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PART I.

The sheep were in the folds on the mesa. The bronzed shepherds of El Rito had eaten their tortillas and chili con carne, smoked their corn husk cigarettes, spread their colchons on the floors of their huts, devoutly said their prayers and gone to sleep.

The faithful sentinels that guarded the sheepfolds were also sleeping, but with one eye open and one ear cocked; no prowling coyote might hope to enter the loosely constructed corral and snatch a weak lambkin, for the scent of the sentinels was keen, their hearing acute, their courage above suspicion and their intelligence but little less than human. Man is not so universally faithful to his trust as is the shepherd dog.

It was a night in early spring; the heavens were radiant with stars; the air was soft and radiant with fragrance of the sprouting sage. Each star shone with a brilliancy that would have rivalled that blazing forerunner of the seven wise men—lighting the scene as fairly as would a crescent moon in a less clear and tranquil atmosphere. And in this glorious starlight hovered the spirits of peace and content. Here were a people, patient in poverty, happy in ignorance and as pious as were those amongst whom dwelt the Virgin that brought forth a Messiah.

The mud town of El Rito was in darkness, save for a single light that shone from a window in the house of the good priest, Padre Ramon. It was 10 o'clock, so there was none to see the light nor remark the unseemly hour kept by the spiritual pastor of a flock as meek and gentle as the white herds in the sheepfolds. The good priest was alone; he sat with bowed head

PEDRO TRIED TO ROUSE THE UNCONSCIOUS PRIEST.

beside a table and pressed his hands against his brow. There was a look of suffering upon his handsome, clean-shaven face; his eyes, which had ever looked with gladness upon his people, were now wide and glaring; he was as one ill unto death. But Padre Ramon suffered no physical ailment; he was ill mentally and sick at heart. Nature had no herb, the alchemist no drug to calm his troubled mind or stop the ache within his breast.

Manuel Salazar (that was Padre Ramon's name) was born for the world; fate gave him to the church. He had all the physical graces and manly accomplishments that excite the admiration and win the love of women. His was a strong, passionate nature, but the fires of his blood were held in check by the cool currents of his mind. Twenty years have passed since Manuel Salazar had presented himself to the provincial and craved admittance to the Society of Jesus; during those twenty years Loyola had no more devoted disciple. Manuel's desire to be a Jesuit was not the result of a devotional spirit, but rather that he might by life service to the church and the holy order redeem himself from an existence which fate had darkened and saddened.

When a youth of 18 he was betrothed to Alcaria de Vargas, whose father's large estate was adjacent to that of Manuel's father in Southern New Mexico. She was in every respect worthy to be his bride; she had youth, beauty and culture, and together with an only brother two years her senior, would inherit the acres and vast herds of Don Antonio de Vargas. Alcaria's life had been lived outside of towns and cities, so that her purity had not been tarnished nor her simplicity lessened by contact with aggregated humanity. Her ancestry dated back to the conquest, and in her veins flowed the sangre azul of Castile.

The Salazars had naught of which to be ashamed; their blood, also, was blue and their wealth great. Don Diego Salazar looked forward with pride to the union that was to link his honored family name to the ancient one of de Vargas, while Don Antonio regarded Manuel as the most eligible of sons-in-law. The marriage was never celebrated.

One evening, a week previous to the date set for the wedding, Manuel, accompanied by Enrique de Vargas, Alcaria's brother, rode to the town near by to complete some arrangements for the approaching festivities. They separated early in the evening, making an agreement to meet at 10 o'clock in the plaza, where they had left their horses. Enrique was not there at the appointed time. He had many friends in the town, and Manuel took it for granted that he had been unavoidably detained by some of them. After waiting nearly an hour, Manuel went in search of his tardy companion. To all of his inquiries there was the same answer; no one had seen Enrique since early in the evening, when he had ridden into the town.

Manuel's worst fears were realized. It was midnight when he found Enrique—in a gaming house. The youthful scion of the house of de Vargas had the seat of honor opposite the dealer, while smaller players crowded around him. There was a scowl on Enrique's flushed face, as he placed his money on the queen, the opposing card being a jack. The monte dealer began to slowly draw the cards one by one from the pack in his hands. Enrique called out each card as it fell upon the table; his voice was thick, but defiant. It was at once apparent to Manuel that Enrique was drunk and in an ugly mood; he had been losing, and was exasperated almost to madness.

"Jack," called the dealer, showing the card and taking the money Enrique had staked.

"Show me the queen," cried Enrique angrily, as he pounded and pushed back several of the players on either hand. "There was a queen in the first layout and it won; now show me the other one."

"Does the senor think—" began the gambler, but Enrique cut him short.

"Never mind what I think, show me the queen," said Enrique. His eyes glittered with rage and his attitude was menacing.

Manuel made his way to the table and placed one hand on Enrique's shoulder.

"Enrique—" he began.

"You stand aside," commanded the enraged youth, "this is my affair." Then turning to the gambler he almost shrieked: "Show me that queen or I'll cut your heart out."

A knife flashed in Enrique's right hand. The monte dealer threw the cards upon the floor and grabbed a revolver lying in an open drawer. Manuel sprang between them and caught Enrique by the wrist, as the enraged youth made a lunge at the dealer.

"Enrique, what are you doing? Listen to me," he said in an authoritative tone.

De Vargas' face was black with passion; he exerted his full strength and wrenched himself free. He struck out viciously and the blow fell upon Manuel's neck. A little stream of blood trickled down the injured man's shirt front, while from a vein spouted a tiny crimson spray, as perfumed waters are forced from atomizers.

"For the love of God, Enrique, stop; it is I, Manuel; seize him some one," he called, as he retreated before the infuriated youth, who seemed bereft of all reason.

In the moment of excitement the dealer had slipped out through a side door; the crowd fell back instead of closing in upon Enrique; no one had either the courage to seize him or attempt to check the assault.

As Manuel retreated he placed a chair between him and his pursuer, but Enrique flung it aside and advanced with uplifted knife.

"You cheat, you thief." His voice was choked with rage and he gasped rather than uttered the words.

"Are you mad, Enrique? Don't you see that it is I, Manuel?" cried the wounded man, as he sought some avenue of escape, or some means of checking Enrique's murderous advance. A small deal table was near by and Manuel placed himself on the side opposite his assailant. He saw that rage and drink combined had maddened Enrique beyond the power of reason. To attempt to disarm him without injury to one or both seemed impossible and Manuel's only desire was to escape from the place, until Enrique should come to his senses. With this purpose in view he attempted to circle around the table, expecting Enrique to follow him, but instead of doing this Enrique, with the supernatural strength born of rage, leapt over the table. Manuel's only chance to escape was gone; there was no place for him to retreat except to the corner of the long room. Again he called to Enrique to stop and there was a warning tone in his voice. Back in the far end of the dimly-lighted room, where the spectators could not see what took place, they clashed. The encounter lasted but a moment and this time it was Enrique who fell back. There was a gaping wound in his neck near the shoulder blade and his left hand was clasped to his side, indicating that he had received a second wound. He clutched at the deal table for support and as he steadied himself, Manuel passed him. Enrique's expression had undergone a complete change. His rage had reached its climax in blows and reaction had set in. He was calmer, and seemed to be dazed. He tossed his knife backward over his head and it fell sticking upright in the floor.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "What have I done? Did I strike you, Manuel?"

Across Manuel's right hand, in addition to the wound in his neck, was a streak of red from which the blood flowed down his fingers, mingling with that of Enrique on the blade of his knife, and dripping from the point.

The spectators nervously gathered around them and one undertook a brief explanation.

"Forgive me, brother," weakly gasped Enrique. He tried to extend his hand, but the effort was too great; he reeled and would have fallen, but Manuel, dropping his knife, caught him and let him down gently to the floor.

At the beginning of the affray one of the spectators ran for the sheriff. He found that official in company of a young physician—an American—and informed them of what was taking place in the saloon.

As Manuel bent over Enrique, the sheriff and doctor entered the place.

"Lo siento, hermano," (I am sorry, brother,) came feebly from the lips of Enrique, and then he fainted.

While the doctor dressed the wounds of the unconscious man, the sheriff made inquiries regarding the affair. All reports agreed that Manuel had but defended himself, and so the sheriff decided: "If Senor de Vargas should die," he said, "Senor Salazar will not run away."

Manuel knelt beside the doctor as the latter dressed Enrique's wounds, and the little stream of blood from the punctured artery in his neck fell on the American's hands.

"Why, man, you will bleed to death if that is not stopped," said the young physician. "Stand up here and let me fix it."

"It's only a scratch," was the reply, "attend to him," pointing to Enrique.

But the doctor insisted, and the spray of blood was checked none too soon, for Manuel's face had become pallid and his limbs were getting weak.

"Some one should notify his people," said the doctor, as he again gave his attention to the unconscious Enrique, "he may recover and he may die."

"I will tell them," said Manuel. "Have him taken to the hotel and I will let his people know."

He bent over the prostrate man and his eyes filled with tears. Then his emotions overcame him and he kissed Enrique on the cheek. "My brother, my brother," he exclaimed in a choked voice, as he arose. "Mother of God, spare him." He walked with uncertain step to the door, and then summoning all his strength drew himself erect and stepped out onto the street.

Some minutes after the doctor said, referring to Manuel: "He seems to be weak and it is possible he may not be able to reach home. Some of you men had better ride out and notify Don Antonio of what has happened."

Two Mexicans who stood in great awe of Don Antonio, and yet were ever ready to serve him on account of his generosity, volunteered at once to get their horses.

Manuel was weaker than he seemed to be. He had lost a great deal of blood, and before he reached the plaza, where he had left his horse, he was obliged to sit down several times. When at last he had reached the plaza, and while he was preparing to mount, two men passed him. They were talking of the affray in the saloon. It was too dark for Manuel to see their faces, but he could plainly hear what they said.

"That fellow is going to die," said one.

"No hope for him," said the other, "he was dying when we left the place. Of course, the doctor didn't like to say so, but anyone could see that he didn't have any hope for the young fellow. He'll be dead before Salazar can get to Don Antonio's ranch."

"I wouldn't like to be in Salazar's place," said the first speaker. "If old Don Antonio don't shoot him, he'll get out his peons and hang him."

Manuel mounted his horse, and the restive broncho dashed off in the direction of home. The rider could not long stand the rapid pace and it required all his strength to check the speed of the wiry little beast. At the end of two miles Manuel had become so weak that he feared to allow the horse to proceed faster than a walk. At the end of the third mile he could scarcely keep his seat in the saddle, and for fear that he would fall from his horse he rode several paces off the road and dismounted beside an acequia. The tall grass that grew on the bank made a soft and restful couch. He soon felt that he was strong enough to resume the journey; it was now but a short distance to Don Antonio's; the conversation of the two men in the plaza recurred to him. Enrique was dying, perhaps, and he was

HIS VOICE ROSE ALMOST TO A SCREAM.

loitering by the wayside. He must up and hurry on.

A faint sound reached his ears from the west—the direction in which he was traveling—the hoof beats of a horse in a swift gallop—then came another—three—four five, until it became impossible for him to tell the number. As they came nearer the quick gallop quickened into a mad race. Manuel raised his head as the horsemen came into sight; the leader of the party loudly urged his steed into a breakneck pace, and Manuel recognized the voice of Don Antonio de Vargas. The well-nigh exhausted man on the bank of the acequia made an effort to hail them, but the clatter of hoofs drowned his weak voice, as the old Don and twenty of his retainers rushed by in the darkness. Manuel could not see the mingled look of anguish and hatred on the face of Don Antonio, nor could he observe that all the riders were heavily armed. As they dashed by him he indistinctly heard their voices in sharp broken sentences. But two words clearly reached his ears: "Enrique—dead."

The noise of hoofs quickly died away on the sandy road. Manuel exerted all his strength and gained his feet; there was an expression of horror on his face as he gazed after the horsemen.

"Enrique dead!" he exclaimed. For some minutes he stood completely dazed leaning against his horse. His first impulse was to follow Don Antonio; then he thought of Alcaria. She also knew that Enrique was dead; he would go to her and comfort her—No, she would not understand that her brother alone was responsible for the tragedy; she would blame only Manuel, her lover, her betrothed; in her eyes he would be a murderer. Emotional and passionate as she was by nature, in the first burst of mingled grief and wrath, her love

MANUEL CAUGHT HIM AND LET HIM DOWN GENTLY TO THE FLOOR.

for him would perish as tender vegetation shrivels and dies when touched by the hot breath of the Solano.

Such were the thoughts of Manuel as he put forth all his strength and mounted his impatient broncho, which, obedient to the guiding pressure of the rein against its neck and stung by the sharp barbs of a spur, set off at a brisk gallop—not in the direction of Don Antonio's ranch, nor yet back to the town, but straight toward the high mesa to the north. It was with the feeling of a fugitive hotly pursued that Manuel urged his horse; yet he was not fleeing from the law—to defend one's life is not a crime; not from the wrath of Don Antonio and the de Vargas kinsmen—his own kinsmen were equally numerous and powerful—but from her he loved best and now feared most in all the world—Alcaria. He dared not look into her wet eyes and see them flash with hatred when she beheld him; he dared not touch her with hands stained with her brother's blood; with the knife strokes that defended his life, he had slain her love—and so he rode on toward the north, as a madman might have ridden pursued by the phantoms of a torture-racked brain.

Three years later a shepherd youth presented himself to the provincial of the Society of Jesus, at Santa Fe, and sought admission to the order. He was vouched for by his parish priest, who told the aged head of the province that of all his acquaintance, this youth, Ramon Sanchez, was the most devotional. Thus it was that Manuel Salazar, fleeing from the world closed upon himself the door of a sacred retreat and felt that he was safe, not only for a time but for eternity. In the brothers' college none was more studious, none more zealous than Ramon.

At the end of the long and severe course of training, the time came for Ramon to go back to the world. He returned to it even more willingly than he had left it; all the enthusiasm of his nature was aroused to do the will of God; he had lost a bride and found a mother in the church. The wound in his heart had healed; the sadness of his wordly sorrow had left him and he looked upon life as with new eyes and entered again into the affairs of the world with a new and higher purpose.

Padre Ramon was assigned to the parish of El Rito among the class of people he loved—a community of shepherds, in the dregs of poverty, without realization of it, and consequently without the pangs that come to those who have nothing and desire much. And not gentler were these shepherds of four-footed flocks than was this shepherd of men. He drew inspiration from their simple, uncomplaining lives, and "wore in his easy shoe the four-leaf clover of sweet content."

Not quite a year had Padre Ramon been at El Rito when he received a summons from the provincial to come to Santa Fe in haste. Pedro harnessed the mules, and together he and the padre set out. It was night when they reached the city of Holy Faith. It was Pedro's first introduction into life outside of the little collection of mud huts he called his native plaza, and his attention was diverted from his mules by even such poor sights as the country youth may see in the New Mexican capital.

A balle was in progress in a house several streets distant from the provincial's residence, and as Pedro and his mules were opposite the place the door of the house was suddenly opened to admit a new arrival. The mules were no more used to urban sound than Pedro was to urban sights, and as the discordant strains of violins, guitars and horns smote their ears they plunged furiously to the other side of the street, one fore-wheel struck a large rock, the vehicle was upset, and the frightened animals ran wildly toward the center of the town. Pedro, an agile youth, alighted on his feet, and had sufficient presence of mind to think first of the padre. The good priest was lying upon his back in the middle of the road.

"Are you hurt, padre?" anxiously inquired the boy; but there was no response. Pedro tried to arouse the unconscious priest, but without success, and fearing that the good father had been killed he alarmed the dancers at the balle. The padre was carried to the Jesuit hospital near by. Beside the injury to his head, which had rendered him unconscious, the priest had a dislocated shoulder. It would be several days before he would be out again.

While Padre Ramon was under the influence of opiates his shoulder was put in place, and he remained in a deep sleep for hours. When he awoke, a nurse in the garb of a sister, was by his bedside.

"The doctor said you were to drink this when you awakened," she said, passing him a cooling draught. "I will send Sister Manuella to dress the wound on your head."

She went noiselessly from the room, and in a few minutes Sister Manuella entered. She carried a fresh bandage in her hand, which she placed on a table, and then approached the bed.

"I am Sister Manuella," she said, "and I am come to dress the wound on your head. Does it give you much pain?"

Padre Ramon was silent. His face was as white as the virgin sheet on which he lay; his eyes were wide and staring; his lips moved without giving forth a sound.

Sister Manuella took a seat by the bedside and stretched forth her hand to undo the bandage on his head.

"Alcaria," he gasped, "do you not know me?"

A long indrawn breath, the trembling of lips and hands, betokened the agitation of the nun.

"Manuel, is it you?" she asked in a faint voice, sweeter in cadence than he had ever heard it.

"Oh, Alcaria, my lost—"

"Stop, padre; be quiet," came the injunction in a calm voice; "you must not excite yourself; the doctor said that excitement might bring on delirium."

"Do you not fear to touch me?"

"No."

"Do you not hate me?"

"I never hated anyone," was the calm reply. "You must be quiet while I remove the bandage," and her trembling fingers touched the blood-stained cloth that bound the padre's head.

"You understand; you know that it was but to defend my life. I struck him down—him I loved as a brother—killed him"—

"I fear for you, padre," said the gentle voice, as Manuella unwound the bandage; "the excitement is dangerous; be calm—Enrique lives."

With a violent motion that roughly tore the bandage from his wound, which bled afresh, Padre Ramon sat upright in the bed; his voice rose almost to a scream as he repeated the words: "Enrique lives; Mother of God, I thank thee."

He stretched upward his arms and fell back upon the pillow in a swoon.

(To be Concluded.)

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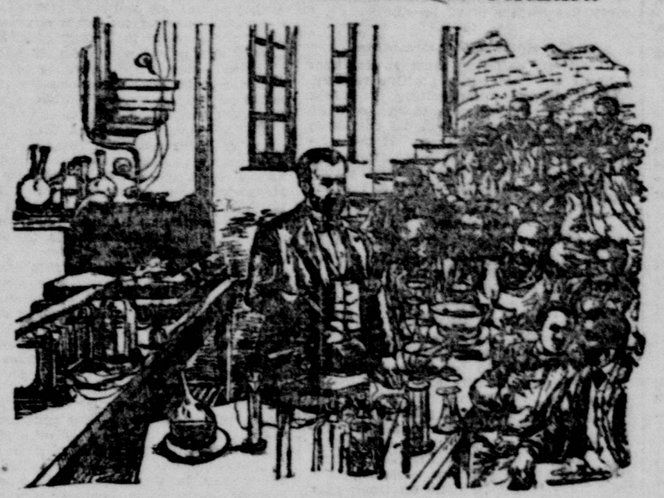

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5:40pm	10:11am	Woodinvi		4:07pm	8:57am
.....	10:51am	Snohom'h		3:39pm	.....
.....	11:43am	Arlington		2:49pm	.....
.....	12:40pm	Woolley		1:45pm	.....
.....	1:20pm	Wick'h'm		1:20pm	.....
.....	2:30pm	Sumas		12:10pm	.....
5:35pm	.....	Issaquah		.....	8:15am
7:00pm	.....	N. Bend		.....	7:00am

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10:30 a. m.	Rossland	3:25 p. m.
9:00 a. m.	Nelson	5:20 p. m.

Close connections at Nelson with steamer for Kaslo and all Kootenay Lake Points.

Passengers for Kettle River and Boundary Creek connect at Marcus with stage daily.