

Our Weekly Serial Story Installment

MISTRESS of MONTEREY

VIRGINIA STIVERS BARTLETT

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WNU Service

CHAPTER XXVI—Continued

The courier spoke timidly. "Excellency," he murmured deprecatingly, "unfortunately, I must be on my way, not being on a pleasure trip, like yourself, and . . . and there is a letter in there that I have on my conscience. I should have asked you about it before I left the presidio. It does not bear your frank."

The Governor looked startled. "So? And who has sent a letter out without my frank?"

"Her Excellency, La Senora La Gobernadora, Dona Eulalia."

"Ah! Let me have it, and I will attend to it."

The courier took the paper from among the rest and handed it to the Governor. It was addressed to the Viceroy of Mexico. The Governor shook his head and rubbed his eyes. The men watched him in amazement as he tore the letter open and read it.

"A woman's tongue is only three inches long, but it can kill a man of six feet! You," he said to the trembling courier, "get on your way at once. I will keep this letter. And the rest of us will return at once to the presidio."

At the exclamation of disappointment from his escort he laughed loudly.

"But we will stay only a short while, and before this sun has set we will be on our way again. Our pasear is interrupted, companeros, not abandoned!"

A little while later the presidio gates were again thrown open, and to the surprise of everyone, the Governor's party swept into the parade-ground in a cloud of dust and a clatter of hoofs.

From her window La Gobernadora watched El Gobernador ride madly toward the palacio, and before she could control the sudden trembling that seized her, he strode in the room.

Behind him came two soldiers, who had followed from the gate.

"Senora," thundered the Governor, "I have come to place you under arrest." He motioned to the two soldiers, who stepped smartly forward and took their places one at each side of Eulalia. Their eyes goggled with amazement, but they clanked the butts of their muskets smartly on the floor, and stood at attention.

"What is the meaning of this," inquired Eulalia, "is it a drunken prank? For what am I to be placed under arrest?"

"It is no drunken prank. Woman, you are under arrest for treason. I have here"—and he slapped Eulalia's letter to the Viceroy on to the table—"I have here a document written by you containing treasonable utterances against the Governor of the Californias. And any treason against the Governor of the Californias is treason against his Most Catholic Majesty the King of Spain. Therefore I put you under arrest."

Eulalia grew white around the lips, and her voice shook.

"T-t-treason?" she stammered.

"Yes; you have said here that the Governor of California has been going slowly but surely insane for the past three years. That all his acts are the acts of a madman, a maniac. That his governance here has been a long period of misrule. That he fails to co-operate with the priests in their religious work. That everyone is afraid of him, and dare not report his madness to the Viceroy. That he has repeatedly threatened your life, and the lives of others, and that he neglects his duties to consort with Indian women. Is that true?"

"Every word of it!"

"I mean it is true that you have written this?"

"Yes, I wrote it."

"Very well, then. I arrest you in the name of the King of Spain." Eulalia wavered.

"But—but—you can not do that!"

What—what are you going to do with me?"

"You are to be incarcerated in the monjera, the quarters of the Indian women at Mission Carmelo until I return from my trip. Then I will consider your case."

"In the monjera! You can not do this to me! I will not go! You dare not degrade me, disgrace me this way, before the whole community! I will not go!"

"You do not hesitate to degrade and disgrace me before all California, Mexico and Spain, Senora. You shall go to the monjera, and at once. Prepare yourself."

"No! No! I will die first . . . Angustias!"

Angustias was cowering in a corner, watching the scene in terror. At the doors and windows frightened servants listened and looked.

"There is no use calling Angustias. I am through being ruled by women. Angustias will remain here with my children, and you shall go. At once, I said!" he thundered so suddenly that Eulalia jumped. "And if you hesitate any longer you shall go without any preparation. The matron at the monjera will give you a robe such as the Indian girls wear. Well, are you not going to get ready?"

"I am not. I am not going. Please, Pedro, do not do this to me, please. I am sorry . . . I wrote because I am so unhappy . . . it seemed the only way. Please, my darling, adored husband. Please, oh, please do not do this to me!" Whimpering like a child she threw herself at his feet before the scandalized eyes of the watching soldiers and servants. Angustias moved toward her, but the Governor motioned her back. His face was stern and drawn.

"Get up, woman! What a scene to make before these people! A woman's tears and a dog's limping are not real. Will you go now or shall I be forced to make you?"

Still she knelt on the floor.

"No! No! I will not go . . . you can not make me! Oh, Pedro! Oh, Mother of God! Oh, help me!"

The Governor clutched his beard with one hand and gritted his teeth.

"Pick her up," he ordered the soldiers, "tie her hands, and put her on a horse. Take her to the fathers at Carmel and tell them it is my orders she stay in the monjera until I return. Under no circumstances is she to leave before then. And if she misbehaves, she is to be beaten, like any recalcitrant Indian woman."

"Pedro!" Eulalia shrieked. "Pedro, not that! Al, Dios mio . . . not that!"

The Governor was trembling as much as the terrified woman at his feet.

"Very well. Not beaten. But if she misbehaves, she must be put in the stocks. Take her at once."

As the frightened soldiers lifted her from the floor, she struggled like a cat, writhing and sobbing.

"Best tie her hands," ordered the Governor coldly. "Or you will be scratched." He handed one a handkerchief, and watched grimly while her struggling hands were tied at her back. She faced him with features distorted, streaked with tears, but her eyes fierce.

"Cruel, brutal, mad Pedro Fages!" she cried. "You will suffer for this!" She wrenched against the bonds that held her hands. "Oh, let me go! Let me go!"

Fages merely motioned to the soldiers, who dragged her out of the house. Still screaming and struggling, one of them managed to throw her before him on his horse. Angustias rushed from the house wringing her hands and weeping. All the servants crowded out-of-doors. The soldier touched his spurs to the horse. The shrieking writhing La Gobernadora and her escort started across the parade-ground toward the presidio gate, Angustias running lamenting beside.

CHAPTER XXVII

Forth on El Camino Real again rode the Governor of the Californias. The royal road was now a well-defined strip of yellow highway, slowly but surely, through pressure of many feet and hoof-beats of many horses, printing itself upon the pleasant soil of California connecting the Mission and Presidio of Upper California with the ancient Mission and one-time capital Loreto, in Lower California.

As he rode he remembered suddenly that 20 years had passed since he had first traveled this way. No road then; that first party of pioneers had pushed their way through virgin soil, breaking a trail through the wilderness, marking it here and there with cairns of stone, but often with crosses.

Twenty years! He started at the thought. Nearly half his life. In



"I Am Retiring," Said One Old Compadre.

twenty years more he would be seventy. All those years for the siren, California. As he looked at the smiling spring sky, the acres and acres of wild-flowers, the canons full of live-oaks, sycamores, water alders, willows and all manner of trees and shrubs, as he sniffed the wild roses and drank from the clear springs; as he gazed at the mighty mountains or at the rolling restless surf of the Pacific he laughed.

"My life for California!" he said. "By God, she is worth it, the jade!"

Each morning that found them on the road he carefully stamped out the remains of the camp-fire, often on a spot where he had built fires many times before. And as he did this he wondered. Out of these ashes, on one of these little mounds, would a city rise some day? He sighed at the thought, but indulged in prophetic retrospection.

And at the missions he visited long with the padres; ate their good food, drank their good wine; admired their fat herds and sleek horses. Then passed on to the next mission. Passed through much rich country, or wild land alive with herds of antelope and elk, bear and mountain lions. He killed the giant bear he had promised himself, and carried most of it to the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel. There he rested for many days in the shade of the carefully tended trees, with the music of a little stream in his ears. And there he visited with some old, old friends who had traveled with him on the first expedition.

"I am retiring," said one old compadre, Don Epifanio Sanchez, long sergeant of the guard at the Mission San Gabriel. "I am retiring," he repeated as Don Pedro sipped absently at his wine.

"From what . . . ?" questioned the Governor.

"From the King's Army. The King has granted me many varas of land. And I am choosing it well. There are springs on it, and meadow land for grazing, and land to raise corn and grapes. And I have already chosen the knoll on which I

will build my house." He stretched his legs luxuriously before him and sighed with pleasurable anticipation. "Ah, and what a life that will be!"

"But your wife?" asked Don Pedro. "Will she consent to come here and live with you?"

"Had you not heard? My poor wife, God rest her soul, died last year in Mexico City. She would never join me here. And I could not leave here. You understand? Life was lonely for her, I suppose. We had no children . . . and so . . ." He shrugged his shoulders. "God took her home. You are most fortunate, Don Pedro, in having Dona Eulalia with you. Most fortunate!"

"Yes," muttered Fages. "And what will you do with this great rancho and house you are going to build? Will you live alone? What will you do without wife or children?"

Don Epifanio stirred uneasily.

"Pues, compadre, you know how it is. I have already chosen me a wife. Just an Indian girl. That is, part Indian. Her father was a Spanish soldier, though God only knows who he was. But she is beautiful and very young, and has been well educated here at Mission San Gabriel. She can cook, and sew. She can even play the guitar! And she is young. Oh, yes, very young. Fifteen. But look you, I am barely fifty! So I will have many years ahead of me, and God willing, many children." He laughed. "Who knows but we will start a new race in this new land?"

Don Pedro was very quiet as the other dreamed of his future happiness over his wine-glass.

"Yes," mused the Governor to himself. "You will have a happy life. An ideal life. Ah, yes . . ."

The other broke into his musings.

"Why do you not retire, Don Pedro? You have given the best years of your life to your King and this country. The King would be more than willing to award you a great slice of this land that you have governed so long. Why not do it? Let someone else be governor, and have all the worries and anxieties, while you retire and establish a grand hacienda, enjoy your wife and children, and let the Indians do the work?"

Don Pedro was quiet a long time, idly twirling his beaker, and watching the ruddy juice washing in little waves against the glass. All unconsciously his old friend, in relating his own hopes, had laid bare the deepest desires of the Governor's heart.

A great estate of his own! He could see himself riding over the land; could see the sleek herds, the spirited horses he would raise; could see the fields of corn and grain,

squashes, beans and chiles; he wandered through his own orchards and vineyards. Al, Dios, that was what he wanted! A great house where he could entertain a hundred guests, and where a hundred servants would do his bidding; where there would be music and flowers and hospitality . . . and at the end a host of strong sons to speed his departure into that dark uncertain land . . . But the vision did not hold Eulalia.

With a bitter laugh he gulped his wine.

"Before God, Don Epifanio, you are sent by Satan to tempt me! That may be your life, but it can never be mine."

"I am sorry, my friend. For there are many of us who campaigned with you who are going to do this very thing of which I have spoken. In fact, many have sent for their wives and families to come from Mexico, and, as I said before, those of us who have not wives will find them here. Yes, we will found a new civilization, I think, in this strange new land, and you should be one of the founders."

The Governor left San Gabriel, visited the troublous little village of Los Angeles, and left there shaking his head over the laziness and immorality of its inhabitants. South, then, to the Mission San Juan Capistrano, and at last to the Presidio and Mission of San Diego, the cradle of California. Then he turned north again, to return to Monterey, more restless, more unhappy, more disturbed in mind than when he had started on his journey. He had not left his anxieties behind. They had traveled with him. And to them was added the nagging certainty that he was at a crisis in his life. He could not continue living as he had been. He and Eulalia were killing each other.

He must resign as governor of the Californias.

And after that, what?

One of two things. Remain in the province as an hacendado, and fulfill his dearest dreams, regardless of Eulalia. Or return to Mexico, perhaps to Spain.

He groaned in spirit, and worried his grizzled beard as he considered that possibility.

The soft breath of California kissed his cheek as he rode north. The very brambles and wild roses reached out and clutched him with clinging fingers; and when he lay down at night the warm earth seemed to cradle him in loving arms that would not let him go.

When at last he rode through the gates of the Royal Presidio Monterey two months after he had swept through them, he had made a decision.

He would not leave California.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Farm Life Has No Appeal to Peasants of France; Children Prefer City Life

People leave farms in France largely for the same reasons as everywhere else. Ever since the foundation of the Third republic (nominally 1870) peasant children have been getting education, though the number of illiterates as shown by the army conscript examinations is surprisingly high. With education, the ambition of the average peasant has been to make his son a gentleman (a monsieur), which means generally to get him a white-collar job. His daughter likewise he prefers to marry off to a city desk worker rather than to a young farmer, observes a writer in the Chicago Tribune.

By a process which has gone on in other languages, even the word peasant has fallen into bad repute. It is now never used in the news reports of the Paris press. When a word must be used, a peasant is called a cultivator. The word farmer (farmer) has never been used extensively, and not often would it be an accurate translation of our word farmer.

Even if he cannot get a coveted job with the government, the young peasant usually prefers to come to the city and take a chance. He may get on the chain in an auto-

mobile factory or punch tickets in a subway station.

The average French farm has not been improved as the American one has within the last generation. The radio is rare; automobiles are even rarer. The standard of living is undoubtedly higher than before the war, and currents of life now flow freely through the French countryside, but the peasant still thinks of his life as a dull one as compared with that in the city.

Practical, Practicable

Practical means that which is adapted to actual conditions; that which experience has proved to be useful. While the others were wondering what to do, Jones took practical steps to stop the leak in the boat. Evangeline was a dreamer, Joan a practical kind of girl. Practicable denotes that which may be practiced, used, or followed with good results. Some solutions to material problems are all right in theory, but are not practicable in actual practice; in other words they cannot be carried out. To leave a room all you need do is to go out by the door—but if the door is locked on the outside that method of leaving is impracticable.