

FAIR MARGARET*

BY F. MARION CRAWFORD

AUTHOR OF "MR. ISAACS," "CORLEONE," "IN THE PALACE OF THE KING," ETC.

XXI (Continued).

GILDA'S opening duet is long, as Margaret had often thought when studying it, but now she was almost startled because it seemed to her so soon that she found herself once more embracing *Rigoletto* and uttering a very high note at the same time. Very vaguely she wondered whether the far-off person who had been singing for her had not left out something, and if so, why there had been no hitch. Then came the thunder of applause again, not in greeting now, but in praise of her, long drawn, tremendous, rising and bursting and falling, like the breakers on an ocean beach.

"Brava! brava!" yelled *Rigoletto* in her ear; but she could hardly hear him for the noise.

She pressed his hand almost affectionately as she courtesied to the audience. If she could have thought at all, she would have remembered how Mme. Bonanni had once told her that in moments of great success everybody embraces everybody else on the stage. But she could not think of anything. She was not frightened, but she was dazed; she felt the tide of triumph rising round her heart, and upwards towards her throat, like something real that was going to choke her with delight. The time while she had been singing had seemed short; the seconds during which the applause lasted seemed very long, but the roar sounded sweeter than anything had ever sounded to her before that day.

It ceased presently, and Margaret heard from the house that deep-drawn breath, just after the applause ended, which tells that an audience is in haste for more and is anticipating interest or pleasure. The

conductor's baton rose again; Margaret sang her little scene with the maid, and the few bars of soliloquy that follow, and presently she was launched in the great duet with the *Duke*, who had stolen forward to throw himself and his high note at her feet with such an air of real devotion that the elderly woman of the world who admired him felt herself turning green with jealousy in the gloom of her box, and almost cried out at him.

He took his full share of the tremendous applause that broke out at the end, almost before the lovers had sung the last note of their parts; but the public made it clear enough that most of it was for Margaret, by yelling out, "*Brava, la Cordova!*" again and again. The tenor at last was led off through the house by the maid, and Margaret was left to sing "*Caro nome*" alone. Whatever may be said of "*Rigoletto*" as a composition—and out of Italy it was looked upon at first as a failure—it is certainly an opera which of all others gives a lyric soprano a chance of showing what she can do at her first appearance.

By this time Margaret was beyond the possibility of failure. At first she had sung almost unconsciously, under the influence of a glorious excitement like a beautiful dream; but now she was thoroughly aware of what she was doing, and sang the intricate music of the aria with a judgment, a discrimination, and a perfectly controlled taste which appealed to the real critics much more than all that had gone before. But the applause, though loud, was short, and hardly delayed Margaret's exit ten seconds. A moment later she was seen on the terrace with her lamp.

Mme. Bonanni had listened with pro-

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found attention to every note that Margaret sang. She was quietly dressed in a costume of very dark stuff, she wore a veil, and few people would have recognized the dark, pale face of the middle-aged woman now that it was no longer painted. She leaned back in her box alone, watching the stage and calling up a vision of herself, from long ago, singing for the first time in the same house. For she had made her *début* in that very theater, as many great singers have done. It was all changed—the house, the decorations, the stage entrance; but those same walls were standing which had echoed to her young voice, the same roof was overhead, and all her artist's lifetime was gone by.

As Margaret disappeared at last, softly repeating her lover's name, while the conspirators began to fill the stage, the door of the box opened quietly, and Lushington came and sat down close behind his mother.

"Well?" she said, only half turning her head, for she knew it was he. "What do you think?"

"You know what I think, mother," he answered.

"You did not want her to do it."

"I've changed my mind," said Lushington. "It's the real thing. It would be a sin to keep it off the stage."

Mme. Bonanni nodded thoughtfully, but said nothing. A knock was heard at the door of the box. Lushington got up and opened it, and the dark figure of the cadaverous maid appeared in the dim light. Before she had spoken, Mme. Bonanni was close to her.

"They are in the chorus," said the maid in a low voice, "and there is some one behind the door, waiting. I think it will be now."

That was all Lushington heard, but it was quite enough to awaken his curiosity. Who was in the chorus? Behind which door was some one waiting? What was to happen "now"?

Mme. Bonanni reflected a moment before she answered.

"They won't try it now," she said, at last, very confidently.

The maid shrugged her thin shoulders, as if to say that she declined to take any responsibility in the matter, and did not otherwise care much.

"Do exactly as I told you," Mme. Bonanni said. "If anything goes wrong, it will be my fault, not yours."

"Very good, *madame*," answered the maid.

She went away, and Mme. Bonanni returned to her seat in the front of the box, without any apparent intention of explaining matters to Lushington.

"What is happening?" he asked after a few moments. "Can I be of any use?"

"Not yet," answered his mother. "But you may be, by and by. I shall want you to take a message to her."

"To Miss Donne? When?"

"Have you ever been behind in this theater? Do you know your way about?"

"Yes. What am I to do?"

Mme. Bonanni did not answer at once. She was scrutinizing the faces of the courtiers on the darkened stage, and wishing very much that there were more light.

"Schreiermeyer is doing things handsomely," Lushington observed. "He has really given us a good allowance of conspirators."

"There are four more than usual," said Mme. Bonanni, who had counted the chorus.

"They make a very good show," Lushington observed indifferently. "But I did not think they made much noise in the introduction, when they were expected to."

"Perhaps," suggested Mme. Bonanni, "the four supernumeraries are dummies, put on to fill up."

Just then the chorus was explaining at great length, as choruses in operas often do, that it was absolutely necessary not to make the least noise, while *Rigoletto* stood at the foot of the ladder, pretending neither to hear them nor to know, in the supposed total darkness, that his eyes were bandaged.

"Have you seen Logotheti?" asked Lushington.

"Not yet, but I shall certainly see him before it's over. I'm sure that he is somewhere in the house."

"He came over from Paris in his motor-car," Lushington said.

"I know he did."

There was no reason why she should not know that Logotheti had come in his car, but Lushington thought she seemed annoyed that the words should have

slipped out. Her eyes were still fixed intently on the stage.

She rose to her feet suddenly, as if she had seen something that startled her.

"Wait for me!" she said almost sharply, as she passed her son.

She was gone in an instant, and Lushington leaned back in his seat, indifferent to what was going on, since Margaret had disappeared from the stage. As for his mother's unexpected departure, he never was surprised at anything she did; and whatever she did, she generally did without warning; with a rush, as if some one's life depended on it. He fancied that her practised eye had noticed something that did not please her in the stage management, and that she had hurried away to give her opinion.

But she had only gone behind to meet Margaret as the young singer was carried off the stage with a handkerchief tied over her mouth. She knew very nearly at what point to wait, and the four big men in costume who came off almost at a run, carrying Margaret with them, nearly ran into Mme. Bonanni, whom they certainly did not expect to find there.

When she was in the way, in a narrow place, it was quite hopeless to try and pass her. The four men, still carrying Margaret, stopped, but looked bewildered, as if they did not know what to do, and did not set her down.

Mme. Bonanni sprang at them and almost took her bodily from their arms, tearing the handkerchief from her mouth just in time to let her utter the cry for help which is heard from behind the scenes. It was answered instantly by the courtiers' shout of triumph, in which the four men who had carried off *Gilda* did not join. Margaret gave one more cry, and instantly Mme. Bonanni led her quickly away toward her dressing-room, a little shaken and in a very bad temper with the men who had carried her.

"I knew they would be clumsy," she said.

"So did I," answered her friend. "That is why I came round to meet you."

They entered the dim corridor together, and an instant later they both heard the sharp click of a door hastily closed at the other end. It was not the door of Margaret's dressing-room, for that was wide open, and the light from within fell across

the dark, paved floor; nor was it the door of the contralto's room, for that was ajar when they passed it. She had not come in to dress yet.

"That door does not shut well," Margaret said indifferently.

"No," answered Mme. Bonanni, in a preoccupied tone. "Where is your maid?"

The cadaverous maid came up very quickly from behind, overtaking them with Margaret's gray linen duster.

"They did not carry *mademoiselle* out at the usual fly," she said. "I was waiting there."

"They were abominably clumsy," Margaret said, still very much annoyed. "They almost hurt me, and somebody had the impertinence to double-knot the handkerchief after I had arranged it! I'll send for Schreiermeyer at once, I think. If I hadn't solid nerves a thing like that might ruin my *début*."

The maid smiled discreetly. The dress rehearsal for Margaret's *début* was not half over yet, but she had already the dominating tone of the successful prima donna, and talked of sending at once for the redoubtable manager as if she were talking about scolding the call-boy. And the maid knew very well that Schreiermeyer, if sent for, would come and behave with relative meekness, because he had a prospective share in the fortune which was in the Cordova's throat.

But Mme. Bonanni was in favor of temporizing.

"Don't send for him, my dear," she said. "Getting angry is very bad for the voice, and your duet with *Rigoletto* in the next act is always trying."

They were in the dressing-room now, all three women, and the door was shut.

"Is it all right?" Margaret asked, sitting down and looking into the glass. "Am I doing well?"

"You don't need me to tell you that! You are magnificent! Divine! No one ever began so well as you, not even I, my dear—not even I myself!"

This was said with great emphasis. Nothing, perhaps, could have surprised Mme. Bonanni more than that any one should sing better at the beginning than she had sung herself; but having once admitted the fact, she was quite willing that Margaret should know it, and be made happy.

"You're the best friend that ever was!" cried Margaret, springing up; and for the first time in their acquaintance she threw her arms round the elder woman's neck and kissed her. Hitherto the attack—if I may call it so—had always come from Mme. Bonanni, and had been sustained by Margaret.

"Yes," said Mme. Bonanni, "I'm your best friend now, but in a couple of days you will have your choice of the whole world! Now dress, for I'm going away, and though it's only a rehearsal, it's of no use to keep people waiting."

Margaret looked at her, and for the first time realized the change in her appearance: the quiet colors of her dress, the absence of paint on her cheeks, the moderation of the hat. Yet on that very morning Margaret had seen her still in all her glory when she had arrived from Paris.

One woman always knows when another notices her dress. Women have a sixth sense for clothes.

"Yes, my dear," Mme. Bonanni said, as soon as she was aware that Margaret had seen the change; "I did not wish to come to your *début* looking like an advertisement of my former greatness, so I put on this. Tom likes it. He thinks that I look almost like a human being in it!"

"That's complimentary of him!" laughed Margaret.

"Oh, he wouldn't say such a thing, but I see it is just what he thinks. Perhaps I'll send him to you with a message, by and by, before you get into your sack, while the storm is going on. If I do, it will be because it's very important, and whatever he says comes directly from me."

"Very well," Margaret said quietly. "I shall always take your advice, though I hate that last scene."

"I'm beginning to think that it may be more effective than we thought," answered Mme. Bonanni, with a little laugh. "Good-by, my dear."

"Won't you come and dine with me afterwards?" asked Margaret, who had begun to change her dress. "There will only be Mme. de Rosa. You know she could not get here in time for the rehearsal, but she is coming before nine o'clock."

"No, dear. I cannot dine with you to-night. I've made an engagement I can't break. But do you mean to say that anything could keep De Rosa in Paris this afternoon?" Mme. Bonanni was very much surprised, for she knew that the excellent teacher almost worshiped her pupil.

"Yes," said Margaret. "She wrote me that M. Logotheti had some papers for her to sign to-day before a notary, and that somehow if she did not stay and sign them she would lose most of what she has."

"That's ingenious!" exclaimed Mme. Bonanni, with a laugh.

"Ingenious?" Margaret did not understand. "Do you mean that Mme. de Rosa has invented the story?"

"No, no!" cried the other. "I mean it was ingenious of fate, you know—to make such a thing happen just to-day."

"Oh, very!" assented Margaret carelessly, and rather wishing that Mme. Bonanni would go away; for though she was turning into a professional artist at an almost alarming rate, she was not yet hardened in regard to little things, and preferred to be alone with her maid while she was dressing.

But Mme. Bonanni had no intention of staying, and now went away rather abruptly, after nodding to her old maid, unseen by Margaret, as if there were some understanding between them, for the woman answered the signal with an unmistakable look of intelligence.

In the corridor Mme. Bonanni met the contralto taking a temporary leave of the wholesale upholsterer at the door of her dressing-room. She was a black-browed, bony young Italian woman with the face of a Medea, whose boast it was that with her voice and figure she could pass for a man when she pleased.

Mme. Bonanni greeted her and stopped a moment.

"Please do not think I have only just come to the theater," said the Italian. "I have been listening to her in the house, though I have heard her so often at rehearsals."

"Well?" asked the elder woman. "What do you think of it?"

"It is the voice of an angel—and then, she is handsome, too! But——"

"But what?"

"She is a statue," answered the contralto in a tone of mingled pity and contempt. "She has no heart."

"They say that of most lyric sopranos," laughed Mme. Bonanni.

"I never heard it said of you! You have a heart as big as the world!" The Italian made a circle of her two arms, to convey an idea of the size of the prima donna's heart, while the wholesale upholsterer, who had a good eye, compared the measurement with that lady's waist. "You bring the tears to my eyes when you sing," continued the contralto, "but Cordova is different. She only makes me hate her because she has such a splendid voice!"

"Don't hate her, my dear," said Mme. Bonanni gently. "She's a friend of mine. And as for the heart, child, it's like a loaf of bread! You must break it to get anything out of it, and if you never break it at all it dries up into a sort of little wooden cannon-ball! Cordova will break hers, some day, and then you will all say that she is a great artist!"

Thereupon Mme. Bonanni kissed the contralto affectionately, as she kissed most people, smiled to the wholesale upholsterer, and went on her way to cross the stage and get back to her box.

She found Lushington there when she opened the door, looking as if he had not moved since she had left him. He rose as she entered, and then sat down beside her.

"Have you any money with you?" she asked suddenly.

"Yes. How much do you want?"

"I don't want any for myself. Tom, do something for me. Go out and buy a woman's cloak, the biggest you can find. The shops are all open still. Get something that will come down to my feet, and cover me up entirely. We are nearly of the same height, and you can measure it on yourself."

"All right," said Lushington, who was well used to his mother's caprices.

"And, Tom," she called, as he was going to the door, "get a closed carriage and bring it to the stage entrance when you come back. And be quick, my darling child! You must be back in half an hour, or you won't hear the duet."

"It won't take half an hour to buy a cloak," answered Lushington.

"Oh, I forgot—it must have a hood that will quite cover my head—I mean without my hat, of course!"

"Very well—a big hood. I understand."

Lushington went out to do the errand, and Mme. Bonanni drew back into the shadow of the box, for the lights were up in the house between the acts. She sat quite still, leaning forward and resting her chin on her hand and her elbow on her knee, thinking.

There was a knock at the door; she sprang to her feet and opened, and found a shabby woman, who looked like a rather slatternly servant, standing outside with the box-opener, who had shown her where to find the prima donna. The shabby woman gave her a dingy piece of paper folded and addressed hurriedly in pencil, in Logotheti's familiar handwriting. She spread out the half-sheet and read the contents twice over, looked hard at the messenger and then looked at the note again.

"Who gave you this? Who sent you?" she asked.

"You are Mme. Bonanni, are you not?" inquired the woman, instead of answering.

"Of course I am! I want to know who sent you to me."

"The note is for you, *madame*, is it not?" asked the woman, by way of reply.

"Yes, certainly! Can't you answer my question?" Mme. Bonanni was beginning to be angry.

"I will take the answer to the note, if there is one," answered the other coolly.

Mme. Bonanni was on the point of flying into a rage, but she apparently thought better of it. The contents of the note might be true after all. She read it again:

DEAR LADY—I am the victim of the most absurd and annoying mistake. I have been arrested for Schirmer, the betting man who murdered his mother-in-law and escaped from Paris yesterday. They will not let me communicate with any one till to-morrow morning, and I have had great trouble in getting this line to you. For heaven's sake bring Schreiermeyer and anybody else you can find, to identify me, as soon as possible. I am locked up in a cell at the police station of the Third Arrondissement.—Yours ever,
C. LOGOTHETI.

Mme. Bonanni looked at the woman again.

"Did you see the gentleman?" she asked.

"What gentleman?"

"The gentleman who is in prison."

"What prison?" asked the woman with dogged stupidity.

"You're a perfect idiot!" cried Mme. Bonanni, and she slammed the door of the box in the woman's face, and bolted it inside.

She sat down and read the note a fourth time. There was no doubt as to its being really from Logotheti. She laughed to herself.

"More ingenious than ever!" she said, half aloud.

A timid knock at the door of the box. She rose, with evident annoyance, and opened again, to meet the respectable old box-opener, a gray-haired woman of fifty-five.

"Please, *madame*, is the woman to go away? She seems to be waiting for something."

"Tell her to go to all the devils!" answered Mme. Bonanni, furious. "No—don't!" she cried. "Where is she? Come here, you!" she called, seeing the woman at a little distance. "Do you know what you are doing? You are trying to help Schirmer, the murderer, to escape. If you are not careful you will be in prison yourself before morning! That is the answer! Now go, and take care that you are not caught!"

The woman, who was certainly not over-intelligent, stared hard at Mme. Bonanni for a moment, and then turned, with a cry of terror, and fled along the circular passage.

"You should not let in such suspicious-looking people," said Mme. Bonanni to the box-opener in a severe tone.

The poor soul began an apology, but Mme. Bonanni did not stop to listen, and entered the box again, shutting the door behind her.

The curtain went up before Lushington came back, but the prima donna did not look at the stage, and scarcely heard the tenor's lament, the chorus, and the rest. She seemed quite lost in her thoughts. Then Lushington appeared with a big dark cloak on his arm.

"Will this do, mother?" he asked.

She stood up and made him put it over her. It had a hood, as she had

wished, which quite covered her head and would cover her face, too, if she wished to avoid recognition.

"It's just what I wanted," she said. "Hang it on the hook by the door, and sit down. *Gilda* will be on in a minute."

Lushington obeyed, and if he wondered a little at first why his mother should want a big cloak on a suffocating evening in July, he soon forgot all about it in listening to Margaret's duet with *Rigoletto*. His mother sat perfectly motionless in her seat, her eyes closed, following every note.

At the end of the short act, the applause became almost riotous, and if Margaret had appeared before the curtain she would have had an ovation. But in the first place, it was only a rehearsal, after all; and secondly, there was no one to call her back after she had gone to her dressing-room to dress for the last act. She heard the distant roar, however, and felt the tide of triumph rising still higher round her heart. If she had been used to her cadaverous maid, too, she would have seen that the woman's manner was growing more deferential each time she saw her. Success was certain, now—a great and memorable success, which would be proclaimed throughout the world in a very few days. The new star was rising fast, and it was the sallow-faced maid's business to serve stars and no others.

For the first scene of the last act *Gilda* puts on a gown over her man's riding-dress; and when *Rigoletto* sends her off, she has only to drop the skirt, draw on the long boots, and throw her riding-cloak round her to come on for the last scene. Of course the prima donna is obliged to go back to her dressing-room to make even this slight change.

Mme. Bonanni was speaking earnestly to Lushington in an undertone during the interval before the last act, and as he listened to what she said his face became very grave, and his lips set themselves together in a look which his mother knew well enough.

The act proceeded, and Margaret's complete triumph became more and more a matter of certainty. She sang with infinite grace and tenderness that part in the quartet which is intended to express the operatic broken heart, while the *Duke*, the professional murderer, and *Madda*—

Iena are laughing and talking inside the inn. That sort of thing does not appeal much to our modern taste, but Margaret did what she could to make it touching, and was rewarded with round upon round of applause.

Lushington rose quietly at this point, slipped on his thin overcoat, took his hat and the big cloak he had bought, nodded to his mother, and left the box. A few moments later Mme. Bonanni rose and followed him.

In due time Margaret reappeared in her man's dress, but almost completely wrapped in the traditional riding-mantle. *Rigoletto* is off when *Gilda* comes on alone at this point, outside the inn, and the stage gradually darkens while the storm rises. When the trio is over and *Gilda* enters the ruined inn, the darkness is such, even behind the scenes, that one may easily lose his way, and it is hard to recognize any one.

Margaret disappeared, and hurried off, expecting to meet her maid with the sack ready for the final scene. To her surprise a man was standing waiting for her. She could not see his face at all, but she knew it was Lushington who whispered in her ear as he wrapped her in the big cloak he carried. He spoke fast and decidedly.

"That is why the door at the end of the corridor is open to-night," he concluded. "I give you my word that it's true. Now come with me."

Margaret had told Lushington not very long ago that he always acted like a gentleman and sometimes like a hero, and she had meant it. After all, the opera was over now, and it was only a rehearsal. If there was no sack scene, no one would be surprised, and there was no time to hesitate—not an instant.

She slipped her arm through Lushington's. Drawing the hood almost over her eyes with her free hand, and the cloak completely round her, she went where he led her. Certainly in all the history of the opera no prima donna ever left the stage and the theater in such a hurry after her first appearance.

One minute had hardly elapsed in all after she had disappeared into the ruined inn before she found herself driving at a smart pace in a closed carriage, with Lushington sitting bolt upright beside her like a policeman in charge of his prisoner.

It was not yet quite dark when the brougham stopped at the door of Margaret's hotel, and the porter who opened the carriage looked curiously at her riding-boot and spurred heel as she got out under the covered way. She and Lushington had not exchanged a word during the short drive.

He went up in the elevator with her and saw her to the door of her apartment. Then he stood still, with his hat off, holding out his hand to say good-by.

"No," said Margaret, "come in. I don't care what the people think!"

He followed her into her sitting-room, and she shut the door, and turned up the electric light. When he saw her standing in the full glare of the lamps, she had thrown back her hood; she wore a wig with short, tangled hair as part of her man's disguise, and her face was heavily powdered over the paint in order to produce the ghastly pallor which indicates a broken heart on the stage. The heavily blackened lashes made her eyes seem very dark, while her lips were still a deep crimson.

She held her head high, and a little thrown back, and there was something wild and almost fantastic about her looks as she stood there, that made Lushington think of one of Hoffmann's tales. She held out her whitened hand to him; and when he took it he felt the chalk on it, and it was no longer to him the hand of Margaret Donne, but the hand of the Cordova, the great soprano.

"It's of no use," she said. "Something always brings us together. I believe it's our fate. Thank you for what you've just done. Thank you—Tom, with all my heart!"

And suddenly the voice was Margaret's, and rang true and kind. For had he not saved her, and her career, too, perhaps? She could not but be grateful, and forget her other triumphant self for a moment. There was no knowing where that mad Greek might have taken her if she had gone near the door in the corridor again; it would have been somewhere out of Europe, to some lawless Eastern country whence she might never have got back to civilization again.

"You must thank my mother," Lushington answered quietly. "It was she who found out the danger and told me

what to do. But I'm glad you're safe from that brute!"

He pressed her hand in his own and brought it to his lips in a very un-English way; for, after all, he was the son of Mme. Bonanni, the French singer, and only half an Anglo-Saxon.

The last thing Mme. Bonanni remembered, before a strangely sweet and delicious perfume had overpowered her senses, was that she had congratulated herself on not having believed that Logotheti was really in prison, arrested by a mistake. How hugely ingenious he had been, she thought, in trying to get poor Margaret's best friends out of the way! But at that point, while she felt herself being carried along in the sack as swiftly and lightly as if she had been a mere child, she suddenly fell asleep.

She never had any idea how long she was unconscious, but she afterwards calculated that it must have been between twenty minutes and half an hour. She came to herself just as she felt that she was being laid in a comfortable position on a luxuriously cushioned sofa.

She heard heavy retreating footsteps, and then she felt that a hand was hastily and clumsily undoing the mouth of the sack above her head.

"Dearest lady," said a deep voice, with

a sort of oily, anticipative gentleness in it, "can you forgive me my little stratagem?"

The voice spoke very softly, as if the speaker were not at all sure that she was awake; but when she heard it, Mme. Bonanni started, for it was certainly not the voice of Constantine Logotheti, though it was strangely familiar to her.

The sack was drawn down from her face quickly and skilfully. At the same time some slight sound from the door of the room made the man look half round.

In the softly lighted room, against the pale silk hangings, Mme. Bonanni saw a tremendous profile over a huge fair beard that was half gray, and one large and rather watery blue eye behind a single eyeglass with a broad black ribbon. Before the possessor of these features turned to look at her, she uttered a loud exclamation of amazement. Logotheti was really in prison, after all.

Instantly the king's watery blue eyes met her own. Then the eyeglass dropped from its place, the jaw fell, with a wag of the fair beard, and a look of stony astonishment and blank disappointment came into all the great features, while Mme. Bonanni broke into a peal of perfectly uncontrollable laughter.

And with the big-hearted woman's laugh this history ends.

THE END

WHILE THE SEASONS CHANGE

Though spring's keen ardors pale
To naught but frail alloy,
My spirit does not fail—
I have my joy!

Though summer's manifold
Heaped riches tire and cloy—
Days of bright-blazoned gold—
I have my joy!

Though autumn's bannered pride
The ruthless winds destroy,
Still am I satisfied—
I have my joy!

Though winter's ravaging band
About my path deploy,
Heart-undismayed I stand—
I have my joy!

My joy remains through all,
As the clear pole-star true;
I am its happy thrall;
My joy is *you*!

Clinton Scollard

THE NEW DEPUTY OF COCHITE

BY WILLIAM CHESTER ESTABROOK

COLLINS, the new deputy sheriff of Cochite, had ridden hard all day long. The seventy desert miles that lay to his rear had incrusting him in a dingy shell of dust.

He had reached the mountains now. Below him was the desert he had crossed, a golden sheen in the waning sunlight; about him the early shadows of the jagged peaks darkened the narrow trail.

At a sudden turn he came upon a girl sitting wearily on a bench of broken lava. A ragged old pack burro was making a pretense of nibbling the orange-colored lichens at her feet. She was a slender young thing, a mere child, and her dark eyes and skin, and the black hair that fluttered from beneath her faded head-cloth, revealed the purity of her Mexican blood.

Collins rode on up the trail without accosting her, almost without noticing her. He had never seen her before, and yet a guide-post pointing him direct to his quarry could not have better served his purpose.

So she had followed! The Mexicans who had brought word to the sheriff's office at Cochite had, for once, told the truth. She had started three days ago. Poor child!

It was pitch dark when Collins reached his destination. The chug of an engine, the strain of a steel cable about a mighty drum, the signal gong in the engine-room, and the welcome sight of lamps and lights, all told him of his journey's end. A lamp was burning in a little shack labeled "Superintendent." He rode up, and, throwing the reins over the pony's head, cowboy fashion, dismounted and went in.

The superintendent accepted his greeting with quiet unconcern. Collins turned the lapel of his coat and showed his badge.

"I don't think there's any such name on our pay-roll at present," the other man said, obligingly thumbing his list. Collins smiled.

"I hardly expected him to come here under the same name," he said.

"You'll want to see the men, eh?" asked the superintendent.

"I expect I'll have to bother you."

"The day shift is just at supper; we might go down to the boarding-house first," suggested the superintendent.

He took down a lantern and led the way, first sending a man to look after the deputy's pony. The forty or fifty bare-armed, bare-breasted men who sat eating under the flare of the kerosene lamps looked curiously at the stranger whom the "boss" brought, for a moment, to their door. Then Collins stepped back into the darkness.

"Not there?" asked the superintendent.

"No, he's not there," replied the deputy. "I suppose I might as well go down into the mine."

Together they went up the hill to the shaft-house. The superintendent's obsequiousness had given way to inquisitiveness.

"Hold-up?" he asked tentatively.

"Worse than that," replied Collins.

"Murder?"

Collins nodded.

"Old man Perez—killed him for his money, so the greasers say."

"Hadn't heard of it!"

"Two weeks ago to-day."

"We've taken in half a dozen new men since then; maybe he's among them. But what makes you think he's here?"

"His sweetheart, old Perez' niece, is on her way up here. Greasers at the ranch followed her to Caliens yesterday, and brought word to the office at Cochite. I