

The Vale of Aragon

By FRED McLAUGHLIN

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CHAPTER X-Continued

"I haven't forgot it, and the general shall know. General Bolivar shall hear how he received that injury..."

"I stood aghast, for Pini, in the presence of witnesses, had given me his promise that nothing of that unfortunate affair of Maracay should reach the ears of the Liberator..."

"Tell him," Pini cried, "tell your general about your arm; explain to him how you were wounded..."

"I am waiting," said Bolivar. "Colonel Pini shot me, my general..."

"Not at all." "Was this at Maracay?" "Yes, my general..."

"Pini would doubtless have good reason for doing such a thing. He turned a judicial eye upon the colonel..."

"I attacked him, my general." "Mother of G-d!" Bolivar gasped. "That is, I dissembled, my attack upon him and his shooting of me came so near the same instant that it would be impossible to tell which was cause and which effect..."

"Was this—er—unfortunate affair in any way related to the loss of Maracay?" "No, general," Colonel Pini lied; "it was purely personal..."

"Now Bolivar's eyes questioned me. It was not in me to explain to the Liberator how Colonel Pini had wasted a precious hour in drunkenness and in an unsuccessful attempt to win the favor of the Senorita Lamartina..."

"Colonel Pini is entirely right, general; that unfortunate affair was purely personal. I confess to having attacked the colonel, my superior officer, and I do not care to offer any defense..."

Bolivar's face was a study. He must have known that, in service to him and to Venezuela, I had given my best; he knew that the Apure battalion of three hundred Indians whom I had commanded was the best of his native fighting force...

"That, my general, is a question for Colonel Pini." Pini must have realized that his burst of anger had opened up a dangerous abyss for himself, for he smiled and, assuming a pose of charity, said: "One must make allowance for a gallant soldier, General; our Americano has been a bit impetuous and I did not report that hapless circumstance because I had no wish to injure him in your eyes..."

"Drunk, even, the sophist was always a good liar." General Bolivar laughed, relieving thereby an awkward tension. "I cannot expect all my officers to love one another; it is not the way of soldiers, for most of them are 'sudden and quick in quarrel'; neither can I afford to lose one of them thus on the eve of our greatest struggle..."

"So we drank again, and Monahan, pinching my arm, whispered, 'Any soldier who can dash a glass of wine into the face of his superior officer, and get away with it, must surely have the fairies working for him!'"

"Aye, my general." Dawn came slowly as we rested on our arms in the early morning of the twenty-fourth of June, a day which might be termed the birthday of Venezuela. We occupied the timbered heights southwest of the field of Carabobo, and waited to ring down the curtain on the last act of the great Colombian tragedy..."

"I recognized Adolfo, and waved my sword, and called to him to come on; and my voice was drowned in a roar of musketry. Then the bravos leaped to their feet and, yelling wildly, charged with the bayonet..."

"If we lost, I knew that I would go down fighting among those Apure bravos of mine, for I had taught them to stand and fight until the last man could stand no longer..."

The sun glistened on the equipment of the Spaniards, who were spread out in battle array. They were possibly eight thousand strong, which gave them an advantage over us of two thousand men; yet they were hiring fighters, and our men were fighting for their homes, for their families, for the right to rule themselves..."

The approach to the field was a narrow way, hardly wide enough to admit a file of men. The Spaniards opened the battle. The approach of the main body of our forces was in full view of the enemy, and we lost many men to their artillery fire before we reached the plain, where the various units spread, each to its task..."

Under desultory fire of the right wing of La Torre's forces we advanced slowly and took our station upon a low ridge that commanded the plain; where, according to my orders, I placed my three hundred men in a position which seemed to me best to hold the ridge when a general advance of the Spanish army might be made..."

The crash of contact filled the surrounding hills with thunder, for Paez and Cedeño struck—right and center—at once. My men lay, their slim brown bodies close against the ground, and waited. I heard murmured prayers and oaths, and saw nervous movements; so, while the air was full of the potent whine of bullets, I got to my feet and walked slowly back and forth in front of the men..."

"Venezuela, my bravos," I said, "we will be watching you today; when the men of Spain shall charge upon us—we will hold!"

I saw Bolivar's unit reach the plain and close in behind the British legion, which had already made formation in the famous hollow square. As our center, under Cedeño, broke before the superior marksmanship and the greater numbers of the Spanish soldiers, as Paez faltered and failed, I talked to my men, urging, coaxing: "It is only the beginning, my bravos of Apure; we fight today for liberty. To run is defeat and slavery; to stand is victory and freedom. They will be coming now; do not shoot wildly. Wait, hold your fire until you can pick a silver button on a Spanish jacket—and do not miss. For every silver button you make your target a Spanish soldier will offer up his life..."

"There he goes," cried Monahan, with a short laugh, "on to victory!"

The right wing of the Spanish army crumpled under the charge of Pini's horsemen, crumpled and fled in wild confusion. The desperate battle of Carabobo, which removed for ever the rule of Spain from Venezuela, had become a rout..."

The wings of Bolivar's army, racing across the plain, closed in to complete the work of destruction, for nothing less than complete destruction for the Spanish would appease the Liberator. He must have seen, at last, the golden opportunity for a free Venezuela, and he took no chance on losing. Few Spaniards escaped, few prisoners were taken; the rout had become a slaughter wherein the Indians' lust for blood was fully appeased..."

Yet Spain had taught them, (TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Vienna specialist has discovered a new kind of food paste which, rubbed into the skin, is capable of supporting life indefinitely without oral feeding..."

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to their feet and, yelling wildly, charged with the bayonet. They fought like fiends—thrusting, driving, hacking, shrieling weird warcries, and moving ever forward until the enemy broke and fled before us..."

We took an advanced position upon another lateral ridge, and prepared for the next attack. Behind us the field was covered with dead, but for every prostrate bravo there were two of the uniformed men of Spain. Scarce two hundred of our men survived, yet, resting on their arms, they laughed and jested among themselves, and told one another how many Spaniards they had killed..."

Then in one concerted movement the Spaniards attacked all along the line, but Paez held, and the British legion, though called upon to withstand the shock of the bulk of Spain's soldiery, gave no ground; and the center of the enemy line rolled back even as the right wing struck us again..."

The Apure bravos fired almost into the faces of the soldiers, after which they leaped to their feet to meet the Spaniards in hand-to-hand fighting. There was a frantic heroism about their ardor, a wild enthusiasm, a maniacal lust for killing that must have terrified the uniformed soldiers, who outnumbered us two or three to one, for they broke in dismay, leaving us again in possession of the tiny sector that we had been directed to hold at any cost..."

And the cost, indeed, had been a grievous thing, for less than half of my bravos remained; I knew that the next charge of our enemies would find us too weak to hold. I looked back to where Colonel Pini, with more than six hundred mounted men, waited for us to fail, and hatred for the man filled my soul..."

A body of soldiers disengaged itself from the British legion and, under command of a captain whose head was swathed in a crimson bandage, came toward us on a run...

"Monahan," I cried, "all honor to the British legion!" He grinned. "That's the way we did the French at Waterloo, son. They charged and broke against our squares, and charged and broke again, and old Bonny's heart broke with them. It's easy when you know how..."

He considered Pini's force, a scant half-mile behind us, and swore softly. "What's the colonel waiting for, Garde?"

"For the 'break,' my friend, then he will gallop forward and win a glorious victory. These hundred men are sent to me?"

"Sure; if you hadn't held their right wing we could not have held the center. Those bravos of yours have stood like a rock, an unusual thing for native troops..."

"And have died," I said sadly, "holding it." "So Colonel Mackintosh offers his compliments—and this hundred men—and he directs me to tell you that you have put the white man's dogged heroism into the red man's heart..."

This from Mackintosh, grizzled warrior of many battles, was sweet music to my ears. The veterans of the British legion had already been distributed among my bravos, so, renewed in strength and spirit, we waited for the next attack. It came too slowly to suit us, so we went out to meet it—went blithely, wildly, white man and brown—with eager cries upon our lips and the consciousness of imminent victory in our hearts...

After the first volley we met them standing up, arm to arm, eye to eye, and the clatter of conflict filled our little world with noise. That mixed command of mine fought its way through the first Spanish line, then we drove ahead to meet the next one, paying no heed to anything behind us. On our right the British legion, having abandoned its defensive tactics, moved slowly against the center. Evidently it, too, had broken through the first line. From the east came wild cheering from the soldiers of Paez...

"We win, I think," said Monahan. "We could not lose, my friend; yet they move back slowly, in good order. What we should have is a rout—an overwhelming victory..."

"In that case," said the Irish soldier, "we need the mounted laneros." That must also have been Bolivar's thought, for a body of horsemen, moving swiftly through the center, passed the British legion and hurled itself upon the enemy, throwing the line into confusion. The six hundred mounted laneros of Colonel Pini's command roared by us, and we waved our arms and cheered them on...

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LIFE'S LITTLE JESTS

MEEKNESS "Who was the first man?" asked the visiting minister. "Adam," the children all answered in chorus...

Interest "I may as well confess that I am not as picturesque and prominent a figure as I expected to become when I amassed great wealth..."

COULDN'T DETACH Guide—I'd like to see you apart for a moment, sir. "Sorry, but I can't detach myself just now..."

Bright Youth A corpulent teacher was giving a lesson to a class of small children on a canary. Teacher—Can any boy tell me what a canary can do and I can't? Sharp Boy—Please, miss, have a bath in a saucer!

Fortunate Little Girl—I'm glad I wasn't born in France, daddy. Dad—Why, my child? Little Girl—"Cos I don't know my French."

HER ADDRESS Mrs. Codfish—Why, I declare, that must be for me!

Proof Positive "A bachelor has left his fortune to a woman who refused him." "And then you say we men are not grateful."—Buen Humor, Madrid.

Beyond Hope Edna—What kind of a driver is Clarence? Olive—Terrible—all he grasps is the steering wheel.

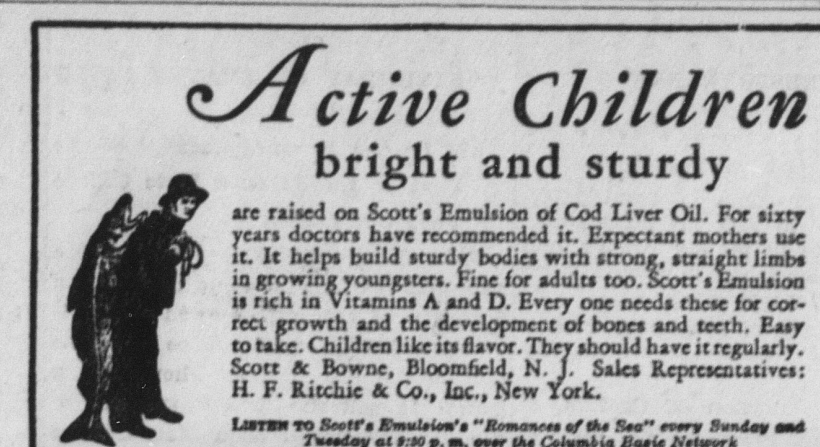
Paradoxical "A sausage factory is an odd place." "Yes, the best thing in it is the wurst."

Otherwise, All Right "You never go on fishing trips, do you?" said Smithers. "No," growled Withers. "I never have any luck, am a poor liar, don't drink and don't care a hang about either catching or eating fish."

Goody to Both Mother was coaxing Sally Lou to eat. "If you don't eat these carrots mother is going away." To which the child quickly retorted: "Take the carrots with you."

Practical Mind "When that man asked you for serious advice you insisted on lending him money." "Yes," replied Mr. Dustin Stax. "Sometimes a lift is of more value than an 'uplift'."

In a Manner of Speaking Mrs. Jones—Well, I see your husband is home helping you. Mrs. Peck—Yes, now that he has retired from business he can do just as he pleases.



Active Children bright and sturdy

are raised on Scott's Emulsion of Cod Liver Oil. For sixty years doctors have recommended it. Expectant mothers use it. It helps build sturdy bodies with strong, straight limbs in growing youngsters...

Steamers Among Clouds The Pacific Steam Navigation company's motor ship La Paz recently left Liverpool for South America. In her hold was packed a complete steamship, capable of carrying 100 passengers and heavy cargo...

Denver Boy is a Winner Every mother realizes how important it is to teach children good habits of conduct but many of them fail to realize the importance of teaching their children good bowel habits...

COULDN'T DETACH Guide—I'd like to see you apart for a moment, sir. "Sorry, but I can't detach myself just now..."

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