

Dice of Destiny

by Jackson Gregory



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CHAPTER X—Continued.

It seemed to him that suddenly it had grown cold there in De la Guerra's bedroom.

He shivered, and, taking up his candle, went his way back through the drawing room, with no word to Torre, with no glance even, for he feared that now he could not let his eyes go to the handsome, evil face and keep his hand back, and at last to Pedro's bedside.

Pedro, waiting for him impatiently, tried to lift himself upon an elbow, and falling in that turned his bright black eyes upon the American.

"What did she say, Josefa?" he asked quickly. "It is the master's key?"

"Yes, Pedro," answered Stanway dispiritedly. "But what is the use? She does not know what door it opens."

"But I know!" said Pedro brightly. "You know!" Stanway laid his hand on the wounded man's arm. "Tell me. Quick!"

"When the master was young he lived in Spain, where the old master, his father, sent him to school. In the home there, bulwalled of stones like an old castle, senior, was a room where many times he was locked up by his tutor because he was wild and did not fall in love with his books. I have heard him laugh and tell about it to the padre from La Panza. When he came away he brought the key to that prison room with him. That is the key you have, senior!"

Stanway looked at the man with swift suspicion. Pedro seemed excited over the key; a look of great shrewdness was in his eyes, and the key unlocked a door in Spain! If he was becoming delirious—

"I am not in a fever, senior," said Pedro quickly, seeing the thought in the American's eyes. "But that key tells me something. Every night before going to my bed I go to the master's room to see if he wishes anything, to take any commands for the next day. I went last night after it was late, just before I went to the senorita's door. It was habit, senior. I could not have gone to sleep unless I went there."

"Well?" sharply.

"I heard a little sound. It was the scratching of a window shade. I went, closed the window, and locked it tightly. And while looking for the sound I saw the key in its place. It was there at eleven o'clock last night, senior."

"You are sure, Pedro? You are very certain that this key was in the master's room at eleven o'clock?"

"Very certain, senior."

"Then—But it is impossible, Pedro! You say that you locked the windows? All of them?"

"All, senior."

"And the door as you came out?"

"I locked, senior. The key was under my bed. I gave it to you just now. And there is only one key upon the rancho—only one in the world which will unlock it!"

"But then it is impossible!"

Stanway, restless, upon his feet, strode back and forth, frowning. If the key had been there last night, if door and windows had been locked, if they had been locked when he went to the room—then how could one of the men who attacked Pedro have had it in his hand at three o'clock in the morning?

"You mean," he said slowly, coming back to the bedside, "that the attack upon you and Celestino was made by men who are among the house servants or the De la Guerra vaqueros?"

"No, senior. There was no hesitation—the voice was confident. The men wore handkerchiefs about their faces, but I know that they were not of our men. They were strangers to me."

"But," cried Stanway, "how could such a thing be? How could they have gotten into the master's room? Then how could they have gotten to the senorita's room without some one of our men seeing them? And why should they have brought the key?"

"The key is heavy, good to strike a hard blow," replied Pedro. "If a man had lost his knife and needed a weapon he might take it. No, senior."

"But how—"

Stanway broke off, his eyes ran from Pedro's face to sweep the room, a sudden light came into them, and the blood ran into his face.

"My God," he cried, "I see it!"

"You are wiser than I, senior," Pedro smiled contentedly and closed his eyes, looking very pale and weak. "You will let me have news when there is anything, senior? I could get well quickly with good news."

Stanway promised, took Pedro's hand quickly, turned and hurried out

of the room. His step was quick, his eyes very bright.

"I understand now Torre's signal on the window," he muttered as he went. "And—by heaven, how blind I was! I know what he meant when he said he was taunting a man whom he did not like! It's the boldest game a man ever played!"

CHAPTER XI.

"You Have Overplayed Your Hand."

"I am afraid that I have been indiscreet, Senior Stanway," Torre, with his old smile charged now with something of mockery and much of triumph, held out a little piece of white paper to Stanway, who, key in hand, had just come from Pedro on his way to the master's room. "But I think that I can plead an altogether unusual position as my excuse. You will pardon me, senior?"

Stanway took the paper, guessing what it was, and read it swiftly:

MI Querido Senior Billy:

To save papa grande, to save me from all that is horrible, there is no way but to do what Torre asks. In grandfather's room, behind the great mahogany bed, there is a painting on the wall.

There is a spot in the woodwork, three feet from the floor, ten from the northwest corner, where you must press with your finger. It will disclose the banco. Give him the money—for the sake of

Your Teresa.

"You will pardon my having read it?" again smilingly from Torre.

"Where did you get this thing?" cried Stanway.

Torre pointed to the window, whose panes he had broken just before three o'clock.

"There. On the floor. Some one threw it in on the floor while you were running so giddily across the border. You see this is very well planned, senior. Is it not? Even my lieutenants—"

"If I do not do as she asks?" cut in Stanway, his low-lidded eyes sharp upon Torre's.

Torre shrugged.

"Who knows? Perhaps they will take the trouble to find a priest to give the senorita in holy matrimony to—"

In sudden rage Stanway, his nerves jangling, his rage reddening his face, leaped at the man, and as he leaped struck, struck hard—his hand, clenched fist smashing into the evil smile, cutting the lips so that the blood ran from them, sending Torre reeling backward across the room.

"Shut up!" he cried hoarsely. "You mention the senorita once more and—"

His teeth closed with a little ominous click. Torre, wiping the blood from his lips, glared at him with a boundless, almost speechless, rage.

"Coward!" he sneered. "Since I am a prisoner, with a half dozen men ready to spring upon me, you attack me—"

"Gaucho!" called Stanway.

"Si, senior!" Gaucho's brown face brightening, his eyes looking happier than they had looked for two days.

"Do not interfere. Do not let your men take hand, no matter what happens." Then he swung about upon Torre. "Do you want to finish it now?" he said curtly.

But Torre was once more himself, smiling, at ease, only a fierce hatred in his eyes.

"Gracias, senior!" he returned. "I shall merely make you pay for that blow in my own way. And now I ask another ten thousand dollars as ransom for the old man and the girl. Ten thousand dollars for a blow, senior! Do you care to strike again?"

Stanway shrugged.

"You have overplayed your hand, Torre," he said quietly. "This note from the senorita makes me sure of what I was beginning to suspect. Gaucho, come with me."

With no further word, leaving Torre's mystified face looking after him, he went out, Gaucho at his heels.

"Gaucho," he said, speaking swiftly from beyond the closed door, "I want you to come to the master's room. Bring some men with you—six, ten—I don't know how many we shall need. Let two of them bring axes. Let all carry side arms. Bring the picked men, Gaucho; the hardest men on the rancho. I think that there is going to be fighting this time."

"The master?" cried Gaucho. "The senorita? You know—"

"I know nothing. But I think—that they have never for a second left the house! Hurry, Gaucho!"

And Gaucho hurried, his own face as mystified as Torre's. Stanway went quickly to the bedroom.

"Somewhere in these great thick walls there is a passageway," he whispered to himself. "It runs from this room throughout the house and to the east wing where Teresa's rooms are."

"Somewhere, down below perhaps, there is a room, a dungeon. I think that it is just under the drawing room;

I think that that is where De la Guerra is; that many of the things which Torre said were meant to be heard by the old man that they might taunt and mock him; I think that Torre's men down there heard the crashing glass, the words which went with it. I think that we are going to find De la Guerra and Teresa there."

He studied the walls.

There was nothing to hint at a secret door.

He moved out the bed, found the spot which Teresa's note told of, set his thumb to it, and saw a panel drop down, shelfwise, showing a great iron safe set in the wall. The safe was locked, the key missing. But he knew that he had found De la Guerra's bank. He closed the panel swiftly as Gaucho and his men came to the door.

"Que es, senior?" Gaucho asked quickly. And the black eyes of the dark-faced men thronging behind him—eager, expectant—told as well as words that Gaucho had whispered to his men that the American had a plan, that hope lay behind it.

"Come in, Gaucho. Shut the door. How many men?"

They entered as he spoke. He counted as the last man closed the door behind him.

"Ten, senior. Five more are coming."

"And—sternly—"you can vouch for them, for all of them? You can trust every man to the uttermost, Gaucho?"

"To the uttermost, senior," as sternly. "To the death in the service of the master and"—his voice breaking a little—"the senorita."

"And the other five?"

"The same."

"Good! This is my plan. Come close, all of you."

He addressed them in Spanish, speaking swiftly, his voice lowered so that the men must crane their necks and lean forward to hear. He told them of his hope that those they sought had never been taken out of the hacienda.

"Now," he ended, "there is no doubt a passageway running from here to the senorita's rooms. If we find this end of it and attack they may escape at the other end. So we must be ready."

"Gaucho, send two men into the senorita's rooms. Let them be ready, armed and watchful. Send two more to the stairway. Let Torre and Juarez be bound and watched over by one man only, a man whom you can trust and who will blow their brains out before he lets them escape."

"Let every other man in the house be armed and ready. Then—"

"Then, senior?" eagerly.

"Then—with quiet determination—"we shall find where the passage is if we have to tear down the walls. Hurry, Gaucho!"

Gaucho ran upon his errand, calling by name the men he wished to go with him. Stanway, bidding those with him to be very silent, not knowing what means the men he sought might have of overhearing what happened in the room, began a silent search for some sign of a passageway in the thick walls.

And now at last fate and the quick eyes of a vaquero aided him. There was a little scratch on the redwood of the wall just opposite the door through which they had entered, a fresh white scratch. It was Mendoz, a young Mexican, who saw it; it was Mendoz who found a mark of a greasy thumb upon the same panel, some four feet from the floor.

"Aqui, esta!" he muttered. "Senior, look!"

Stanway's heart beat wildly when he saw what Mendoz had found.

"The door of the passageway!" he whispered. "Sh! Be still! Even take off your boots, compañeros. We are going to give them no warning. But first, Mendoz, bring Dempton here, quick! I think he is going to talk now."

Mendez hurried, and presently came back, he and the immense Vidal, walking at Dempton's right and left.

"Dempton," whispered Stanway, meeting him, "make no sound. If he cries out—to Vidal and Mendoz—"if he makes a sound choke the life out of him. Do you understand, Dempton?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Slaves in Abyssinia.

The inhabitants of the Gemira country in Abyssinia are pagans. They appear to believe in a divinity inhabiting the sky—not to be identified with the Wah of the Galla—and also in secondary genii dwelling on the earth. Slavery is not officially recognized, but it exists in fact, though with some extension in form. The slave is not free to change his master; he is put in chains if suspected of an intention of escaping; he is beaten if he does not work or march at the will of his master, and he receives no pay. On the other hand, if he can be "presented" he cannot be openly sold, and must be designated gabare ("subject") not baria ("slave"). Even these differences disappear in distant provinces like Gemira, and in times of disorder. Those who will not submit live as fugitives in the forests.

External Substitute.

Here is a famous Chinese humorous story. A traveler stopped at a house and asked for a cup of tea. Having none on hand, the host sent his son out to procure some. Meanwhile the hostess put a pot of water on the fire to boil. The son did not return, and it became necessary to add some more water to the pot. This was done several times. The son still remained absent, and finally the wife said to her husband: "Inasmuch as the tea does not seem to be forthcoming, perhaps you had better offer your guest a bath."

ECONOMY IN BURNING WOOD

Experts of Agricultural Department Reveal Secrets That Are Well Worth Keeping in Mind.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Where a fireplace is available wood can be used to good advantage, affording both heat and ventilation, but there is a secret about fireplace management. It is not generally known that a wood fire can be kept burning day and night in a fireplace with very little attention and with small consumption of wood. The secret in keeping wood from burning too rapidly is a plentiful supply of ashes, say foresters of the United States department of agriculture. One user who adopted this plan reports continuous use of a fireplace for over a month, with dry chestnut wood, where the amount of ashes formed by a month's use was not enough to require removal.

Ashes should be kept level with the andiron, the foresters say. As the blocks burn, an accumulation of glowing charcoal forms in the ashes. This keeps on burning slowly and assists in igniting the fresh blocks on the andirons. A pocket may be formed in the ashes into which the hot charcoal may fall, forming a heat storage. Two or three blocks on the andirons with the hot charcoal in the ashes will form an excellent fire.

To check the fire, ashes are shoveled over one or more of the blocks, covering lightly all the burning wood. This will not put out the fire; it will only check the rate of burning, so that red charcoal will be found when the ashes are removed for addition of fresh fuel.

Fireplace wood is usually cut in longer lengths than stove wood, but the ordinary 16-inch stove length is convenient. Any kind of wood can be used, provided it is dry and seasoned.

A banked fire will keep 10 or 12 hours, and will send some heat from the hot bricks all the time. A well-managed fireplace will be found a great addition to the heating system in any residence. Its value is to supplement a furnace, although it may replace the furnace in fall and spring with decided economy.

Value of Obstacles.

We were talking with a gentleman the other day about the rise of boys and young men, and he had many observations to relate, all of which taught the lesson that success starts with obstacles. A young man who has had no obstacles to surmount will seldom be successful in any department of life he may enter. It is quite impossible to expect anything great of a boy who is fed with a silver spoon and grows up amid a life of ease. It is the resistance that a boy encounters that develops his powers. He must carry rocks, and not feathers, if he expects to gain strength. So a boy should not wish for an easy way through which to reach success. If he is to be a scholar, a great merchant, a captain of industry or an efficient manager of anything good, he must begin down low, where there is work to do. A boy cannot loaf his way into great achievement; he has to struggle for it. The boy who knows this and fears not will make a man of himself. None other need apply.—Ohio State Journal.

One Rainy Night.

It was my first grand affair and I had invited the judge's daughter. Three weeks of my salary had been invested in raiment Lord Chesterfield might approve. My elder married sister was to be a receiving matron.

In spite of the sloppy rain that night, the taxi had brought my lady in uncrushed safety to the hall. Her gown was quite the daintiest in sight. My white kids were adjusted, and I felt indeed we were a distinguished pair as we crossed the ballroom in the limelight to the receiving line.

My sister greeted the judge's daughter graciously and turned to bestow on me her company manners, incidentally her critical eye.

"Good evening, brother," she smiled as she glanced from top toward toe and suddenly, sub rosa, "Turn down your trousers!"

I looked at my feet. My cheeks flamed! I had crossed the floor with full three inches of trousers still turned up in proof that "twas raining in London."—Chicago Tribune.

New Anesthetic.

How nitrous oxide gas, an anesthetic made available in large quantities in France through the joint efforts of the army medical corps and the American Red Cross, saved the lives of many American soldiers, was told in a statement by the Red Cross. The value of the gas was underestimated by medical men before the war, the statement said, but because of its tendency to increase blood pressure to strengthen the heart without producing a shock and to cause no depressing after effects, it came into general use in the operating rooms of most hospitals before the end of the war.

In the War News.

A young man told us about an old lady who used to come to see the wounded boys. Her one fault was asking too many questions. They decided that the next time she came they would all pretend to be asleep. She came. One, who was bandaged from head to foot, was the only one who appeared at all awake, so she went to him and asked: "How did you know you were wounded, my lad?" "Oh, I read about it in the papers," he replied.—Exchange.

The Wreck of Faith

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TEXT.—I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel, which is not another.—Gal. 1:5.

Here we have an expression of Paul's astonishment that the Galatian Christians were now slipping from the truth as he had given it to them and were trying to make a composite religion that would better suit them—a union of faith and works.

There is suggestion that there was something fairly analogous between the Galatian church and the church of today. When the first century closed there was a deposit of divine truth left in the form of some writings by prophets, apostles, psalmists, herdmen, fishermen and others, all inspired of God. This deposit may be considered from some three different standpoints: First, it was something that was for all the world as such, all nations and peoples. It was intended to be the foundation of the religion that the world needed; and upon it grew up the system of belief which, while varying in different countries and centuries, was substantially the same everywhere, and should be so today.

The church fell heir to this treasure but failed to be true as its custodian. Teachers of theology were like the Talmudists of old, and receded further and further from the original teaching as the centuries went by.

This deposit of truth also was given to the individual, for God never intended that his Book should be under lock and key.

But in quite recent times the aspects which that faith presents were greatly varied, and are quite different from the aspects in a previous time. The departure from the faith may be spoken of under three general propositions:

1. That faith is still the limit of attack on the part of its avowed enemies, although the form of attack has radically changed.
2. There has been a departure from the generally accepted interpretation of the Word of God on the part of a very large number of teachers of religion and various subjects in which the church in its external relations particularly are outwardly interested.
3. What was the burden of that religious teaching? The ultimate denial of the supernatural. The result of this with many theological teachers has been in the first place the full acceptance of those views, and secondly a kind of teaching which leaves the pupil without any positive conviction. A further result has been that a generation of younger men educated in seminaries where there was such positive denial of the supernatural, or the hesitating and uncertain teaching, has grown up, and is at best uncertain in its convictions.

A still further result is that the people of the churches ministered to by such men are not informed as to the great truths of the Bible, and become the easy victims of all kinds of heresies such as Christian Science, theosophy, etc. Or, if they have not gone off into these heresies openly, are merely existing as bodies of Christians, with few signs of real life. A grand total result is that we find the Church of God today sturdily indifferent to the vital truths of Christianity, and holding fast to its existence by introducing all kinds of physical buttresses. There are great church buildings, universities, colleges, etc., mere charnel houses, for within there is nothing but decaying flesh and dead men's bones.

3. But there is another aspect of the day that is observable—the decay of individual faith. The writer has had many say to him: "We do not know what we believe any more." Inquiries being made along certain lines, such as the deity of Christ, the authority of the Holy Scriptures, the subject of regeneration, the same lack of faith was still expressed. There is nothing sadder than this in the whole realm of religious phenomena—people without faith. This aspect becomes tragedy when we realize that the young people of our Christian homes even express themselves as having no belief. One place where such faith is ruined is in the Godless colleges and universities of the land. The charge must not be placed on the state universities, for the danger from them is not so great as from the universities that are founded by Christian people and are under nominal Christian control.

What is the remedy? Before this remedy can be presented, many will succumb as victims of their ignorance, but the tide may be checked, if the world can be brought back to the acceptance of the great principles of the Protestant religion. The Church of God can do much by positively requiring of its teachers that they teach nothing but the fundamentals of our Christian religion, and teach positively.

Eases Colds

At once! Relief with "Pape's Cold Compound"

The first dose eases your cold! Don't stay stuffed-up! Quit blowing and snuffling! A dose of "Pape's Cold Compound" taken every two hours until three doses are taken usually breaks up a severe cold and ends all gripe misery.

Relief awaits you! Open your clogged-up nostrils and the air passages of your head; stop nose running; relieve the headache, dullness, feverishness, sneezing, soreness and stiffness.

"Pape's Cold Compound" is the quickest, surest relief known and costs only a few cents at drug stores. It acts without assistance. Tastes nice. Contains no quinine. Insist on Pape's!—Adv.

A Big Tale.

The magazine called Our Navy is never frightened by facts when fiction is just as good. From it we take a story which sets forth the estimate the marines had of the mud "over there."

"I was walking along the road," says the marine, "and happened to see a soldier's hat lying there. I kicked the hat and discovered there was a head under it and a live man under the head. So I pulled the man out. He then informed me that he was on horseback, so both of us dug down in the mud and pulled the horse out. The horse was good and hungry by that time, so we dug down farther and hauled up a bale of hay the horse had been eating."

"CALIFORNIA FIG SYRUP" IS CHILD'S LAXATIVE

Look at tongue! Remove poisons from stomach, liver and bowels.

Accept "California" Syrup of Figs only—look for the name California on the package, then you are sure your child is having the best and most harmless laxative or physic for the little stomach, liver and bowels. Children love its delicious fruity taste. Full directions for child's dose on each bottle. Give it without fear.

Mother! You must say "California!"—Adv.

Oil Stations in Cuba.

In view of the contemplated establishment at Antilla, Cuba, of a fuel oil station by the Texas company (South America) the United Fruit company has begun the erection of fuel oil tanks on its properties at Banes and Preston, Orseno province, Cuba. Six tanks will be erected at present by an American construction company.

ASPIRIN FOR COLDS

Name "Bayer" is on Genuine Aspirin—say Bayer

Insist on "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" in a "Bayer package," containing proper directions for Colds, Pain, Headache, Neuralgia, Lumbago, and Rheumatism. Name "Bayer" means genuine Aspirin prescribed by physicians for nineteen years. Handy tin boxes of 12 tablets cost few cents. Aspirin is trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.—Adv.

A Word Grenade.

Excited proprietor—Hey! Ad writer—What is it? "Never use the word 'verve' again in an advertisement! Here in this morning's issue you have a statement that our 'sales force is full of verve,' and the confounded printer has got it 'nerve'!"—Philadelphia Ledger.

Gold is found in Sumatra, the Celebes and in Dutch Borneo in beach deposits.

MURINE Night Morning Keep Your Eyes Clean—Clear—Healthy