

NEVER SAY FAIL.

Keep pushing, 'tis wiser Than sitting aside, And dreaming and singing, And waiting the tide. In life's earnest battle They only prevail Who daily march onward And never say fail!

THE ORCHID.

It was mid-afternoon of a vivid April day in the year 1850. Along the wooded shore of the St. John's River the sunlight, falling through masses of brilliant green foliage, cast light upon a world voluptuously decked and blossomed; for this was in Florida, where the spring comes swiftly, in a storm of color, and where April is a child with full breasts. Even the distinctive Spanish moss, which makes the landscape drip and gives to nature the quality of a dry-point etching, had taken a softer tone of gray, and was like a virgin's drapery, half concealing, half adorning the beauty now approaching the moment of its bridal adventure.

Upon the bank of the stream— which the Indians called "strange," because it flowed north—stood, in a tempting grove of live-oak trees, a stately white-pillared house, whose broad portico overlooked a rank green lawn. Beyond the house, and across a bright extent of flower-garden, showed the slave quarters, an extensive cluster of buildings in which lived some two hundred blacks, nor counted their lot an unhappy one; for they were the property of a man who considered that harshness to an inferior was as unbecoming as the tenets of a gentleman as servility to an equal.

In the distance, as far as the eye could see, extended the peach and orange groves, the broad fields of sugarcane, of indigo, of cotton—all belonging to Colonel Philip Gardiner, ex-soldier of the Seminole wars and the lordliest planter in northern Florida, whose five thousand acres stretched for miles along the river-front; whose house was filled with mahogany furniture, oil-paintings, fine linen and rare silver fetched from England by former Gardiners, and whose youthful Spanish wife was the most beautiful woman in the country. One would have said that here was a man doomed to a veritable monotony of good fortune; for there is no drama in magnificence. But Colonel Philip had a weakness. He loved the hazard of the game-table with the ardor of one in whose veins flowed the blood of adventurers and pioneers. Pre-eminently, he would betake himself to town, and, in company with divers congenial spirits, would indulge in a poker game whose proportions were nothing short of epic.

On the afternoon mentioned, in the shadow of the dock that reached from the lawn's edge to the clear water, floated the Colonel's private dugout—a craft hewn from a single cypress log, some thirty-five feet long by three feet wide. Seated in the dugout and lolling on their oars were six gigantic negroes, three to a side, who laughed and conversed in lazy, musical voices, while keeping an expectant watch upon the shore. One who had been chewing a piece of seed-cane spat out the white pith, displaying a set of teeth whiter still, and in a deep bass voice sang: "Yalligater sunnin' in a cypress bog, Long come a nigger en fell off de log. Whar dat nigger now?"

And the five others, in a doleful chant, repeated the refrain: "Whar dat nigger now?" Suddenly, however, the inquiry concerning the fate of the incautious nigger ceased and decorum settled upon the boat's crew. Down the steps of the house and across the lawn came, with his lady on his arm, the lord of this terrestrial paradise. Tall, slender, erect, with deep-set black eyes, long, drooping mustaches and a hooked nose, Colonel Philip Gardiner was a figure typical of old Florida, a living example of the gentleman planter of the fifties. He was clad in immaculate white linen—the Colonel's suits furnished exclusive employment for one stout negro collar—and wore a low, turn-over collar with a black stock.

At his side, and almost as tall as he, walked his wife, the beautiful Sophia. She, too, was dressed in white, but had thrown over her head and shoulders a black lace mantilla that gave infinite grace to the movements of her lithe, willowy body. The soft frame of this mantilla accentuated the pure olive of her face, with its exquisite golden pallor, its huge dark eyes fringed with heavy lashes, its delicate, sensitive nose and red mouth slightly drawn up at the corners. The effect of this characteristic was to give her the appearance of being continually about to smile, an effect that was at once baffling and agreeable. Moreover, she had a habit of looking up from beneath the half-lowered eyelids that invested her with a certain mysterious detachment, as though she walked behind a lovely mask. It must be confessed, that she was something of an enigma to her husband, who, though finding her a faultless wife, a superb hostess and a fascinating ornament to his home, had never been able to assure himself that he possessed the fealty of her soul. Sometimes he doubted whether she had a soul; she was almost too beautiful to have one.

Near the river's edge and directly in the path of the approaching couple

stood a magnificent live-oak, decked out now in its new coat of green; a veritable monarch, whose vast limbs, sweeping the ground at their extremities, were hung with majestic stalactites of Spanish moss. As they passed beneath the branches of this tree, the Colonel paused abruptly and pointing upward exclaimed: "The orchid, madam! It has bloomed."

Sophia raised her lovely, languid eyes and saw drooping above her a remarkable flower, an orchid, somewhat larger than a lily, the heart of which was a pale gold. For some moments she remained thus, gazing up at the strange blossom with an interest that was more than curiosity. "This, then," she asked finally, "is the famous orchid of your family, Philip?"

"Yes," answered the Colonel, and added lightly, but with an undertone of serious conviction, "As long as this flower blooms, Sophia, no harm can befall us!" She laid her hand impulsively upon his arm, "Do not go to town today, Philip! Stay at home with me!"

"My dear Sophia, are you not well?" "Oh, yes, Philip; I am perfectly well. But as I stood here just now, I thought that—I thought that a shadow had fallen upon us—"

Colonel Philip's black brows contracted in a frown. "That is not unlikely, since we are standing beneath a tree."

"It was not a shadow of the tree, Philip."

"Come, come, madam! How often must I request you not to vex me with your little superstitions? What man worthy of the name would permit himself to be turned aside by shadows?"

Sophia remained silent for an instant, then said in a low tone, "Forgive me, Philip; I know it was only a foolish fancy." Her voice with its quaint precision of phrase and charm of accent fell reassuringly upon the Colonel's ears. He took his wife's hand in his and bowed low over it, sweeping off his hat as he did so. Then he turned and walked at a leisurely gait to the landing-dugout, stepped into the waiting dugout, and took his place in the stern sheets. The canoe drifted out into the stream. The Colonel grasped the tiller-ropes and leaned forward. "Give way!" he said gently, and the boat, at the word, leaped half its length through the water. The four negroes, each wielding a twelve-foot ash oar arranged upon an outrigger, fell easily into a long swinging stroke, their half-naked black bodies swaying back and forth like so many parts of a smoothly working machine; and as they rowed they sang:

"Pat-rollers standin' by de co't house do, Long come a nigger, en stub he toe, Whar dat nigger now?"

Colonel Philip, his broad-brimmed hat pulled down over his eyes, laid his course for the town wharf, some six miles away, and gave himself up to various reflections. His thoughts were chiefly of his beautiful wife, of her charm and grace, of her exquisite breeding, of her subtle mystery. What a picture she had made, standing there beneath the oak, with her face lifted to the flower! How the golden tint of the orchid had matched the soft glow of her flesh! She, herself, was like some rare plant magically glowing in his home.

He had met her at Havana during the course of a business voyage to that city in the previous autumn; had seen her standing tall and wonderful on a balcony in the Malecon—one of those marvelous grilled balconies that the Cubans put upon their houses, like so much fine iron lace. For days following he had ridden to and fro beneath her window, and she had looked down at him, slowly fanning herself with a huge silver fan, and apparently smiling. Eventually, he had sought an introduction to her father, a wealthy Spanish nobleman, and thereupon had presented his suit in formal fashion. He had conducted his courtship under prescribed difficulties—wooing his lady in a cavernous tiled room filled with her relatives, who sat facing one another in two long rows of chairs placed down the center of the chamber and who poured out interminable floods of Spanish—Sophia alone spoke English—meanwhile waving their fans in unison, as though to brush the air of unseen words.

He had married Sophia upon her twentieth birthday—he, himself, was twelve years older—and had sailed with her to Florida, there to establish her as the mistress of his estates. She had taken her place in his life with the dignity of a queen assuming a throne, and in all matters had arranged her tastes to conform with his. Yet, at times, he felt that she was still an utter stranger to him, as exotic and unaccountable as the golden orchid that, next to Sophia herself, was the chief treasure of his existence.

This orchid had bloomed for generations upon the body of the great oak at the foot of the Gardiner place. So far as was known, it was the only orchid to grow in that section of Florida and was one of the marvels of the countryside. The story was that the first Gardiner, landing on this shore after many trials by land and water, had looked up to see smiling upon him the golden orchid and had accepted it promptly as a good omen. Since that day, the flower had remained the inviolate talisman of the Gardiner heirs and was considered generally to exert a mystic influence upon the family fortunes. There was a legend that so long as the orchid bloomed undisturbed and was not picked, so long the house of Gardiner would prosper. Colonel Philip, though not of a superstitious turn of mind, believed implicitly in this legend, and, indeed, regarded the orchid as an object almost sacred.

In exactly half an hour after leaving its own dock, the dugout, driven by the tireless energy of the blacks, reached the town wharf. The Colonel disembarked, and tossing a handful of silver to his crew, bade them wait till his return. The negroes dispatched one of the number with the money to buy food and sweetmeats; the others promptly curled up and went to sleep. The Colonel might return in an hour, or he might return in a week—he would find them waiting just where he had left them.

Colonel Philip walked slowly up the

wharf and through the main street of the town, pausing to answer the salutations of such citizens as greeted him, or sweeping off his hat in response to a lady's smile of recognition. Finally, however, he entered the door of the Planter's Hotel, bowed to the several gentlemen sitting in the lobby (each gentleman had a brass cuspidor beside him), bowed in just the proper degree to the white-haired negro scraping in his path, and stopping at the desk, bowed to the clerk on duty. The latter, in reply, leaned forward and said gravely: "Good evening, Colonel Gardiner! A fine evening, sir!"

The Colonel drew himself up as though acknowledging a personal compliment. "Sir, a fine venin'. A d—d'd fine venin', if I may say so—yes, sir!"

The row of gentlemen seated in the lobby nodded their heads approvingly and spat as one into their several receptacles. The Colonel passed on up the broad, red-carpeted flight of stairs.

Arriving at the second floor he walked down the corridor until he came to a door marked "Salon." This he pushed open and stepped directly into a spacious, high-ceiled room heavily with tobacco smoke. In the center of the chamber four gentlemen sat playing cards about a round mahogany table. At a sideboard against the wall, a negro in a white apron was pouring liquor out of a cut-glass decanter.

As the Colonel entered, the gentlemen at the table rose and bowed. The Colonel bowed in return, and advancing, shook hands with the first three. "Good evenin', Mr. Preble. Good evenin', Mr. Hobbs. Good evenin', Judge Oldmaster."

"Good evenin', sir." The last individual, a big, blooming man with steel-rimmed spectacles set low upon a large crimson nose, with a wave of the hand indicated the fourth member of the party. "Colonel Gardiner, sir. I have the honor to present Mr. Ramon Alvarez, formerly of St. Augustine, but now, sir, of this community. Mr. Alvarez has purchased some land down the river and purports to raise indigo. Mr. Alvarez—Colonel Gardiner."

"I am happy to meet you, senior," said Alvarez smiling. "Sir, I am your servant," replied the Colonel, grasping the hand of the other and measuring him with a keen glance. He saw a young man, small and elegant, with the dark complexion of a Spaniard and the delicate features of an aristocrat. He had a black mustache, white teeth that gleamed when he smiled and a pair of bold, flashing brown eyes. His manner was one of careless gaiety, and his charm and good humor were uncontrollable.

"Boy," said the judge, "liquor!" The negro in the white apron approached with a tray from which each gentleman took a glass of whiskey, and remarking, "Your health, sir!" drained it without the degenerate aid of water. After which, the four original players sat down once more at the table and waited for the Colonel to complete the preliminaries contingent upon his participation in the game.

These were simple, but inviolable. First, he removed his hat and gave it to the negro; then he removed his coat and placed it over the back of his chair. Next, he took from his pocket a small clay pipe which he filled and lighted. Finally, he sat down in his chair, picked up the hat that had been dealt him and said, "Gentlemen, if the pot is open, I will come in; if it is not open, I will open it!"

The game, from that moment, proceeded without interruption until six-thirty o'clock p. m., when an adjournment was taken for refreshments. After these had been consumed, the gentlemen renewed their poker. At midnight a light supper was served, following which the gentlemen renewed their poker. The Colonel was in excellent fettle. He had smoked a sack of first-rate Cuban tobacco, had drunk a quart of good whiskey and had won ten thousand dollars.

But his luck was short-lived, for when the game ended by agreement at dawn he had lost thirty thousand dollars to Ramon Alvarez, the young Spaniard. "I said the Colonel, rising and inclining his tall figure in the young man's direction, 'I congratulate you. Your luck was phenomenal, sir. Phenomenal!'"

"It would need to be senior," returned Alvarez, laughing, "to defeat such playing as yours." The Colonel bowed once more, and then, with rare delicacy, approached the matter of payment. He said that he had not, unfortunately, so much cash in hand, but that if Alvarez would come to his plantation he might select thirty slaves worth one thousand dollars apiece. Ramon readily agreed to this plan, and the Colonel invited him to come with his overseer the following afternoon. Then, bidding a formal farewell to his friends Preble, Hobbs and Oldmaster, Colonel Philip left the hotel as he had entered it, calm, unruffled, dignified, with only a slightly flushed cheek to betray the extent of his gentlemanly dissipation.

Walking down to the wharf he roused his negroes, got into his dugout and was rowed home through the early morning at a pace that would have done credit to a contemporary steamboat.

An hour later, having bathed, shaved and donned fresh linen, he breakfasted with his beautiful wife, who received him as usual, presenting her cheek to be kissed and smiling across the snowy table whenever she met his glance. "There will be a gentleman to visit this evening," said the Colonel, as he heaped his plate with steaming spoonfuls of hominy; "he will have tea with us and stay the night." "Ah!" exclaimed Sophia, and unconsciously uttered a sigh. "Are you displeased, madam?" inquired the Colonel rather sharply. "Oh, no, Philip. I am not displeased at anything you do. It is merely that I like best to be alone here with you. Then it is most like a paradise to me, Philip." "You are a model wife, Sophia! But you will enjoy meeting this young man. He is charming and, more than that, a countryman of yours!" That afternoon Ramon Alvarez arrived, accompanied by his overseer, in a handsomely appointed flatboat. The

Spaniard was welcomed by Colonel Philip in person and was conducted to the spacious veranda of the house, where a statuette negro butler served mint juleps in glasses as fine as crystal.

"You may tell your factotum, sir, to go out to the quarters and take what pleases him. He will find my creatures a sound lot, I believe. Is your julep sugared to suit you, sir?"

"It is excellent," repeated Alvarez with a little wave of the hand. Thus, while the two men sat upon the porch sipping their juleps and talking of inconsequential matters, some thirty negro slaves were removed bodily from the Gardiner quarters, were fastened together with a rope and marched down to the river bank, where they were compelled to man the lighter. This vessel, thereupon, amid lamentations, put forth and was soon lost to view.

She had no more than disappeared, however, when the Colonel, glancing up, saw Sophia standing in the doorway, evidently much perturbed.

"Oh, Philip," she exclaimed, "what does it mean? They have taken Zacharias, the husband of my maid, Harriot!"

Then she perceived Ramon, and her agitation changed to a very pretty confusion. "I am sorry! I did not know—" she murmured.

"Madam," said the Colonel coldly, "let me present to you, Mr. Ramon Alvarez, a friend of Judge Oldmaster, and therefore—of mine! Mr. Alvarez is the gentleman of whom I spoke."

Alvarez bowed gracefully, then straightening up, looked at the Colonel's wife. "I regret, senora," he said, "that I have been unintentionally the cause of your unhappiness. I shall be more than glad to return to you the slave, Zacharias."

"Thank you, senior," replied Sophia simply. "That is most kind of you." Alvarez turned to the Colonel. "With your permission, senior?"

Colonel Philip said stiffly, "Your generosity does you honor, sir. But I must insist, in such a case, that you take two slaves in place of the one you intend to return."

The Spaniard smiled, showing his white teeth. "As you will!" he said, and looked again at the Colonel's wife.

Henceforth he continued to look at her with his bold brown eyes, as though she were some marvel which he would imprint upon his memory. When tea was announced, and Sophia appeared in a gown of corn-colored silk that displayed to advantage her slender arms and lovely shoulders, her firm smooth neck rising from the gentle slope of her bosom, Alvarez could not repress a start of admiration. All through the meal, which the Colonel signaled by delivering an extensive homily upon the art of cooking rice, Ramon kept watch of the radiant beauty of his hostess, noting its various moods and transitions, closely observing the play of emotions upon that fair face, while lending an attentive ear to the Colonel's discourse.

After tea, they repaired to the drawing-room, through whose tall windows fell the spent shafts of the departing day, long fingers of light that struck rich fires from silver and old mahogany and made, van the flames of the candles burning in their sconces. Sophia seated herself at the massive rosewood piano, and played tinkling waltzes lazily, while the twilight deepened and the candles grew as bright as so many little swords. Finally, she struck into a certain air.

"Ah!" exclaimed Alvarez, springing up, "I know the words to that!" And going to the piano, he sang in a pleasing tenor voice the song that she had begun. For the next hour he remained at Sophia's side, rendering innumerable Spanish ballads, to which she improvised graceful accompaniments. The Colonel sat in an armchair and pulled his mustache, listening with a rather grim expression of countenance to the music whose meaning he understood but little. His manner as he bade Alvarez good-night, however, was one of unqualified courtesy and good-will.

Two days later, Ramon Alvarez made a second visit to the great house on the shore of the St. John's. His ostensible purpose was to return the slave, Zacharias; but he confessed to Sophia, with a charming, ingenious air, that he had come chiefly in the hope of seeing her again. "It is such a pleasure to meet a countrywoman in this land which is no longer Spain," he confided to her with his gleaming smile; but his eyes said boldly: "You are the most beautiful creature that I have ever seen. I dream of you. I long to possess you."

As it happened, the Colonel was not present at this meeting, having gone to ride over his vast estate. Hence, it fell to Sophia's lot to entertain Ramon until her husband should return. This she did by showing him about the premises, by conducting him through her flower garden and by walking with him along the edge of the river, where ran a delightful little path canopied over with Spanish moss. Finally they came to the great oak, and Ramon, letting his gaze rove for an instant from the person of his companion, saw the marvelous golden orchid growing upon a branch of the tree.

"Look, senora! There is a flower that might be your face reflected from heaven. Let me climb up and get it for you!"

"No, no!" cried Sophia, in horror. "You must not! It is not to be picked, that flower! My husband would kill us—"

Then, rather breathlessly, she told Ramon the history of the Gardiner orchid. When she had finished, he looked at her with his bold, flashing eyes, and said that a flower was a frail talisman upon which to impose so large a faith. "Especially," he added, "as beautiful flowers are meant to be picked!"

"Is that true, senior?" "Is it not, senora? Of what use is a blossom that grows unnoticed in the gloomy shade of an oak tree? What purpose does it serve, or what joy does it taste, hidden there in cold chastity from the warmth of admiring eyes?"

Sophia glanced up at him sidelong. "Ah, senior," she said, with a sigh, "how well you understand the nature of flowers!" (Concluded next week.)

Predicts Hard Winter.

Hazleton.—Jake Lintner, Butler valley's famous 80 year old weather prophet, issued his predictions for next winter, as follows: "What do I think of the long spell of rainy weather? Well, it beats all records I have heard of; but I am not worrying so much over the rain as I am over the corresponding snow that

is likely to come to this part of the country next January. In my observations I have never known it to fail. Every time there has been a long spell of rain in July we have lots of snow and sleet in January. So I would advise you to have your coal bins filled and do as we do in the country, lay in a good supply of edibles."

Meats in Storage Not "Hoarded"

Live stock is a seasonal crop—like cereals and grains.

It is "ripe" and is marketed in larger quantities in certain months. This causes a natural oversupply at one time and a natural shortage at another.

During the time of oversupply Swift & Company places some of the meat in cold storage, against the season of short production.

This is a necessity in order that the nation's ration of meat—58,000,000 pounds every day in the year—may be forthcoming as the consumer requires it.

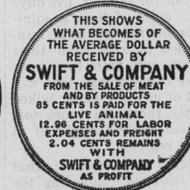
This is not hoarding, not price manipulation, not market control. It is mere common sense.

United States Bureau of Markets' figures of stocks of frozen and cured meats July 1 are being used as a basis for Department of Justice investigations in many cities. When properly analyzed, based on Swift & Company's stocks, these figures show:

- 62 per cent (approximate) is pork and beef cuts, etc., cured and in process of curing. It takes 30 to 90 days in pickle or salt to complete the curing process.
12 per cent is frozen pork, of which more than three-quarters is to be cured in the next few months.
7 per cent is lard. This is a normal supply and only four-fifths of a pound per capita, and much of it will have to go to supply European needs.
19 per cent is frozen beef and lamb, and miscellaneous meats, part of which is owned by the Government and was intended chiefly for over-seas shipment. If this were all diverted to domestic trade channels it would be only 2 1/2 lbs. per capita—a 5 days' supply.

From this it will be seen that "meats in storage" represent unfinished goods in process of curing and the working supply necessary to assure the consumer a steady flow of finished product.

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