

MY SWEETHEART'S FACE.

My kingdom is my sweetheart's face,
And these the boundaries I trace,
Northward her forehead fair,
Beyond, a wilderness of auburn hair,
A mere cheek to east and west,
Her little mouth,
The sunny south,
It is the south that I love best,
Her eyes, two crystal lakes,
Rippling with light,
Caught from the sun by day,
The stars by night,
The dimples in
Her cheeks and chin,
Are moons which love hath set,
And I have fallen in!
—John Allan Wyeth in Harper's.

UNSHRIVED.

In the City of Mexico, toward the close
of the year 1731, Friar Lorenzo, of the
Monastery of San Sulpicio de Justa, was
making his way homeward to that estab-
lishment in the chilly hours of very
early morning. He had been keeping a
vigil, imposed by the regulations of the
order, that had taken him to a chapel in
the parish of Nuestra Señora de la Soledad,
away out beyond the Zocalo, that lay
about equidistant between his two
terminals. A very old man was Friar
Lorenzo, and his pace was far from
rapid, so that he had been long on the
way. By this time he was so fatigued
that his limbs almost refused longer to
uphold the spare weight of his trem-
bling, aged body. Yet he nerved him-
self to renewed effort as he heard the
second hour boom out from the big
belfry of the cathedral at the very
moment that he reached the entrance to
the Calle de Olmedo, for the great fati-
gue he felt was yet exceeded and partly
neutralized by a more potent impulse—
the spurting thrills of terror.

Perhaps it were unfair to say that
Friar Lorenzo was a coward; the kinder
view were to consider that the acquies-
cent conventional life had developed
abnormally an extreme constitutional
timidity. No priest in the monastery—
may, none in all the great City of Mexico—
was better, kinder or led a life more
godly than that of Friar Lorenzo. So
meek was he, so holy in his life, that his
superior often found it needful to re-
buke him for excess of fasting and pen-
ance, and to exercise vigilance in the
way of seeing that Friar Lorenzo took
aliment enough to nourish his frail
body, instead of setting apart his por-
tion for bestowal upon the swarm of
mendicants that daily haunted the steps
of the monastery.

But in the active functions of his office
—his right that led him without the
convent walls, to intercommune with his
kind and encounter with the scene of
worldly existence—to all such effect and
contact the holy man was most reluct-
ant, being ready to purchase exemption
from such movement at any cost of
penance.

The superior of the order had struggled
long against this infirmity, and the
mission on which he had tonight sent
Friar Lorenzo was in the direct way of
endeavor to correct the weakness. But
aloud tonight the suffering of the friar
was greater than ever—so great indeed
as to be almost unbearable. The hour,
the silence and gloom of the deserted
streets, with their houses that appeared
soiled and lifeless, and other like forces
had wrought him up to a very panic of
subject nervous dread—a fear of some-
thing, he knew not what.

It was not long since all Mexico had
been stirred to horror and dismay by the
disappearance of the noble priest, Juan
de Nava, whose fate was not made clear
till many long years after, and many
grimy rumors were still rife concerning
this matter. At that period robbers
abounded in Mexico, audacious and un-
punished—robbers who would murder a
man for the garments he wore. Stories,
too, were related of men who killed for
the ghastly delight of killing—whose
crimes were inexplicable and seemingly
causeless, like those murders committed
in the dreary street of Don Juan Martel
the stern native of which transpired
only long thereafter. Moreover, the
ready superstitious credences of the day
gave willing heed to the legends and
traditions of the conquered Mexicans,
and found in these supernatural causes
for even vulgar crimes.

Therefore it was no marvel that poor
old Friar Lorenzo was full of terrors in
his night-walk.

At the mouth of the Calle de Olmedo
he halted, for the intensity of gloom and
silence was even more terrible than the
way he had just traversed. But this
route meant a saving of many blocks of
circuits, and after a brief hesitation,
crossing himself and kissing his crucifix,
which he firmly believed contained a
splinter of the true cross, the old man
entered the dark thoroughfare, murrur-
ring, as he went, his prayer. He had
scarcely passed the corner when he
started so violently as to stagger and al-
most lose his footing, for his gown
brushed and caught to rattle slightly the
sword of a man standing silent, and mo-
tionless in the embrasure of a doorway.
Friar Lorenzo considered as he felt the
eyes of the unknown bent piercingly
upon him, and he quickened his steps to
hurry onward.

He had traversed half the block and
was beginning to breathe more freely
when he heard behind him the dull fall
of footsteps following after—not in
haste, but with the assured, deliberate
manner that told of the prisoner's con-
viction that he could evade the infinite
mercy of God as he felt the presence of
his pursuer. For some paces the two
walked side by side in unbroken silence,
and the monk was conscious of the side-
long, scrutinizing looks of the other.

Presently, "Delay thee, holy friar,"
spoke the object of his terror; "I have
need of thy ministrations."

But Friar Lorenzo answered, trem-
bling: "Spare me, I pray, your worship,
I am old and feeble; since noon of yester-
day I have kept vigil, and flesh and spirit
alike are fainting." Your worship knows
that no call as the wicket of any of the
abounding monasteries will bring you
around, temporal or spiritual—ad far
better than my poor, weak services. I
pray you, spare, think no harm, but I
beg to decline the office."

The man at his side laughed shortly—
a staccato, raucous laugh, that made the
monk feel as if he were sniveling up as
he heard it.

"God's death! these friars are pre-
sumptuous! The ministers of God—
the servants of heaven—so their creeds
profess, yet they give themselves the
airs of statesmen and 'beg to decline' the
office of their profession! Have you
forgotten your vows, sirrah? Have you
forgotten that what service you are con-
secrated? Nay, then, I will have you—
you and none other. See that you move
on before me." He made as if to impel
the monk by grasping his arm; but the
touch of that hard hand so affected
Friar Lorenzo that he recoiled and would
have fallen had not the man released
him.

"What—what would your worship
have of me?" he stammered faintly.

"You go to strive a sinner," and with
that answer his guide halted before a
lofty mansion whose overhanging bal-
conies shadowed the street. The somber
cavalier pushed open the great aqua-
mar entrance door, without knocking, al-
though, as Friar Lorenzo marked, there
was a knocker of peculiar design, quite
distinct from the conventional clenched
hand or lion's head—for this was a battle
ax, falling upon a beak, and the two
glittered quite strangely clear in the
gloom. The tunnel-like arch of the
aquarium was all in deepest darkness,
save where a dim ray of light filtered
out from the crack of a door on the left
hand, whither the way was led by the
man who had captured the friar.

This was the apartment usually as-
signed as a door porter's lodge in great
houses, but here it seemed of dimensions
more spacious than was common. The
dark walls seemed to absorb rather than
reflect the pale rays of the candle, yet
enough of brilliance fell to flash gleams
of keen color from the jewels of one who
lay on a rough cot in a corner, draped
over with a coverlet of rich brocade,
glinting back the candle light from the
golden threads of its embroideries.

The stern man pointed to the out-
stretched figure: "Do thou confess her
quickly."

The friar drew back with a start and
a shiver when he had bent over the
woman, for she was fast bound to the
rude bed, made moveless by harsh cords
that held her beautiful naked arms out-
stretched by her sides and lashed her
feet, too, closely. An observer of more
worldly knowledge than Friar Lorenzo
would have guessed that she had been
borne hither from some scene of gala
and rejoicing, for on her delicate wrists
and on her exquisite neck, and in the
soft masses of her dark hair blazed
splendid jewels; and the zone of her
corset, showing above the coverlet,
roughly wrapped around her, showed
that the stuff of her garb was of exceed-
ing richness.

"Wouldst thou confess, my daugh-
ter?" stammered Friar Lorenzo, drawn
back to her despite his fear, less by his
sense of duty than by the appeal in her
eyes, full of a great despair and a mighty
terror. He turned, when she made a
sign of assent, toward his captor, in
intimation of the privacy due to a con-
fession, but that somber figure only
laughed, albeit most harshly, and drew
somewhat aside, toward the doorway.
Then Friar Lorenzo, bending low above
the woman, shaken between his fears
and his pity, listened to her confession.
But she had not yet finished when the
grim watcher strode forward, caught
the friar by his lean, trembling arm
and cried: "Have done! thou art mak-
ing protest! Too long this wretched
woman has lived already!" and so,
against her wild entreaties and the
friar's protests, he dragged the minister
away and thrust him forth into the
street.

The friar, half stunned yet half des-
perate with the thoughts awakened by
his forebodings and the tale heard from
the woman, called, prayed and knocked,
beating his frail hands on the heavy
bronze bossed portal in a very frenzy.
But the massive wood gave back only
the sound of his blows, and that but
dully. At last, despairing, he hastened
from the spot with so hurried and un-
certain a step that the few wayfarers
who now began to appear in the street
shrunk aside from him with more of
awe than reverence, and murmured,
"O, the poor padre! his many penances
have made him mad!"

Friar Lorenzo was half distracted,
most of all with doubts as to his divided
duty. Did his priestly vows as to the
inviolability of confession exact silence
as to what had happened? Did the
duties of humanity and justice demand
that he give up to investigation and
punishment the door or would he doer
of what he was convinced was a foul
crime? And so, seeking to temporize
for guidance, he would fain tell his
hearts to temporize and calm his giddied
senses. But his rosary swung not at his
side, and a flash of thought reminded
him that he had laid it upon the couch
beside the doomed woman. That de-
cided him. No fragment of the divine,
thrice sanctified, true cross must not be
left to the unhalloved hands of that
wily, soiling monster.

Thus Friar Lorenzo set off with eager
though trembling speed for the Palace
of Justice that stood then, as it stands
now, fronting on the great square Zo-
calo, or main plaza, and at right angles
to the cathedral and sacristy. On the
bridge spanning the canal before the
palacio he met a patrol just setting out
on the last round before sunrise. The
friar halted before them, and with
knotted tongue and parched, stammer-
ing lips gasped forth his story. The
officer of the patrol sped back to the
guardroom to summon the alcalde, and
a moment later the squad was rattling
along at a swinging pace, the friar,
whose exhaustion was evident, borne on
the clasped hands of two stout soldiers.
Following his directions, they passed at
last before the wide aqueduct of a house
in the Calle de Olmedo. "It was here,"
the priest said, shivering.

The officer raised the brazen battle
ax of the knocker and clashed it against
the knocker, but no challenging voice
nor sound of shuffling, undulated tread
came back in answer. Again he knocked,
more loudly, and no sound arose within
but hollow echoes. Then the alcalde
rapped with his sword and summoned,
"Open in the name of the king, his jus-
tice!" and still no key rattled in the
lock, no clink of bar or chain gave
promise of ingress.

By this time a crowd had gathered
about the place, for the most part Indian
knockers, driving their heavy laden
donkeys into the city to market, or
household servants, thus early out of
doors for the daily sweeping of the
streets. One of these drew near from a
lower across the way, a woman of more
than middle age, bearing the burden of
long, pointed straw and up with a
stroke that made the short, headless

brooms of Mexico.

"Senors, your worship summon in
vain," she said, with somewhat of wun-
der breaking through the composure of
her bearing; "this house has long been
vacant."

Friar Lorenzo turned in a sort of rage
upon her, his meekness overcome by his
desires of body and his soul's solicitude.
"Wouldst say I lie, impious one! Shall
a priest not know where he has heard
confession? But it was here, I tell ye!
Open open nor tarry for her prating,
lest the crime be done within our very
bearing."

The woman's dark face flushed. She
seemed a decent body, and her counte-
nance was full of intelligence beyond
the common, as she replied, with protest
as positive as respectful:

"Nay, his reverence, she were in-
deed a bold and irreverent woman who
would dispute the word of Friar Loren-
zo—ay, I know his fame for holiness,
as who does not among the humble ones
of Mexico? But his reverence is less
young than he once was, and these day-
break lights are uncertain, so that to
mistake one house for another is easy.
Humbly do I assure ye that never once
has this door been opened in the fifty
years that I have lived across there, and
my mother, who was portress before me,
has often said that never in her time
had the house a tenant."

"But open open!" Friar Lorenzo
shouted. Then the officer, impressed in
spite of himself by this strange excite-
ment and insistence, bade his men take
up a massive vigia, or roof beam of cedar,
that lay where some workmen had been
reparing an azotea, and, poisoning it
among them, the patrolmen again and
again dashed the heavy timber, in the
guise of a battering ram, against the
door leaves, whose heavy planks crashed
loudly at the impact; then the bolts
sprung open, and into the zaguan poured
the gathered gazers. No sight or sound
of life greeted the incursion.

Once inside the zaguan it was no hard
matter to shatter the heavy, antiquated
padlock that held the door leading to
the side room; that clumsy defense was
indeed half eaten away with rust and
verdigris, and down from the corners of
the door head swung veritable curtains
of venerable cobwebs, thick and velvety,
the ancient tapestry. The door fell in-
ward with a crash of rotten, honey-
combed wood, and every soul there but
one retreated a step or two from the un-
knownness before them. Only Friar
Lorenzo pushed forward, with an eagerness
that vanquished his deceptitude,
and then, from the farther corner, came
his voice:

"Said I not so? And will ye doubt me
longer, unbelievers? This was the place
indeed! They have taken away the hap-
less lady; ye must seek her, but the
proof of the place I show ye! Here it is,
among a pile of rubbish, mine own dear
rosary, made of olive stones from Geth-
semane," and he came forth, as the chief
of the patrol caught a cresset from the
hand of a huckster and blew into a pun-
gent blaze its slumbering bit of cootil
(Mexican pitchpine or lightwood), and
went forward to rake curiously with his
short sword among the shapeless heap
that the friar had abandoned.

"This rubbish—why, lady! Here is a
wristlet, rings, a great breadth of brocade
incrusted with gold and gems—a collet
of major diamonds—aye! we have found
a bonanza! and—what is this?" He
clapped his hand upon a long mass,
black as jet in the red light, and with
one swift sweep held it aloft, as high as
his head, whence it fell to the knees of
him. Then he dropped it with a gasping
cry of terror. "Tis hair! a woman's
hair. And—gracious God! See that!
the hair of a dead woman!" For, as he
stirred that dense black veil from the
coils and couchings where it had lain for
unknown years, a smallish skull, long
kept in position by its once crown of
glory, rolled forward and touched his
russet boot. And from the dread crum-
bling relics now arose a dire odor of mor-
tality, whose warning of dissolution and
decay sent the stout soldiers and their
commander rushing, with one accord,
away from the bones and the diamonds,
hustling the peeping mob before them.

"Aye, Padre Friar Lorenzo!" called
the alcalde; "now, what a blessed thing
it is we have a holy man among us!
Father, en el nombre de Jesus, Maria y
Jose (in the name of Jesus, Mary and
Joseph), purge and purify us of this
vile contact!" and he would have knelt
before Friar Lorenzo; but a sturdy arti-
san, who had just sent his great red cop-
per kettle rolling across the dankly
mossed stones of the court as he dropped
it in the effort to catch the sinking fig-
ure—this grimy Christian called out:
"Stand back! Give him the good God's
air, ye doughty soldiers! Ah, no; it
helps not! his eye is fixed, his face is
ashen—his body grows a dead weight.
Aye, senors, see you not that this
sainted Friar Lorenzo is dying, for never
yet lived through the day a priest who
confessed one already dead—and how
many years think ye have lain under,
whither he led us, the mortal parts of
the poor lady ye cried out that ye had
found there?"—Y. H. Addis in Argonaut.

She Knew Her Deficiencies.
Mr. Wickwire—But, my dear, you are
so pretty that I really cannot see how
your beauty needs any addition in the
shape of such expensive finery as you
wish.

Mrs. Wickwire—No, I am not. If I
were as pretty as you pretend I am, I
would not have to argue so long to get
a new dress.—Indianapolis Journal.

Double Sight.

Featherstone—I had a narrow escape
the other day. I was shaved by a
barber so drunk that he charged me
double price.

Ringway—Why, how was that?
Featherstone—He thought he was
shaving two men.—New York Herald.

That Was Why.

"Her taste in music is improving won-
derfully," said one young woman.

"Why," replied the other, "she never
plays or sings now."

"Yes," was the rejoinder, "that is how
I know."—Washington Star.

A Misunderstanding.

Rev. Mr. Tynon at the christening, for-
gotten of the date—Let us see, this is
the thirtieth!

Frost Father—Good heavens, no! It
is only the eleventh.—Kate Field's
Washington.

Shakespeare's Fame.

Little Elan—Who was Shakespeare?

Do!
Shakespeare (the playwright)—One of
my predecessors, child.

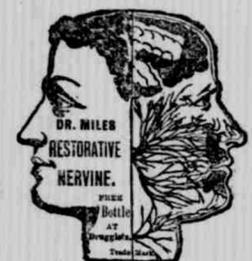


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