

The Williston Graphic

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LA PASCUA.

BY RALPH GRAHAM TABER.

"The black bull is of the Sensuntepec breed; his like has never been seen here before—so tall, so glossy, so wide of flank! You should have seen the fire in his eyes as they drove him into the patio! And there is something more, scores," the speaker leaned forward and held his brown finger upon his thick lips, mysteriously; "it is a secret known but to the few."

"Then it is scarcely a secret," the younger of his two auditors replied. A faint smile hovered uncertainly about the corners of his mouth, and he toyed idly with the glass before him.

"What is this wonderful secret?" asked the other, expelling a cloud of smoke from his lungs.

"It is said there will be a new matador."

"Pouff! that is not news, Don Pedro. These matadores—they come and go, like the bulls they slay; it is only a question of time with them. Sooner or later a drink too much makes the nerves falter, and then—then the knife hits half an inch too low, or it fails to strike the right moment, and a new matador is needed! The other—"

"But this," interrupted the landlord—"this is news, señores; for the matador has never even faced a bull, not as a contender nor capador."

"Caramba! What is the name of this fool?" The question was asked in a tone of contempt, and the tall youth looked up with an impatient frown.

"The landlord shrugged his shoulders. "I do not know the name, but he comes from the upper country."

"Then we will drink to the excellent toil. Come, friends; shall it be aguariente?"

"I thank you," the youth replied, courteously, "but not for me, señor; I do not drink it." Rising from his seat, he wished them good day and departed.

"What is our young friend who will not drink?" asked the guest, as he tasted his glass of strong spirits.

"A passer, who came but this morning. He gave his name as Antonio. I know no more about him."

As Antonio reached the street, he heard the tones of a distant marimba beating out the national air. Following a tortuous walk, that was hedged on either side by banks of blood-red roses, he slowly crossed the broad square in front of the low adobe inn. He selected a bud, trimmed the thorns with his knife, and thrust the stem beneath the band of his wide sombrero.

Reaching the street on the opposite side, he found himself before the cathedral, whose pretentious entrance faced the flower-covered square. A rudely-carved stone high up on its yellow adobe wall proclaimed that the first foundation stone had been laid 120 years before—and the structure was yet unfinished. The stucco decorations within its high arch had fallen away in places, and spots of green mold clung to the plaster casts of the saints. Showing irregularly here and there were small punctures—some of them filled with moss—from which lead bullets might be dug with a knife, the mementoes of revolutions; and crowning the arch stood a statue of the Virgin, sorrowfully viewing her empty arms from which the Babe's image had fallen.

Antonio carelessly noted all this, but his thoughts were of the solemn high mass, that was soon to be celebrated, and of the gayly-dressed throng that would fill the church and overflow the plaza, when the grand processional should draw near. For it was the feast of La Pascua and the crowning day of the holy week—the day that commemorated the birth of the infant Saviour.

The air was tremulous with musical sounds, and the people began to congregate. The marimba notes swelled louder and louder, the tramp of a multitude echoed along the rough pavements and the head of the procession turned into the square. As it approached, Antonio doffed his hat respectfully, and he knelt when the robed priests passed, with the shining "Santísimo" held on high, surrounded by swinging censers. The smoke of the incense filled the street with its subtle perfume, and served to throw an additional charm about the chariot that followed. This was a float drawn by two-score of young girls clad in pure white garments, with thin veiling pinned to their soft, black hair and falling back over their shoulders. The chariot, too, was draped in white, and upon its broad platform was presented a tableau of the Nativity. Before a gilt manger, in which lay a figure of the holy Child, three boys, representing the three wise men, reverently knelt and gazed upon a glistening star that hovered over the cradle. Behind them were the skin-clad shepherds, each with a snow-white lamb in his arms, and beside the crib stood the mother, a slight, fair girl, draped in flowing robes, chosen from all who had come for the fête because of her saint-like beauty, and bashfully proud of the distinction that was hers to enjoy for the hour.

As the latter's glance fell upon Antonio, kneeling bareheaded in the throng, and as she felt his eyes bent upon her, her face was marked by a passing shade of annoyance. Antonio caught the expression, and the quick blood surged to his olive cheeks.

He muttered bitterly to himself: "She is saying again, as she said before: 'Antonio, what a coward!' But it shall be for the last time. To-day—to-day I shall show her!"

He rose from his knees and shouldered his way through the crowd to enter the church, where the organ was

pouring the notes of the processional. As he unconsciously crossed himself at the font and made the genuflection, his eyes sought for her—this girl who had called him a coward. He saw her at last; she had knelt, near the aisle, in a flood of bright, red sunlight that streamed through a leaded window. Her loose, gray robe had been laid aside, and the mass of her hair had a tinge of bronze, as the colored rays fell upon it. Antonio had no thought of the mass. He hardly heard the grand singing.

Presently a nervous hand touched his shoulder, and a rough voice whispered: "Was it to see them kill the bull—the fine, black bull of Sensuntepec—that you came down to the city? You were wise not to answer the public challenge. I have seen him, and I—even I, who have given many a bull the sword thrust—do not like the look of this fellow."

"It is 200 pesetas," Antonio answered, absently.

"And I would earn them, Antonio, in spite of my broken wrist—if only to gain the glory. But a new Espada has challenged—one whom they say is new to the redondel." Then he added, with some asperity: "Your chance would have been quite so good as his—and think—200 pesetas! Had you not lacked the courage?"

Antonio did not resent the speech. He merely answered, quietly: "Yes, too, then, think I lacked courage." That it was a lying reason I gave to Lola, as excuse for refusing the challenge!"

"Hardly a lie, Antonio. I give not the lie save for reason. It is more that your life has been of the sheep—that you have not the nature to battle and kill."

Antonio made no reply. He was living again that night on the hills when, awakened from sleep by his lamb's loud bleating, he had seized his machete, had rushed to the fold, and had slain the mountain lion. The angry mark on his shoulder burned again, where the brute's strong claws had struck him, and his olive cheeks burned, too, as he thought of how Lola had called him coward, and how her father now said he lacked courage. Her father, the famous matador, who had broken his wrist in the last Pascua fight, and yet managed to kill his victim!

The garrulous old man had continued to whisper. What was it he had been saying?

"—is a fortune. And you could have married my Lola."

Antonio turned and laid his hand impulsively on the old man's arm. "It is enough for now, señor. You will attend the fight with her? Then you will see me later."

Antonio abruptly left the church and, crossing the square with rapid strides, plunged into the maze of crooked streets, between the brown-tiled dwellings, and presently emerged at another square, the famous Plaza de Toros. It was inclosed by a high adobe wall, on whose top was a thick growth of cactus. He did not approach the main entrance, which a merry crowd was besieging, but sought a small door on the eastern side, at which he knocked nervously.

"The guard within called out, gruffly: "Quien?"

"Antonio Gomez."

"Welcome, Antonio Gomez."

The burly guard eyed the youth's lithe figure, as a dealer might take notes of the good points of a horse, and nodded in grave approval: "You would make a brave matador, my son, if you had first the much-needed practice. As it is—well, it may be, perhaps—if Toro Negro will let you."

He led the way to an inner room, which he placed at Antonio's disposal, and reverently laid out the richly colored sash, the small red flag and the short sword, sharp as a razor, that comprised the matador's equipment. Antonio took up the light weapon, balanced and swung it back and forth, ran his fingers along its keen edge, and replaced it on the table.

Again the guard smiled and nodded. "When all is ready I will call you, señor," he said, as he left the apartment.

Antonio could hear the tramping of hoofs, as the padores mounted, and the music of the band came to him faintly, through the thick walls, as it played the strains of a familiar song—a favorite song of Lola's:

"Gayly the flags are flaunting,
List how the horses neigh;
An envious crowd greet the riders proud,
As they mark for Toro the way.

"Then a trumpet blast, loud and haunting,
Echoes from hill to hill;
The broad gates swing and into the ring
Bursts Toro to wreak his will.

"The chulos play for their honors;
They flutter scarfs in his eyes,
They prick his rough hide, and his anger
deride,
As to toss them he blindly tries.

"Then the plaza is hushed and breathless,
The Toreadores give way,
The brave Matador looks the plaza o'er,
And, singly, awaits the fray.

"The bull goes the ground in his fury,
And bellows with rage and hate
As he charges his foe, but a flashing blow
Ends Toro, and ends the fate."

How stingingly Lola had sung it that night on the mountain! And when she had finished she laid her guitar beside him, and spoke of the Pascua bull fight, and, with a soft arm around his neck, asked him to take up the challenge, in an effort to win the grand public prize—the much coveted prize that would fall to him who might conquer the black Sensuntepec bull. In their poverty it was quite a fortune to them. It was by far the largest prize that had ever yet been offered. Its possession would mean they might marry at once, without waiting for that uncertain time when they might be able to save enough to pay the fee of the padre. The padre's fee was very high; 50 pesetas for holding the mass, 50 more for the precious scroll that would prove the ceremony. The valley folk seldom marry at all; but, safe in their mutual promise, lived their lives in their thatched cane huts without the padre's blessing.

But Lola was not in the valley. She would not listen to aught but the mass and the good priest's fatherly blessing.

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Why, then, had he so bluntly refused? It was not from cowardice; that he knew. He hardly understood it himself, but that he had an unreasonable dislike of inflicting useless torture. And Lola had called him a coward; and had refused to hear such a childish excuse, and, with a fine scorn, had left him.

And he had gone back to his little cane hut, and had lain awake through the long, dark night, watching the twinkling Southern Cross and thinking about this girl whom he loved—who had mockingly called him a coward!

And long before daybreak he left the hut, and, at sunrise, awoke the padre—and the padre had written a letter for him—at the price of his last peseta.

And he had not seen Lola since, until in the church procession. But to-day he would show her that at least he did not lack the courage!

He heard the shouts and the cheering, as the padores entered; and he heard the wild, pulsating notes of the marimba, sounding far away and indistinct. Then he heard an occasional burst of applause; and still he sat there waiting.

At last the guard came to call him. He rose and took up the short-bladed sword and his other safeguard, the small, red flag, and passed out into the sunshine.

He cast one glance about the surging sea of expectant faces, and then looked longingly up at the hills that rose behind the city. Their bluish tops seemed trembling in the haze, the air seemed drenched in expectancy, and far-off sounds came plainly—among them the tinkle of a sheep bell far up on the shimmering mountain side.

Then a sharp cry rang out: "Guardese, Antonio—guardese!"

He caught one glimpse of a girl in white, who stretched her bare arms out toward him. Then he turned to avoid the great, black bull that came rushing down the redondel. He instinctively leaped—only just in time—and the small, red flag was torn from his hand. The maddened beast tossed it high in the air and turned to prepare for a second attack, while the spectators, pained with his agile leap, boisterously applauded.

The bull paced the ground, with lowered head, throwing a cloud of dust in the air. His parched tongue hung from his open jaws, his hot breath came in panting gasps, the red blood trickled down his sides where the spears of the chulos had pricked him, and his bloodshot eyes shone with madness as he quickened his pace to a thunderous charge.

Antonio calmly awaited the assault, and then—then the mad beast stopped short in his wild onset, trembled, and, bellowing, crouched to the ground in a spasm of fear. Antonio stupidly gazed at the bull; then he heard a dull rumbling beneath him and felt the baked earth lift and surge and sink and rise, like an angry ocean after a storm. The hilltops swayed in the quivering air, strong men shrieked aloud in their dread and the solid walls of adobe groined and creaked and cracked.

Antonio dropped his now useless sword and, with a bound, reached the side of the ring where he had seen Lola standing, and where the panic-stricken spectators were blindly fighting for the exits.

"Lola!" he shouted, "my Lola!" and out of the surging mass he heard her calling to him. "Leap!" he cried, with uplifted arms, and struggling through the crowd, she obeyed.

Others, gasping the prayers to the saints that their palsied lips failed to utter, were dropping all about him; but Antonio caught her skilfully, and with his light but precious burden, staggered away from the crumbling wall. As he reached the center of the redondel the earthquake ceased for a moment; then a second series of shocks began, a wide crack opened across the court, a dizziness overpowered him and he sank to the heaving, uncertain earth, not in the utterness of terror, nor with a desperate prayer in his throat, but with a willing song in his soul, as he clasped his Lola closer. Was he not from the upper country—the country that lay far back of the hills, the high mountain land where Momotombo's towering black peaks breathed blacker smoke from dawn to dawn and made the treetops bend and nod to the tune of the hills' fitful slumbers? Why should he fear the quaking earth? Fear was for those of the lowlands born; Momotombo had rocked his cradle; and the song that trembled within his soul was a song of thanksgiving and gladness—the thrilling note of his vibrant heart as he pressed his Lola to it.

It was over again in a moment. The hilltops resumed their still place in the sky, a welcome wind stirred the tall mango trees, and Lola shuddered and opened her eyes, and drew his head down and kissed him.

One by one men regained courage to speak, although at first it was only in whispers.

Antonio assisted Lola to rise, as her aged father approached them.

"You have done well, Antonio," he said. "The Toro lives, but he has made his fight. You have won the 200 pesetas."

A happy light shone in Antonio's soft eyes, and, drawing Lola closer, he asked:

"Then, you think now, I lacked not the courage?"—N. Y. Independent.

Alligators Carry Weight.

The Indians in Central and South America firmly believe that alligators swallow stones for the purpose of making themselves heavier, and thus capable of diving more easily. From whatever cause, the fact is certain that alligators do swallow stones, it being rarely the case that a saurian is killed without one or more stones, sometimes of considerable size, being found in his stomach. The stones are of all sizes, from a mere pebble to a boulder almost the size of a man's head, and sometimes weighing as much as 10 pounds.—Chicago Journal.

PITH AND POINT.

The New Girl.—"Johanna, don't forget to dust the bric-a-brac." "No ma'am. Where do you keep the dust?" —Detroit Free Press.

—He (significantly) — I am my father's only child, you know, Miss Blood. She—"Well, you can't blame him, Mr. Sappy."—Brooklyn Life.

—"I wonder," said the younger one, "if I shall lose my looks, too, when I get to your age?" "You would be lucky if you did," replied the elder one.—Tit-Bits.

—Whyso—"This physiognomist says that aggressive, impulsive people generally have black eyes." Knowso—"If not at first, they get them later."—Truth.

—"Dear me, Adelbert," said the poet's wife, "this stuff don't make sense." "I know that as well as you do," said the poet. "It isn't intended to make sense. It is to make dollars. It was ordered by a magazine."—Washington Star.

—"That was a very fine speech you made the other night," said one Pittsburgher to another. "I didn't make it the other night," replied the latter. "I delivered it the other night, but it took me a month to make it."—Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph.

—"Bostonian—"It is a fortunate thing for the English language that these distressing accidents on the trolley roads occur in Brooklyn and Philadelphia, where the reporters have ample time to write, instead of in your city." New Yorker—"Why?" Bostonian—"Because your reporters would refer to the victims as having been trolley-cut."—Harper's Bazar.

—When the lecturer inquired dramatically: "Can anyone in the room tell me of a perfect man?" there was a dead silence. "Has anyone," he continued, "heard of a perfect woman?" Then a patient-looking little woman in a black dress rose up in the back of the auditorium and answered: "There was one. I've often heard of her, but she's dead now. She was my husband's first wife."—Massachusetts Ploughman.

A UNIQUE OVERCOAT.

It is Made of the Skins of Unborn Musk Oxen.

S. N. Malterer, of Spokane, wears an overcoat that is bound to attract attention, no matter where it is seen. The coat is made out of fur of the unborn musk ox, and, while not only very rare, is exceedingly pretty. The coat is light in weight and were it not for the weight of the lining would seem as though made of the softest down. The color is a light silver gray when the light is upon it from one direction and as soon as the light is shifted it turns to a clear gray. When seen under a light not very bright it has the appearance of jet black. Mr. Malterer says that it has attracted so much attention in the eastern cities that he had to lay it aside to keep from being bothered answering questions as to what it was and where he got it.

"The fur of the unborn musk ox," said he, "is very rare. In fact, it cannot be had for money. The way I got the fur to make this one was peculiar. Two years ago I made a trip to the Great Slave lake, and in fitting out at Athabasca Landing I bought a canoe, paying \$100 for it. It was along toward fall when I got back to the landing, and there I met an old trapper, who had been hunting and trapping along the lakes and rivers for a number of years. He seemed to take quite a fancy to my canoe, although he did not say anything, but was looking it over carefully and noting its good points, as a horse fancier would a blooded horse. Finally he stepped up to me and said: 'Say, mister, what are you going to do with that boat?'

"At that time I had no expectations of ever going up in that part of the country again and, as the boat could be of little value to me, I answered: 'Just to show you that the Yankees are all right I'll give you that boat.' He was greatly pleased and, after looking it over again, he said: 'Well, I'll just show you that the old trapper is all right, too,' and, taking me over to his warehouse, he got a number of these furs and gave them to me. At a cash value they would be worth many times the canoe, and they were his accumulation for a number of years.

"After making the coat, I found that I only lacked two of having enough to make a jacket for my sister, and when I went on my trip down the Mackenzie this year I met the trapper again and I told him that I should like to get three more. He loaned me the canoe that I had given him the year before, and when I returned to the landing in the fall he had three furs for me."—Spokane Spokesman.

Life in Dust.

Of all other factors, perhaps dust has its considerable part in the processes of nature; for microscopic dust in the atmosphere does not always consist of the coarse notes which may be sometimes seen in the path of a sunbeam. There is much that is wonderful and mysterious concealed in the existence of dust, for even in the pure air, at an elevation of 4,000 feet, it has been ascertained that there are about 34,000 dust particles per cubic inch, but in a room in a crowded city they would amount to no less than 30,000,000 particles per cubic inch. It will be, therefore, easy to understand how important an influence this invisible dust must exercise over the health conditions of a highly sensitive organism; although their chemical analysis is difficult, the more exact elements of these dust particles can be scientifically determined. These minute atoms are at first microscopic, but become visible and are ever increased by contact with the surrounding land and water. Perhaps, however, that which concerns atmospheric hygiene most are the living organisms contained among the dust particles or bacteria as we shall call them.—National Board of Health Magazine.

THE NEGROES' CURLY HAIR.

It is a Protection to the Brain from the Tropical Sun.

The flat nose of the African and his large nostrils result from the necessity of inhaling larger draughts of tropical air to produce the same degree of vitality, because of its greater expansion; thus the increased exercise produces increased expansion of the nostrils of a large nose.

The curling of the African's hair, the St. Louis Republic says, while universal on his continent, is common in every country of the globe. Perhaps this has its scientific solution in the fact that the curls deflect the rays of the tropical sun, thus preventing their more severe penetration into the brain. In the transmission of light, it is a law that every intervening object with which a ray comes in contact bends and diverts in another direction.

Heat curls every kind of hair and that which is provided in nature for the protection of the brain from injury by the rays of a tropical sun is a created endowment, which by degrees is becoming naturally transmissible and inherited.

The skull of the African, with its peculiar thickness, affords another feature of protection to the brain.

It is evident that it is the outdoor exposure of the working classes that makes their skin so black. It must also be remembered that it is not the skin alone of the men of Africa which manifests deep color, but this characteristic is noticed in all the birds, beasts, fish, reptiles and plants.

Another fact in relation to this phenomenon is that everything grows less deeply colored as we approach the polar regions. There the white bear is found and nowhere else, while the black bear lives and is now native to almost every other climate.

HOG-KILLING TIME.

A Season of Great Moment in Parts of Virginia.

"Hog-killing time" in the country is one of the most important seasons of the whole year. Hog killing is the single item of farm work that is generally postponed, not only until cold weather, but until the crops are all gathered and housed, the cow stables and other ragged outbuildings "patched up" and put in order, the potatoes, turnips, cabbages, etc., killed, the apples gathered and stored away and huge piles of wood provided for the proverbial "log fires." And then butchering begins, not unlike a long, carefully planned insurrection. No one knows just why, says the Richmond Dispatch, but the wholesale "outthroat," "bloodshed" business begins about one hour before day-dawn, and he who happens to be out so early in the morning sees little else than outdoor fires dotted over the neighborhood and hears little else than the deafening squeals of dying swine, until the last pampered "jockey" has "paid the penalty." Perhaps 2,000 fat hogs have been butchered in King George this week. It has not been possible to pass along the roads without seeing a row of dead hogs strung up about some country home. Even the little ash-faced darky takes on a broad grin when "daddy" kills hogs, and very soon after that important event at his home he sheds the cutaneous scales from his face and those cheeks shine as if the "grease" had been applied externally. The hogs raised here this year for pork were unusually fine, and the meat is said to be of the very best quality, notwithstanding the fact that the pastures were poor and that there was an absence of other advantages during the summer and fall.

THE FIGHT IS ON.

There is an intense rivalry between the watermelon and tomato growers as to who can produce the earliest. Salzer's Earliest Watermelon ripened in 1895 in 52 days. That record is to be beaten, and Salzer pays \$100 to the winner! Then on tomatoes the record on "30 days the Earliest Tomato" in 1895 was 68 days. That's to be beaten, and \$50 paid. Salzer challenges the world to produce earlier melons, tomatoes, cabbages, radishes, peas or sweet corn than he offers. Get his mammoth catalogue. There is money in it.

IF YOU WILL CUT THIS OUT AND SEND it with 12c. stamps to the John A. Salzer Seed Co., La Crosse, Wis., you will get free their great catalogue and a package of the yellow rind watermelon sensation.

"Yes, doctor, it still hurts me to breathe in fact, the only trouble now seems to be my breath." "Oh, well, I'll give you something that will soon stop that."—Life.

A collecting agency in New York is run by women exclusively, which seems to disprove the adage a woman's work is never done.—Texas Sittings.

There's Room at the Top for the Cupid hair pin. It never slips out, and keeps each particular hair in place. It's in the TWIST.

Manufactured by Richardson & DeLong Bros., Philadelphia.

Makers of the famous DeLong Hook and Eye.

FLORIDA. THE GREAT PLANT SYSTEM

are now open. FINEST HUNTING AND FISHING in the world. "GUN and ROD on the WEST COAST of FLORIDA" a Handsome Sportsman's Manual, 100 pages, 25c. Write to W. W. Wicks, Manager, application, Traffic Manager, 5A N. 1st St., Miami, Fla.

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March

April, May are most emphatically the months for taking a good blood purifier, because the system is now most in need of such a medicine, and because it more quickly responds to medicinal qualities. In winter impurities do not pass out of the body freely, but accumulate in the blood.

April

The best medicine to purify, enrich and vitalize the blood, and thus give strength and build up the system, is Hood's Sarsaparilla. Thousands take it as their Spring Medicine, and more are taking it to-day than ever before. If you are tired, "out of

May

sorts," nervous, have bad taste in the morning, aching or dizzy head, sore stomach and feel all run down, a course of Hood's Sarsaparilla will put your whole body in good order and make you strong and vigorous. It is the ideal Spring Medicine and true nerve tonic, because

Hood's Sarsaparilla

Is the One True Blood Purifier. All druggists. Prepared only by C. J. Hood & Co., Lowell, Mass. Hood's Pills are purely vegetable, and fully prepared. 25 cents.

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