



hundred yards below the camp... Felix and I turned at the... A sheet of water two feet... now covered the river bed, and... horses splashed through it I... the stream to see, below... a wall of water six feet high... extending from bank to bank... rolling down upon us. Swift as... it came, with a swelling... behind it pushing it on.

CHAPTER XIV. It was a mad chase, the pursuit of... those fleeing figures so far ahead, but... we put our horses down to their work... if we expected to overhaul them in... the first dash. We made small account... of any obstacle that could be... brushed through or overriden. Onward... our horses flew, here swerving at... a mesquite tree, there winding at full... speed through a grove of yuccas or cacti... whose spikes and thorns tore... garments and skin cruelly as we grazed... past them. Our willing beasts were... doing their best, but their loud breathing... and panting flanks soon told us... of the struggle they were making to... keep up their pace. If once they failed... us, the race was ended.

generally north-western direction, into the Gila valley. If only we had the daylight before us, we might keep the bandits in sight until they reached the river, which we knew would be so swollen by the recent rain that they could not ford it for twenty-four hours at least. But the daylight would fail us before we could travel half-way there, giving them every chance to get away from us under cover of darkness. The shadows of the tree clumps and great plants stretched long upon the plain, and in the West the sun hung low above the mountains. The bandits, reserving their horses' speed, could slip away from us whenever they chose, and, in any event, the veil of darkness that would fall in another hour would close the pursuit for the night at least. Suddenly the bandits turned sharply to the westward, at right angles to the course they had been taking, and quickened their pace. We could see no reason for their change of course, but turned our horses to meet the movement. At the top of the first eminence we reached Felix rose in his stirrups so as to command a wide view ahead. In an instant he was all excitement. "This way—and hurry on!" he called to me as he pointed with his hand out upon the prairie. Turning our horses in that direction, we spurred them to their best speed. Presently I saw the reason for this change of course. The bandits, overconfident and careless, perhaps, in following down the bank of the arroyo had not properly observed the configuration of the country. Following down its bank, they had ridden to a point where the arroyo bent sharply to the left, continuing in that direction for a full mile before turning again to the north-west. With the channel running bank high with water, there was nothing for them to do but follow the bank to where it turned again, which gave us a chance, if our horses' speed proved equal to theirs, to cut off their retreat. By changing our course as we had, we had about the same distance to ride to reach this second bend that they had. Our horses rose nobly to the effort we required of them, and we held them to a trot as fast almost as that at which we had begun the pursuit. But as we neared the point from which the bandits could strike again down the valley, with a free course ahead, it became evident that they would reach it sooner than we. Our horses were showing distress, which was perceived by the bandits, who, as they neared the bend in advance of us, shouted, waved their hats, and one or two of them fired upon us from their horses' backs. Once more Sangrado swung his hat, and pointed to the north-west as if inviting us to follow him. Another minute would take him, with his captive, round the bend, and then, with a clear course before them, it was evident that his party would soon leave us hopelessly behind. Felix sprang from his horse, lifted his rifle to his shoulder, held it there a second, to catch the sights, and fired. As the smoke curled up from the muzzle of the piece, Sangrado's horse, at a distance of two hundred yards away, stopped short, stood stock-still for a moment, trembling, then pitched forward and robed, lifeless, upon his side, shot through the head. Sangrado sprang from the saddle, with Carmen in his arms, in time to save them both from falling beneath the horse. Uttering a curse that came plainly to our ears, two hundred yards away, he left Carmen standing by the ground where it had fallen, and rushed toward us, firing as he came. His men, from their saddles, sent in a volley upon us, then dismounted, threw their bridles reins down before their horses to check them from wandering, and came toward us, taking advantage of everything that could afford them cover. Their leader, the first cutburst of rage over, and admonished by two or three close shots from our rifles, was content to make his approach from under cover, and from behind a huge melon cactus watched for a chance to shoot at us, while he directed the movements of his men. There was no way to come to close quarters with the bandits except as we manoeuvred for position under such cover as we could find. If they had kept to their horses, and charged upon us, we could have emptied every saddle before they got within close pistol range. Now that they had turned and were making their fight, taking advantage of everything that could shelter them, our only course was to meet them with the same tactics. It was an unsatisfactory sort of business, with night so near at hand, but it at least checked the fight of the bandits and gave us more chances than when they were distancing us on their horses. Both sides fired fast whenever a mark offered itself, but, while there were some close calls, in five minutes' smart shooting no one on either side was injured. Our skirmish ended in a most unexpected manner. In the excitement of firing no one among the bandits seemed to think of Carmen, who had remained near the fallen horse. Sangrado, as if never dreaming of such a thing as her escape, was minding his shooting, twenty yards away. I saw her turn suddenly, in a listening attitude, as if some one behind had called. A cowboy hat, with a head beneath it, had appeared above the edge of a small ravine, leading down into the arroyo beyond her, toward the ravine. A little cowboy, no taller than she, rose to receive her. Sangrado turned just as she passed into the ravine, and saw her and her companion. Instantly he ran toward her, and his men, at his call, followed him. Within a few yards of the verge of the ravine they stopped short, as up from the hollow four men in cowboy hats appeared, fully armed, with leveled rifles covered them. At two hundred and fifty yards away we could identify three of the men with whom Carmen had sought protection. These were Billy the Kid and his two followers, Dave Rudebaugh and Phoenix. The fourth appeared to be a boy dressed in cowboy habiliments, and was on foot. Taken completely by surprise, the

covered by the weapons of men whose appearance indicated their perfect willingness to use them, the bandits stood irresolute. What words, in the beginning, passed between the leaders of the two outlaw bands we were too far away to hear. But as soon as Felix and I could get to our horses we mounted and rode up to the group. We rode past the Mexican outlaws and joined the party of the Kid. The two leaders were talking together in the Spanish tongue, and these from Sangrado were the first words we could distinguish: "Caballero, you still have not informed me why you have interfered in my affairs and now hold me and my companions at the muzzles of your guns. What do you wish of me?" "Oh, only to ask you a question or two," drawled Billy, in his "danger" tone. "I saw that you were riding and firing rather recklessly, seeing that you had a lady a-cry, and I thought I'd take care of her till things quieted down. I had to hold you up, you know, for you were coming our way, with weapons drawn, and 'twouldn't do to let you get the drop on us." "Once again I ask you, will you restore the senorita to me and let us go our way in peace?" "She doesn't seem very anxious to go along with you. How does it happen that you are carrying her off in that fashion against her will?" "That is a private affair of my own," said Sangrado, his white teeth gleaming behind the set smile which a poorly hidden anger and deadly hatred that his prize revealed. "Deprived of his prize and held at bay, he was not disposed to endure much more questioning. "The senorita is in my care and custody, and I am responsible to any one who challenges my right in what I do. Is my friend, the caballero, satisfied?" "Wait a little," returned Billy, coolly. Here are two young men who may have something to say about this." Without removing his eyes from Sangrado's, he spoke to Felix and me. "You hear what the Mexican has said. What have you got to say to it?" I knew that Felix was holding in his anger and resentment with too much difficulty to be able to trust his voice to speak. He was waiting to settle accounts with Sangrado and did not care to talk. I answered for both. "This lady is the Senorita Carmen, daughter of Don Ramon Bustamante, of the Santa Cruz valley. These men surprised her father's outfit on the stage trail, ten miles up the arroyo, fired upon him and his servant and carried her off. We are of his party and have come to take her back to her father." "You are rickin' long odds, it strikes me," said Billy. "They are two to your one and well heeled." "The question of odds doesn't count in this case," I replied. "We have come to rescue the senorita and mean to do it if we last long enough." Sangrado interrupted our talk and laughed as he spoke. "There is a quick way to settle this matter," he said. "It is true that I have carried the girl away from under the eyes of her father and law. I will fight to the death the caballero who claims her, to see which best deserves to have her." Felix did not wait for further words. "I accept the offer," he said. "You may name your weapons." "Let it then be revolvers and knives. We will stand fifty paces apart and walk toward each other, firing when we choose. If we are both alive when our pistols are emptied, our knives shall finish the business." "That pleases me well," said Felix. "We need waste no time in making our arrangements." "Since all is agreed upon so pleasantly," said the Kid, "the rest of us will see fair play between you two. But understand that whatever happens, the girl shall have her choice about her protector. If she wishes to go back to her father, I will see that she is taken to him safe." "We are losing the daylight," said Sangrado, with a glance at the sun, now passing below the western mountains. "Will somebody kindly pace off the distance so we can get to work?" While Phoenix stepped off fifty yards I noticed that Carmen had reappeared and was standing by the side of the little cowboy who first had called her to the outlaws' protection. He held her hand and was whispering in her ear. Then the two withdrew from the others as far as the edge of the ravine; but, though he evidently tried to persuade her to withdraw from the sight of the approaching duel, she steadfastly refused to go. "No, I will stay here. Away, I shall die of anxiety and suspense," I heard her say. With her lover about to enter upon a desperate duel with her abductor, this Spanish-blooded girl of the southwest could better endure to witness all that might occur than to be away in the hour of danger to him. She would not approach him lest her hopes and fears in some way disturb his calm resolution. Only once, as she gazed upon him, their eyes for a moment met, and it would be a recompense for great danger, the look of love, of pride, and of confidence with which they dwelt upon the man who was about to fight to the death in her cause. The distance was stepped off, fifty paces, and each man took his place, with revolver held in right hand and keen knife in left. All the others of the two parties passed to one side, next the ravine, and stood, revolver in hand, to see fair play. Billy had a lady's white handkerchief in his hand. From a position equidistant from the two principals he asked:—"Men, are you ready?" Each of the combatants nodded. "I will count three and then drop this handkerchief," he announced. "That will be the signal for both to advance. After that each man will fire whenever he chooses." He counted off, "One, two, three!" and the handkerchief fluttered to the ground. At the signal the two men, with perfect composure, walked toward each other. Neither offered to fire until a half of the distance had been covered. Then Sangrado suddenly brought up his pistol and fired without aiming. I saw Felix's left arm jerk and his shirt move with the wind of the bullet, which had passed between his arm and his side. Before Sangrado could shoot again he had brought his pistol up and fired. At the moment of his pulling the trigger Sangrado suddenly dodged, then ran toward him, winding in and out, like a snake, to mar the aim of Felix, and emptying his revolver as he ran. Billy, looking on, spoke with the calm wisdom of a starter in a horse race. "The American had better mind his shooting. If he doesn't stop the Mexican before they come together, he'll fare the worst with the knives." Felix stood still, as leisurely and calm as if at target practice, and fired rapidly, but with perfect deliberation. Three, four, five shots he had sent,

and still his evening game on. Sangrado's revolver had been emptied, and neither man had fallen. A distance of not more than four yards divided them, and quickly would come the savage work with the knives. My heart turned sick at the thought. Just when two more steps would bring them together Felix fired his sixth shot. Sangrado stopped short, straightened back, flung both arms upward, throwing his knife and pistol high into the air, spun partly round and fell, with arms extended, upon his face. He did not rise or move, and all the spectators, except Carmen and her companion, rushed to the spot. Some lifted the Mexican, who lay limp and lifeless. The blue and red stain in his shirt over his left breast told the story of his hurt. Felix stood calmly waiting, with smoking pistol in hand. Dave Rudebaugh was one of the first to lift Sangrado and examine his wound. He felt his pulse, then turned to Felix. "He's dead as a stone," he said. "The duel's over. It was a fair fight, and you got your man." Felix turned his head upon the sight of the dead man and walked toward Carmen. Throughout every event of the duel up to the last shot she had stood watching her lover, with everything that pride and confidence and unspoken prayer for another can write upon the human countenance expressed in hers. Throughout the ordeal, she had betrayed no weakness; but, now that it was over, her composure had left her, and she was sobbing, with her head on the young cowboy's shoulder. He had his arm about her, supporting and soothing her—yes, kissing her—in a way that might be deemed an excess of friendliness by an exacting lover. But even such a lover might have found amends in a reception such as she gave Felix when she became aware that he stood by her side. She flung her arms about his neck and clung to him, sobbing and laughing and bestowing on him terms of endearment, in the utterance of which the presence of strangers and the fact of short acquaintance did not figure as restraints. She was of Southern race, remember, and, after the stress of her wild ride in captivity and the contention over her fate afterward, was expressing in a perfectly natural way her appreciation of the lover who had risked his life in her cause and stood before her a conqueror. The little cowboy looked up, and for the first time I got a fair view of his face. Tears were running down his cheeks, and he was crying, very much as a girl might cry from sympathy. His tears! Now that I saw the face fully, the bold black eyes, softened by unwonted emotion, the saucy mouth, the fresh scar, which marked the track of Sangrado's bullet athwart her cheek. I recognized Lupita. (To be Continued.)

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