found it large and high enough for a man to enter on horseback, but it rapidly diminished in size until some yards from the entrance there was barely height to walk without stooping. At this point the passage had been closed by a thin slab of slate, standing on edge and extending from one side to the other. At some time it had bridged the tunnel, but loosened by erosion the edge had fallen, completely damming the stream. The spring had gradually found a channel under this gate, but apparently that was the sole entrance. Had it not been for finding the feathers, a brief examination would have satisfied the searchers that there was no hiding place for anything bigger than a cat. With the flashlight, they began a careful scrutiny of the barrier and presently Randall grasped his companion's sleeve and held the light close to a section of the upper left-hand corner that revealed a slight difference in color and texture. It was, in fact, a large piece of bark fitted so skillfully that without a strong light it could not have been detected.

They moved back silently for a few paces and held a whispered conference. The ingenious doorway confirmed the opinion held by Senor Alvarez since the wounding of Miguel's dog, that the thief wore human guise. He was for seeing the affair through at once, and Randall agreed with a thrill of excitement, as he visualized some fierce and desperate bandit leaping forth to defy their united strength and ingenuity. Senhor Alvarez drew an efficient-looking revolver from its holster, an action imitated by his friend. Then the planter, speaking in Portuguese, loudly commanded the presumable inmate to come out, but there was no reply.

"We are armed and will fire unless you obey!" was his warning; and after another brief pause, he fired into the air, to show that he was in earnest. At this there was a startled rustling behind the barrier, and a quavering voice replied:

"Have mercy, Senor! I come!" The men looked at one another in amazement, for the voice was unmistakably feminine.

"The devil!" exclaimed Randall.

"I have often heard that personage referred to as 'she' murmured Alvarez with a dry smile. "Though I had not suspected that this forest demon—there, the bark panel has been moved aside!"

A slender, girlish figure emerged, clambered down backward, then turned and advanced toward them. As the brighter daylight at the mouth of the cave revealed her face, a second surprise swept over them both.

"Carlotta! My wife's runaway maid!" exclaimed Senor Alvarez.

"The girl of the dance hall!" marveled Randall.

The culprit stood with demurely downcast lids and folded hands, undeniably pretty and childishly appealing, in her coarse white blouse, black skirt and red scarf. Slowly she raised a pair of dark, pleading liquid eyes to her former employer. Senor Alvarez cleared his throat and tried his best to look as stern as he had looked five minutes before.

"Carlotta, what does this mean?" he demanded. "Are you the thief who has made all this trouble?" The girl shook her head.

"There is some one else hiding here. Who is it?"

"My husband, Senor. Ah, do not harm him! We had to hide and he would not let me go hungry. And the other—the stabbing—it was not his fault. Do not let them arrest my Bonaventure! He is so brave, so strong—and Jiminez made him jealous——"

"Let your brave Bonaventure come out and speak for himself!" thundered Senor Alvarez. Promptly a meek-looking little brown man dropped out and sidled toward them, his hands upraised in surrender. Senor Alvarez struggled visibly for a moment between anger and mirth, so strong was the contrast between the sorry specimen before him and the atmosphere of terrifying mystery which had enveloped the great plantation. Both recognized him as the girl's companion in the Santarem street fight.

"Who are you and why do you hide here and steal from my men?" Alvarez demanded.

"I am Bonaventure Santos, Senor, and I have stolen that we might not starve," explained the captive simply. "And I was forced to hide because, as the Senor knows, I have slain a man—my friend Jiminez Moreno. It was at a dance, and we had both drunk much cachuca. He said he would carry off my new wife, Carlotta; that I was too little and too cowardly to keep her. Now, as the Senor sees, I am somewhat small, but, especially when I am drunk, it is not always safe to tell me of it. I stabbed him in the heart with my matchete, and he fell, so I knew I had killed him. Then Carlotta and I were scared, so we ran off and paddled back here and hid my boat. My father worked for you when I was a little boy, so I knew about this cave. Now, Senor, I have confessed all; must I die?"

"But the horns, the ears, the shining eyes?" Randall interrupted in his halting Portuguese, gesturing to make his meaning clear. Bonaventure waved his hand toward his retreat with a wan smile. While Senor Alvarez guarded the prisoners, Randall scrambled into the cavern and found it a snug little refuge, with stones and boards built into a platform for the rude housekeeping of the fugitives. There were provisions for several days, including some canned goods from the store house of the planter himself In the corner lay the hide of a young steer, with horns, ears and tail attached, and this Randall brought out with him.

"So that was why the overseer couldn't find the skin," mused Senor Alvarez. Bonaventure took from the pocket of his ragged trousers some bits of whitish, pithy wood and held them out, saying:

"A kind of decayed wood which glows in the dark: with this I made the eyes." Senor Alvarez summoned an impressive frown as he held out his hand for the fragments of punk.

"You are indeed a rascal, Bonaventure, and deserve to be jailed for scaring my men and stealing their food—and shame on Carlotta, who told you no doubt where to find everything! But I am greatly in need of men for the timber gang just now and so I will hire you, if you will promise to pay back to each man the value of what you have stolen, and ask them all, and the padre, too, for forgiveness. And you must show them the calfskin, that they may see for themselves how harmless was the 'demon' that frightened them so much."

"Senor, you are good!" stammered Bonaventure, while Carlotta, the minx, wept effective tears of gratitude. "But have you forgotten about Jiminez? I shall be arrested if I come out—"

"Be comforted," said the planter, not unkindly. "Your Jiminez fell because he was so drunk and your matchete only scratched his arm because you were so drunk, and he is now working for Senor Mendez on the next plantation, and wishes to find you and ask your pardon. You might have known this long ago if you had not hidden so well. Now you are going to work well for me, and if your wife wishes it, Carlotta may go back to her work in the house."

"Heaven be thanked for all these mercies," gasped little Bonaventure, quite overwhelmed.

"You may well say so," agreed Senor Alvarez. "Now we must hurry home and lift from my men the terrible curse of the demon del foresta! Randall, you shall have the fiery eyes for your collection, and the story for your notebook."

(The End.)

NURSES

The Toronto Hospital for Incurables, in affiliation with Bellevue and Allied Hospitals, New York City, offers a three years' Course of Training to young women, having the required education, and desirous of becoming nurses. This Hospital has adopted the eight-hour system. The pupils receive uniforms of the School, a monthly allowance and travelling expenses to and from New York. For further information apply to the Superintendent.

Woman's Sphere

Some Short Cuts In Sewing.

When gathering, lengthen the machine stitch and make two rows of stitching about three-eighths of an inch apart. Draw up one thread of each row and you have neat gathers that will not slip out of place.

When putting on a straight facing or binding, let one edge be selvage. This saves much time and basting.

The less particular things may be pinned instead of basted. If you are careful to put the pins in at right angles to the line of stitching, the machine foot will pass over them with no trouble.

A little fancy stitching adds much to the appearance of some otherwise plain looking things. Wind floss on the bobbin of your machine, loosen the shuttle tension enough to allow the floss to pass through easily, and lengthen the stitch. Ordinary thread is used for the needle. Stamp the material and work on the wrong side. This stitching has the appearance of couching.—Mrs. H. R. W.

When cutting children's garments from a small amount of goods and piecing is necessary, piece where trimming would look most effective. Cover the seam with a bit of braid or a simple design in embroidery work or a few fancy stitches, as the long and short stitch, or feather stitch. On garments for grown-ups wool yarn or beads can be used in charming effects.

To do punch work by a short-cut method, use a design such as a wild rose or butterfly, baste a piece of strong paper underneath, then a piece of coarse curtain net. Work through all. When finished cut out linen, being very careful not to cut net. Tear out paper, leaving net, which greatly resembles punch work. This can be worked to great advantage in mending thin breaks in lunch cloths and also to cover stains. Work the design over the stain or hole and cut away. Mrs. R. R.

I have a family of seven to sew for, so I have to use all the short-cuts I can. I do very little basting and find I can make the work look just as neat as when I baste it.

I do my patching of every-day clothes on the sewing machine. I put a patch on the knee of a pair of overalls by ripping up the inside leg seam, sewing the patch in place and then resewing the seam.

In making buttonholes in every-day garments, I sew back and forth three or four times, leaving a small space in centre where buttonhole is needed. This is then cut, being careful not to cut the stitching.

In making plain garments I cut out several garments at a time. Then stitch all seams so as to have them ready for pick-up work at odd times.

To prevent ripping in tablecloths, sheets, or towels at the ends, I sew back and forth two or three times in the same place instead of tying the threads.

When hemstitching wears out, I stitch serpentine braid across the worn edge. This makes a neat finish and lasts a long time.

When I get new underwear I stitch two or three times around the buttonholes on the sewing machine. This prevents them from stretching or losing their shape.—Mrs. L. W. F.

Two Kinds of Honesty.

A certain brother and sister, just promoted from one school to another, found that among their new schoolmates cheating was prevalent. It was apparently a point of pride with the pupils to deceive the teachers as often as possible and to invent new ways to do it. Neither of the newcomers yielded to the fashion, but they resisted it in very different ways.

The girl, who was of a strong and independent nature, detested the habit, felt a sweeping scorn for all who indulged in it and was outspoken in expressing her disdain. With the few who shared her honesty, she held herself aloof from her mates; she toiled with indignant fidelity at her tasks, never complaining, never telling tales, and accepting with a feeling of exaltation rather than of discouragement a rank lower than that which her mental inferiors attained by cheating.

She was regarded as a person apart, who had strict notions, did not mind work, said sharp things and shot contemptuous glances. Her affairs were of no consequence to the rest of the school. She did not care for their opinion nor they for hers.

With her brother it was different. He was an active, companionable and sensitive boy who disliked work as much as he loved play, cared immensely for what the other fellows thought of him, delighted in doing a good turn for anybody, and desired always to be like the persons he was with, and to do as they did.

He thought it mean to cheat, but he could not think meanly of all the pupils who cheated. Some of them were very "good sorts" in most things. Then, too, even if he himself did not cheat, how was he to keep from helping others to, when his best friends would ask him the answers to questions and think him a prig if he didn't tell?

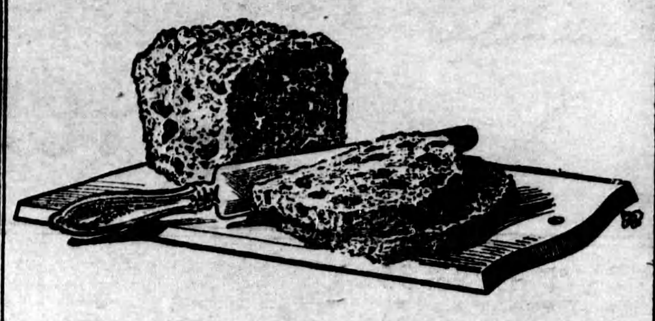
He tried one day to acquaint his sister with his difficulties. She was horrified.

"Why, Tom," she exclaimed. "Do you mean to tell me you'd like to cheat?"

Now, that was exactly what Tom did mean. He would have liked to cheat. He felt the temptation and longed for the comfortable result. Yet he had not cheated. But he stammered and hesitated and felt so ashamed before the bristling virtue with which his sister received his confession that he never finished it. He dropped the subject as soon as he could, and so forfeited the strong and bracing help that he needed. If only the nature that was so nobly honest had been patient and gentle too that sisterly opportunity would not have been thrown away.

The two are still at school. The aggressively honest girl still maintains her honorable oddity, and still wins no one to her side. The boy still refrains with difficulty from doing as the other pupils do; sometimes he helps his friends when it would be better for them if he refused. But his own work is still honest, and some of his mates are coming to do as he does, half from love of honesty and half from love of him. Perhaps, as his moral nature grows with his physical and mental growth, he will be as sturdily and naturally honest as his sister and more sympathetic than she with the weaknesses of others.

It is a fine thing to have a nature superior to common temptations; but when virtue assets itself so vigorously that it crushes or alienates the feelings of those who are less hardy morally it links itself with a fault. Common honesty and common kindliness should go hand in hand.



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Ivory on Islands.

The most valuable desolate islands in the world are the Liakova, in the Arctic Ocean, off the mouth of the Lena, in Siberia. They are frost-bound and utterly barren, save for Arctic moss; but they contain such enormous quantities of fossil ivory that they are exceedingly valuable—in fact, although uninhabited save for the ivory diggers, and of themselves incapable of supporting life, they produce a revenue of £1,000,000 a year.

Hop-a-Doodle.

Tie together the legs of two players so that to move ahead they have to hop. Furnish each of them with a smooth pole, about ten feet long and well padded at one end, and then let them see which can first push the other over with the padded end of the pole. The roosterlike contest will provide plenty of fun for those who look on as well as for those who take part.

The fish in the lakes of the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky are blind. Through long disuse of the eye the species has ceased to have anything but the outward form of the eye.

Canada's Message.

My Forests march from sea to sea
Eternal in their pageantry;
The white-leaf'd poplars sue for rains,
The birch a maiden-ghost remains,
The maple flames in a lone hour,
Ever the pine's a secret tower,
Bird and beast do so abound,
My lonely lands seem holy ground;
Edens at evening where God stood
And saw His works that all were good.
—E. B. Osborn.

Sea Monster With "Human" Face.

A sea monster has become stranded on the sea-shore near Bombay, India. It measures over 25 feet from head to tail, and it has a huge face somewhat resembling a human. The mouth runs inwards for over three feet and it would be possible for it to swallow three men at a time. It has created consternation and alarm amongst the fishermen in the neighborhood.

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Domestic Science.

The inspector was paying his usual visit to the village school.

Every face shone with cleanliness, every collar stood stiff with starch, all ears were strained to catch every word the inspector uttered, every hand was itching to be the first raised in reply.

The examination was coming to an unusually successful close when the great man asked:

"What is a lake?"

There was a long silence. Nobody could answer the question. At last Willie's chance had come and his hand shot up into the air.

"Well, Willie," asked the inspector. "What is it?"

"A hole in the kettle, sir," was the answer.

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