Dice of Destiny

By JACKSON GREGORY

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"IT'S PERJURY!"

Synopsis—Senor Antonio de la Guerra, a fine old Spaniard living on his ancestral estate on the American side of the Mexican border, is informed by his American lawyer, Dempton, that there is a technical error in his will. He thereupon signs a new will, without reading it. In the meantime his adorable granddaughter and heiress, Senorita Teresa, is out on her rose-covered balcony, listening to American love-making from Billy Stanway, owner of the Painted Rock ranch. Teresa, going to join her grandfather, finds him gone, with the drawing room in disorder and blood on the floor. The American takes command of the situation. Senor Eduardo Ramon Torre, a hated kinsman of the De la Guerras, arrives. Stanway and the De la Guerra ranch hands return from vain pursuit of the bandits. The new will disinherits Teresa and makes Torre sole heir. Captain Juarez, nominally representing the bandits, appears and demands $20,000 ransom for De la Guerra. Torre, as heir, tries to assume control and demands that Teresa produce the ransom. Stanway detains Torre and Juarez and his men kidnap Dempton and bring him to the ranch. Stanway demands a confession from the lawyer.

CHAPTER VII.

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A Rat in a Trap?

Eduardo Ramon Torre, lounging before one of the deep windows of the drawing room, smoked his cigarettes and hummed gay snatches of song, evidently quite happy, seemingly unaware of the presence of Gaucho Morales and a brother vaquero, who, on the other hand, kept their eyes always upon the young Spaniard and their hard, brown hands close to their hips.

The door opened and Stanway came in. Torre did not turn, did not cease his gay music. The two vaqueros rose and stood looking at the American curiously.

"Torre," called Stanway bluntly.

Torre turned, smiled, ended a last high note clearly, and only then bowed very deeply to the rancher.

"At your service, Senor Stanway," he said lightly.

"Gaucho," said Stanway, for the moment ignoring Torre. "I shall be with the senor for a little. If you and your companion will wait for me in the patio I'll call you when I want you."

"Si, senor," responded the vaquero promptly. And from the door, as by way of afterthought: "We have not searched him, senor. No doubt he is armed."

"No doubt," dryly, from the rancher. "It is all right, Gaucho."

The two cowboys went out. Then pleasantly, insolently, Torre admitted to Stanway that he had been responsible for Senor de la Guerra's disappearance, that he knew where he was, and that the captain was his own agent.

"What," asked the rancher curiously, "do you gain from such an admission?"

"Two things, senor. In the first place I am meeting you upon a basis upon which we may be able to come to terms. It seems that you are really the one for me to deal with. In the second place," and the smile in his eyes was hard and cruel enough now, "I am taunting a man whom I do not like. That is a pleasure."

Stanway frowned, not understanding.

"Bring us back the senor and you gain your freedom—your safety, if you don't waste too much time getting out of the country," he said.

"You ask a great deal," Torre pulled thoughtfully at his little mustache. "And you offer a very little. For I shall have my freedom and safety—why, senor, at any time I please!"

"You refuse my offer?"

"Absolutely."

"Even," went on Stanway coolly, "after your personal danger is augmented by Dempton's confession of complicity?"

For the first time the rancher saw a quick light of fear leap into Torre's eyes. Then the lids dropped a little—a very little, but enough to hide the eyes—and in an instant Torre's manner was again careless, indifferent.

"A random shot that, no?" He lifted his eyes once more, and they were frank and mirthful again. "I am sorry that it does not find a target."

"What will you say when you are confronted with Dempton's written and signed confession?"

"That will never be. I know that he has confessed to nothing."

Stanway leaned forward and tapped his forefinger upon the table between them. "I shall have Dempton's confession within twenty-four hours!"

Torre shook his head, smiling his inscrutable smile.

"I have a counter-offer to make," said Torre. "Teresita is to pay to Captain Juarez the money which he demands—twenty thousand dollars. Within twenty-four hours from the time that the money is paid her grandfather will walk into this drawing room unharmed."

"And if she refuses your offer?"

"Then, twenty-four hours after her refusal, her grandfather will be dead. Then I shall be the heir to the entire property. You will accuse me of having murdered him, and I shall deny. It will go to the courts. In the end I shall be cleared. You see, senor, times are fortunately turbulent along the border, and what has happened may so easily be laid at the door of the poor devils of insurrectos. You can create suspicion, you can make trouble. But then there is the will, properly drawn and witnessed, and—there is something else!"

"And that?" curiously, wondering how far Torre would go in showing his hand.

"There will be other witnesses of whom you do not guess yet—witnesses carefully selected, who will not be shaken in a point they make. And they will swear that Senor de la Guerra became very angry with his granddaughter upon the very day of his disappearance; that he quarreled openly with her; that he vowed he would disinherit her, and that he sent immediately for his lawyer to make the new will. Do you care, senor, to know what these witnesses will prove to be the cause of the quarrel?"

"Well?" asked Stanway.

"It will be that Teresa, heedless of her grandfather's hatred of all Americanos, had fallen in love with one of them; that she defied De la Guerra, and swore that she would marry—you!"

"Why!" gasped the rancher. "It's perjury!"

"Certainly." The smile merely deepened upon Torre's handsome face. "But let us think not of the legal morality of it but of the effect upon a jury. Who, when this point is made, will seem the one who would be desirous of the disappearance of the old gentleman?

"Who then will appear in the light of the abductor? I leave it to you," busy over a new cigarette, "if the point will not hold."

Stanway's mouth hardened.

He saw that if Torre had made one mistake—if Dempton were in reality what he appeared, a weak tool—yet the young Spaniard had planned painstakingly elsewhere.

"You may mark a certain seeming discrepancy," went on the Spaniard. "I suppose the De la Guerra estate is worth a million. And I am asking only twenty thousand dollars to renounce all claim, free the old gentleman, go away and leave you, senor, to pay your court to the heiress!"

Had Given Him Her Hand and a Wan Smile.

He laughed softly at Stanway's quick, angry frown, and continued swiftly:

"It is because I have very urgent need of ten thousand dollars. It would save me from an embarrassing position, senor. You do not guess how embarrassing. And I am very modestly asking merely twice my actual needs.

"True, there is more to gain by slitting the throat of my esteemed kinsman and inheriting the whole. You see, I don't mind speaking frankly, between friends.

"But, on the other hand, the danger of which you speak would be much greater—and I need the money now, not after the courts can have had time to haggle over the will for a year or two. So, senor, you have my offer. What do you say?"

"I say," cried Stanway hotly, "that you are a scoundrel, and I believe only so much of what you say as I judge wise. If Senor de la Guerra dies, why then you go to the hangman—provided Gaucho and his men allow you to go that far. You will save him to save your own neck. Do you absolutely refuse to accept my proposition?"

"Absolutely. I shall make better terms."

Stanway went to the door.

"There is going to be no more making of terms," he said briefly. "I shall talk to you henceforward as I'd talk to a rat in a trap!"

Torre sprang up swiftly, his face flushing darkly with a rush of angry blood.

"You shall see," he cried harshly, "that even a rat in a trap may have sharp teeth. You fool, it is I who will offer terms—or dictate—at my pleasure!"

He turned away with a short, ugly laugh. Stanway for the first time felt a little shock of positive dread; fear that he was risking too much; that he had no right to assume this responsibility. For there was something in Torre's voice which told him that the man was making no idle threat.

CHAPTER VIII.

At Three O'clock.

The questions perplexing Stanway were these: "Is there a large force of men backing Torre and Juarez? Are they alone in the thing?" And there was only one way to answer them.

As the afternoon slipped by and dusk came down upon them, sweet and warm, through the groves of orange and olive trees, Teresa sent word to the men's quarters for all, excepting a half dozen of them, to come to the house.

Those not coming in were to remain on guard over the corrals into which the saddle-horses had been herded, and to serve as sentinels along the border. The guard over Torre and Juarez was doubled; the two men were disarmed and assigned to couches upon the opposite side of the drawing-room.

Doors were fastened, windows locked, shutters drawn, and the hacienda was like an old fortress in time of siege.

"I do not anticipate an attack," Stanway smiled into Teresa's grave face. "Surely the insurgents are not looking for complications with this country. But we are taking no chances. It would take a whole regiment of them to trouble us here tonight."

"But are we doing right?" she whispered a little fearfully. "If we gave them the money—it is so small a part of papa grande's estate—he would be out of all danger. And as it is—"

"It is a bluff of Torre's, pure and simple," he told her. "If anything should happen to Senor de la Guerra, Torre and Juarez would not last fifteen minutes with your little army of retainers, senorita. They talk big, both of them, but I am not afraid."

But when she had given him her hand and a wan smile by the way of "Buenas noches," he was not content until he himself had seen to the watchfulness of the men stationed here and there throughout the big house. And, by the way of final precaution, he saw that another man slept that night at Pedro's side, in front of the senerita's door, and that both men were armed.

He had not again gone to where Dempton fumed and worried in the library. It was his thought to leave the lawyer to chew upon the cud of suspicion his own parting words had given him, to make the night long and uneventful for him, so that his trembling little soul might have time for thought.

It was late when Teresa heeded his urging and went to her room. He left her at the foot of the stairs leading up to her chambers; saw Pedro preparing to spend the night at her doorway, and then went to his own room, decided to sleep until the stiller hours of the night came; then to superintend in person the watch which was being kept throughout the house.

On his way to the wing of the building which had been given over to him, he passed through the drawing-room for the last time.

Juarez seemed to be asleep upon his couch. Half a dozen of Gaucho's vaqueros, all armed, were scattered about the room, their quick eyes showing how alert was the spirit within them. Torre, sitting at a table idly turning the leaves of an illustrated book of poems, rose quickly when Stanway came into the room and stepped to his side.

> Torre makes threats which seem to mean an attack by bandits in the night.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

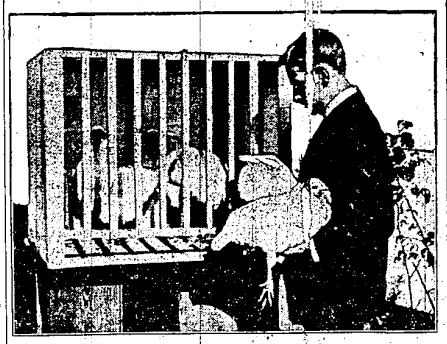
Calf Was Just Right.

Carolyn was delighted when she received an invitation to spend a week in the country with a friend of the family, and expressed herself to a little friend she was playing with like this: "Yes, they have pigs and chickens and a cow and a little calf. I can't milk the cow, but I can milk the calf—it's just my size."

Classifying Time.

That man has great tomorrows before him who has great yesterdays behind him and is trying to put a great deal of greatness into his todays.

CONDITIONING FOWLS FOR EXHIBITION INVOLVES PROPER FEED AND TRAINING



Show Birds Are Trained in Exhibition Coops and Should Be Handled Frequently.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

The beauty contest season for poultry is again at hand and fanciers who previously have fretted over egg record and feeding rations are now concerned with grooming their birds in their best bib and tucker and preparing them for inspection by judges at fairs and poultry shows.

Something besides external beauty and fine feathers is required to win in the show ring. Every fowl, whether young or mature, should be in first-class show condition when it enters the exhibition hall. The plumage should be the standard length for the breed, lustrous and plentiful, the head bright red in color, and the comb developed to the required size. The specimen should appear in handsome dress, good physical condition, and trained to exhibit his good qualities to advantage. Careful training imparts to a bird sufficient confidence to assume and hold desired poses under show-room conditions.

If possible, obtain exhibition coops similar to those used at the show you will attend. Cover the floor with short, clean straw, or a mixture of bran and straw for feathered-leg breeds. Two months before the show place in the coops at night the birds you intend to exhibit. Visit the coops as frequently as you can and handle the birds often. Carry them around under the arm, open their wings and examine the undercolor, and accustom them to every movement of the judge. It is not advisable or necessary to keep the show birds confined in the training coops. A day at a time is sufficient; then allow them the run of the house for two or three days, and outdoor exercise if seasonable.

Diet Makes Hens Handsome.

Show birds should receive a variety of foods. If you wish to increase weight rapidly, make a mash of equal parts of corn meal, ground oats, wheat middlings and thick sour milk or buttermilk. Sweeten it with brown sugar, and add 10 per cent linseed meal. The mash should be of the same consistency as thick oatmeal porridge. This is similar to milk-feeding rations, but it should be fed only each morning. Feed whole or cracked corn, wheat, kafir corn, barley, or buckwheat, or a commercial scratching food, in the middle of the day and again in the late afternoon. Feed yellow corn to buff varieties, and white corn to white, black and parti-colored. Yellow corn may cream the plumage of white birds. A little cooked or raw meat or ground bone will be beneficial, except to specimens inclined to grow large combs.

It is necessary to examine your show birds carefully at least 10 weeks before the show. Remove all imperfect feathers in the hope that they will be replaced by feathers of standard color. Frequently a colored feather showing a little white along the edge of the web will molt out perfectly when the fowl is well fed on the sour-milk mash, meat, and grain. Never pluck a new feather—one in which the quill is filled with fluid—as it will invariably return partially white. A few days before the exhibition again examine your birds and pluck the imperfect feathers. It is quite a problem to determine the best procedure when there is foreign color in some of the large feathers on the wings or tail.

Peroxide Blondes in Hen House.

Many exhibitors of white fowls bleach the plumage of their birds with peroxide of hydrogen and ammonia. They mix in a china bowl a solution of three parts of peroxide of hydrogen and one part of ammonia. A clean muslin cloth is dipped in the solution and the bird is wrapped in it. The muslin is next covered with oiled silk or some waterproof cloth to confine the fumes of the bleaching gas. The peroxide-ammonia solution can be sponged on the plumage or sprayed with an atomizer. The only advantage in wrapping the bird is to make the bleach more effective.

The shanks and feet of exhibition fowls must be absolutely clean and well polished. To overcome rough scales rub the legs twice daily with a cloth dipped in kerosene and a short time before the show wash them thoroughly. Use a good scouring soap, woolen cloth, and warm rain water. Remove any old or rough scales, and also the dirt between the scales. The latter can be taken out with toothpicks. Dry the shanks and apply a solution of equal parts of sweet oil and alcohol. Then warm a woolen cloth and scrape a little beeswax on it. The warmth will melt the wax and the shanks should then be polished with the waxed cloth.

Cosmetics and Curealls of Ugliness.

Before shipping the birds to the exhibition apply the sweet oil and alcohol solution to the face and comb. If you are showing white birds, fill their plumage after washing and when thoroughly dry with equal parts of bran and rice flour. Some exhibitors use cornstarch which is equally satisfactory. This prevents the plumage becoming soiled, and when the starch is shaken out at the show and the fowls are groomed, they apparently take a higher polish. However, your coops must have wooden or muslin tops and sides to prevent rain from coming in contact with the starched plumage. The final grooming is accomplished with a silk handkerchief, rubbing and polishing the feather until the plumage has a high luster.

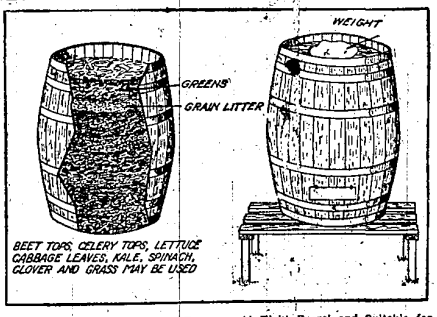
WAR ON YOUNG GRASSHOPPER

Little Attention Paid to Pest by Farmer Until They Have Reached Considerable Size.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Although grasshoppers are not usually noticed by the farmer until they have reached a considerable size, they begin to injure his crops immediately upon hatching from the egg. They should be detected and combated, therefore, while young and small, so that time, labor and material, as well as crops, may be saved.

GREEN FEED IS ESSENTIAL FOR CHICKENS



Homemade Poultry Silo Made From an Air-Tight Barrel and Suitable for Storing Green Feed for Poultry.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Chickens confined to small yards should always be supplied with green feed, such as lettuce, sprouted oats, alfalfa, or clover, but the best place to raise chickens successfully is on a good range where no extra green feed is required. Where the chickens are kept in small bare yards, fine charcoal, grit, and oyster shell should be kept before the chickens all of the time, and cracked or ground bone may be fed. The bone is not necessary for chickens that have a good range.

THE KITCHEN CABINET

If you were busy being kind,
Before you knew it you would find
You'd soon forget to think 'twas true
That someone was unkind to you.

If you were busy being glad
And cheering people who are sad,
Although your heart might ache a bit
You'd soon forget to notice it.

SOME FAVORITE DISHES.

This time of the year is filled with such sunshiny days, and even warm ones, that it is well to keep to the lighter foods and simple repasts until the first chilly days which give the appetite a zest and vigor.

The oyster now has come again to his own and is served fresh, preferably, though in a stew, fried, creamed or escalloped will always be popular with many.

Creamed Fresh Beef.—Chop one pound of beef from the round; put into a hot pan and stir until all is seared. Add one tablespoonful of butter and, as soon as it is melted, dredge the beef with one tablespoonful of flour; stir until the flour is browned. Add one cupful of cream, boil up, season with salt and pepper and serve on hot toast.

Delmonico Hash.—Take a pound of finely chopped meat from the top of the round, put it into a hot frying pan with two tablespoonfuls of butter, one small shredded onion and cook until the beef is nicely browned; add one-half cupful of hot water; or, better, soup stock, and eight chopped potatoes, previously cooked. Season with salt, paprika and chopped parsley.

Cheese and Olive Canapes.—Cut stale bread into one-quarter-inch slices. Shape with a small oblong cutter with rounded corners. Cream butter and add an equal quantity of soft, rich cheese; season with salt. Spread on the bread and garnish with one-quarter-inch border of finely chopped olives and a piece of red and green pepper cut in fancy shapes in the center of each.

Meravian Apple Pie.—Core and pare six even-sized apples. Place in a covered pan, with a teaspoonful of lemon juice, a little of the yellow rind, a cupful of sugar and water enough to cover the bottom of the dish. Stew until tender. Line a deep pastry plate with rich pastry; place the apples in it, fill the centers with peach marmalade and put strips of pastry over the top. Bake in a quick oven and serve with cream.

Russel Sandwiches.—Take an equal amount of cold boiled chicken and tongue, a dozen olives and six hard-cooked eggs; mix all together and chop as fine as possible. Work into a paste by the addition of mayonnaise dressing, then season and spread on buttered bread.

"To judge with candor and speak no wrong,
The feeble to support against the strong,
To soothe the wretched and the poor to feed,
Will cover many an idle, foolish deed."

THE SEASONABLE WORD.

In the autumn, when there is such an abundance of vegetables, the frugal housewife will provide for winter, when there is less of a choice.

Olive Oil Pickles.—Take 100 small cucumbers sliced thin, leaving on the peeling, three pints of small onions also sliced thin, three ounces of white mustard seed, one ounce of celery seed, one ounce of white pepper, two scant cupfuls of olive oil. Add one and two-thirds cupfuls of salt, and add to the cucumbers; let stand three hours. Let the sliced onions stand in cold water three hours. Drain well, and mix the onions and cucumbers with the oil and the spices. Put into jars, and fill the jars with good vinegar. Keep in a cold place. Good in ten days.

Corn Relish.—Cut corn from twelve ears, chop one small head of cabbage, sprinkle salt over the cabbage, mix well and let stand three hours. Drain off the water and put corn and cabbage together; add one cupful of sugar, two quarts of vinegar, one-half cupful of mustard, four small red peppers chopped. Cook all until tender, then put into sterile cans and seal.

Piccalilli.—Take two gallons of green tomatoes chopped fine, eight large onions also chopped, three quarts of vinegar, six tablespoonfuls of mustard seed, one tablespoonful each of cloves, allspice and mace, one tablespoonful of celery seed and two pounds of granulated sugar. Let the tomatoes and onions stand over night, sprinkled with salt; drain in the morning and mix with the spices and boil until tender.

Mint Vinegar.—Put into a quart jar enough fresh mint, carefully washed and dried, to fill it loosely, fill up with vinegar and let stand well covered for three weeks. Strain, bottle and cork, and the flavored vinegar will keep for years. Tarragon, chervil or any other herb may be used in the same manner.

Mushrooms make fine catsup. Arrange in layers in salt and let stand over night. Drain and cook with spices as one's taste desires.

Nellie Maxwell