

THE OLD STAGE DOOR.

Tis up a little alleyway. Where dust and darkness reign. With all the kindred mysteries That follow in their train. The tragic and the comic blend. Just as they did of yore. Look out, or else you'll tumble At the old stage door. The paint that once bedecked it Has vanished long ago. Like that on many a footlight queen Whose smile we used to know. Whose voice has long been silent. Whose face is seen no more. When play and song are ended At the old stage door. The chosen few who enter now Are faces new and strange: For those we knew have passed away With Time's relentless change. Ah, well, we'll wait with laughter The tears that vex us sore. As we turn away heart heavy From the old stage door. -Robert Gilbert Welsh in New York Sun.

THE DUMB WITNESS.

The histories of California chronicle briefly, in the sections devoted to Los Angeles county, the murder in 1841 of one Nicholas Finch, a German. But naught say these chronicles concerning certain curious details connected with that crime, known to those versed in the unwritten history of southern California, and these matters are set forth as follows:

Fronting the old parish church of Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles still stands today a long, old fashioned building of two stories, with dormer windowed roof, once the residence of his reverence the bishop of this diocese. This edifice is now the focus—the theater, I believe—of the Chinese quarter, and the cross that topped it, so long familiar to the eyes of Angelinos, has been supplanted by the great swinging lanterns of lacquered wood and brilliant hue paper.

Ere this house came to be used as the episcopal abode, Nicholas Finch kept within it a little shop, where he sold liquors, groceries and other miscellaneous wares. From time to time he replenished his stock from the vessels which touched at San Pedro, and when he went down to that port to make his purchases, he was wont to leave his door key with his friends, Charles Baric and his wife Sophie, French people living across the plaza, close by the church, about where is now the site of a modest photograph gallery.

One day Mme. Baric discovered that her compadre's door was not opened, and she marveled somewhat thereat, knowing, first, that no trading vessel was anchored at San Pedro, and, moreover, that Finch always, as has been said, brought his key to her when going ashore. And her wonder became alarm when three days passed, and the door remained closed, and there was no sign of her friend and neighbor. So the little Frenchwoman crossed the plaza, her husband having been for some days absent from the pueblo, and she knocked at the door of Nicholas Finch, and getting no answer, she put first her eye, then her ear and then her nose to the keyhole. The eye saw utter darkness, the ear heard no sound from within, but to her nostrils came an odor at once foul and forbidding that made her limbs to quake, her hair to creep, her gorge to rise and her blood to curdle. And she hastened away with fear and trembling and told her misgivings to Manuel Requena, who, in those days, was the alcalde.

Then Don Manuel, seeing that the case, indeed, wore an ominous aspect, called on Don Ygnacio Coronel, who held an office corresponding to our present clerkship of the courts, and they went to the house of Finch, with three stout alguaciles (constables or bailiffs), who broke open the door, after the alcalde had thrice summoned and received no answer. When the nauseous stench that came forth had been in some measure weakened by the influx of fresh air, they stepped within and at once saw, inside the narrow room, the body of the German, lying near the counter, stretched in a pool of blood, stiffened and decomposing. His head was beaten to pieces, and the barrel of a gun, that had been hammered somewhat toward the form of a bludgeon, showed the means of his murder.

The officers proceeded to examine the premises, whose condition told, not too obscurely, the story of the crime. Some small wares on the counter and a magnifying glass clutched in the fingers of the dead man indicated that he had been engaged in a dealing of business when he was stricken down. That the assassins had rifled the little shop was manifest by the state of the effects, some scattered, some evidently missing; that they had escaped by the rear was doubly proved by the barring inside of the street door and by the leading to the inner rooms of bloody footprints whose number and variety of shape showed that four or five assailants had been present. The living rooms, behind the shop, had been plundered, but the outer door, leading into the usual corridor and thence to a low walled corral, had been shut, and even locked, from the outside. The searchers opened this door and stepped into the yard.

"They have killed his dog also!" cried Don Ygnacio Coronel, at sight of a great mastiff stretched on his side upon the earthen floor of the corridor. But even as he spoke the creature stirred, slightly lifted his head, glanced toward them, and feebly wagged his tail. When they went to him they found that he was tethered by a fast chain, and was gaunt, weak and almost famished, having been without food or water since the day before his master was murdered.

"We must succor this poor creature, not only from humanity, but also as a precaution," said Don Ygnacio; "he might possibly prove to be a valuable witness."

The alcalde looked sharply at the other, as if to see if he were jesting, and the alguaciles grinned broadly. But Don Ygnacio's face was serious even to solemnity, as befitted the occasion, and one of the men was promptly dispatched

for food and water, which was administered to the dog.

The discovery of this murder was followed by wild excitement in the pueblo. The resident foreigners—that is, not Spanish-Americans—as usual, acted as if the crime were a result of race antagonism, rather than personal motive, and they called loudly for vengeance, and were not far from creating an incendiary uprising. Guards were posted to watch over the public safety, an ordinance was issued requiring citizens to be within doors by 10 o'clock at night and a volunteer guard was placed over the jail, besides which a small detachment of soldiers were sent thither from Santa Barbara.

And now was set in motion all the complicated machinery of the old Spanish law, not altogether unlike the processes of the French criminal courts, and various vagabonds and suspicious characters were taken into custody. These prisoners were kept under guard of several soldiers, and they were conducted to the alcáide for examination by a corporal. The dog of the murdered man had been given such good care that his strength was fully restored, and he had been brought to the scene of examination and tied within the room.

It was the observant and reflective clerk of the court who first noted that the animal was growling, sullenly and resentfully, as one of the prisoners stood before the alcáide, whose attention he called to the fact by writing a few lines, in which he suggested that the prisoner be returned to confinement until the matter should be discussed. Accordingly, Don Manuel Requena sent away the wretch cowering there, and the guard was directed to bring in another prisoner after a few minutes. Again the dog displayed marked anger and hostility, as he did at each new installment of suspects.

"Let us try an experiment," said Don Ygnacio. "Will you arrange, Don Manuel, to have another guard bring in, one by one in turn, the men who have just been before us?"

This was done, but the intelligent animal, a few moments since so savage, now only looked inquiringly at each arrival, but made no demonstration of enmity. Then a pretext was found to call back the corporal who first had brought in the prisoner. He was one Santiago Linares, a slender, dark fellow, with a youthful, almost boyish countenance, and ingratiating manner. He was maneuvered near the dog, and no sooner had he come within reach than the mastiff, bristling and snarling fiercely, sprang upon him and would have throttled him had not those present torn Linares out of his fangs. Trembling and ashen was the fellow, yet full of self-possession, and feigning wonder and indignation when taken with complicity in the murder. He had not even been in the pueblo, he declared, on the night of the crime; it was his day off from service, and he had been at the mission with his mistress, one Eugenia Valencia. Nevertheless, he was at once sent to jail, and that incommunicado; that is to say, solitary confinement, where no one could see or communicate with him. And "Send for la Eugenia," instructed the alcáide.

This Valencia woman came of a very criminal stock, and she and her family were at the bottom of a vast percentage of the disorder that befell in those days in Los Angeles. The brothers were scamps and practically bandits, fitting sons of depraved parents. Another sister lived for many years in illicit bonds with William W., one of the wealthiest of the foreign residents, whom it were hardly kind to indicate more clearly, since his descendants still live among us. After she had borne this man three children his jealousy of her flagrant infidelities led to a scandalous shooting affair, notwithstanding which he would still have married her, but that the authorities banished her from the pueblo as a measure of public safety, and she died some years later at Mazatlan, where W., because of his vested interests here, could not follow her. He sent, however, for her children, and educated them with his legitimate children, he having married meanwhile one of the Lugos from Santa Barbara. Of such a strain—resolute, bold, unscrupulous—was the woman whom Manuel Requena, the alcáide, sent to fetch from San Gabriel.

His messengers took her all unaware. She had not even heard that the murder was discovered, and so when they had secured her, the officers searched her dwelling and found bundled away there in a large quantity of the effects and clothing plundered from the murdered German. The officer who arrested her did not fail to impress upon her the significance of this find and its tendency to criminate her. Thus when she arrived at the courtroom she was quaking, full of terror and an abject conviction that her own liberty and her own life were in peril. Under the stress of this fear, and almost without waiting to be questioned, she hastened, when brought before the alcáide, to declare that she had been in the company of the men who had killed the German and that she had been a witness to his slaying. She was of course put into confinement incommunicado.

Santiago Linares was now told that one of his accomplices had confessed, and had named him as the chief offender. Upon this, spurred not more by fear than by anger and vindictiveness, he made a declaration implicating Ascencio Valencia, a brother of Eugenia, and another bad character of the pueblo, one Jose Duarte, whom he had, he said, accompanied upon that fatal evening, not being aware of the purpose of their enterprise.

The two men he named were promptly arrested, and they, when they learned of their accuser, began a perfect siege of cowardly but ferocious protestations and disclaimers, each alleging his own innocence while inculpating the others. The discrepancies between their statements were carefully noted, and the discordant witnesses were brought together in accordance with that feature of the Spanish law known as "confrontation." These comparisons of statements resulted in the elimination of much subversive false-

hood and the establishment of many facts upon which they were all agreed.

Thus it was proved that the gun barrel found beside the murdered man was owned by Ascencio Valencia, who had adapted it to the uses of a crowbar. On the night in question, the four—Eugenia Valencia, Ascencio Valencia, Linares and the third man—had gone to the house and knocked at the door of Finch. The German was naturally of a cautious and suspicious mind, and, there being at the time much lawlessness and crime in the pueblo, he refused to open the door, this, indeed, being a precaution he always exercised. The woman Valencia, however, urged him to admit her, saying that she had brought a valuable jewel which she had brought to pawn to him under the stress of great need.

Finally, after much urging, Finch set the door ajar, and Linares at once thrust his foot within the crack to prevent its closing again. Eugenia pushed through the opening, and the others pressed closely after her, and when within closed the door behind them promptly.

As yet no offensive demonstration was made, but when Finch, doubtless somewhat reassured by Eugenia's tenderness of the jewel she declared she had brought with her, fetched a magnifying glass and bent over to examine the offered pledge—then the heavy gun barrel was brought down with a crash upon the head of Finch, who was felled by the blow and immediately beaten to death with the same weapon. Here was the point of variance. No two of the men agreed as to who did the actual slaying, and Eugenia professed ignorance in that particular. The concurrence of statement further showed that after the murder the assailants had looted Finch's shop, securing about ten dollars in cash, but few, if any, valuables, as the German's cautious habits precluded his keeping such at hand. Eugenia, full of vanity at their little profit, made up a bundle of the man's clothing and other effects and the four left the premises, first fastening the front door on the inside and going out by the rear.

Now, according to the Spanish law, their confessions of complicity were sufficient to convict all these people of murder. But, under the laws of Mexico, modifying the former, the local authorities of the California courts had no right or warrant to pass sentence of death, and it was necessary to send to Mexico the statement of the case, with all the details, before such sentence could be passed, even in the most flagrant crimes. In the present instance the public feeling of horror and the indignation was very strong; therefore, taking into consideration the atrocity of the crime and the lack of facilities for securing the prisoners during the long period which must elapse before the return of the decision from the tribunal of the Mexican capital, after much and deliberate discussion of the situation by the best men of the pueblo, the townspeople resolved upon summary administration of justice, and 300 armed men assembled, after the prisoners had been warned of their fate and given three days for preparation.

Padre Tomas Estevega came in from San Gabriel to attend them, and after his ministrations the three men were taken forth and led to the corridor of the house where their crime was done, and there they were, in the language of the Mexicans, "passed under arms"—that is to say, executed by shooting. This execution took place between 10 and 11 o'clock in the morning of April 6, 1841. Then the vicario declared under sentence of banishment from the country. Before she could be sent away however, Governor Alvarado commuted the sentence, and thus she was allowed to remain, pursuing her infamous calling and propagating social ulcers, which should corrupt and canker for many a year in Los Angeles—the most criminal of the four—for it was clearly shown that if she did not actually strike the blow, the woman had instigated and planned the murder.

But the faithful dog of Nicholas Finch had surely borne well his share in avenging the foul and brutal murder of his unfortunate master.—Y. H. Addis in Omaha World-Herald.

The Manufacture of Mirrors. Early in the sixteenth century a manufactory of glass mirrors was first established on a commercial scale in Venice and the republic enjoyed a monopoly of this profitable business for 150 years. The makers of looking glasses formed an important corporation among themselves and were allowed unusual privileges. This process was to blow cylinders of glass, which were afterward flattened upon a stone, carefully polished and silvered on the back with an amalgam. In this way quite large ones were produced, sometimes measuring as much as four feet in length. The secret was carefully guarded and the laws were enforced which declared that any workmen at the trade who carried his art to a foreign state must return upon requisition on penalty of imprisonment for his nearest relatives. If, notwithstanding this penalty, he refused to return, emissaries were sent to kill him. Nevertheless, in 1665 Colbert, at that time prime minister of France, imported from Venice twenty makers of looking glasses, who set up their business in the Fauberg St. Antoine. Before long the French mirrors excelled the Venetian, and a fresh impulse was given to the art in 1691 by the discovery of a process for making plate glass. From that time to this the looking glasses made in France have been the best in the world.—Washington Star.

When a Lion Is Doctored. Naturally animals resent any attempt to cure them, and it requires an amount of coaxing to get them to take medicine that would exhaust the patience of most people. A sick lion will lie in its cage most of the time, or sit up on its haunches, with its head drooping a little and all of the fire gone out of its eyes. It will allow its keeper to enter and pat its head, but it will not touch the carefully prepared medicine unless it is concealed in some delicious morsel of fresh meat.—New York Epoch.

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