

CAPTAIN LUCIAN OF THE BEAR FLAG



By ARTHUR L. PRICE
CHAPTER I

THREE children were playing on a floating stump in a small stream in the Sonoma valley on an afternoon in June, 1846. The boy with fair hair had just invented a game, and, although his dark companion, with almost black hair and eyes, could not comprehend the spirit of the play, he had been forced to enter into it. For the fair haired boy had a knack of domineering and getting his own way. Then, of course, his sister always supported him.

The game was "Boston tea party," and Pedro was the tea. It was little fun to be tea under those conditions, but Lucian said that his mother had told him all about the Boston tea party, and it was the most patriotic game which he could invent that day. Rose had agreed with her brother, as usual, and so Pedro had submitted. The little creek became Boston harbor and Lucian and Rose were the patriots disguised as Indians who hurled the hateful cargo into the stream.

"But I look more like Injun," Pedro had protested very truthfully.

"That is why you can't be an Indian," Lucian insisted. "The men who looked like Indians were not Indians. They were Boston men, just like my father is and like my mother would be if she were a man instead of being a lady. So you have to be the tea, and over you go, Pedro."

Lucian gave a holst and the two boys wrestled for a moment, and Pedro, the tea, fell into the water. But this time the tea dragged in the patriot, and there was a double splash, while Rose danced up and down on the float and called loudly to the brother to swim ashore.

"You don't know how tea acts," Lucian asserted when he and Pedro had pulled themselves out of the water and were seated in the sun.

"Now after the tea party came the war," Lucian continued. "We shall fight that—What is that procession coming, a regular parade. Hide, Rose, while Pedro and I look and see what it is. Maybe it is the war!"

The little pioneer girl of 12, wonderfully obedient to the word of her brother, who was two years older than she, slipped into a clump of willows, and Lucian and Pedro hurried up the bank to see what was approaching.

It was a large party of horsemen driving a bunch of 200 horses.

Lucian had seen many bands of horses as large as the drove which was now trotting toward him, but he had never seen such horsemen. There were a dozen riders in the party, caballeros, and each one had a sword and a gun and a pair of pistols. Each wore a leathern jacket, laced in front with stout cord, and one or two had a glistening armor or cuirass over his leathern jacket. At the head of the column rode a handsome young man with a wonderful broad hat, trimmed with silver ornaments. His saddle seemed a mass of silver and his bridle was heavily mounted in silver and gold. As he rode along he continually twisted the ends of his mustache.

"It is a real army," yelled Lucian excitedly, and he and Pedro dashed from their cover toward the advancing line of horsemen and horses.

The roads of that day in the Sonoma valley—although it was not more than 64 years ago—were little better than trails. As the troop approached the water they herded the horses into a thinner column. But the young officer, twirling his mustaches, always kept to the front. He reached the ford at the same time the two boys scrambled up out of the creek bottom.

Both lads were well nigh out of breath, but Lucian was able first to talk. He had lived in California for a year and in that time had learned

In the Stream the Soldier Reined Up His Horse, "Tell Every Yankee to Get Out of California," He Shouted

enough Spanish and Mexican and Indian, a curious combination of the three languages, to make himself able to converse with any one he might meet on the trail or around the mission of San Francisco Solano, at the town of Sonoma. He selected Spanish and Mexican words to address to the officer.

"Are you a general?" he asked first. The lad had often seen General Vallejo riding about the valley and was sure that the young officer, even though he was young, must have a higher rank even than benign General Vallejo, for the latter had no body of troopers with him.

The young officer laughed at the idea of being a general. But he did not intend that the "gringo" boy should know that he had overestimated the rank he held.

"Yes," he shouted, "I am a general, and I eat little boys who have white Yankee hair."

"You're fierce," replied Lucian, for since the officer laughed he was not to be greatly feared.

"I won't eat you now," said the Mexican soldier. "But just wait. Wait until General Castro and Governor Pico catch you and your father and all you Yankee people. You will be put out of California. This belongs to Mexico. See those horses? General Castro will put troopers on them, cavalry. Then we shall ride up here and kill all the Americans, all the Yankees, the gringos, the pigs we can find." The young officer swore desperately. "We made a mistake. We did not think that the Americans would come into this country, into buena California, but they have come. No more will come. General Castro is awaiting them at the Mission Santa Clara. I will join him, and then we shall start north and drive out all the Americans. Captain Fremont, the American soldier, he, too, must go. Tell that to your father."

The young horseman cut his horse with his jingling silver spurs and it plunged into the stream, leading the way for the rest of the band.

In midstream the soldier reined up his noble black steed and turned again toward Lucian and Pedro.

"I am Lieutenant Francisco Arce of General Castro's staff," he shouted back. "Tell every Yankee what I said,

to get out, to get out of California and never to come back. We will fight, fight, fight, until every drop of our blood is gone before we will let you Yankees have our country. Tell that to Captain Fremont with the compliments of Lieutenant Francisco Arce."

Then Lieutenant Francisco Arce and his little band of horsemen and 200 horses rode toward the east, leaving Lucian and Pedro on the bank of the stream and Rose still hidden in the thicket of willows, wondering what bold words the horseman was uttering, he was talking so loud.

After the last horse had crossed the ford and the troop had made its way off beyond a knoll Lucian called to Rose, to come out from her hiding place.

She wanted to see the soldiers herself, and close at hand, but she did not complain because Lucian had told her to remain under cover. They were then living in a wild country and Rose had been warned that above all things she must obey her brother. Why, he was 2 years older than she and she was only 12.

The two little Yankee children ran home with all their might over the meadows to their abode, while Pedro trudged along to the place where his Mexican people lived. Lucian was dripping when they reached the house, for he had not dried himself after the Boston tea party game. But that did not disturb him. He started to tell his mother the wonderful story of the soldiers he had seen.

Mrs. Elliott knew far better than Lucian did of the hateful feeling which the Mexicans and Spaniards had for the people from "the states."

She did not hear all of his first breathless recital, but grasped his repetition of Lieutenant Francisco Arce's last words, "We will fight until every drop of our blood is gone before we will let you Yankees have our country."

She made the dry shirted Lucian repeat the entire story and as he talked she held him and Rose closer and closer against her knee.

"We have come here, darlings, with no bad idea," she said. "Your father and I came here to live, came here where it is healthful for him, where he is stronger, where there is no snow

but much sunshine; no ice, but many flowers. We do not want to take the land from the Mexicans, except to buy it; and they gave us many leagues on small payment. But what we pay for is ours honestly and we should not have to give it up."

"Taxation without representation is tyranny," shouted Lucian, struggling from his mother's arms and assuming a brave air. "That is what I said when I threw the Boston tea—that was Pedro—into the harbor this afternoon."

Mrs. Elliott laughed at her sturdy boy, but she warned him against the practice of throwing boys into the water and of playing such Yankee games as the Boston tea party with a native Californian for the tea.

"We must be quiet and not warlike," said the good mother. "Always we should be that way, but now especially, when there is danger in the air. We must do nothing to excite the Mexicans, but must live in peace with them."

Mrs. Elliott was already in dread of the uprising of the Mexicans. The story of the soldiers and their threats as repeated to her graphically by her little boy increased that fear. From the old missionary priest who, bare-footed, tramped the valley from Indian village to rancharia, the good woman learned more of the bitterness of General Castro and his associates, and Governor Pico's impending campaign against the "gringos."

"But you are safe here," the old priest would say. "General Vallejo is a good father to all of us and no harm will come."

But Mrs. Elliott could not be quieted. Her husband was in Monterey, where he had gone to transact some business with the government and the American consul, Mr. Larkin. He would be away two weeks and his road led through the Santa Clara valley, where General Castro was gathering his forces.

In the isolated little ranch in the Sonoma valley the mother longed for the return of the father. He was to arrive on June 14. On the night of June 13 Mrs. Elliott went to bed light hearted. Her husband would be home on the following day and nothing to stir her fears had happened since the passing of Lieutenant Arce.

She had been sleeping soundly when she was aroused by the noise of many horsemen in the field at the house. It was dark, but through the chink in the heavy shutters the woman could see a party of about 30 armed men watering their horses at a spring.

Immediately she thought of Lieutenant Arce. He and his troop had come back to drive the Americans, the Yankees, out of the country. She and her children would be slaughtered in their beds.

As yet the children had not been awakened. Noiselessly the mother crept to the corner of the room where Lucian slept. Bending low she whispered into his ear that he must awake.

Once before, when they were crossing the plans and the emigrant party had been attacked at night by Indians, Mrs. Elliott had aroused her son that way. Then the 13 year old boy had gone to the front with the men and fought by the side of his father against the Indians.

The mother feared a more hopeless struggle now.

"The Mexicans are in the yard; they have come to attack us; jump up, Lucian," whispered the alarmed mother. "But be still. Rose is still asleep."

Lucian leaped from his bed and hastened to the window. He found a chink in the shutters and leaning over the adobe sill gazed silently at the assembled warriors in the yard. It was dark. All he could see in the starlight was that they were mounted and armed. He clutched a gun from the rack.

"We'll keep still, mother, until they start to attack us. Then we'll fight them. Be still and maybe they will pass on."

The mother and son stood intently watching the body of men. They knew not what moment an attack might be made. But they would not invite it.

But there was Rose. She moved uneasily in her bed.

Suddenly her voice broke out, filling the room and causing the men in the yard to swing their guns into position. Rose had started a song:

"Oh, say, can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we halled in the twilight's last gleaming?"

(To be continued.)