

### A New Mexican Episode.

The sun shone hotly on Anita ranch, which lay like a small excrescence on the dun-colored earth. The adobe house, the fences, the corral, all wore the sun-baked shade of the level ground. The silence was not a strange and dreamy thing, as is usual in solitude; 'twas a hot, fierce, aggressive silence, which seemed to challenge disturbance. No bee or flying thing buzzed in the air, and as far as eye could reach, no shade came between the fiery sun and the flat gray mesa.

The wind, always defiant, blew bravely across the sagebrush, carrying with him the remonstrant breath of the sun, who protested against the persistent rivalry and would not give him full sway. Their competition gave life to the cattle on the range, to the suffering cowboys, and to the small group of people on the ranch-house porch.

The sloping roof gave shelter from the sun's rays, and the wide-open doors through the long hall caught every whiff of the erratic wind as he, still warring with the sun, blew here and there.

A low hammock occupied the most shaded spot, and in it swung a girl. Her face was dark and small and her little head was covered with a thick, short crop of black curls; her eyes were very large and darkly gray. All else about her was small—the tan colored shoes, the slender hands, the scarlet mouth—and she took but a speck of room in the wide hammock, forming a piquant contrast to the two men beside her. They were both tall and athletically built; their skins were of the same color as the house and earth, with a liberal dash of added red. One was pronouncedly dark; the other blue of eye and yellow of hair. Even before they spoke they were proclaimed Englishmen. The darker one, Frank Farrington, turned toward the girl and said:

"Well, Jack, when did Harry say he'd come up from Santa Fe? With that fuss over at Ortegass, and Slawson, the manager, gone, you'll be left quite alone, won't you?"

"Oh, yes; but only for two nights. My brother is coming back on Saturday; there's no one to bother."

The girl put one toe to the floor and swung forward, showing the "gun" which graced the carved Mexican belt. This belt held together the corduroy skirt and white duck blouse; a scarlet silk scarf was knotted around the brown throat, and a large, heavily buckled sombrero lay on the floor beside her. Looking out over the mesa, she said:

"The sun seems to be standing still out there. You should have visited your cousin earlier, Captain Charteris. I'm afraid you'll take back lurid accounts of his adopted land."

The Captain replied with the deep, mellow voice of his country:

"Well, really, Miss Delaney, the country is lovely; but Frank seems to find the people all right."

"The people!—a pleasant mockery in the shrill American voice. 'That must mean us, for we are really the only people about here. Well, Harry is a nice boy, but Slawson and Augusta Victoria can't be called social ornaments. Then there's myself; but I—Now, Captain Charteris, rising in the hammock and swinging forward directly in front of him, 'will you tell me if I am different from English girls—very much worse, I mean? Now please tell; I want to know truly and honestly.'"

"Oh, really, Miss Delaney, girls are about all alike, you know, only English girls are more kept in the background, and that sort of thing."

"But, Captain Charteris, if an English girl lost her father and mother when she was only three, and had had to live out her life with her brother, because he wouldn't live anywhere else, and she wasn't—well, wasn't real dead-y strong herself, would she have been very different from me?"

There was an appealing earnestness in the high voice and a breathless interest in the dark eyes. Charteris looked at her with cool admiration, replying that he would answer her question at another time. She sank back half-dissatisfied and hummed a song.

When the sun showed the first symptoms of descending the men mounted their horses and rode away. Farrington turned in the saddle and called to the girl, 'We'll stop with the mail on our way home.'

How different was the old adobe hours later, when the sun had given place to its fair rival, the moon. The hot grayness had all gone, and the parched, unlovely earth looked cool and soft in the clear light. The sage-brush and cactus plants were temporarily given a tint of silvery green, and the wind, fickle fellow, seemed conquered by the gentle moon, for hand in hand they searched every nook and corner, blessing all living things as they went. The porch seemed another spot, as it lay in a flood of milky rays; the chairs, the table, the dusty lamp-nick—all seemed freshly covered with shining satin. The girl was in the same position, but the corduroy gown had given place to a white one, and the scarlet kerchief had faded to rose. The rebellious hair had been smoothed until it lay in dusky rings about the face which the moonlight had whitened, and the tender rays turned to pink the two scarlet spots—were they of expectation?—which burned beneath the glowing eyes. The sombrero's place on the floor was taken by a mandolin, which slipped from the hands of its owner as she started from her lazy swinging in the hammock, her accustomed ear having heard the pressure of horses' hoofs against the hard ground along, long before the riders could be seen. Listening more intently she soon knew there was but one horse, one rider. The expectancy was ended when Capt. Charteris slid from

his horse, tied it at the gate, and walked toward the house, idly swinging the leather mail bag as he came. Once under the portal, he threw his hat on the floor and sank into a low chair beside the girl.

"Poor Frank went on to catch the train for Santa Fe. Your brother wrote and urged it. Bah! it's a nasty ride from Ortegass!"

The man broke the silence.

"Sing something—something Spanish." Jack played a soft chord on the mandolin and sang a tender serenade. As she finished he leaned over her and said gently:

"You shall have the answer to the question of this afternoon now. How can I compare you to other women, you who are so strangely different so intoxicatingly charming? He leaned nearer and took, unrebuked, the tanned fingers in his own. 'You are the result of this strange life and climate, and I—oh, you know how I feel! You have shown your power over me since you first raised those eyes to my face; and when I hear you sing, then—then you know you hold me, soul and body, as no woman ever did before. You know it, don't you, Jack?'"

Unclosing her eyes as from a dream of bliss, she laid her hand lovingly upon his shoulder.

"You don't understand me, Captain Charteris. I suppose I am not like other girls, and it takes a long, long time to understand me."

hall, her eye fell on the forgotten mail bag; for occupation she unstrapped it.

There were no letters for the Anita ranch, but several for Farrington, and a London newspaper which had been opened read and refolded. She aimlessly unfolded it, glancing over it uncomprehendingly until a penciled paragraph attracted her eye. This read: 'The marriage arranged last winter between Captain Harcourt Dene Clifford Charteris and Lady Evelyn Maud Brankworth will be consummated on June 20 at St. George's Hanover Square. This marriage will be an exceedingly important social event, owing to the prominence of both bride and groom—the former being the second daughter of the Earl of Alwin and the latter the prospective heir of his uncle, Lord Walforth, of Walforth house, Surrey. Captain Charteris will shortly return from the American Southwest, where his long stay has completely restored his health.' The paper was still firmly grasped in her stiffening fingers. She did not change her position; the brown face turned a sallow shade, and the eyes had a glowing fierceness. She neither cried nor spoke, but mechanically relolled the paper and replaced it in the bag.

Night came again; the moon came back to the old porch, and with the wind played a sweet duo in the accustomed way. But there was no appreciative grace in the heart of the small creature who sat here. With wind burned face and raging heart she looked out over the broad stretch of



**WELL BEGUN IS HALF DONE**

Start wash day with good soap, pure soap; that's half the battle won.

**SURPRISE SOAP** is made especially for washing clothes, makes them clean and fresh and sweet, with little rubbing.

It's best for this and every use.

Don't forget the name. **SURPRISE.**

oh, dear, oh!—they had already started. Without a word Jack rushed, hatless, for the corral. Her own little broncho Loria, was soon girthed, and they were off over the mesa, the startled horse fairly maddened as the heavy end of the quirt struck her tender flanks with repeated blows. Her gentle mistress seemed turned

sweetheart, do my will just this once—this once!" And he obeyed.

Through the rear door of the house they went. With her hand locked in his, they rushed toward the cannon. Jack guiding the rebellious Englishman. At length she stopped. "I can go no further," and pulling the red kerchief from her neck she held it to her lips.

"What shall I do with you, Harcourt? They will kill you!"

He took the hand at her side. 'Twas red with blood.

"Jose Gonzales, is that you?"

"Si Senor."

The girl advanced to where the three horsemen had reined and talked earnestly in Spanish. The voices were first high and fierce, then low and pleading, finally soft and consenting, as they slowly turned and rode away. She walked back to Charteris.

"Come!" she said. How differently from an hour before! She said no more, but started forward. Charteris followed.

"Jack," he called—"dear little Jack," you have saved my life and I am a coward."

"Don't speak to me," she replied, bitterly. "Saddle me a horse. I'll wait for it inside."

Two horses were soon tied at the gate, and he entered the room where Jack stood, not as she had so short a time before panting, glowing, reckless, the embodiment of love and bravery, but instead, a pallid, sombre-eyed woman, whose strange quiet was a terror to the man before her.

"They have given you your life," she said, "because I promised them that in the early morning you would go. I told them this; they believe me; you must go."

"Yes, I will go; but you—you who have risked your precious life—have brought on this fearful thing," pointing to the blood-stained hand. "What shall I do for you?"

"I am past help," she replied. "God is good; he has sent this—it not enough, the stream in the canon will be a roaring torrent in May."

She started toward the gate, he swiftly following.

"Jack, Jack, let me go with you!"

"No; but you can go across the range," pointing southward, "and shoot Loria—I couldn't do that," covering her eyes with her trembling fingers.

She moaned; he followed, and they rode slowly toward the trail.

"Jack," he whispered tenderly, "why have you given me my life and forced it to bitterness like this?"

She rode on and laid her hand on the horn of his saddle.

"Do not dare to follow me. Shoot Loria quickly and kindly. With her will die your memory of these days. I have read the London Times, and I love you."

When Harry Delaney returned to the Anita ranch the weeping Augusta Victoria met him in the portal. A rude emblem of black swang from the door knob and inside the house the little mistress lay still and silent, at rest forever. 'The old trouble' and the new one had ended all.

The London Times announced that on June 20 at St. George's Hanover Square were married Captain Harcourt Dene Clifford Charteris and Lady Evelyn Maud Brankworth.



AN EARLY CHURCH-GOER.

Charteris hid a smile with his hand. The pleading voice was in his ears, the red mouth near him, the eyes shining unconsciously love in his face, and the moonlight, the wind, the echoes of the song roused his slow senses, and putting his arm around her he whispered in his melting voice:

"Jack, do you love me?"

There was no shyness in her rapt face, as she drew nearer and murmured:

"Oh yes; yes, I do love you, and I was afraid you would never understand."

The smile grew broader on the Englishman's face as he ardently kissed her, and the mistaken moon incautiously threw a glamor of tenderness into the steady eyes, while the vibrating little creature, with her head on his heart, accepted the moon's soft blandishments, and worshipped on.

The intense stillness of the summer night seemed to ask for music, and Jack drew the mandolin toward her, playing slowly that sweetest Spanish air "Media Noche." While her fingers were on the strings, Charteris, after whispering "Carissima, querida chiquita" in her willing ear and again kissing her, strolled to the gate and mounted his horse. She sat still, a bright bit of color in the vivid moonlight; and as he rode away, waving his hat as he went, she played with all the strength in her quick hands, sending after him a flood of melody which sounded in his ears long after the agile broncho had borne him from view.

She slept to dream over the last act of her life, and awoke to redream it as she wandered restlessly about the house or swung in the hammock. Harry and Farrington would not return for two days.

Surely Harcourt, she whispered the name blushing to herself, "would come again." Seeking shelter from the heat in the long

prairies where only last night all had seemed a vision of beauty. Suddenly she leaned back her head and called, sharply, "Augusta Victoria!"

A sibilant Missouri girl, the domestic pivot of the ranch, appeared in response.

"Well, Miss Jack?"

The black head lowered, and the tan heel struck the floor several times before the question came:

"What was Jose up here for this afternoon, and why did he slink away around the corral, or, quickly lifting her head and looking into Augusta Victoria's eyes, is he still here?"

"No, he ain't here now; but you know Jose and me are keepin' company; so why shouldn't he be here?"

"No reason; only he seemed to act queer and I am sure I heard him mention—mention Captain Charteris's name."

"Well, yes, he might 'av,' uneasily shifting her lank weight from one flat foot to other.

Jack arose, went over to Augusta Victoria, and grasped her firmly by the shoulder.

"You know I have never trusted Jose, and now I know there is something wrong. Tell me—tell me, or I—well, you know what I can do."

"Oh, dear Miss Jack, save him!—save Jose! save us all!"

Hurriedly, disconnectedly, she told the trembling little woman before her the story. Charteris had had a quarrel with Mexicans on the lower Pecos; that in saving his own life he had shot his assailant; that the dead man was a cousin to Jose, who, with his brothers were all left to right the wrong. That they were to meet at Ortegass, and were going to Farrington's ranch, where Charteris was alone; that the settlement would be short, and that—

into a demon, as mile after mile they flew—not by the trail, but over the range where quirts and larks lurked, and the prairie dogs' holes were traps to the galloping horse's feet. On they went, the mare goaded to frenzy by the shrill voice and raining blows. The Farrington ranch lights were in sight, and Jack heard a triplammer in her side gave a final shout to speed Loria on but a treacherous hole caught one of the horse's slender legs, breaking it and throwing the little broncho in agony of pain to the ground, where her rider lay, unhurt. Without a glance at her dearly loved horse, Jack sprang to her feet and rushed like a coyote over the ground.

The altitude exhausted her feeble lungs, and when she stumbled across the doorway of Farrington's ranch speech had almost left her. The curtain was up, and Charteris sat by the table, under a swinging lamp, writing. With one swift movement she pulled down the treacherous shade, threw herself upon his breast and stretched out her arms protectively around him, as, listening to every labored breath, she gasped:

"Come with me—there is no time to talk."

She determined negotiation in his face, she continued:

"There is not a moment to lose. Jose Gonzales and his brothers are behind me. They are fierce with pulque and revenge. Come, come!"

"Never! I'll face the cowardly Mexicans!"

"Harcourt,"—a deep wail of despairing passion in her voice—"I love you, dearest, with all the life God has given me and I beg of you, for the sake of your hope and mine in Heaven to listen to me." Her shielding arms were around him, and fifty kisses were pressed on his lips. "Harcourt,

**OUR BICYCLE LINE**

**SPEED-KING \$40**

THOROUGHLY RELIABLE

**EMPIRE \$55**

HIGHEST GRADE AMERICAN.

SPECIAL GRADE CANADIAN

**KING OF SCORCHERS \$75**

COMBINES BEST ENGLISH AND AMERICAN FEATURES

LADY'S ALSO

**AGENTS WANTED**

**E.C. HILL & CO.**

TORONTO