

# O. Henry Stories

## IX.—A Double Dyed Deceiver.

By O. HENRY

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HE trouble began in Laredo. It was the Lino Kid's fault, for he should have confined his habit of manslaughter to Mexicans. But the Kid was past twenty, and to have only Mexicans to one's credit at twenty is to bluish unsee on the Rio Grande border.

It happened in old Justo Valdes' gambling house. There was a poker game at which sat players who were not all friends, as happens often when men ride in from afar to shoot Polly as she gallops. There was a row over so small a matter as a pair of queens, and when the smoke had cleared away it was found that the Kid had committed an indiscretion and his adversary had been guilty of a blunder, for the unfortunate combatant, instead of being a greaser, was a high blooded youth from the cow ranches, of about the Kid's own age and possessed of friends and champions. His blunder in missing the Kid's right ear only a sixteenth of an inch when he pulled his gun did not lessen the indiscretion of the better marksman.

The Kid, not being equipped with a retinue nor boundfully supplied with personal admirers and supporters—on account of a rather unbragging reputation, even for the border—considered it not incompatible with his indisputable goodness to perform that judicious traditional act known as "pulling his freight."

Quickly the avengers gathered and sought him. Three of them overtook him within a rod of the station. The Kid turned and showed his teeth in that brilliant but merciless smile that usually preceded his deeds of insolence and violence, and his pursuers fell back without making it necessary for him even to reach for his weapon.

But in this affair the Kid had not felt the grim threat for encounter that usually urged him on to battle. It had been a purely chance row, born of the cards and certain epithets impossible for a gentleman to brook that had passed between the two. The Kid had either liked the slim, haughty, brown faced young chap, whom his bullet had cut off in the first pride of manhood. And now he wanted no more blood. He wanted to get away and have a good long sleep somewhere in the sun on the mesquit grass, with his handkerchief over his face. Even a Mexican might have crossed his path in safety while he was in this mood.

The Kid openly boarded the north bound passenger train that departed five minutes later. But at Webb, a few miles out, where it was flagged to take on a traveler, he abandoned that manner of escape. There were telegraph stations ahead, and the Kid took instant advantage of electricity and steam. Saddle and spur were his rocks of safety.

The man whom he had shot was a stranger to him. But the Kid knew that he was of the Corralitos outfit from Hidalgo and that the punches from that ranch were more relentless and vengeful than Kentucky feudists when wrong or hurt was done to one of them. So, with the wisdom that has characterized many great fighters, the Kid decided to pile up as many leagues as possible of chaparral and pear between himself and the retaliation of the Corralitos bunch.

Near the station was a store, and near the store, scattered among the mesquites and elms, stood the saddled horses of the customers. Most of them waited, half asleep, with sagging limbs and drooping heads. But one, a long leaved roan with a curved neck, snorted and pawed the turf. Him the Kid mounted, gripped with his knees and slapped gently with the owner's own quip.

If the stalling of the feverish card player had cast a cloud over the Kid's standing as a good and true citizen this last act of his veiled his figure in the darkest shadows of dispute. On the Rio Grande border if you take a man's life you sometimes take trash, but if you take his horse you take a thing the loss of which renders him poor, indeed, and which catches you no matter how you are caught. For the Kid there was no turning back now.

With the springing roan under him he felt little care or uneasiness. After a five mile gallop he drew in to the plainsman's jogging trot and rode northward toward the Nueces river bottoms. He knew the country well—its most tortuous and obscure trails through the great wilderness of brush and pear and its camps and lonesome ranches where one might find safe entertainment. Always he rode to the east, for the Kid had never seen the ocean, and he had a fancy to lay his hand upon the mane of the great Gulf, the gaudy colt of the greater waters.

So after three days he stood on the shore at Corpus Christi and looked out across the gentle ripples of a quiet sea. Captain Moore of the schooner Flyaway stood near his ship, which one of his crew was guarding in the surf



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arrived at his desired state of beatitude—a state wherein he sang ancient mandolin vanderlute songs and pelted his screaming parrot with banana peels—until the middle of the afternoon. So when he looked up from his hammock at the sound of a slight cough and saw the Kid standing in the door of the consulate he was still in a condition to extend the hospitality and courtesy due from the representative of a great nation. "Don't disturb yourself," said the Kid easily. "I just dropped in. They told me it was customary to light at your camp before starting in to round up the town. I just came in on a ship from Texas."

"Glad to see you, Mr. —," said the consul.

The Kid laughed.

"Sprague Dalton," he said. "It sounds funny to me to hear it. I'm called the Lino Kid in the Rio Grande country."

"I'm Thacker," said the consul. "Take that easy bottom chair. Now, if you've come to invest you want somebody to advise you. These diagrams will show you out of the gold in your teeth if you don't understand their ways. Try a cigar?"

"Much obliged," said the Kid, "but it wasn't for my corn sticks and the little bag in my back pocket I couldn't live a minute." He took out his "make-ups" and rolled a cigarette.

"They speak Spanish here," said the consul. "You'll need an interpreter. If there's anything I can do why, I'd be delighted. If you're buying fruit lands or looking for a concession of any sort you'll want somebody who knows the ropes to look out for you."

"I speak Spanish," said the Kid, "about nine times better than I do English. Everybody speaks it on the range where I come from. And I'm not in the market for anything."

"You speak Spanish?" said Thacker thoughtfully. He regarded the Kid absently.

"You look like a Spaniard, too," he continued. "And you're from Texas. And you can't be more than twenty or twenty-one. I wonder if you've got any nerve?"

"You got a deal of some kind to put through?" asked the Texan, with unexpected shrewdness.

"Are you open to a proposition?" said Thacker.

"What's the use to deny it?" said the Kid. "I got into a little gun frolic down in Laredo and plucked a white man. There wasn't any Mexican handy. And I come down to your parrot and monkey range just for to smell the morning glories and marigolds. Now, do you see?"

Thacker got up and closed the door. "Let me see your hand," he said.

He took the Kid's left hand and examined the back of it closely.

"I can do it," he said excitedly. "Your flesh is as hard as wood and as healthy as a baby's. It'll heal in a week."

"It's a diet diet you want to back me for," said the Kid, "don't put your money up yet. Make it gun work, and I'll keep you company. But no bare handed scuffling like ladies at a tea party for me."

"It's easier than that," said Thacker. "Through the window he pointed to a two story white stuccoed house with wide galleries railing amid the deep green tropical foliage on a wooded hill that sloped gently from the sea."

"In that house," said Thacker, "a fine old Castilian gentleman and his wife are yearning to gather you into their arms and fill your pockets with money. Old Santos Urique lives there. He owns half the gold mines in the country."

"You haven't been eating loco weed have you?" asked the Kid.

"I'll tell you. Twelve years ago they lost a kid. No, he didn't die, although most of 'em here do from drinking the surface water. He was a wild little devil, even if he wasn't but eight years old. Everybody knows about it. Some Americans who were through here prospecting for gold had letters to Santos Urique, and the boy was a favorite with his stories. They filled his head with big stories about the States, and about a month after they left the kid disappeared too. He was supposed to have stowed himself away among the banana bunches on a fruit steamer and gone to New Orleans. He was seen once afterward in Texas. It was thought, but they never heard anything more of him. Old Urique has spent thousands of dollars having him looked for. The madman was broken up worst of all. The kid was her life. She wears mourning yet. But they say she believes he'll come back to her some day and never gives up hope. On the back of the boy's left hand was tattooed a flying eagle carrying a spear in his claws. That's old Urique's coat of arms or something that he inherited in Spain."

"The Kid raised his left hand slowly and gazed at it curiously.

"That's it," said Thacker, reaching behind the official desk for his bottle of smuggled brandy. "You're not so slow. I can do it. What was I consul at Sandakan for? I never knew till now. In a week I'll have the eagle bird with the frog sticker blended in so you'll think you were born with it. I brought a set of needles and ink for; because I was sure you'd drop in some day, Mr. Dalton."

"Oh, is—?" said the Kid. "I thought I told you my name?"

"All right, Kid, then. It won't be that long. How does Senorito Urique sound for a change?"

"I never played son any that I remember of," said the Kid. "If I had any parents to mention they went over the divide about the time I gave my first blast. What is the plan of your company?"

Thacker leaned back against the wall and held his glass up to the light.

"We've come now," said he, "to the question of how far you're willing to go in a little matter of the sort."

"I told you why I came down here," said the Kid simply.

"A good answer," said the consul. "But you won't have to go that far here's the scheme. After I get the trademark tattooed on your hand I'll furnish you with all of the family history I can find out, so you can be studying up points to talk about. You've got the looks, you speak the Spanish, you know the facts, you can tell about Texas, you've got the tattoo mark. When I notify them that the rightful heir has returned and is willing to know whether he will be received and pardoned, what will happen? They'll simply rush down here

and fall on your neck, and the curtain goes down for refreshments and a stroll in the lobby."

"I'm waiting," said the Kid. "I haven't had my middle off in your camp long, partner, and I never met you before, but if you intend to let it go at a parental blessing, why, I'm mistaken in my man, that's all."

"Thanks," said the consul. "I haven't met anybody in a long time that keeps up with an argument as well as you do. The rest of it is simple. If they take you in only for while it's long enough. Don't give 'em time to hunt up the strawberry mark on your left shoulder. Old Urique keeps anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000 in his house all the time in a little safe that you can't open with a shoe buttoner. Get it. My skill as an introcer is worth half the bootie. We go halves and catch a tramp steamer for the Janeiro. Let the United States go to pieces if it can't get along without my services. Quo vice, senior?"

"It sounds to me," said the Kid, nodding his head. "I'm out for the dust."

"All right, then," said Thacker. "You'll have to keep close mouth with me. You can live in

where old Urique keeps his stuff. It's United States currency, too; he don't accept anything else. What's doing? Don't say 'nothing' this time."

"Why, sure," said the Kid, admiring his diamond, "there's plenty of money up there. I'm no judge of collateral in bunches, but I will undertake for you that I've seen the rise of \$50,000 at a time in that tin grub box that my adopted father calls his safe. And he lets me carry the key sometimes just to show me that he knows I'm the real little Francisco that strayed from the herd a long time ago."

"Well, what are you waiting for?" asked Thacker angrily. "Don't you forget that I can upset your apple cart any day I want to. If old Urique knew you were an impostor, what sort of things would happen to you? Oh, you don't know this country, Mr. Texas Kid. The law here have got mustard spread between 'em. These people here'll stretch you out like a frog that had been stepped on and give you about fifty sticks at every corner of the plaza. And they'll wear every stick out too. What was left of you they'd feed to alligators."

"I might as well tell you now, partner," said the Kid, sliding down low on his stumper chair, "that things are — as to stay just as they are. They're about right now."

"What do you mean?" asked Thacker, rattling the bottom of his glass on his desk.

"The scheme's off," said the Kid. "And whenever you have the pleasure of speaking to me address me as Don Francisco Urique. I'll guarantee I'll answer to it. We'll let Colonel Urique keep his money. His little tin safe is as good as the time locker in the First National bank of Laredo as far as you and me are concerned."

"You're going to throw me down, then, are you?" said the consul.

"Sure," said the Kid cheerfully. "Throw you down. That's it. And now I'll tell you why. The first night I was up at the colonel's house they introduced me to a bedroom. No blankets and the floor—a real room, with a bed and things in it. And before I was asleep in comes this artificial mother of mine and tucks in the covers. 'Panchito,' she says, 'my little lost one, God has brought you back to me. I bless his name forever.' It was that or some truck like that she said. And down comes a drop or two of rain and hits me on the nose. And all that stuck by me, Mr. Thacker. And it's been that way ever since. And it's got to stay that way. Don't you think that it's for what's in it for me, either, but I say so. If you have any such ideas keep 'em to yourself. I haven't had much truck with women in my life and no mothers to speak of, but here's a lady that we've got to be fooled. Once she stood it; twice she won't. I'm a low down wolf, and the devil may have sent me on this trail instead of God, but I'll travel it to the end. And now, don't forget that I'm Don Francisco Urique whenever you happen to mention my name."

"I'll expose you today, you—you double dyed traitor," stammered Thacker.

The Kid arose and without violence took Thacker by the throat with a hand of steel and shoved him slowly into a corner. Then he drew from under his left arm his pearl handled .45 and poked the cold muzzle of it against the consul's mouth.

"I told you why I come here," he said, with his old freezing smile. "If I leave here you'll be the reason. Never forget it, partner. Now, what is my name?"

"Er—Don Francisco Urique!" gasped Thacker.

From outside came a sound of wheels and the shouting of some one and the sharp thwacks of a wooden whipstock upon the backs of fat horses.

The Kid put up his gun and walked toward the door. But he turned again and came back to the trembling Thacker and held up his left hand with its back toward the consul.

"There's one more reason," he said slowly, "why things have got to stand as they are. The fellow I killed in Laredo had one of them same pictures on his left hand."

Outside the ancient landau of Don Santos Urique rattled to the door. The coachman ceased his bellowing. Senora Urique, in a voluminous gray gown of white lace and flying ribbons, leaned forward with a happy look in her great soft eyes.

"Are you within, dear son?" she called in the rippling Castilian.

"Madre mia, yo vengo (mother, I come)," answered the young Don Francisco Urique.

Justice.

Each citizen wants to live as fully as his surroundings permit. This is the desire of all, it results that all, exercising joint control, are interested in seeing that, while each does not suffer from breach of the relations between acts and ends in his own person, he shall not break those relations in the persons of others. The incorporated mass of citizens has to maintain the condition under which each may gain the fullest life compatible with the fullest lives of fellow citizens. To maintain intact the conditions under which life may be carried on is a business fundamentally distinct from the business of interfering with the carrying on of the life itself, either by helping the individual or directing him or restraining him.—Herbert Spencer.

Carelessness.

Mr. Flatbush—I see during some recent explorations at Pompeii an ancient kitchen was unearthed. In the fireplace there was a kettle on the grate, just as it was left 1,823 years ago by some cook residing in that city.

Mrs. Flatbush—Such carelessness! You can't tell me she hasn't had an opportunity to put that kettle away in all this time!—Yonkers Statesman.

Teachers Meet at Stayton.

Saturday there was a large attendance at the teachers' institute held at the high school building in this city, about fifty from out of town being present.

Among the speakers were E. F. Carlson, assistant state superintendent of public instruction, County Superintendent W. M. Smith, F. S. Gunnert, and J.

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