

THE VALE OF ARAGON

By FRED McLAUGHLIN

Author of "The Blade of Picardy"

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THE STORY

At nightfall, in the old city of New Orleans, in the year 1821, Loren Garde, recently an officer under General Jackson, is surprised by the appearance of three figures, in ancient Spanish costume, two men and a woman whose beauty enchants him. Representing the arrogance of the elder of the two men, Garde fights a duel with him with swords, and wounds him. Afterward he learns his opponent is Adolfo de Fuentes, colonel in the Spanish army in Venezuela. Garde flees from gens d'armes, taking refuge in a garden, where he overhears a plot to overthrow Spanish rule in Venezuela. Discovers he fights, but is overpowered, recovering consciousness to find himself a prisoner on the Santa Lucrecia, Spanish ship bearing contraband arms and ammunition for the Venezuelans under Bolivar.

CHAPTER II—Continued

"We go to La Guaira," said Francisco solemnly, "and there, God willing, we join forces with Simon Bolivar, who will be, some day, the savior of his country, just as your own George Washington was."

"A thing," said I, "which I hope will come to pass, for the western world should be free of Spain, and will be, some day, I am sure. That, however, interests me less at this moment than my safe return to New Orleans, where my father and my mother will be waiting for me."

"You think, then," Francisco urged, "that, for certain compensation, you could not add to the experiences of your life by joining—?"

"Compensation? My father, Senor, is the richest man in the lower valley. What can a campaign in Venezuela add to my life? I have spent two years with Gen. Andrew Jackson."

"Yet we cannot set you free, Senor, you know too much."

"You cannot hold me."

Francisco smiled. "We have arranged it. You are mad; a violent insanity has possessed you, and the good Doctor Santini, whom, in one of your fits of madness, you have already attacked, must attend you to all times. We are taking you to your home near Caracas."

"You have told the captain all that?"

"Assuredly; it was gentler by far than dropping you into the river, for our plans must not go astray."

"Bah!" I cried. "Suppose I get word to the captain that the coils of tobacco conceal firearms, that the kegs of tobacco are powder, that the corn contains bullets, and that machetes may be found in the pork?"

Francisco laughed softly, while Santini swore out of the side of his mouth. "If you managed to get such word to Captain Alvarez, Senor, and he should look and find nothing, he will be assured that you are mad; if he should find contraband he would have no proof against us, for shipment has been made in proper form from Diego Martinez to another merchant in Caracas. If the captain questions our innocence, and even becomes so suspicious as to confine us, pending examination at Caracas, there is yet Manuel and the mixed crew of this ship. We cannot do things by halves. Only Spanish ships may trade with Venezuela, therefore we put them to our use."

I marveled at the daring of the thing, and marveling, I was filled with admiration. "Simon Bolivar must depend upon you greatly, Senor," I said.

Francisco bowed. "He has offered me that signal honor, and you may rest assured that nothing shall swerve me from my service to him and, through him, my service to Venezuela. One life, Senor, or a score of lives, shall not stand in my way. We brought you alive to this ship instead of killing you as we should have done because I harbored a faint hope that a man of your courage might see his way clear to aid us, but as you cannot offer service I shall see to it that you do not interfere."

"I think, of the two of us, Francisco, the charge of madness should not be laid against me!"

The days went by, slowly enough, while the Santa Lucrecia skimmed the quiet waters of the Gulf, and my head heeled, and the face of Santini became less like that of a gargoyle.

We touched at Vera Cruz, where a letter I had written to my father and mother was posted, a letter telling them that I had gone to Venezuela with friends, and would return to New Orleans at a later date. This, I knew, would relieve their worry over my non-arrival from France.

At Coatzacoalcos, in the tranquil harbor of which we spent a night, the wily Francisco offered me a chance to escape, but, having experienced a change of heart, I refused to take advantage of it, for I had heard a voice

in the night—a voice as clear and as pure as the note of a mocking bird. It brought back to me remembrance of all the mad things of that wild New Orleans night. That voice had transformed the Santa Lucrecia from a prison ship into a paradise.

As the days and nights went by I listened for her footsteps on the after-deck; I pictured again and again the exquisite face in its frame of dark curls, the soft curve of her cheek, the sweetly pointed chin, and I lost myself in the immeasurable depths of eyes that could change to purple the silver glory of moonlight.

One night I heard her voice lifted in an old French song that I knew and loved, and one that my mother used to sing.

Francisco and Santini were out. I tried the door and found, to my great surprise, that it was unsecured, for they had been in the habit of locking me in. I slipped out, my heart thudding in my throat, and seeking the protecting shadow of the mizenmast, crouched, listening, looking.

Scarce thirty feet away she stood beside the starboard after-rail, a golden-tan mantilla over her hair and across her slim shoulders. Her face was raised toward the stars, and the music that came from her lips was such as I had always imagined the angels might produce.

A slim boy, Polito, was near her, and on her right stood the massive figure that I had last seen dressed as Charles V. One of his arms was strapped against his side. His rasping voice broke into the middle of the melody: "Why do you sing in French, Carissima; is not the Spanish language sufficient?"

"No one language, Dolfo, is sufficient for a night like this. Every language has its own love songs, never does a translation quite suffice."

I found myself laughing softly in the gloom. She would sing a love song in French to her Spanish lover! Even Polito was laughing now. "Adolfo," he said in gentle raillery, "console thyself that she does not sing in English, which might bring to her mind the moon-madness of that tall Americano with the fair hair and the clever wrist."

Adolfo uttered something in his heard that must have been an oath, for her voice was gently chiding: "Poor Dolfo, he has had an evil time, and we should be good to him during this, his first hour on the deck. I think the Americano must have had a touch of the moon, which does amazing things to us. I suppose he is laughing, somewhere, over the madness of that night."

"Unless," said De Fuentes lamely, "there have been other nights."

"Now I wanted to deny that; I wanted to tell her that her image had filled my dreams. I had a wild desire to cast myself at her feet and to cry my love aloud to the world, yet I knew that such an act of insanity would only add confirmation to Francisco's charge of madness against me."

While I waited, hot and cold by turns, listening to her voice and devouring her with eager eyes, two figures came along the rail and stopped. The taller one, Francisco, bowed, and Adolfo jerked his heavy body awkwardly. When she spoke to Francisco and Santini there was an easy frankness in her manner, as though she had been in the habit of talking with them often.

"That mysterious patient of yours, Doctor Villard," she said, "has filled me with a consuming curiosity; is it forbidden that I satisfy it?"

Santini laughed uneasily, and Francisco answered her: "It has been ordered, Senorita, that our patient be left in the strictest privacy. His people in Caracas will hold us—"

Now De Fuentes laughed, laughed harshly, laughed long and loud, a huge guffaw that beat out over the quiet sea. "Caracas," he cried, "how will you two reach Caracas?"

"Ah, Adolfo," she said, "what do you mean; has the close confinement, and the pain of your wound—?"

"No," Adolfo yelled, "a hundred noes!" He went off into another paroxysm of unholly glee, in which I fervently hoped he might expire of apoplexy, but he survived. "Doctor Villard," he jeered, "Doctor Villard indeed! He is Santini, the soldier—and Bolivar is going to lose a patriot! And as for you, Francisco Perez, there will be a rope—"

Francisco emitted a shrill whistle, and figures, running swiftly, emerged from the gloom. I dashed toward the milling group, caught sight of Santini, with a knife upraised, and threw myself upon him. The evil blade clattered to the deck and the soldier turned to face me. He rasped a bitter oath, swinging his fists the while, which crashed against the side of my head and filled the heavens with shooting stars. Before Santini could strike

Women's Hands Larger Than Ancestors'

The hands of the women of today—are they larger than the hands of their grandmothers? There is no exposition of old-style costume, says the *Matin* of Paris, which does not reveal, at least by the diminutive gloves, the exquisite smallness of our feminine predecessors, both living and extinct. Few women of this generation, moreover, are able to wear the wedding rings, the other rings or bracelets of their ancestors.

One is able to conclude, certainly, that these souvenirs of the past were chosen in accordance with the fashion and requirement, and not merely curious legacies left to us as something most precious and most rare.

It would be only honesty, rather, to avow that the activity of modern

again the lithe form of Polito intervened. He threw his slim body like a lance at the soldier's throat and the two went down, a grotesque figure of writhing arms and legs.

Now I saw the dark Manuel, a pistol in his hand and his mouth open in an expectant grin. Before he could raise the weapon I closed his mouth with a driving fist, behind which I had put all the power of my muscles.

With the sailors pressing around us I turned to find Francisco. There was no enmity in his eyes, and he made no move to attack me. "Francisco," I said in one of those sudden, unaccountable hushes that every battle, large or small, will develop, "you have committed a grave blunder."

Trembling hands caught my arm and whirled me around. The Senorita Lamartina raised on tiptoe, and her pale face was less than eight inches from my eyes.

"You—Your Majesty," I faltered.

"Mother of G—d," she whispered, "the moon-wraith!"

A western sun filled the upper half of my tiny cubicle with a lurid glow, a still, oppressive heat—pregnating a storm—bore upon me; bonds that cut me cruelly held my arms and legs, and black thoughts of injustice filled my brain.

I had fought to save him—and her—and I had come to this prison cell. Was this the Spaniard's idea of gratitude; could there be in the heart of Adolfo de Fuentes so perverted a sense of right and wrong, in his slant of life so poor a picture of sportsmanship? Ah, I was to learn many things about the Spaniards.

I wondered what had become of Manuel; I wondered what they had done to Francisco and Santini, for I remembered that Spanish justice was swift.

But one ray of light shined in the gloom of my despair. Riding upon that fervent whisper of the "moon-wraith" had come, so I believed, a definite note of joy.

I heard the grating of a key in the padlock, and the rattle of a chain. The door opened and two armed soldiers came in. They loosed my bonds and I stood up, moving my arms and legs so that the numbness passed away. The sailors eased out in single file and stationed themselves in the channel, guns ready for any attempt that I might make to escape.

I stood wondering, eyes upon the uneven floor, until the consciousness of a presence came to me. I was afraid to raise my eyes until I heard her voice—and there has never been another voice like hers, never another face so exquisite, nor a form so graciously fashioned.

"Will the Senor Moon-wraith—?"

Now a palsy seized me. I was afraid—afraid that I was dreaming. I heard her light step as she crossed the narrow way, and I felt the touch of a tentative hand upon my arm. I raised my eyes and drank deep of the beauty of her face.

"Senorita," I said, "ah, Senorita, you have come thus to my poor prison."

She turned her head and glanced over her shoulder, where in the gloom of the channel, dim outlines of the sailor guards were visible. "Monsieur, you know the French?"

"Perfectly," I said; "it is my mother tongue."

"Your mother tongue? I thought you were Americano."

"Yes; though my mother is French."

Standing close to me she raised her face toward the glow of the tiny port-hole. "Will you tell me, Monsieur, who you are?"

Tell her? I would tell her anything, anything to hold her here, to give me further time to fill my eyes with her loveliness and my soul with the joy of her presence. "My name is Loren."

"Loren," she repeated, accenting—as she should have done—the last syllable. "Loren—what?"

"Loren Garde, the good Norse name that my father, a youth just out of his teens, brought to New Orleans after his campaign under the brilliant Gen. Nathaniel Greene. With faith in himself and the new nation to which he had offered valiant service, he has managed by hard work and careful saving and investment to gather vast acreage of Mississippi valley lands."

"If your father is wealthy, then why—in the name of all the saints, Monsieur—did you thus throw away your life by serving that arch-rebel and conspirator, Simon Bolivar?"

Now a bit of Francisco's patriotism touched me, so that I refrained, for the moment, from telling her that I had spurned the offer of the revolutionists. "The rebel of today, Your Majesty, may be tomorrow's liberator. Do you not know that, already, they are calling this Bolivar the Washington of South America?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

News Review of Current Events the World Over

Statesmen at London Conference Try to Pull Germany Out of Financial Morass—President Hoover Offers Plan.

By EDWARD W. PICKARD



Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald

FOUR resolutions or recommendations, devised by the committee of finance ministers and adopted by the seven-power conference in London, comprised the total results of the parley, and it was the opinion of experts that little if anything had been done for the actual relief of Germany.

The plan includes the suggestions of President Hoover, which Secretary Stimson said were really both American and British in conception. Here, briefly summarized, are the recommendations adopted:

First—That the central banks and the World Bank for International Settlements extend the \$100,000,000 German credit for a further period of three months.

Second—That private banks be urged to leave their credits now in Germany in German hands for the present.

Third—That a world bank committee be appointed to consider the questions of short-term loans to Germany and the conversion of existing short-term loans to long-term loans.

Fourth—That the conference "note with satisfaction" the action of German industrialists in creating a reserve of approximately \$125,000,000 on the German gold discount bank.

After the conference adjourned, Chancellor Bruening and Minister Curtius consulted the American delegates concerning the possibility of arranging a new long-term loan. If France refused to participate, they thought the loan might be made by America, Great Britain and several other countries.

Herr Bruening also conferred with Premier Laval of France on the possibility of the latter visiting Berlin within the next three months.

That France is not at all in sympathy with the Hoover credits proposal was made clear by Premier Laval when he informed the conference: "Our country saved herself in 1925. That is an example which Germany should meditate upon."

Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald presided over the sessions of the conference, and at its opening he sought to impress on the delegates the imperative need of speedy and decisive action. "If we cannot find a solution of the present crisis," said he, "no one can foretell the political and financial dangers that will ensue. It will be difficult to stay the flood before it has overwhelmed the whole of central Europe, with consequences social and political, as well as purely financial, which no man can estimate."

"Time is against us. Every day adds to the risks of a collapse which will be outside of human control."

FRANCE took advantage of the international confab to start a campaign for putting teeth in the Kellogg pact and in the League of Nations covenant. A memorandum issued at the Quai d'Orsay, replying to the league's request for information on armed strength, contained the official view that disarmament cannot be accomplished unless an international armed force is set up under the aegis of the league, or reciprocal obligations are undertaken to prevent aggression by a military force. The document gave no precise figures on France's armaments, but did declare that those armaments have been reduced to the lowest possible point "under present conditions in Europe and the world." National security is still the slogan of France, and she insists on guarantees if her armaments are to be modified.

The memorandum finally contends that insecurity for one state means insecurity for all, and the idea of neutrality is incompatible with the notion of solidarity of states.

WHILE statesmen in London were trying to reach conclusions that might result in the complete abandonment of the projected Austro-German customs union by the German government, the World court in The Hague opened a hearing on the proposal that has been so dear to the hearts of the officials in Berlin.

Before the court took up the case President Adachi of Japan installed Judges de Bustamante of Cuba and Wang of China, who were not present at the last session.

After this preliminary, the full court, including Frank B. Kellogg of the United States, began the hearing, with the governments of Germany, Austria, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia as parties to the case. They were represented by an army of agents, counsels, advocates, and assistants. The Austrian agent, Prof.

Eric Kauffmann, was accompanied by an American, A. S. Feller, of the New York bar.

Dispatches from Vienna indicate that Austria is not nearly so eager for the customs union as she was before the present financial crisis hit Germany. Indeed, the Austrian government may drop the plan entirely. It is now engrossed in trying to extricate Austria from its own financial difficulties. Dr. Franz Rottenberg, who, until recently was director general of the Bank of Austria, has been called on for help and has been made director of the Austrian credit bureau. It will be his task to arrange a national credit and budget system which, it is hoped, will pull the nation out of the hole.

ANNOUNCEMENT is made by the insurgent government at Canton, China, that it will begin operations against the Nationalist government on August 1, when Gen. Chang Fat-Kawi will lead an army into Kiangsi province, which is nominally Nationalist territory.

This decision followed the announcement that Gen. Shih Yu-San, an anti-Nationalist, had begun hostilities in northern China. General Shih's operations north of the Yellow river caused the declaration of martial law in Peiping and Tientsin and the invocation of a news censorship by Nationalist authorities.

TRANSPORTED from El Paso, Texas, in an ambulance, Albert B. Fall, former secretary of the interior, entered the New Mexico penitentiary at Santa Fe to serve a sentence of a year and a day for bribery in federal oil leases. He was put in the prison hospital, where he is expected to serve his time. The usual photographing, fingerprinting, classification and numbering routine was dispensed with until Fall is reported by the prison physician, Dr. E. W. Fliske, as able to stand these details.

Interviews by the press with Fall were forbidden by the United States Department of Justice in a letter of instructions to Warden Ed Swope of the New Mexico penitentiary.

Gov. Murray

SHOULD "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, governor of Oklahoma, seek any other office, it is likely he would receive a large part of the motorist vote of the state. He has been engaged in a contest with Gov. Ross S. Sterling of Texas over toll and free bridges across the Red river, which separates the two states, and for a time at least the result was that automobiles crossed the river on free spans, excepting the one at Denison, Texas, and the owners of toll bridges were doing no business. At the south end of the Denison free bridge Texas rangers were stationed by order of Governor Sterling to stop traffic after Oklahoma officers had torn down a barrier that had been erected. In retaliation, Governor Murray had highway crews tear up the approaches to toll spans that are near two free bridges. The Denison toll bridge was blocked at the Oklahoma end, forcing traffic to make a 30-mile detour to the free bridge at Preston.

Oklahoma highway employees said they had received orders to begin tearing up a section of road near Achille, Okla., leading to K. O. & G. railroad bridge at Carpenter's Bluff, eight miles east of Denison. The railroad bridge has a toll runway for vehicles.

Involved in the controversy are a federal injunction and a contract with toll bridge owners. J. J. Loy, Texas state senator, prominent in highway affairs, informed Governor Sterling that he considered the Texas executive had overstepped his authority in sending rangers to block the Denison free bridge. "The bridge was closed by a federal injunction and keeping it closed was a matter for federal officers," Loy said.

BAD weather conditions marred the 1931 national balloon elimination race which started at Akron, Ohio, and the contest was decidedly unsatisfactory. First place was won by the United States navy bag which was piloted by Lieuts. T. G. M. Settle and Wilfred Bushnell. Second place went to the Goodyear-Zeppelin Goodyear VIII, piloted by Frank Trotter, and third honors to the W. J. R. of Detroit, guided by Ed J. Hill and Arthur Schlosser.

The navy balloon landed at Marilla, N. Y., after covering a distance of 215 miles. The Goodyear came to earth about two hours later at Stevensville, Ont., 190 miles from her starting point, while the W. J. R. came down at Wesleyville, Pa., near Erie, after covering only 115 miles.

The army balloon No. 1, piloted by Capt. Karl S. Axtater and Lieut. H. S. Couch, had to cover only about 80 miles to take fourth place in the contest. This bag came down at Custards, Pa., after running into a storm. The same storm forced down L. P. Furculow and John Rieker, the Akron balloon pilots, who landed four miles north of Ravenna to take fifth place after traveling only about 20 miles.

A second army balloon, piloted by Lieuts. Edgar Fogesonger and John A. Tarro, was last, with a flight of only 35 minutes. It covered only 12 miles before coming down. As a result of the contest, the navy and Goodyear balloons will represent the United States along with W. T. Van Orman of Akron in the international Gordon Bennett race.

NICARAGUAN insurgents have "busted loose" again and are giving the national guard so much trouble that United States marine patrols went to the rescue from Managua.

A large party of rebels armed with pistols and machetes entered the town of Rama on the Escondido river and, after sharp fighting, was driven back by national guardsmen. Three of the invaders and one guardsman were killed.

About the same time 250 men under Pedro Altamirano, Sandinista chieftain, sacked the small mining town of Santa Domingo in Chontales department, according to official reports. Police killed one of the insurgents. A national guard patrol was ambushed on both sides of the Chico river at Kisslaya by 40 insurgents, the government has been informed. Three of the insurgents were killed and one guardsman was wounded.

OUR eight new 10,000-ton cruisers, it has been found, roll so badly in rough water that the effectiveness of their gunfire is impaired. Therefore they are to be altered. Already anti-rolling tanks and larger bilge keels are being put in the Pensacola and the Northampton and if these changes are successful the other cruisers also will have them. Navy officials said the seriousness of the roll had been exaggerated. The seven cruisers now building have been so modified in design, it was said, that the tendency to roll will be eliminated.

WHAT was said to be the largest prohibition investigation ever undertaken came to a climax in Baltimore when a federal grand jury returned three indictments charging 53 corporations and individuals in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Michigan and Ohio with conspiracy to violate the prohibition laws.

The investigation was begun in August, 1929, after the seizure in Baltimore of three big stills used for cracking and re-distilling commercial alcohol for beverage purposes. More than 130 witnesses, including Prohibition Director Woodcock, Dr. James M. Doran, former director and officials of the attorney general's office appeared before the inquest, which cost the government \$500,000.

Among those indicted were the United States Industrial Alcohol company, and its subsidiary, the United States Industrial Chemical company of West Virginia and Maryland, the largest industrial alcohol company in the country.

According to the charges, the conspiracy was started in 1927, and corporations were formed for the purchase of industrial alcohol so it could be resold to other individuals for conversion into beverage channels. It was said the ring operated plants at Cleveland, Erie, Pa., Paterson, N. J., and Fredonia, and Florida, N. Y.

WHEAT continues to be a live topic for a considerable part of the country's population, and scarcely a day passes without either an attack on the policy of the farm board or a defense of its way of doing business. The price having dropped to 25 cents a bushel or even lower in the Southwest, the growers are using their grain in ways heretofore unknown. In the Texas panhandle it is accepted as admissions to theaters, and by dentists and newspapers in lieu of cash. Many of the southwestern farmers are feeding wheat to poultry, cattle and hogs and using it for fuel. A judge in Dodge City, Kan., offers to marry couples for ten bushels of the grain, and in several cities motor companies take it in exchange for used cars at the rate of 50 cents for a bushel.

SYNDICALISTS are causing a lot of trouble in Spain, and it is a question whether the new republic will be able to survive. Riotous demonstrations in Seville resulted in the death of nearly a score of persons, and martial law was proclaimed there.

It was predicted that when the assembly was formally constituted the cabinet would resign immediately, that Alcalá Zamora would be elected president and that he would summon either Manuel Azana, present war minister, or Alejandro Derraux, foreign minister, to the premiership.

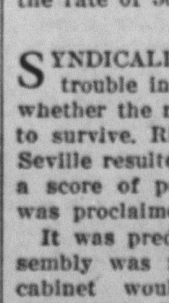
The proclamation declaring martial law in Seville set forth that troops would fire on the slightest warning and that, therefore, residents had best keep off the streets and out of balconies. Resistance to the military will result in immediate court-martial. The troops were ordered to use heavy artillery to destroy houses from which sniping has been going on.



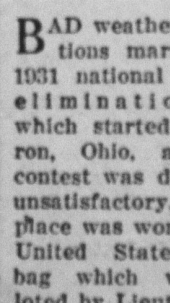
Ames W. Woodcock



Gov. Murray



Licut. Bushnell



Dr. Rottenberg