

Jim the Conqueror

... By Peter B. Kyne ...

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SYNOPSIS

Roberta Antrim, beautiful Eastern society girl, who lives with her uncle, William B. Latham, known as "Crooked Bill" because of his amusing slyness, receives a telegram from Jaime Miguel Higuera, owner of the Rancho Valle Verde, in Texas, informing her her Uncle Tom Antrim has died, a violent death.

CHAPTER I—Continued

"He is also good-natured and easy-going, otherwise he would not bother himself with the probably thankless task of protecting the interests of a stranger—and an American at that. Probably he acted thus because I am a woman, which proves he is gallant and chivalrous."

"A sort of knight-errant." Crooked Bill murmured maliciously, and Hackett shot him a look of displeasure. "Well, Mexicans, of whatever class, are very polite to a lady. They always make a great-to-do about women. The chances are this Higuera is an educated half-breed Aztec Indian. I wish he had informed us who killed Cock Robin. He merely says it was a cowman."

"I wonder if he got hurt?" Roberta murmured.

"Does it matter particularly?" For a reason he had not even tried to analyze, but which had been born of a subconscious resentment of the man who had made it possible to interject Jaime Miguel Higuera into Roberta Antrim's thoughts, Glenn Hackett spoke.

Ten thousand cunning lips peeped for an instant from Crooked Bill's old eyes. "No, he didn't get hurt—at least, not very badly."

"How do you know?" Hackett demanded, and Roberta looked at her uncle inquiringly. "I believe you know Jaime Higuera."

"I couldn't make an affidavit to that, Roberta. I cannot recall having met him or even heard of him, so help me!"

Just then the butler entered to announce dinner. "Better reconsider your decision and break bread with us," Crooked Bill urged their guest.

"Yes, do," Roberta pleaded. "Thank you, I think I shall not." Then to the butler. "Harms, will you be good enough to get my hat and coat and telephone the garage for my car?"

When Glenn Hackett's car had rolled away down the driveway, Crooked Bill turned to his ward. "Round two for little Bright-eyes. I'm placing my money on the red."

"Who," the girl demanded firmly, "is Jaime Miguel Higuera?"

"I don't know, honey. I can only suspect, and some day I'll verify my suspicions and tell you."

"Please tell me your suspicions now, there's a dear," and Roberta smiled her most coaxing smile and put her arms around Crooked Bill's neck.

"Ah," he murmured, "a man can struggle along under a mystery but it drives a woman crazy. I'll not tell you what I suspect and you are perfectly powerless to drag it out of me."

"For two cents," Roberta threatened, "I'd go down to Los Algodones and investigate Jaime Miguel Higuera personally."

"If you do you'll get the surprise of your sweet young life, my dear."

Roberta's brown eyes danced. Nobody knew better than Crooked Bill how she cherished surprises.

"I think I should go down to Uncle Tom's funeral," she suggested. "I'm the last of the Antrims and it would be rather indecent of me to permit strangers—and not very sympathetic strangers—I fear—to bury him."

Crooked Bill was always practical, even if mysterious. "I wouldn't do that, honey. I'm afraid Uncle Tom won't keep until you get there. I have never heard of ice or undertakers in Los Algodones, and as for hermetically sealed caskets, there just aren't any. I have a friend down there, however, and I'll wire him to attend the obsequies and send flowers for you and a wreath of cactus for me."

"Why have you always disliked Uncle Tom so?"

"Because you're his niece, not mine, and he's never showed the slightest interest in you, except to send you five dollars at Christmas and on your birthdays; because I staked the unholy wretch in the cow business and he sold out the cows, refused to pay the loan, went to Mexico where I couldn't collect and set up in the sheep business; because he was ornery from birth and looked it. Your father was not what I would call a mental giant, Roberta, but he was kind and amusing and on the square, whereas your Uncle Tom was a throwback, a black sheep."

"Every family has them," the girl defended.

"Well, honey, you haven't yours any more!"

The following evening Glenn Hackett, having recovered marvelously from his indisposition of the day before, called for dinner. "The bank gives the man Higuera most flattering recommendations, Mr. Latham," he

announced. "He has plenty of cash and worldly assets and his record is clean. He is known as a man of honor and can be trusted implicitly."

Crooked Bill nodded, as if this report was not a matter of surprise to him. Hackett resumed:

"I cannot go to Texas to attend to this matter of your, Roberta. It will be necessary to engage a lawyer down there to handle your affairs there, and I suppose Higuera can direct you to a good one. I imagine you will have to proceed to Los Algodones immediately."

"I shall start tomorrow," Roberta decided, and added maliciously: "I can hardly wait to meet that adorable Jaime Miguel Higuera!"

CHAPTER II

A Sabbath calm lay upon the hacienda of Don Jaime Miguel Higuera, lord of the Rancho Valle Verde, notwithstanding the fact that it was not Sunday. Don Jaime gazed out through the arched entrance of his patio toward the distant, blue, serrated hills where the United States of America ended and the Republic of Mexico began.

"I wonder," he thought, "what is going to become of the Higuera family?"

The problem proving too much for him, Don Jaime did that which all of his race do with the utmost ease and without preliminary notice. He fell into a gentle slumber. And while he slept a man on a honey-colored horse with a dark stripe running the length of his backbone rode up to the hacienda entrance, dismounted, and strode stiffly through the arched entrance and down the flower-bordered gravel walk to the veranda. Observing Don Jaime at peace in the arms of Morpheus, the stranger removed a full cartridge belt, with two pistols, and hung his armament on one of a row of huge spikes driven into the adobe wall of the house. Quietly he drew another chair alongside Don Jaime, and disposed his tired body in it.

Don Jaime murmured, without troubling to open his eyes. "Who the devil are you?"

"Wake up, you lazy greaser, and see," the visitor retorted.

"When you speak in your naturally loud, vulgar and irreverent tone of voice I recognize you. I do not have to look." Don Jaime spoke perfect English, but the faintest clipped accent denoted it was not his mother tongue. He added in Spanish: "Welcome to my poor house. It is yours, gringo."

"I don't want your poor house. All I desire is accommodation and food for my horse and myself until morning and—"

"Thou graceless one!" Don Jaime murmured drowsily but without offense. "But what else can one expect of a Texan—and particularly a Texas ranger? But what brings you here, my friend?"

"A desire to be neighborly and to offer a slight return for your many evidences of princely hospitality—that and a natural desire to enjoy it again. Since when did you go into the sheep business, Jimmy?"

Don Jaime's dark eyes opened widely and the hint of an ever-ready smile faded from his handsome features, leaving them unbelievably stern. "Where?" he demanded.

"About ten miles south of here. I came across country from San Ysidro and bumped into them on your range. About forty thousand of them, I should say, although I'm no judge of sheep in quantity. The brand is Circle A."

"Tom Antrim's outfit. Well, if he's only ten miles from here he's trespassing on my range. Thanks for the information, Ken. Feed is pretty scarce to the east of me and I suppose Tom Antrim got desperate. Yes, you have your uses, gringo."

"If you care to run into Los Algodones and swear to a warrant charging him and John Doe and Richard Roe and James Black and Thomas Green and say a dozen other off-color gents with trespassing, I'll pick those boys up and lodge them in the jug; and then you and your boys can run the sheep off in peace."

"I don't want to run them off in peace, Ken." Don Jaime replied languidly. "I've done that before and it doesn't work. They always come back. Sure you haven't got some other work to do tomorrow?"

"Now, look here, Jimmy," the ranger protested, "you listen to me. Tom Antrim's there to stay. So I'm going to hang around the neighborhood. He's got twenty herders with him and I noticed they all carried rifles."

"A man's house is his castle," said Don Jaime contemptuously, "and I presume that principle applies to the lands contiguous thereto. One has a right to defend his castle from unwarranted trespass, and I'm here to tell you, old kid, I am very weary of Tom Antrim and his sheeps—I mean sheep. D—n it, will I never get over the habit of slipping on my plastrals, like any Mexican! Three weeks ago the sheriff of this county arrested Tom Antrim and held him and his men long enough to permit me to

drive his sheep off my range; and before I called the sheriff in I talked with Tom Antrim. I told him he must not come back again, because eef—I mean if—he did—here Don Jaime shrugged eloquent shoulders—"well, I would not bother the sheriff to fight for my rights for me. No, by Santa Maria la Purisima! It is in the blood of the Higuera family to fight their own fights."

The ranger protested again. "I heard all about the famous deft of yours to old Antrim, and I happen to know the old skunk don't take orders worth a cent. Yet, he knows you mean business. That's why his men are all armed. He expects a battle and he knows you'll lead your forces. Now, if you should get killed in the fracas, your executor would be the one to protest against his trespassing in the future. Who might your executor be?"

"The Federal Trust company of El Paso."

"Tom Antrim owes them a lot of money. In a dry year they might not be too anxious to discover that Antrim was invading your range—that is, not until they had gotten their money out of the old hog. Now I

"Where the devil do you suppose I got my education, if not along the Rio Grande?" Ken Hobart retorted. He lit a cigar and looked over the pleasant garden. "Gosh, you've got a nice place here, Jimmy. I wish I'd been as discriminating in the selection of my ancestors as you were."

Don Jaime laughed lightly. "Only a little while ago I was reflecting that I have not had opportunity to practice the discrimination evinced by my ancestors in the picking of wives, Friend Hobart," he replied. "If you would be lord of a rancho marry a lady who has one and doesn't know what to do with it. Fortunately, I possess thees—I mean this—rancho, so I do not need the lady."

"If you did, Jimmy, where the devil would you find her?"

"You have the delightful habit of placing your finger on the weak spot, my friend. Where, indeed, would I find a suitable wife? I am too busy with thees—I mean this—rancho, and when, once or twice a year I wander to the fleshpots it is to be filled with amazement and fear of what would happen to me if I marry a modern girl."

"You have all of a Castilian's horror of a woman who believes she can take as good care of herself as any man can. I suppose you want a girl who will consent to dwell behind bars, take no exercise and stand for a fat old duenna tagging around behind her, not to see that she avoids romance but to make certain she doesn't act natural and seek it."

"You are wrong, my friend. I am quite modern but a bit old-fashioned, too. I have been in love many times but only in love with love. I must think long and carefully before asking any woman to share this life with me. Here, she would be lonely. She would look from this hacienda to the horizon and see—cattle. She would look back and see—me. One grows weary of scenery. She would come to regard me as a jailer, not a husband. So I must be careful."

"Well, when you meet the girl you truly fall desperately in love with, and she reciprocates your passion—"

"She," quoth Don Jaime Miguel Higuera solemnly, "shall be the mother of my children."

"Where? Here?"

"Where she will, my friend," Don Jaime replied with simple sincerity.

"Then, Jimmy," said Ken Hobart, "I hope, for purely selfish reasons, you'll meet your fate before long and that she'll refuse to marry you until you sell this ranch and move to Houston or Dallas or San Antonio or—"

"The Higuera men do not take orders from women," Don Jaime interrupted. "And this rancho will never be sold. Four generations of my family have owned it and fought for it. I love it."

"Well, if she asks it, you'll buy her a town house and live there with her part of the year, will you not?"

"Asking is not ordering or delivering ultimatums—"

"Ultimata, Jimmy," the ranger corrected him, mischievously.

"At any rate," Don Jaime resumed,

"I will, having warned him, you ride back home, gather your gang together and take possession of the water-holes where Antrim must, of necessity, water his sheep tonight. Don't let him water them. He'll fight for the water, rather than back-track with his flock over ground that's been eaten over, only to find your men guarding the water-holes in that direction, too. A sheep can't stand such

Statistics Provide New Pastime for Fat Folks

Are you fat or lean? In either case you will appreciate these valuable statistics revealed by a magazine writer regarding adipose tissue, says the Detroit News. New fat added to the frame naturally has to be nourished by the extension of blood vessels. And a pound of fat, says a writer, requires small vessels totaling 5-6 of a mile in length. When a man puts on 30 pounds he interlaces his system with 25 miles of new capillaries, veins and arteries. This fact supplies a very amusing pastime for persons addicted to laying things end to end, and is supposed to explain why fat folks are so contented and jolly. Every evening, as their weight increases, they can sit by the

fire and, after doing the cross-word puzzle, lay a fresh supply of capillaries end to end. Or, when losing weight, they can remove them end from end. It keeps the mind innocently and pleasantly occupied, and makes for happiness and good citizenship.

Beware of us fellows with the lean and hungry look. Such men are dangerous.

Large Gold Nugget

The National museum has a record showing that the largest gold nugget found in California was found in the Monumental mine, in Sierra county, and weighed 1,596 troy ounces.

declining the argument, "it would be a delight to be led but h—I to be driven."

"Well, when some girl starts leading you, you'll need a good manager for this ranch, Jimmy. I'm growing weary of the reckless, modestly paid life of a ranger . . . at least I could be depended on to keep this range free of sheep."

"There are also bandits from below the border who raid my cattle. The cemetery of the Rancho Valle Verde has grown fast of late years."

"Border fighting is right up my alley, James, old son."

"As a ranger you fight with the law behind you. You start with a moral victory. But as manager of this ranch, which God placed too close to the Rio Grande for comfort, you would have to be very careful. It is better to be the head of a mouse than the tail of a lion. However, Friend Ken, if the time should come for me to tie myself to a girl's apron-strings I shall send for you."

Don Jaime lifted from the floor beside his chair a copy of a pretentious magazine devoted to country life in America. "Here is a photograph of a girl," he said, turning the pages idly, "whose face and figure would cast a halo over Texas. Now, if she were as good and sweet and womanly as she is beautiful—Miss Roberta Antrim," he interrupted himself to read from the caption, "one of the enthusiastic members of the Westchester County hunt, mounted on her crack hunter Croppy Boy." Must be an Irish hunter," Don Jaime opined.

"Look at that, Ken, and see if you can work up a cheer or two."

The ranger studied the page casually. "Well, why don't you pull out for Westchester county, New York, secure an introduction to her and see if she's too good to be true or otherwise? At least you'd start with one advantage. She was still unmarried when this magazine went to press."

"One Antrim at a time, Ken. When I've disposed of Tom it will be time to dream of having a look at Roberta."

"You aren't afraid they're related, are you?"

Don Jaime favored his guest with a withering glance. "A man named Jim Hobart was hanged at Austin last week," he retorted. "Was he a relative of yours—this train robber and murderer?"

"Yes," Ken Hobart answered evenly, "he was my half-brother. And I tracked him and captured him. A black sheep will crop out in the best of regulated families, you know."

Don Jaime's hand caressed that of his friend. "I did not know. I am sorry, my friend."

Ken Hobart turned bleak eyes upon his host. "I want to quit the rangers, Don Jimmy. I wasn't jesting when I said I'd like to be the manager of Rancho Valle Verde if you should ever need me."

"You are the man I have been seeking, Ken. When you reach town tomorrow wire your resignation to the governor of Texas, and as soon as you are released return here."

"Hope you'll be here when I arrive, Jimmy. You've got to fight that Antrim outfit, and when you do, for the Lord's sake be careful. I really want this job."

"If I am still here you will be assistant general manager. If I am not here you will be general manager—and executor of my estate. I will make a new will tonight. Your salary will never be less than the one you enjoy at present. Write your own ticket," he added, with a touch of his tremendous prodigality.

Don Jaime made his will and handed it to Ken Hobart at breakfast the following morning. "Your instructions are all in that envelope, too," he explained, "in case I should be unfortunate. I have some Mexican first cousins; they're emigres, living in Los Angeles, and I'm leaving them the ranch in trust, with you as trustee and manager. The revolutions have ruined them and I support them now. Socially, I'm proud of them, but the fact remains that they're d—d spend-thrifts, and if they and their way they'd sell this ranch and the cattle for fifty cents on the dollar in order to start splurging again. And a Mexican grandee is much too conscientious a splurger to continue on the job indefinitely. Consequently I, with my acquired American conservatism, must look after the poor devils."

"Don Jaime," Hobart protested, "I'm your employee now. I'll wire the governor of Texas my resignation and, without waiting for its acceptance, I'll ride back in time to be present when Antrim's sheep come to the guarded water-holes."

Don Jaime smiled. "As you will, Ken. While I require no additional proof that I have made no mistake in hiring you, still—he shrugged and grimaced as only a Latin can—"it is nice to have it. As you know, we of the Higuera tribe are easy-going people. We do not require the services of supermen, for we have never had them, but we have been accustomed to loyalty. Because I know you are loyal to your job I have engaged you."

"Thank you, Don Jaime."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



A Sabbath Calm Lay Upon the Hacienda of Don Miguel Higuera.



"Splitting" Headaches

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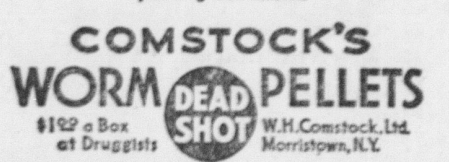
"TUMS" Quick relief for acid indigestion, heartburn. Only 10c.

Sound Dietary Idea

Bacon, in his Regiment of Health, says: "Beware of sudden change in any great point of diet, and if necessity enforce it, fit the rest to it; for it is a secret, both in nature and state, that it is safer to change many things than one." And again: "It is a safer conclusion to say, 'This agreeth not well with me, therefore I will not continue it.'"



Picking at nostrils. Gritting the teeth. Loss of appetite. These are symptoms of worms. Rid your child's body of these ruinous parasites that sap health and strength. Give Comstock's Dead Shot Worm Pellets. Prepared like confections. Children take them without suspecting treatment.



Fills the Bill

"I want to do something big and something clean."

"Then wash an elephant."—Deutsche Illustrierte (Berlin).

Foolish Reasoning

It is in the nature of foolish reason to seem good to the foolish reasoner.—Eliot.

Try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound



Poor girl . . . she has the same old headaches . . . backaches . . . and blues. She ought to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound in tablet form.

But It's No Specific

To avoid that run-down feeling, walk with the green.—Ft. Wayne News-Sentinel.

Adapted From Battle Cry

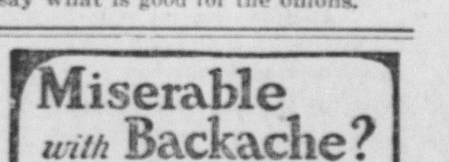
Often the motto used in heraldry was in early times the battle cry of its owner.

A soft answer turneth away wrath and a long answer prevents people from asking you questions in the future.—Terre Haute Tribune.

Write out your speech to last two hours, then cut it down to thirty minutes.

No one will ever enjoy free speech if he afterward becomes scared about what he said.

A physician says that onions are good for the nerves, but he doesn't say what is good for the onions.



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It May Warn of Kidney or Bladder Irregularities

A persistent backache, with bladder irregularities and a tired, nervous, depressed feeling may warn of some disordered kidney or bladder condition. Users everywhere rely on Doan's Pills. Praised for more than 50 years by grateful users the country over. Sold by all druggists.



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