

FREE YET CAPTIVE.

[By Clarissa Mackie.]

It had been a miserable dinner—the fricassee had been overpeppered, the sweet potatoes had been burned in the baking and the dessert had been a grotesque assemblage of half-stewed fruits.

Mr. Amory pushed aside his plate in disgust and touched his lips to the coffee.

"Mud!" he muttered, tragically.

"I am afraid that Marta is obsessed by the general uneasiness," fluttered his gentle little wife. "When Pedro brought the mail he announced that a company of rebels was on the way to attack the mines, and the woman is terrified."

"As we all are," frankly admitted their niece, Barbara Dare. "Haven't we been sleeping with one eye open—at least I have—and when I heard that Villa's army was on the way to San Vados my heart actually turned completely over!"

Mr. Amory laughed. "Fie Bobs! And I've been counting on you as my right-hand man if they attack the mine."

Barbara colored beautifully and her eyes flashed.

"Oh, Uncle Dan, of course if it came down to actual defense of our lives, every bit of fear would leave me at once."

"Well, for my part, I'd rather take good advice and leave San Vados while there is time to do it gracefully. Mr. Ritch says when the critical moment comes we must drop everything and fly in the motor that he will send from town. How I hate this Mexico!" Mrs. Amory arose and clumsily-footed Marta came in to remove the cloth.

In the veranda of the adobe house the three sat and watched the stars pricking out in the deep blue sky. They were very silent; perhaps each one was weighing the gravity of the situation that confronted them after many months of false alarms.

Suddenly out of the silence there came the distant purr of a motor coming over the Ledro bridge.

Amory tossed his cigar over the railing and rose to his tall height.

"I rather think that's Ritch's automobile," he said.

"You won't go, Uncle Dan?" asked Barbara eagerly.

"Of course, we will go, Bobs," interrupted her aunt's voice sharply. "You should be thankful that Mr. Ritch has provided a means for us to reach the coast and take a ship to San Diego. I'm going to get my things—I've had them packed for three weeks—and you had better get together anything you especially treasure. We shall never see Mexico again, if I have my way!"

"Are you really going, Uncle Dan?" urged Barbara. "Of course, I know that you've had everything closed up at the mines and—oh, here he comes!" she sighed impatiently. "His lights are out, too."

Something black loomed out of the darkness of the drive and a large motor car halted at the steps. A man alighted and came onto the veranda.

"Mr. Amory?" he asked in a crisp, authoritative tone.

"Yes."

"Mr. Ritch asked me to take your people to the coast. The Ritch's have barely escaped with their lives and Mr. Ritch is slightly wounded. They're halfway to the coast now. I think we can overtake them if we hurry."

"We had about decided to stay and fight it out," hesitated Mr. Amory.

"Fight it out with what?" demanded the other.

"How many men can you depend on? Ritch thought he could depend on 200 and every blamed greaser joined the rebel forces and chased him off his own plantation. I believe in going while the going's good!"

"That's excellent advice, Mr. —"

By Jove, I ought to know you, your voice is familiar," apologized Amory.

"My name is Campbell. You may remember me as your nearest neighbor on the south—owner of the Cactus mine—and sort of foe, I suppose," he laughed ruefully.

"Campbell—Campbell, of the Cactus mine—why, we can't be under obligations to you!" chortled Amory with his customary hot temper.

"You don't mean to say that you'd let the mere matter of a lost lawsuit stand between you and the lives of your family?" asked the other incredulously.

"Perhaps Mr. Amory's family would prefer to lose their lives than to hold them under obligation to Mr. Gordon Campbell!" interpolated Barbara warmly. "I would rather remain here, Uncle Dan," she said firmly.

Mrs. Amory fluttered onto the veranda, her arms full of bundles. "I'm just in time," she gasped. "Oh, is it Mr. Ritch's chauffeur—no?" As the young man took the bags from her grasp.

"It is Mr. Gordon Campbell, of the Cactus mine," said Amory grimly. "He has come to convey us to the coast, my dear. Bobs and I prefer to remain here. How about you, Sally?"

Mrs. Amory, recollecting the bitterness that had followed Campbell's winning of the long contested lawsuit, stifled her fears and leaned against her husband's protecting arm.

"Of course my place is by your side, Daniel," she whimpered.

Campbell broke the silence that followed Mrs. Amory's words.

"Do you people mean to say that you'd stay here and be shot up rather than permit me to drive you to

safety just because you don't like me?" "It seems to be a unanimous decision," retorted Amory grimly.

"Are you aware that a band of 75 Mexicans is encamped five miles below here and that it is their boast that the Amory house will be a ruin by morning and the Amorys—" he paused uncertainly.

"The Amorys will fight their own battles!" finished Amory obstinately. "If Ritch had sent his own car—had come himself—would you have gone with him?" demanded Campbell in an ugly tone.

"Very likely the flight would have proved more attractive to us," sneered Mr. Amory.

Silence followed. Then came a clatter of shoes on the stones. "Who is that?" asked Amory sharply while the women held breath.

"Adios, señor!" shrilled Marta's voice, and they knew that she was fleeing with the faithful Pedro.

Barbara had joined her uncle and aunt and the three stood in a little group at the edge of the veranda. A dim light from the hall showed them standing in stiff opposition to the burly young mine owner who had been their enemy.

Suddenly something flashed in the lamplight and the Amorys winced to find themselves staring into a pair of long, blue-nosed guns held in the muscular hands of Mr. Gordon Campbell.

"Hands up," he ordered sharply, "and, believe me, I mean every word of it!" he snapped. When they had obeyed dazedly, Amory muttering threats of vengeance, Campbell continued: "Mrs. Amory and Miss Dare, you will please walk down and get into the car. You, Mr. Amory, will hand over any guns you may have—

thanks. Now, Amory, just hustle those bundles into the tonneau and take your seat beside me. Got any cats and dogs you want along—no? Well, here's hoping you come back again some day." The machine trembled and then shot forward into the night, Daniel Amory grumbling at the bonds Campbell had knotted about his wrists.

As they swept into the highway there came a rush of hoofs from the east and the moonshine glittered on the meager accoutrements of the attacking cavalry. There was a roar of anger from the Mexicans as the machine and its occupants disappeared around a bend in the road, and there followed a clatter of hoofs and rattling volleys of musketry.

"Just in time," admitted Daniel Amory sheepishly.

Campbell said nothing.

Barbara, holding her frightened aunt in her strong, young arms, felt that she hated Gordon Campbell for the high-handed manner in which he had saved their lives.

Campbell stopped the car and got out and lighted the big searchlight at the front. Then in a broad, triangular path of white light they went down the hill.

There they could see the bridge still stretching its wooden spans across the black gorge.

"Thank God!" Campbell muttered, and his three captives, knowing that a grave danger had been averted, felt a sudden revulsion of feeling toward Gordon Campbell. As they rounded the shoulder of a hill a glare of light from above showed them that their home was in flames and their departure had been none too soon.

Across the bridge that swayed under the weight of the heavy car and then on to solid ground again, they turned west and mile after mile curled from under the tires until at last they could smell the salt savor of the Pacific.

Just as dawn was breaking behind them Campbell turned in his seat and with a flash of his penknife severed Amory's bonds.

"I'm sorry that it was necessary, Amory," he said brusquely. "Now, perhaps the ladies would like refreshments; you will find food in the lunch hamper on the left side—and hot and cold drinks in the thermos bottles."

Amory opened the lunch hamper and supplied the wants of his wife and niece. He passed several sandwiches and a cup of coffee to his captor, but took nothing himself. He was feeling mightily ashamed of himself and the part he had played.

When they reached a rise of ground that showed the blue ocean sparkling in the sunshine, while the white walls of a peaceful town slumbered at its edge, Gordon turned his gray eyes on Daniel Amory.

"Below us is a little town of Santa Ana. You will see three ships in the harbor flying the Star and Stripes. We will be safe aboard in half an hour."

"You are going, too?"

Campbell shook his head. "I'm going back for a few days to finish up my affairs." He threw in the clutch and the car started on its final lap of the journey.

At last came the moment to say farewell to Campbell. The two Amorys were loud in their gratitude.

"I am ashamed," murmured Barbara Dare, looking adorable in her humility. "If you can ever forgive our stupidity, I hope you will come and see us and let us thank you again."

"You are very good," said Campbell gravely. "I'll come with pleasure. There's something I shall ask of you, Miss Dare."

Barbara hung her head under the masterful look in his eyes and her heart was beating tumultuously. She knew very well when that time arrived she would go forth with him the happiest and most docile captive in the world.

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MADE SMOKING A HARSHIP

Foolish Competitions That Should Have Disgusted Genuine Lovers of the Seductive Weed.

At a smoking competition held recently at Brighton, England, the winner kept an eighth of an ounce of tobacco alight for 103 minutes. There was a severer test at Oxford in 1723 on a scaffold over against the theater. Thomas Hearne described the scene: "The conditions were that anyone (man or woman) that could smooke out three ounces of tobacco first without drinking or going off the stage should have twelve shillings. Many

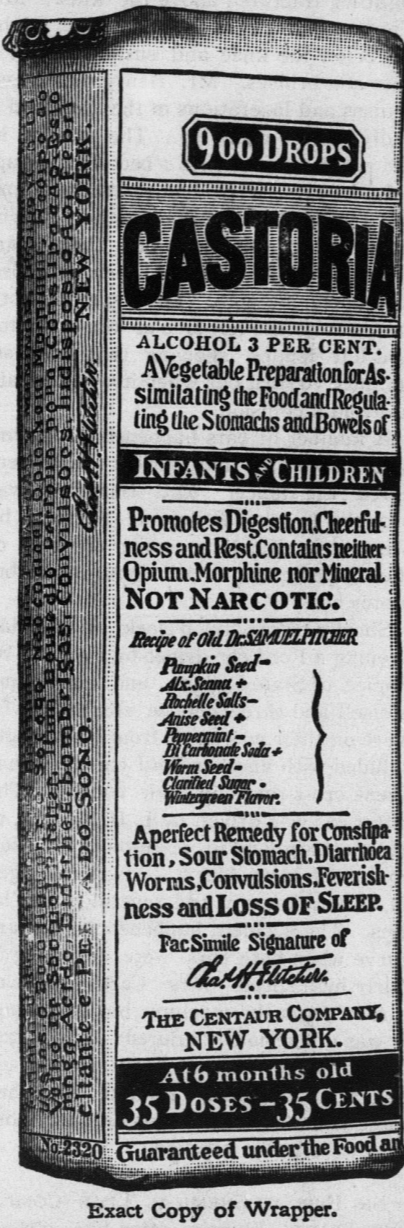
tried, and it was thought that a journeyman taylor would have been victorious, he smooke faster than, and being many pipes before the rest; but at last he was so sick that 'twas thought he would have died, and an old man, that had been a soldier, and smooke gently, came off a conqueror, smookeing the three ounces quite out."

In Derbyshire there was a club where the qualification for membership was the ability to smooke up a pound of shag tobacco at one sitting. A china pot served as pipe, and the candidate smooke through the spout.

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