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THE GILA MONSTER

By DAVID WALTER CHURCH

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With our ample resources and facilities we can render you efficient service and handle your business to your entire satisfaction.

Little Inez Basquemento, a Mexican girl I saw while engineering in the southwest, was a merry child (if she had been born in the north she would have been a child; but, being a Mexican, she was a woman). She might have been anywhere from fourteen to sixteen. She played the guitar and sang with a little birdlike voice, jabbered Spanish musically, danced, and her face wore a perpetual smile, which was for every one. But if any person attempted to ruy her she would knit her brows and shrink away as though terrified. And once her confidence was lost by a bit of banter her good will could never be regained.

There was a young engineer engaged on the same work as myself out there, at the time fresh from one of the "Tech" schools of the northern states. He was twenty years old, handsome as a picture and as bright as a new brass button. What must he do but make love to Inez with all the recklessness of youth regardless of the consequences both to himself and her! I, who was older, saw his danger and warned him. I knew what was up, for in the evening when the day's work was over I would hear on the Basquemento veranda the twang of Inez's guitar, her little flute voice, her merry laughter mingled with sounds which I recognized as coming from Ben Eggleston, the young man who was sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind.

"You little fool," I would say to him, "don't you know that the girl is a mingling of child and woman—child in inexperience, woman in development; that she will fall in love with you and then—"

"I'll break it off at once," would be the young fellow's invariable reply. The boy fully intended to keep his resolution when it was made, but gave up trying to do so when it got cold. The next night I would hear the same pleasant sounds on the veranda and knew that they were breeding the same storm.

This went on till the work on that division was finished and we were about to move. Eggleston assured me there wouldn't be any trouble. The girl was such a child that he couldn't believe she had been attracted to him as she might have been if more of a woman. He was going away and would simply bid her goodbye as he would any other girl of immature years whose companion he had been.

"My advice to you," I said, "is to do no such thing. Go without saying anything about your going."

He didn't take my advice. The day before leaving he told her in a careless way that the engineering party to which he belonged was going to move its headquarters.

"And I will not see you again?" said the girl, her smile vanishing.

"Perhaps not," replied Ben, not thinking it wise to leave her to look forward to meeting him again. "You'll grow up soon and get married. Then you won't want any young men friends like me."

In order the better to kill in her all expectation of getting any nearer to him he told her he had a girl in the north.

That evening I met Inez carrying a cudge in one hand and a canvas bag in the other. She wore the same innocent look she had always worn, but I noticed a peculiar glitter in her eye. There was something incongruous in a little girl's carrying a bludgeon, and, naturally fearful for Ben Eggleston, I could not help vaguely connecting the act with the hitting he was giving her. She passed me without looking

back, and, taking position behind a tree, I watched her.

She went along, looking about her on the ground as if searching for something. She spent half an hour in this way, I following her, taking a new position now and then where I would not be observed by her. Presently I saw her hit something with her weapon. Then she picked up what looked to me like a short distance like a baby alligator. She held it by the tail, dropped it into the bag, closed the mouth and went away.

I didn't know what it all meant; but, still timorous about Ben, I told him he had better not wait for the moving of the party, but get out at once. He laughed at me and said there was nothing to fear and if there were he wouldn't run from a little Mexican girl who had scarcely given up her doll.

We engineers slept in a long temporary building one story high. That night I was startled by an unearthly yell. Springing out of bed, I ran along to a room where Eggleston and a roddman slept. The window was open, and Eggleston had just struck a light. His roommate was holding one leg and writhing with pain.

"Kill it!" he yelled.

Then I saw a little alligator looking thing on the floor.

"Kill it! It's the Gila monster and has bitten me. I'm gone up."

Inez's actions were explained. She had dropped the reptile in through the window on Ben, she supposed, but really on his roommate. For a week the poor devil howled in agony, then died.

That was years ago. Ben Eggleston has never married. The bare mention of a woman produces on him a temporary insanity.

FREAK TREASURY NOTES.

The Face of the Bill, Not the Back, Indicates Its Value.

Despite the careful scrutiny given every bill that leaves the bureau of engraving and printing, a number of "freak" notes find their way into circulation from time to time. Such a one was a note that once came to the subtreasury at New York. It had the imprint of a twenty dollar note on one side and of a ten on the other. But, inasmuch as the face showed the figures 20, \$20 was the legal value of the bill.

In most cases the "freak" bills that have escaped the vigilance of the bureau's officers are national banknotes, which, like the regular treasury notes, are printed there. As intimated already, the face value is always recognized when the "freaks" come to be cashed at any branch of the treasury. The imprint on the back has no legal status whatsoever.

The notes are printed in sheets. Usually there will be one twenty and two tens on a sheet. They are printed one side at a time, so it can readily be seen that the printer in turning over the sheet might get it upside down and thus put a ten dollar back on the twenty dollar note or a twenty on the back of one of the tens.

When errors are discovered the misprinted sheet is laid aside to be destroyed. It cannot be torn up at once, for every sheet has to be accounted for. After some formalities it is ground into pulp.

Almost all the "freak" bills that have been issued in the past have found their way back to the treasury, there to be destroyed. It is thought that very few of them are now scattered about, and these are for the most part in the hands of curio hunters.—Harper's Weekly.

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