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THE WAR RELIC

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By Selina Elizabeth Higgins.
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When Pietro Sanchez returned from putting down the insurrection in Movida, he brought to his home town of Piasta but one trophy of the war—a large brass cannon.

Pietro was an honest, sturdy blacksmith. He had fought just as he set tires on the wagon wheels or shod a



Each Night Some One Had Watched.

horse—his whole soul in the task. He had been the leader of the company which drove the marauding gang of Rivolla, the bandit, out of the district. Who had a better right to adopt the great field piece as a souvenir of those troublesome battle days?

The blacksmith shop was located on the topmost bluff overlooking the broad Rio Brazos, commanding the valley for miles. Just at its edge Pietro had set the cannon.

"It is a memento, a monument and a trade sign," said Pietro. "There it shall remain as a record, reminder and sign manual of the trade of the anvil."

"But, neighbor," spoke a fear-minded, nervous old man, "these are days of peace. Why remind of war?"

"It shall not be moved," persisted Pietro stubbornly. "Who can say what may come?"

There came new disturbances as the year passed by, but these were centered in a distant province. Pietro looked grim and thoughtful as he heard of new depredations of the Rivolla banditti. Airy, fairy Ninez, full of the joyous hopefulness of youth, only smiled on. She was light-hearted and happy. Had she not Luis Guarez, the handsome gallant at Piasta? His stalwart arm, his loyal heart would spring to action in response to any patriotic call. As to Rivolla, some day the gibbet. Yet she recalled the dark, perfidious face of the cruel outlaw with a shudder.

For the family of Pietro had known Rivolla in the past. Two years before he had lived at Piasta for a time. He had appeared as a suitor for Ninez. Sternly old Sanchez had ordered him away from the threshold, learning of his cruel and cowardly past. And Ninez had felt relieved when the fierce visaged bandit had departed from the village.

Then there had come a missive for the little Mexican maid. It was from the renegade Rivolla, now devastating a peaceful district, driving off cattle, burning peaceful homes, blotting out the lives of worthy patriots in cold, murderous riot and hate.

"Have a care!" the words of the message ran. "I have sworn to make you mine, and Rivolla never fails in his purpose."

It was of this that Ninez and Luis were speaking one moonlit night. They had strolled along the bluff, where the clear, cool air was like balm. The river flowed by, a sparkling sheet of silvery sheen. The air