

THE FACE PASSPORT

By GEORGE E. COBB

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To be envied by dangerous enemies on every hand, to have love and fortune at the hazard of a discovery which meant certain death, to be three hundred miles from friends and safety amid the most perilous environment one could conceive—this was the predicament of Arthur Vernon one summer afternoon in the wildest, wickedest part of Mexico.

He was in the service of an engineering firm at New York and with warfare and riot rife in the southern republic it had become necessary for someone to go thither and secure certain records, or copies of them, to validate the ownership of a group of rich mining claims. It might be years before existing turbulency subsided, but in the meantime Mexican home interests might destroy the records, seize the properties, and when the war was over the rightful American owners of the same would find it difficult to re-establish tenancy.

Vernon penetrated the unsafe district and performed his mission excellently well. All the records of the district were kept by some monks at a monastery and they proved fair and honorable brethren. Vernon paid liberally for certified copies of the documents, stowed them safely in a secret inner pocket and made preparations to return to his native country.

He was delayed on account of railroad difficulties and secluded himself in an obscure little hostelry, going out rarely in the daytime and with his face well muffled at night. It was a secret society composed of robber assassins and raiders that he feared. They were all powerful in the district and called themselves "The Pesado." Vernon had positively learned that members of this dangerous combination had come into collusion with the head group of semi-capitalists, who were plotting to acquire the mining properties. Half a dozen times he escaped an ambush, twice he was fired at. He realized that he must get across an extensive stretch of territory before the general hue and cry against him was aroused. He became certain that the hotel had several within it who had him under surveillance. It was at midnight that he started on the long, arduous tramp. The rich reward he would receive should he succeed in conveying the papers safely was a great incentive to courage and daring, and meant also that he need no longer defer marriage with the gentle, loyal idol of his soul, Adele Foster.

Vernon was assured that from one end of the district to the other the Pesado had been apprized of his movements. Twice he blundered into taverns where he was suspiciously re-

garded by sombre, sinister looking men, and in the latest instance he just managed to escape by a rear exit.

It was one afternoon when he had been kept busy evading a number of suspicious looking trailers that there came a climax. Vernon was resting in a copse by the wayside when five men appeared. Their voices were high and they seemed to be quarrelling over some money paid by the Pesado to one of its members for some secret service. A heavy-set man, from whom the quartette demanded a division, Vernon knew from a badge he wore was of the Pesado. Suddenly the quartette made a concerted spring at the man. Four murderous looking knives gleamed in the air and the victim went down wailing in his life's blood. His assailants were about to finish up and despoil him when Vernon, unable to resist an impulse of fairness, even at risk to himself, leaped into view.

The baffled four armed with knives drew back as he manacled them with his leveled revolver. He drove them away; they went toward the town. Vernon bent over the prostrate man. "You are badly hurt!" he inquired. "It is my end," came the definite answer. "I am faint, helpless. Drag me to my little hut beyond the path in the timber yonder, and let me die in the arms of my wife. The traitors! The Pesado shall avenge me."

Vernon was thoroughly exhausted when, after carrying the wounded man on his shoulders nearly half a mile over a rocky trail, he reached the hut indicated. The wife of the victim greeted her husband with distracted cries. He was borne into the house and she set at work to attend to his wounds. She came to Vernon after a spell, a singular expression upon her face.

"He may live," she told him, "and you bravely aided him. He knows you. He was looking for you, and the money paid by the Pesado to him to find you was what those others were after. You must not delay here. It is at your peril. My husband and I would save you. Let me act quickly. Then you can go in safety."

The woman secured a brush and a pot containing some dark substances with staining qualities. Across one cheek of Vernon she traced several cabalistic signs.

"No Pesado will question that passport sign of the order," she said, and Vernon understood.

Thrice he was challenged during the half week that was consumed in reaching the border. One glance, however, at the sign manual of the powerful Pesado, and he was allowed to proceed on his way, to safety, to an opulent compensation for his services, and to anxious, waiting Adele, his betrothed.

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Domestic servants in South Africa receive an average of \$18 per month.

FOUGHT OVER CAPTAIN'S BODY

Superstitious Sailors Wanted Commander Consigned to Sea—Others Would Carry Corpses to Port.

A weird tale of shipwreck, death at sea, and the fierce, rough-and-tumble battles of superstitious, hard-fisted seafaring men was revealed when Attorney John B. Tyrrell filed for probate in the superior court the will of Capt. Charles D. Olsen, master of the clipper ship James Rolph, Jr., the San Francisco Chronicle states.

Olsen died on the return from Liverpool with his ship in ballast. At one stage of the trip his ship was wrecked, and since it was not heard of for a long time was given up as lost. He got it off the rocks, patched it up and continued the voyage. Then he became ill and died.

With him on the voyage were his wife, their eight-year-old daughter, and the child's nurse. After his death certain members of the crew insisted that he should be buried at sea. The captain was honored and respected by all his men, and the insistence of some of them on burial at sea was due to their firm belief that it was the fitting burial for a seafaring man, and that ill fortune would strike the vessel if this were not done.

Others of the crew, the majority, argued that the body should be borne to land, as Mrs. Olsen desired. When the arguments waxed hot the disputants resorted to fists, knives and clubs, until separated and quieted by the ship's officers. The body was then taken into the hold of the vessel and buried four feet deep in the ballast.

When the ship reached Panama the coffin was disinterred and hoisted toward the deck to be taken ashore and cremated. Superstition again caused trouble, and a sailor named Larson, the biggest man on the ship, leaped to the side of the coffin when it reached the deck and with a knife threatened to kill anyone who attempted to remove the body from the ship before it was safe in its home port of San Francisco, because of his belief that ill luck would certainly come to the ship if it were moved.

By a ruse he was quieted and led away. The body was taken ashore.

Facts of Evolution.

The monkey, the ape and the gorilla were all included with man in the line of evolution followed by Prof. Elliott Smith in a late British Royal Institution lecture. The domination of mammals over other primitive animals was given by the senses of vision, touch and hearing, and the gradual development of these senses and minor brain faculties could be traced from the Miocene period to the anthropoid apes and to man. The primitive structure of remote ancestors is better preserved in man than in any other mammal. His particular group of primates has never been compelled to turn aside from natural development, while others, like the gorilla and the gibbon, have acquired special characteristics of limb or agility to avoid extinction. Primitive man probably came into existence somewhere in the region of Asia between India and China. He was a wanderer, and had nothing to fix him in one spot until he became civilized and a regular tiller of the soil.

Opals Growing on Trees.

Opals grown on trees is one of the latest discoveries of science. Such "stones" are now on exhibition in the American Museum of Natural History, New York. These "opals" were grown in Humboldt county, Nevada, several thousand years ago, by the slow processes of nature. They were formed from trees which were evidently uprooted and buried in a swamp during some earthquake. The trees, many feet under water, became water-logged snags, and then became petrified. The swamp water had become heavily charged with a solution of silica, which acted upon and changed the nature of the wood, while preserving its structure. In course of time the wood became "opal," and can scarcely be distinguished from the genuine article. —Leslie's Weekly.

Seed Electrification.

There appears to be much interest in the electrification of seeds and the application of electricity to growing plants, says the Scientific American. A recent account of work along these lines tells of a new method of aiding plant growth. The seeds, ten or 20 sacks, are placed in tanks provided with iron electrodes at both ends; the electrolyte is a solution of sodium nitrate or some other fertilizer. Particularly with cereals—wheat, barley and oats—the yields of both grain and straw are said to be increased. Some 500 farmers have taken up the treatment of the seeds, which is followed by a very careful drying in a kiln month or two before sowing.

Efficiency on Italian Farms.

The Italian ministry of agriculture is determined to make every acre in Italy do its bit. With this maximum production in view, an agricultural survey will be made to reveal every plot that is yielding less than it should. The backward farmer will then be given assistance in increasing the fertility of his land. In cases where the individual is unable, or unwilling, to co-operate, the government will insist on subletting or on a forced sale. —Popular Mechanics Magazine.

Our Meat From China.

The Tsungtau district of China promises to become a great meat-growing country and contracts have been made calling for the export of great quantities of meat to the United States.

FOUR COMMANDMENTS

Which Harris Says Farmers Ought to Follow.

Four commandments will have to be kept by the farmers before they will be able to put the price on their own cotton, which is their right to do, says B. Harris, commissioner of agriculture. These are, he says:

"1. Diversify; 2. organize and co-operate; 3. build warehouses; 4. have a fund.

"The farmers must diversify their crops to the extent that their farms must be self sustaining. When they do this the cotton crop is half financed.

"They must organize and cooperate not alone with other farmers but with the merchants and bankers and business men. Get them to join the American Cotton Association. Why? Because the cotton crop is the money crop, the backbone of all finance, all prosperity, all business, all progress, all improvement, all education of the South, and always will be.

"Now as to warehouses. These should be throughout the South in number sufficient to take up the slack in the crop. Then receipts can be issued that should be regarded as negotiable scrip in any country. No better collateral can be had. I can not say much about any of these points without repeating much that has already been said but it is a lesson which bears repeating and the people should learn it thoroughly.

"The fourth commandment which I wish to urge upon the people is to organize a cotton fund to let out loans upon cotton—this fund not to be a general banking proposition, but to protect cotton. For when a bale is put into a warehouse it must stay there until the spinner will pay the price set for it by the American Cotton Association.

"If the farmers will adhere strictly to these four commandments they will prove to be the only means by which the farmers can 'clinch' their property after freeing themselves and future generations from poverty and illiteracy. If the farmers will observe strictly these four general principles and put business methods behind their agriculture they will never again see short staple cotton, middling and above, sell for less than 50 cents per pound.

"When these four things are done, the South will come into her own and will in ten years be one of the richest countries in the world.

Lige Danels, a negro charged with

the murder of Mrs. Maggie Hall, a white woman, was taken from the county jail at Center, Texas, by a mob of 1,000 men and lynched to a tree in the court house yard. The mob wrecked the steel cell to get at the negro.

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