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THE MONTROSE WHITES

By AUGUSTA LARNED.

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He asked for Miss Lancaster, and as the first sound of his voice reached her ear Louise ran down the stairs, with a glad light in her face, and pushed aside Rose, who was just shutting the parlor door.

"Oh, Frank!" she cried as she came forward, with hand extended. He grasped it, and they stood there for a moment silent, looking each into the other's face.

"How did you know me, an old man now?" he murmured at last.

"Fourteen years have not made such a difference, Frank. I should have known you anywhere, even if I had not heard your voice."

"Fourteen years, is it, Louise? Well, it seems at moments an eternity to me, and then again as if we had just parted."

"So it seems to me, Frank."

"Does it, Louise? I am delighted to hear you say so." He still held her hand, and they sat down side by side on the sofa. "It seems as though you were expecting me, Louise, as if you had had some hint of my coming."

"I was expecting you, Frank. I was waiting every moment for the bell to ring. Do you know this is the anniversary of our parting, 14 years ago?"

He looked at her with puzzled, wondering eyes. "So it is, Louise; so it is. When I think of that foolish contention that separated us, I am humiliated. A thousand times I have been humbled in the dust by the remembrance of my tyranny, my violence, my unreasonableness. It was all my fault. I take it wholly upon myself."

"No," said Louise softly; "I think I was most to blame. Aunt Morris always said so, and she was a just, discerning woman. I should have shown you the correspondence willingly. It was nothing but a foolish scruple that prevented. Then I was proud and independent in those days, unwilling to own a lord and master, feeling that I ought to be trusted for such character as I possessed—an uncompromising young girl who would break her heart rather than yield."

"Oh, Frank!" she cried.

"I remember what a hot headed, high handed, impetuous fellow I was then, Louise, how undisciplined, raw, without knowledge of men or of the world—it all comes back to me with a sense of surprise. I am afraid you will find me a little impetuous still, but if it were all to do over again, if we could be set back where we were in those blissful old days, you would find, Louise, that even my crudities have been disciplined away; that at least I should not be so vilely jealous."

"Perhaps I might not like you so well," returned Louise, with a little tremulous smile.

"Don't say that. Try to think only of the good and forget the faulty fellow who made you and himself needlessly miserable. Do you remember, Louise, that day in June we spent at the Haywood farm, our walk in the woods, our little excursion on the river; how we drove home by moonlight, with all the roadsides scented with new mown hay and dog roses?"

"Yes, yes," said she eagerly. "I remember it all—every leaf on the trees, every pebble in the road. We fished three hours, Frank, and we did not have a bite, not one, and then we lost our way going home."

"How fortunate that was, Louise! It was that day, you remember, that you, that I, that we pledged ourselves to each other. Oh, if that time could come back, Louise, you would find me a wiser and I believe a better man."

"Yes," sighed Louise, "but if we had been wiser—if you had been a great and distinguished professor, and I a discreet, prudent old maid—we shouldn't have been half so happy, or so—so silly and absurd. You find me wiser, too, Frank," she added, with a little laugh. "Wisdom does not compensate for years on the wrong side of the ledger."

"But you are not old, Louise. You are just the same, only more beautiful to me, and with that little sarcastic edge to your tongue, so fascinating and delightful. Can you, will you renew the old bond between us so absurdly broken by a fit of temper, a gust of passion? Will you make me the happiest of men?"

She put out her hand again, and he clasped it, and for a long time there were but few words spoken.

"Do you know," said Louise at last, "all that episode of my youth occurred during the three years I lived with my Aunt Morris in X. The people here have never heard a word. They solemnly believe I was cut out for spinsterhood from my cradle and have never had a single sentimental experience."

"But you will tell your friends now, Louise?"

"Not for a little while, Frank. It is all so new, so strange, so delicious, I wish to luxuriate in my emotions just for a few days before the bomb explodes over Littlefield."

"But I am curious to know why you were expecting me today. Was it a case of thought transference?"

"No; not quite. You had written to a person here that you were coming."

"Yes, to be sure, to Helen White, who wishes to consult me about a course of lectures on the 'Philosophy of the Passions and Emotions.' I judged by her note that she was a little exalted, as the French say. And is she a friend of yours?"

"Yes; my best friend here, with the exception of her husband—Montrose White—whose father lived next door to mine when we were children."

"Montrose White," said the professor, his face changing slightly. "Was not that the man with whom you corresponded, Louise? If I am not mistaken, it was his letter that caused our rupture."

"Yes; Monte had always been like a brother to me. Our relations were confidential. He had written, telling me as a great secret not to be divulged to any one, that he was engaged to Helen Cragshaw, my old schoolmate. There was some opposition on the part of his family. Old Deacon White was morally as stiff as steelyards, and there had been shady business transactions reported of Helen's father. Monte had put a seal upon my lips until he could get his father's consent, and before the prohibition was removed we had quarreled, and then it was too late to explain."

The professor had fallen into a muse. "How odd," said he after a moment's silence, "that this Helen White, who has written to me, should be the wife of Montrose White! Well, well, how strangely the threads of our lives are mingled! She could not know, Louise, that I was coming here solely to see you, to speak to you again perhaps in the foolish hope that you still remember that dear past, and that you would receive me gently."

"You could not know, Frank, that I have always loved you."

"No, dear; I was not so egotistic, so self confident as to believe such a thing. I could only interrogate my own heart. You know, Louise, I married. She was a lovely girl, but always frail. I had not much to give her but care and protection, but it came to my knowledge by accident that she had grown fond of me. I did what I could to make her life less painful, less suffering, and she never knew my little story. I kept it always inclosed in a treasury of its own, my one brief romance. So you will not tell your friends, the Whites, what has happened."

"No; not just yet," said Louise after a pause. "When you call on Helen, you can speak of me casually as an old acquaintance."

Two or three days passed, and Louise saw nothing of the Whites. Professor Markham passed all his evenings in her little parlor, and the time flew away on swift wings. One night Monte White returned home late to dinner and told his wife that he had seen Louise in the street, and she was looking lovely, like a girl of 16. What could have happened, he wondered, to renew her youth.

"Nothing has happened," returned Helen calmly as she helped herself to cranberry. "Nothing ever does happen to Louise in her even, placid life, that goes on just like clockwork. I don't believe she feels or suffers like other women. She has no passion, no fire, no impulses, and, as to her beauty, I never could see it. Of course she has fine eyes, but one good feature does not make a beautiful face, and then she is a year older than I am."

"We never can agree on Louise," said Monte, with a little sigh. "I have always looked up to her as the ideal woman."

"Yes, I know, Monte, you have always had a weak spot in that direction. It seems she knew Professor Markham when she was a girl living with her Aunt Morris at X., but I am perfectly sure she is not the kind of woman to attract him. He is a superb man, a real king of men," said Helen enthusiastically.

"So I have heard you say before," observed Monte dryly.

"Oh, Monte, if you would only try to comprehend such a man as the professor, it would be a great advantage to you. It would widen your mental scope. It would take your thoughts off your horses."

"I don't want my mental scope widened," growled Monte. "It's enough for a man's wife to have a mental scope. And, as for the horses, don't bother about them. You have your fads; let me have mine."

A distinct seed of prejudice and jealousy had been planted in Monte's mind toward the professor. The next day Mrs. White hustled into Miss Lancaster's parlor, looking very pink and pretty.

"You don't know how charmed I am with Professor Markham," said she almost before sitting down. "He has given me invaluable hints about my lectures, and I think they are going to be a great success. I wonder, Louise, you have never spoken to me of him. I don't remember that I ever heard you mention his name, and it was just by accident I found out he had known you those years you lived in X."

Louise held her head down over her embroidery, upon which she seemed very intent. "There was no occasion for my mentioning him as I know."

"But such a distinguished man," Mrs. White went on, peeping at herself in the mirror, "so fascinating, so brilliant and magnetic! One does not meet such a man without his making an impression. I have thought if we had known each other earlier, Louise, my life might have been very different. I have sighed so for sympathy in the higher realms of my nature, and now, when it is too late, a man appears who might have fed me, have helped me and made my life a kind of ecstasy. They say his wife was a poor little invalid. He never had been mated, Louise. It is very sad. You see, dear, I can enter into the very last fiber of his experience."

Louise raised her head abruptly, put her handkerchief to her mouth and indulged in a rather violent fit of coughing. It was a gust of indignation she was trying to choke down, accompanied by a strong desire to shake Helen White.

"I have urged him to come and see you," Mrs. White, all unconscious, went on. "I have said all the pretty things about you I could think of, and I should not be a bit surprised if he called."

"Thank you," said Louise hastily, biting her lips, and her friend arose and sailed out of the house.

All the next day and the next Louise remained at home. It rained and gave her a pretext for staying indoors. Indeed she had so much to think of and dream over she did not mark the lapse of time. The professor spent his days at the hotel, where he was writing the last chapter of a book. After three days of rain the sky cleared, the clouds broke and drifted off in soft, pearly masses, and the young light shone softly over bare trees stripped of their leaves and the wet roads gleaming with pools and puddles. Louise was sitting, as usual, in her bow window, this time with the morning paper in her hand, when she saw Monte White check the furious pace of his horse Mountain Bird at her door, fling himself out of his road wagon with a kind of fury and rush into the house.

"Well, what is it now?" said she, rising to meet him.

Monte, as usual, began to pace up and down her little parlor like an enraged bulldog held by a long chain. His face was red, and he muttered short, angry, defiant snorts.

"You ought to have told me, Louise," he began. "It was your duty to put me on my guard and not leave me to find it out from others."

"Find out what, Monte? What are you talking about? Do sit down and try to behave like a rational being."

"That madam had a new bee in her bonnet and so had planned to give parlor lectures for money. Think of my disgust when Fellows let it out yesterday in my office, and I had never heard a breath of the thing. Fellows' wife had been asked to join the class, and the impression has gone out all over the town that I am a niggard and refuse to give my wife money to dress on. I went home and made things hum, you had better believe. I got the whole story out of Helen from first to last, and what she has not told me I could easily infer. It seems that fellow Markham came on here expressly to coach my wife for these lectures, and he has been lounging about her for the last five days filling her mind with the most preposterous notions. She is bewitched with the man. The scoundrel has hypnotized her completely. But now I am on deck, and I am going gunning for Markham. He had better look out for himself when he finds an enraged husband on his track!"

Louise had turned pale as death, but instantly the color returned to her face in a great flood, and now she arose and came and laid her hand on Monte's arm.

"You are utterly mistaken about Professor Markham, Monte. You have gone off on the wrong track, as you usually do, and are foolishly violent and unjust. He called on your wife at her own request to answer a few questions she had put to him by letter. The plan of the parlor lectures was formed long before she ever saw him. He had nothing to do with it."

Monte seemed struck with a new sense of surprise. "What do you know about Markham, Louise? What right have you to speak for him?"

"I know everything about him."

Monte looked at her in blank astonishment. "Then you are old friends?"

"Yes; very old friends."

"You say he did not come here to help my wife in this odious scheme."

"No; he did not. His connection with your wife was purely accidental."

"Whom did he come to see then?"

"He came to see me."

Monte sat down suddenly, with his mouth stupidly hanging open and his hands on his knees, as if incapable of taking in the situation.

Louise stood before him, blushing prettily and trembling a little with the consciousness that the time for confession had arrived. "Monte," said she, in a low voice, "you never knew that there had been a little romance in my life. It all happened the years I was away in X. with my aunt. I knew him—Frank—that is, Professor Markham—when we were both young, before he became an eminent and learned man. We were mutually attracted then—it was 14 years ago—and were engaged, but both being quick tempered and high spirited we quarreled about a little thing of no consequence. He thought to exercise his authority over me, and I resented the attempt, and from that day to this we have never met until he came here on purpose to see me five days ago. His wife has been dead some time, and now, you see, Monte, it is just the same as if that ridiculous quarrel had never occurred." And Louise sat down suddenly and went into eclipse behind her handkerchief.

"Why, Louise, you dear girl," cried Monte, jumping up and getting hold of her hand and nearly wringing it off in his grip. "How glad I am, how delighted I am, how rejoiced I am! What purblind dunces we have been, what idiots to keep on saying all these years that probably you never were in love, never had a serious affair in your life! You dear creature, I congratulate you with all my heart and soul, and Markham—I am sure he is a capital fellow. Tell him I shall be delighted to make his acquaintance. Ha, ha, ha! Was there ever such a joke? It's better than winning a $5,000 purse on the race course. I must be off at once and let Helen know the great news." And he flung out of the door, jumped into his trotting wagon, and lashing Mountain Bird flew down the street like a streak of lightning.

Monte chuckled and rolled with inward laughter all the way back to the house. He took a wicked pleasure in advance in the effect the news was going to produce on Helen. In fact, it did explode like a bombshell in the middle of the parlor and came near blowing the roof off the house. The next day Helen was in bed upstairs ill of a nervous attack brought on by a whirl of emotions and the memory of her last interview with Miss Lancaster, and Monte, as usual, had left his office early to come and sit beside her as a tender and assiduous nurse.

For a long time Helen had been lying quietly in bed twitching the diamond ring on her finger to catch the light from the facets, when at last she said: "Do you know, Monte, dear, I think Louise has played us a nasty trick? She

"Do you know, Monte, dear, I think Louise has played us a nasty trick?"

ought to have been more confiding to old friends who have stuck by her through thick and thin. Think how we have laid ourselves open to her, Monte; how we have told her all our secrets."

"I don't believe she ever has betrayed our confidence, dear," said Monte gently, not wishing to excite his wife by contradicting her.

"Perhaps she hasn't," said Helen, with a sigh, "but I've a notion we shall be happier together now she is going away."

"We shall have to do without her at any rate," returned Monte rather ruefully, "and I suppose we shall get along together about as well as married people in general."

"Well, I am positively glad she's going," returned his wife. "I am half disposed to think she has made most of the trouble between us. It is the third person who does make the trouble in nine cases out of ten, and I know for one thing she always kept me stirred up."

"Poor Louise! It was a thankless place between the upper and nether millstones," murmured Monte, and then aloud, "I am afraid you are a little unjust to your old friend, my dear, and, for my part, I think Markham is the luckiest dog I have ever known."

THE END.

The Japanese Waitress.

"The Japanese waitress is a creature full of kindliness and winning graces," said Lieutenant Walter H. Gorham, a navy officer. "I once attended a large banquet in Japan where the tact and courtesy of these individuals contributed largely to the success of the entertainment. Each guest was provided with a pretty, bright, well dressed waitress, with her hair stuck full of flowers and jeweled pins. She never entered on any duty without first falling on her knees, smoothing her skirt over them and placing her little flat nose to the floor as a mark of obedience and respect. She will watch your chopsticks with the closest attention and will occasionally offer her advice as to the most succulent dishes and the best order in which to do them justice."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Woman and Music.

The new University of Wales has provided by its charter for conferring degrees in music on women. This is a new departure, as hitherto ladies have been debarred from musical honors. The Princess of Wales is an honorary Mus. Doc. of the Royal University of Ireland; so also is Miss Annie Paterson of Dublin; but, with these exceptions, no female bachelor of music exists.—London Queen.

He Had Counted Them.

Guest (facetiously)—There are two spoons in my teacup. What is that a sign of?

Hostess' Little Son—That's a sign that somebody else hasn't got any spoon.—Good News.

Vermont has a greater percentage of improved land in proportion to its area than any other state except New York and Illinois. The dairy product of Vermont reaches $25,000,000.

Compensation.

There had been a battle. Death was everywhere. Under cannon lay dead and dying. The ground was red with the blood of men. The defeated commander, begrimed and sad beyond words, a fugitive from the field, crept on his hands and knees through underbrush toward the skirts of the village. Suddenly he paused. The sound of a soft voice broke on his ear, and he peered through the bushes. A little child sat weaving a garland of grass and wild flowers by a running brook.

"Be not afraid, dear child," he said as she started at his approach, but resumed her seat, reassured by his kindly eye. "I have lost my empire."

"How sorry I am!" said the little one timidly. "But you may have my garland."—Kate Field's Washington.

A Japanese Invitation to Dinner.

An invitation to dinner among the middle or upper classes of Japan frequently commences as follows: "I beg pardon for thus insulting you in begging your company at my house to dinner. The house is small and very drty. Our habits are rude, and you may not get anything fit to eat, and yet I hope that you will condescend to be present with us at 6 o'clock on Dec. 9." Upon arriving at the house you find it spotlessly clean, tasty in arrangement and the host and hostess affable indeed. The bill of fare consists of 10 or 15 courses, the best the market can afford. All the self humiliation of the host is the method adopted to pay you honor.—New York World.

THE BURNING ISLAND.

By CAMILIE DEBANS.

CHAPTER I.

THE STORY OF A CRIME.

The small fort of Salem, in Brazil, is situated on the right bank of the river Amazon, higher up than Para and some leagues from the sea. It is the most wearisome place in the world to stay in if we may believe what travelers say, and Don Luis Vagaert, from the time that he was appointed lieutenant governor, became one of the most melancholy officers in the whole Brazilian army.

The garrison consisted of not more than 100 soldiers. Under the walls of the citadel was a poor village, which gave shelter to about 100 negroes of both sexes, and in addition there might be found among them, from time to time, some Indians, just emerging from a state of cannibalism, who came to dispose of the produce of their hunting expeditions.

The governor in chief lived in Bahia. Accordingly Don Luis Vagaert found himself absolute master of the fort. Besides the functions of lieutenant governor he discharged those of a magistrate and administered justice without appeal.

In order to overcome his feeling of ennui, Don Luis had on his arrival given up all his time to field sports, but when he had laid down in his bedroom a carpet made up of the skins of 20 jaguars which he had killed the lieutenant governor was obliged to own to himself that jaguars, dead or alive, gave him no further amusement. He then set to work to attack the alligators, but after a time the alligators also failed to interest him. Then he fancied that possibly snake hunting might afford him the diversion he so much wished for, and accordingly, arming himself with a bottle of sal ammoniac, he started in quest of rattlesnakes, whip serpents and all kinds of venomous reptiles.

He ended by making a magnificent collection of them. It was reported that in his room might be seen a beautiful flower stand, which had come from Paris, in which about 50 flowers of a particular sort afforded a home to as many living coral serpents.

Now, a coral serpent is the most charming reptile in the world. Of a bright red color and about as long as a penholder, it lives in the calyx of a flower, from which, on the slightest provocation, it darts out upon any one who ventures to disturb it, and its bite causes almost instantaneous death.

It happened one day that Pedro Bacas, a private soldier, and John, a sergeant in the same regiment, conceived the idea of going secretly to see for themselves whether what was said about this wonderful collection was really true. They entered this famous room by the window and looked about with much curiosity for the flower stand. It was placed against the wall opposite the door. The two soldiers approached it, Pedro trembling, John swinging carelessly a light cane which he held in his hand. It was certainly a wonderful sight which met their eyes. In almost every flower a coral serpent lay coiled up and seemed to be drinking in the perfume which exhaled from it. Four or five humming birds were fluttering round the flower stand, and every now and then one of the serpents, wearied by the buzzing of the wings, made a dart out of the flower and sprang toward the bird, which, however, it never succeeded in catching.

All at once John's face assumed a singular expression. Choosing the moment when Pedro, growing a little bolder, drew nearer to the flower stand to get a better view of these wonderful creatures, the sergeant, as a sort of practical joke, switched his cane near the stalks of the plants where these terrible reptiles were sleeping, and by a quick motion of his hand caused a series of vibrations among these homes of sudden death.

Then quick as thought he saved himself by leaping out through the window. A hundred sharp hissings sounded in Pedro's ears, who in his turn endeavored to save himself by flight, but scarcely had he reached the courtyard when he fell, fainting, to the ground. His brother, who was mounting guard at the door of the lieutenant governor, threw down his musket and rushed to his assistance. It was too late. Five or six serpents had inflicted their bite on the poor soldier. He turned livid and expired on the spot, having scarcely had time to tell his brother what had happened.

Alfonso Bacas, the brother of the dead man, threw himself on the corpse, kissed its forehead; then returning to his post he took up his gun and loaded it. A report was heard, and Sergeant John fell, mortally wounded. A few minutes later the lieutenant governor, returning to the fort, learned what had taken place, gave the order for the arrest of Alfonso and announced that the next day a court martial would sit to try the murderer, who, 24 hours afterward, was brought before Don Luis Vagaert and found guilty, and as the lieutenant governor felt himself that day more than usually out of spirits he pronounced the sentence of death in an imperturbable tone of voice. The execution was appointed to take place the following day. Never since the fort and village of Salem had been in existence had a capital sentence been pronounced either against one of the inhabitants or against one of the soldiers of the garrison, so that it was quite an event, and the lieutenant governor, who no doubt had judged Alfonso Bacas entirely according to the dictates of his conscience, still was not quite at his ease.

At 9 o'clock on Thursday morning there was quite a crowd on the ramparts. Perhaps the word "crowd" may seem an exaggeration; but, after all, everything is relative, and as the entire population of Salem was present on the occasion it would be hypercritical to remark that elsewhere a collection of a hundred men would scarcely be dignified by the name of an assemblage.

All the garrison was under arms. The lieutenant governor, on horseback, was to preside over the execution, and while a picket of 12 men went to fetch the prisoner Don Luis Vagaert placed himself at the head of his troop, which was formed in military square on the place of execution.

The lieutenant governor's watch showed that 9 o'clock had arrived. A shudder ran through all who were present. Still the prisoner had not made his appearance. Don Luis Vagaert was very pale, but yet did not seem overanxious to learn the cause of a delay so much out of harmony with all military discipline. At last the sergeant who was in command of the picket of execution arrived quite out of breath, and making excited gestures before he was able to speak gave the lieutenant governor to understand that the prisoner had escaped.

At this news Don Luis regained his natural color, even went so far as to utter a sigh of relief and muttered to himself:

"This Alfonso is not only a good hearted man, but a fellow of some intelligence. His escape is an event the most unexpected and the most agreeable that could have happened. We shall pass at least a week in looking for him, and I hope we shall not find him. Still all the more reason for starting in pursuit of him.

"Comrades," cried the lieutenant governor from his saddle, "the prisoner has for the moment succeeded in evading the rigor of the law. Our duty is to do all in our power to see that Alphonso Bacas, who has been condemned by a regularly constituted tribunal to be shot, should be retaken and executed with as little delay as possible. We must therefore set to work at once, and a reward of 20 douros shall be given to any sergeant or private soldier who shall bring him in dead or alive. Forward! March!"

Then, resuming his soliloquy, Don Luis said to himself: "He must have got a good start by this time. I might just as well have offered 100,000 douros."

CHAPTER II.

THE WAY OF ESCAPE.

During the night which should have preceded his execution Alfonso Bacas had received a visit from the parish priest of Salem, who duly performed his spiritual offices. Then, having been asked if he desired any special favor before going to execution, he begged for a bottle of brandy, which was brought to him by permission of the civil and military authorities—that is to say, of Don Luis. The half of this brandy served to fill a gourd which the prisoner had in his cell; the rest he offered to the sentinel charged to keep watch over him. The soldier began to make excuses, but Alfonso insisted so pleasantly that the other did not know how to refuse without giving a last insult to a comrade so near death.

The sentinel then accepted it through propriety, drank it through civility and ended by going to sleep through the effects. Bacas lost no time in laying hold of the helpless man and dragging him into his cell. Then he mounted guard in his place. This was at 2 o'clock in the morning.

Alfonso had scarcely time to take up his position when the night patrol was heard coming to relieve guard. The condemned man struck his forehead in despair. In exchanging the password he could not fail to be recognized. Nothing short of a miracle could save him. Flight was impossible, so he waited.

The sergeant who commanded the patrol was a sort of half caste who had come, nobody knew why, from the Argentine Republic, to which, for reasons best known to himself, he showed no desire to return. Fortunately this man knew very little Portuguese, and as soon as Alfonso recognized him he came to the conclusion that it would not be very difficult to outwit him. In fact, the change of guard was made without any trouble, and Alfonso, ready to drop from fright, followed haltingly behind his three or four comrades in order to continue the patrol and return to the guardhouse. But it was precisely this return to the guardhouse which constituted his most formidable danger.

So far there was nothing to fear. The half caste and the soldiers were half asleep as they walked; but if, as always happens, there should be a single one awake among those at the post all would be lost.

Alfonso at once took a final resolution. The patrol marched in an orderly fashion along the ramparts. The fort of Salem had never undergone a siege, and yet, most luckily for him, there existed on the eastern side of the fortifications a sort of breach, commenced by the sun and continued by time, the most invincible enemy of all.

The ramparts, formed of earth held together by bricks, had at this point slightly fallen away, and, though it would have been difficult to climb up this way into the citadel from the steepness of the acclivity, still a desperate man might make the attempt of rolling down to the bottom at the risk of breaking his head. On every other side of the fort Alfonso would have been obliged to use a thick rope in order to descend from the ramparts, and this was not the moment to go and try to get one. As to the gates, they were well guarded, for Don Luis Vagaert had too little to do not to have introduced a very severe discipline into what he called his army.

At the moment, then, that the patrol arrived at the breach Alfonso, who had been lagging behind, drew close to the opening and then let himself roll down to the bottom of the ramparts. The half caste and the soldiers with him, hearing the noise, feared the approach of some wild beast and set off running to the guardhouse, where they called the roll, one man missing. There were several opinions on the matter. One said he had seen a jaguar carry him off down the breach, another declared that it was an alligator, while a third insisted that he had heard the cry of a boa constrictor, which resembles nothing so much as a saw cutting rotten wood. Anyhow this was sufficient to make the soldiers barricade the guardhouse so well that not a single soldier was relieved until daylight.

We can tell what took place afterward. The escape was discovered at 9 o'clock. The soldier who was found in the cell sleeping himself sober was condemned to a month's imprisonment. The half caste guessed well enough what had caused the noise at the side of the breach, but kept his thoughts to himself, and it was settled that after the siesta—that is to say, at the hour when the human brain cannot support the heat of the equatorial sun—40 or 50 men should set off with arms and baggage and explore the forest, where they would be forced to camp out during the whole of the expedition.

The fugitive, we may as well say at once, was a long way off. His voluntary fall had taken place under most favorable circumstances. Some brambles, tall grass and yielding brushwood had broken the shock, and although, after having rolled down for some seconds, he perceived a depth below him—for he had fallen from a height of several yards—still he had nothing worse to complain of than some severe bruises. The dizziness which had arisen from his giddy descent having passed away, Alfonso rose and directed his steps to the north. This was not the direction he intended to take afterward, but the village lay to the east of the fort, and

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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