

CARMEN OF THE RANCHO

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN © Frank H. Spearman WNU Service

CHAPTER XIX

Bowie, leaping his horse into the jungle as he crouched in the saddle, knew he had one more pistol slug to face; and knew that only his knife was left him for a hand-to-hand fight. Yet such was his tradition and his training that, of all weapons available to him, the bowie knife would be his choice in a short arm struggle. He plunged into the jungle without qualm and headed his horse through the thicket by the sounds of the struggling horse ahead.

Then came a silence as Bowie, with his shattered arm, pressed forward. A pistol shot from the squatter rang and echoed through the jungle. The slug whistled past Bowie's head. His only answer to it was a cry, a plainsman's cry.

Blood spurred to the right, close to a huge sycamore. Bowie's horse was struggling up to its knees in mud and slime with every leap like to be its last. Suddenly there came a whirring, clashing sound ahead, and a terrible cry choked short.

Through the tangle of vines and branches before him Bowie caught a glimpse of a riderless horse, lying bogged. What did it mean? Slowing up, the Texan peered through the screen of leaves ahead. He worked his way closer to the giant sycamore, when his horse shied violently.

Half submerged, face downward in the marshy water, lying so close that Bowie's horse almost trampled it, he saw the sprawling figure of a man. Clutching his knife in his left hand, the Texan slipped through the slime and, watching narrowly for a trick, lifted the man's head by the hair out of the ooze. As he took the head in his hands it turned, disjointed at the neck; the squatter was quite dead.

With one arm disabled, Bowie could do no more than partly drag the trunk of the body closer to the roots of the big tree. He stood for a moment in bewilderment and confusion, stunned by the gruesome sight. Almost at his side lay the squatter's pony, only its heaving flanks showing life.

The Texan stood hatless beside his panting horse, wiping beads of sweat from his forehead and trying to decide what to do.

The instinct to hurry away from the tragedy must be denied. If he left the body it would be virtually impossible to find it again, and it would almost certainly be mangled by coyotes before it could be recovered. Nor could Bowie, partly disabled, get it on his horse—the squatter was a large man—to carry it out of the swamp. Nor had he a pistol in hand to load for a shot.

But he had still a stentorian voice. He knew Pardaloe and Simmie would trail him to the Melena. He sent out a slow high cry and listened. No response greeted his ear. After a long wait, for even breath was precious in his predicament, he tried a second call and sat down to figure out what had befallen Blood. Soon he heard in the distance a pistol shot. He knew it was a signal. Again he gave the plainsman's shrill plaintive cry, and there came at last an answering call.

It was frontier wireless long before the day of wires. Patience and calling and answering brought Pardaloe and Simmie, swearing their way into the heart of the Melena to where Bowie stood leaning with his left hand on the sycamore tree.

"Henry, you been hit! Where? Dog it, man, you've lost aplenty blood. Set down. Where's Blood, Henry?"

Pardaloe was concerned. His questions came fast. Bowie pointed to the fallen squatter. Simmie pulled at his beard reflectively—the only sign he ever gave of excitement. Pardaloe stared a moment, pulled the body around, but he saw no blood.

"Henry," he asked, peering, "where'd you hit him?"

"I had no pistol. We were going fast. I was within ten yards of him when we got here. He jumped his horse past the tree without seeing this pool. The horse went down." Bowie pointed upward. "See that old grapevine hanging across from the trunk to the branch? That's what did it."

Late that morning Carmen, after searching the horizon since day-break with straining eyes, perceived a little party of horsemen riding slowly toward the ranch house.

Most of all she searched among them for the caballero to whom she had given her life in promise. Her acute agony of suspense ended when she made out his broad hat and tall figure in the saddle.

Carmen had promised herself she would be very collected when he returned. All night and all the morning her prayers had been poured up to heaven for his safety, and with her prayers answered and her lover, out of the saddle, clasping her close, everything went black before her. She disgraced herself by fainting in Bowie's one good arm.

"I saw the flames in the night along the river," she sobbed when she came to. "Oh, Henry, if you ever ride into danger again, I ride with you. I must. Never again can I stand such a night. What's this?" she exclaimed, catching sight of the

blood-soaked bandage on Bowie's right arm. "You are hurt! You are wounded! Madre de Dios! You will die!"

Bowie laughed as he held her. "I will, but not yet, querida. Not yet."

Despite his assurances, she was atremble. "Come into the house, quick, querido. You do not know how bad you are hurt. Come."

As the couple entered the living room the excitement began all over again. The next moment the senorita and the senora, breathless with fear, had the serving women running, hot water splashing, sheets torn up and enough bandages ready to equip a small hospital. The rough bandages were soaked off. Carmen calmed herself until she saw the ragged wound of the slug in the arm as it was bared. Whereupon, without even apologizing, the excited girl fainted again.

When Dr. Doane took charge he, too, laughed at Carmen's fears. "All



In your honor and mine—

that I wonder at," he said insincerely, "is that you would send for me to attend to a little thing like this. Bowie, my boy, you'll be swinging a reata next week." He successfully concealed his anxiety lest Bowie should suffer a stiff forearm from the shattered bone.

Carmen's confidence in Dr. Doane was very great, but her solicitude for Bowie was unabashed. She tried, for the most part unsuccessfully, to keep the Texan in bed; and failing this, to keep him in the house. "Cease protesting," she would say decisively. "This is my hour, Enrique. I have been waiting for it. God sent me once a protector; it was no credit to you, big man, that he chose you—"

"No credit to me, pobrecita, but it is the only thing in my life that I count."

"He sent me a protector—why shouldn't I persecute him? Why shouldn't I persecute him?"

"You're too young to be cruel," he retorted.

"I don't care! He's mine. I've had too many tragedies in my life not to value a protector. Had only you been there that dreadful day at Los Alamos!"

"Querida! My right arm is getting quite strong again. But Dr. Doane says it must be exercised regularly so it won't be stiff. How about exercising it a little now?"

"My darling, you must take no chances! You might strain it, you know."

"Tomorrow then?"

"Perhaps tomorrow if you behave yourself. Do you realize, bad Texan, how I've already cast to the winds the rigid etiquette of centuries? I'm sure if Don Ramon knew how bad I've been—and all through associating with you—he would disown me. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to impose so on the weakness of a poor girl like me. And I don't believe you are a bit ashamed. What sort of people live in Texas? And you did say something, if I remember rightly, about marrying me—not?"

"If I have so imposed on your lovely nature, querida, I want, of course, to make amends."

Then Carmen spoke, "In the morning, Henry, I want you to take me over to the valley of the strawberries. Will you? I want to go to that redwood tree where we sat. Do you think you could find it? There were two close together."

"I could find it, Carmen, if there were two thousand close together."

"Leave the horses here, Henry. I want to walk the rest of the way up the hill just with you."

"This is the tree, Carmen. Tell me now, from your beating heart, what you told me that day, my Carmen."

"And tomorrow, Henry," said Carmen a week before the wedding day, "we must go to Monterey to engage the musicians. I want a violin and a flute and a guitar. They will ride with us in the procession to the mission and play on the way—won't that be nice? And Henry, we will take the horses from Don Ramon's caballeria of blacks—they are such beauties. You and I will ride together, then Don Ramon and Dona Maria, then the music, and then everybody else!"

"How many?"

"Oh, a hundred or so."

"My! Carmen, this business of getting married in California seems to be important."

"Important, Henry?"

"Why, for a week now, every servant, every vaquero, everyone in the household, has been getting ready for our marriage."

"Ah! But, Enrique, it's not all for you and me that the fattings have been killed, the game brought in. Not all the champagne, the wines, the cordials and the sweet potatoes and coconuts and Chinese ginger and Island sugar and the strong cigars have been brought in just for you and me. No, no, Guadalupe will be host to a hundred guests—every ranchero in the valley, with his wife and sons and daughters and his guests, will be here every day for a week. So will all the De la Guerras from Santa Barbara."

"A week!"

"Yes, and they will laugh and dance and sing and play and get very hungry, Enrique. They will dance every night and all night for a week, in your honor and mine."

"Then all our Monterey cousins and friends and our San Diego cousins and friends—"

"Heaven protect us, pobrecita!"

"You may well say that. I hope we shall have a little time to ourselves after two or three days—don't look for it before that."

"But where will all these people sleep?"

"Oh, nobody sleeps while the celebration lasts! Only perhaps an hour or so after sunrise. They sleep where they can. Then in the morning come the meriendas—like yours and mine," she whispered. "Don't you remember?"

"I remember nothing else, querida mia—only that day and you."

(THE END)

The STRUMPET SEA
by **BEN AMES WILLIAMS**

MEET lovely Mary Doncaster and George McAusland, the missionary who married her, but who would not admit that he loved her. And Peter Corr, who sought in treacherous ways to win her, and Richard Corr, who hid his love. Ben Ames Williams has created some real people and some tense situations in "The Strumpet Sea," a story that will keep you on edge from start to finish.

IN THIS NEWSPAPER



DRAFT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q—A bugle drives me nuts. Can I get exemption on account of I am allergic to brass musical instruments? Otto.

A—No, but it may be possible to put you in some division where you can sit up all night and not have to be called at daybreak.

Q—I am for an adequate defense. I believe conscription necessary. I love my country and am willing to fight for it. But I have always lived home and put everything up to my parents in any emergency. As I am not used to taking on responsibilities myself, could I send my father? J. K. K.

A—You think of the darnedest things.

Q—I have been working nights for the last four years and sleeping days. This has completely changed my habits. I can't keep awake any more by daylight. Unless this war is to be fought after dark what good will I be in the army? Anxious.

A—You will be assigned to scout work in dark glasses.

Q—I have as much courage as the next fellow and I would never fail my country in a pinch. The draft is all right, but what bothers me is that I do not look good except in a blue suit. Will there be any branch of the service where clothing colors are optional? Duke.

A—You know how the Democrats are. A way will be found to make you happy. Maybe you can wear army pants and a dinner jacket.

Q—I hate Hitler. I despise dictators. I am a 100 per cent American. The Western hemisphere must be protected. Roosevelt is my hero. We must show the world nobody can attack us. But I tried sleeping on a cot once and I can't do it. Where does this leave me when the draft call comes? Muggsy.

A—Don't let it get you down. Modern war is so terrific nobody can sleep anyhow anywhere.

Q—I am a young man 21 years old with no dependents. I am sure to be drafted. But I have been studying those pictures of army tents and I do not see any wall plugs for my radio. Must I buy one of those portables? Joe.

A—It can be arranged to put you in a company which has a crooner for a top sergeant.

Q—I reached my twenty-fifth birthday last week without ever going anywhere on my feet when I could do it in the old man's auto. As I understand it, the draft army may have to walk. I talked this over with my folks and my mother persuaded dad that he should let me take his auto to camp. But he refuses to pay for the gasoline any more. Can I have him arrested for obstructing the draft? Dutiful Son.

A—You can settle this some way. How about asking mother to pay for the gas?

Q—I am 32 years old and have been married six years to a woman who never stops talking. We have five children all of whom take after their mother. Her father and mother live with us, and an aunt who has dropped in for a two months' visit has brought her dog with her. Isn't there some way this draft can be speeded up? And if so, why must I first be examined to see if I come up to specifications? This is an emergency, both from my standpoint and the government's. Charlie.

A—Protect yourself in the clinches and be patient. We wish you luck.

YOU CAN'T WIN
A man will have to be this fall
A creature of great craft;
For women, opportunists all,
Have Leap Year and the Draft!
—Nan Emanuel.

TO RENT—Cedarhurst. Wooded surroundings, six rooms, one and one-half baths. Franklin 1194.—New York Times.

Well, even the forest primeval doesn't make it any easier to use half a bathroom, does it?

BLESSED IGNORANCE
One sort of knowledge
Good to lack
Is what is said
Behind your back.
—Richard Armour.

"Seven of the largest oil companies in Rumania were seized by the government. They were all operated on British or American capital. The government said it was not confiscating the properties and intended only to control them."—News item.

Wanna bet?

AROUND THE HOUSE

Do not move bread dough after it begins to rise, or it is likely to fall. Select a spot, out of a draft, for the bowl. Cover with a cloth and then let the dough alone.

If you sprinkle a little flour in the grease in which you are to fry eggs, croquettes, etc., the grease will not sputter.

Any flaked ready-to-serve cereal may be used instead of bread crumbs in a recipe that calls for bread crumbs.

When making baked custard, pour boiling milk onto the beaten eggs. It will then bake very firm.

A piece of chamois that has been dampened makes an excellent duster. It makes furniture look like new.

Delicious energy builders...just heat and eat ...or serve cold...saves money...order, today, from your grocer.

Van Camp's Pork and BEANS
Feast-for-the-Least

Justice Arrives
Justice, even if slow, is sure.—Solon.

Always say **KELLOGG'S** before you say Corn Flakes

Kellogg's CORN FLAKES
THE ORIGINAL
MADE BY KELLOGG'S IN BATTLE CREEK

SWITCH TO SOMETHING YOU'LL LIKE!

Moderate Praise
Always to give praise moderately, is a strong proof of mediocrity.

Speech of Eyes
The eyes have one language everywhere.

GET VITAMINS YOU NEED... AS YOU REFRESH YOURSELF!

Oranges can help you to feel your best
When you want refreshment, eat an orange! Or help yourself from the big family pitcher of fresh orangeade! "Hits the spot"! you'll say.

But that's not all. Oranges add needed vitamins and minerals to your diet. And fully half of our families, says the Department of Agriculture, do not get enough of these health essentials to feel their best!

The best way to be sure of getting all the vitamin C you normally need is to drink an 8-ounce glass of fresh orange juice with breakfast every morning. You also receive vitamins A, B₁ and G and the minerals calcium, phosphorus and iron.

There's nothing else so delicious that's so good for you. So order a supply of Sunkist Oranges next time you buy groceries. They're the pick of California's finest oranges.

Copyright, 1940, California Fruit Growers Exchange

Sunkist CALIFORNIA ORANGES
Best for Juice — and Every use!