

# Why a Woman Usually Kills When She Uses Man as a Target

**A**T last!" The woman stands back. She looks at her hand. In it is a new revolver—she has never fired one before.

And at her feet lies a small, crumpled-up heap of humanity—the dead always seem to grow smaller—the thing before her was once a man. And she has killed him with one sure, straight shot!

"Die as you deserve!" she screams, and then she looks at the thing of steel in her hand. For a moment she is all nerve. Then she realizes. This thing in her hand is a pistol, something she has never used before. Yet at her first shot she has hit the bull's-eye—she has killed a man. Once she would have been afraid to take up a pistol; now she has used it with deadly effect. Once she couldn't have hit the target. Now she has shot dead the man she hates. She has killed him with one shot! Her aim has been absolutely true to the mark she meant it to reach—a man's heart!

The police records of New York for the past two years reveal a dozen cases in which women who had never handled firearms have shot and killed men with unerring aim. In most cases only one shot was fired, a further evidence of their deadly aim. In the cases in which more than one shot was fired the other bullets went wild, showing conclusively that a woman's ability to shoot straight lies in her instinct to point straight and pull the trigger without taking aim, says a writer in the New York World.

**Their First Shot Fatal.** One of the best known cases that illustrates this is the case of Sara Koten, a New York hospital nurse, who shot and killed Dr. Martin Auspitz last June. She is accused of having for days before the shooting nerved herself for the deed. She had never handled a revolver in her life, but when she finally made up her mind to kill him, according to the charge against her, she finished him with one shot.

With one shot Anisia Louise De Massy, a young French woman, who had never used a revolver, killed Gustav Simon, a wealthy manufacturer at No. 640 Broadway, in November of the preceding year. She had an argument with him over money matters and without warning shot him through the heart.

The case of Madeline Wassar Langlotz, who shot and killed her father in August of the same year, is still fresh in the memory of many. Her father had killed her mother and was about to attack her little sister. She picked up a revolver; she had never fired one before. But she killed him

Why does the woman with the pistol so seldom miss her aim? It is absolutely one chance in a thousand that she fails to shoot true. Policemen the country over will tell you this. The frail, hysterical creature with the new pistol which she never dared touch before—so she will tell you—is far more dangerous than the best target shot or the most dangerous thug or highwayman that ever held up a passer-by.

Cowboys and bad men of the west, brought up to use Colts and Remingtons as playthings, men who can shoot off the heads of rattlesnakes from their ponies, miss their men time and again.

But a woman seems never to miss hers, afraid of the revolver as she is.

Ever see a row in a cowboy saloon? The room is crowded with six-shooter experts. Somebody shoots and then everybody shoots. When fifty or sixty shots have been fired the guns are empty, the smoke clears away, the lamps are relighted—and probably nobody has been killed. Nearly all the shooters could hit a dime at 25 yards.

Yet one angry, overwrought woman, who has never fired a pistol in her life, brings down the man she wants to kill every time.

**Men Rarely Hit Mark.** The average American man knows something about a revolver; but he can rarely hit anything with it. Nobody ever saw a policeman who could shoot straight further than at a three-foot range. Thugs and hold-up men know that—and again they get away in a fusillade of bullets which are just as apt to kill somebody across the street or in the next block as to bring down the intended targets. The Jesse James men with their pistols were no match for the sturdy farmers with their shotguns. You must be an expert to shoot straight with a revolver.

It takes long practice and steady nerves. You must know the entire theory of the gun. Why is it then, that a woman, who is all nerves, trembling with excitement and resentment, hits her mark every time? Alone and calm, were she practising with a pistol, she would be as apt to shoot herself as hit the target. Yet when she is nerved to it she shoots straight every time.

There are frequent outbreaks in the foreign colonies of the country's large cities in which the hot-tempered bring some long-standing feud to a climax at the pistol point. The scene is usually a crowded dance hall or a dim alley and the men are massed close. But when the police come they usually find the dead and wounded surprisingly few, considering the short range and the number of shots fired from so many weapons. The men who en-

tion their steady eyes are on the target, not on the gun barrel.

**Unerring Gun Finger.** If you—a woman, for example—will select anything in the room, a door knob, the head in a picture, a figure in the wall paper, and suddenly point your index finger at it you will find by running your eye along the finger that you have drawn a perfect line on the mark. If you will take a paper cutter in your hand, or a pocket knife, or a stick, and try the same experiment, holding the object along your index finger, you will find your aim is almost, if not quite as good.

If you are not nervous about a revolver and will take an empty one in hand, to try the same trick, you will discover to your surprise that you have the barrel end covering your target. The trick is to point first and sight afterward to see how accurately you have pointed. If you want to extend this practice to target shooting with a revolver fire when you point and do your sighting after you have fired, if you do any sighting at all. The sights on a revolver are a joke, required by some tradition.

When you come to try shooting on the point you will not be as successful as when you aimed the empty pistol, because your mind is divided between the effort to point straight and the speculation as to what will happen when you pull the trigger. You will be thinking about the jump of the weapon, its "kick," and wondering whether flying powder will hit you in the eye, or how the report will affect your ear drums. The nervous anticipation of the report alone is apt to destroy the success of your instinctive point. Your hand trembles, too, and you do not shoot at the instant of point, but delay long enough to let your excited nerves wobble the muzzle.

But if you could only forget that the revolver would make a noise, or kick, or that it had a bullet in it; if the weapon had a trigger with a light pull that would not drag your point from the target, you could do some very remarkable shooting by depending solely on the instinct which directs your index finger when you thrust it at any object.

**How Soldiers Are Taught.** In the United States army the men are trained to shoot with a revolver on the point system. The soldier is instructed to crouch his elbow and raise his weapon to a position beside his head with the muzzle straight toward the sky. This is the position taken by the pistol duelist when he is waiting the word to fire. At that word the soldier and the duelist are both taught to thrust or shove their weapons toward the target, pulling the trigger as they do so. This thrust or shove of the weapon forward is an effort to reach the ideal condition of the instinctive point, which means good shooting in proportion as it is approximated.

The cowboy who fires from the hip shoots on the same shove of the weapon forward. The motion is exactly as if you were trying to poke the target with the revolver muzzle, and you pick out with your eye the point you wish to poke. This is the same trick almost as thrusting with a straight

to shooting, into which the condition of a woman, strung to a high nervous tension, and her unfamiliarity with the weapon fit perfectly. In an instant, and by instinct, she is on a par with the greatest marksmen of the age. Were she to try to repeat her performance against the biggest of targets at ten paces it would be safe to give any odds that she could not hit it at all.

The theory of pistol shooting is a true point, a steady hand and the discharge of the weapon at the instant of point when the hand is steady. The pistol expert never runs his eye along the sight until the bright steel tip at the barrel's end covers the mark he wishes to puncture. The best shots among the cowboys will fire from the hip almost as well as from the shoulder. When they fire from any posi-

tion, the bullet acting as the sword tip. Now, the explanation for the incredible marksmanship displayed by an agitated woman lies in the instinct to point straight. She has never fired a pistol before, and she never thinks of aiming it. She does not think of the jump or the report. She is too agitated, too excited, too hysterical, to consider any of these things. She does not even think about the point. She points instinctively, as you will with your index finger. Her mind is concentrated with terrible intensity on the one idea of vengeance, of putting a bullet into the hated face or heart before her. This intensifies the point instinct. And her nervous tension is such that her hand, thrusting out a pistol, is as steady as the proverbial rock at the instant of shooting. The

same nervous tension gives her fingers strength to pull the stiffest trigger at the instant she points the revolver.

**Expert Shot for the Moment.** In short, for the fraction of a second this woman who has never fired a pistol approaches the ideal condition of the expert pistol shot—a sure point, a steady hand, indifference to the jump or the report and the sure trigger pull. Usually the report instantly reduces this awful, iron-nerved figure of vengeance to a limp, sobbing, tearful heap. Sometimes the brainstorm lasts long enough for the firing of several shots. If any miss it will usually be the last one or two fired.

In any event, this same woman who has executed such swiftly accurate satisfaction for her injuries could not hit any sort of a mark with her pistol under anything like normal conditions. The chances are that she would scream and drop the weapon when it was discharged, and her bullet would be likely to pierce the sky or bury itself in the ground. In any event, the result would be an accident.

For the same reason a hold-up man is as dangerous as a mad dog. He is usually the cheapest, most contemptible type of man to be found in all the criminal class. He is apt to be frail, almost a weakling, his nerves shattered with drugs and drink. He is nervous and afraid when he stands some stout citizen up at the point of his revolver. If the citizen resists, if he starts for the hold-up man, or strikes at him, the thug is apt to shoot in sheer fear, and fear of that sort, completely dominating a creature of such a type, is very apt to make him point on instinct and shoot deadly straight.

But the average, normal man who tries to shoot with a revolver has probably fired a few times and is painfully conscious of the fact that he can't hit a barn door. He tries to aim, he delays too long with his point. His muzzle wobbles; the bullet may strike anywhere. Even when possessed with wrath, the average healthy, normal man has a nervous system strong enough to resist the complete control of himself by the passion which controls his actions. He still thinks, as he shoots, what he is doing. He has his attention partly diverted to the weapon. And the target has a fair chance.

But the overwrought woman who thinks she is desperately wronged never seems to miss.

**A Half Shell Story.** The oyster hasn't risen a fraction of an inch in the social scale since the Paleozoic age. No, indeed; but in another way Mr. Mum Oyster has been traveling in seven-league boots. A woolly-headed, sun-worshipping, skin-clothed, barefooted savage of early Britain was the first oyster eater. Imagine him; picture him on the beach, on the sands, say, within sight of the chalk cliffs of Dover. Probably first tried it on the dog. Dog, of course, survived, thrived; then dog's master tasted, opened his eyes wide and smacked his lips. Um-um! Nothing tastier than a headless mollusk. Trust Caesar as an epicure. Best thing he found in Britain was the oyster, and forthwith took him to Rome.

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The flat had gone forth. James Allen must ride possessively around a thousand ewes before there should be added unto him the fairest maid in all the Pecos valley, Mercedes Torres. So ruled old Pedro, Mercedes's father, and Allen knew the Medos' and Persians' laws were weak, wind-shaken reeds beside the solid rock of Pedro's grim determination.

Poor Jim! He did not even own the mustang on which to do the riding. As for the ewes—Jim rushed from Pedro's presence in a sudden passion, and the tiny village of adobe houses set in the middle of New Mexico dropped into dim perspective as Jim's long, angry strides bore him towards the range which rimmed the valley.

The full blaze of noon held the barren land in thrall. A dry wind whispered through the withered grass and shook the ghostly sagebrush. Above the valley a treeless plain stretched out to meet a turquoise sky. The white wool of a dozen flocks relieved the dullness of the landscape.

When the young man had walked his passion off, he faced the situation bravely and made his plans. Old Pedro had a double purpose in the promulgation of this edict. Jim was a lawyer. He had gone to school in Denver, had raked and scraped and planned to remain there to practice, but when the time came to leave the valley his widowed mother had fallen ill with a tedious malady, and Jim, of course, stayed with her that she might be among her people. Jim's mother was a Mexican, as was Mercedes's father, though the other side of each house came from good New England stock, and Pedro, fearful of the Yankee blood in each, sought to bind Jim to the valley.

The young man opened up a modest office in the village and flung a shining shingle to the lazy breeze that crept down from the range. But fees were scarce as molar on a hen-farm. Might ruled in the valley. The Mexicans and greasers settled their differences with flats and knives, and Jim eked out his scanty income by working at the dipping-station just outside the village.

In a year's time Jim had gathered a hundred ewes into his tiny corral. Fits of alternate hope and despair had bridged the interval. When a ewe gave birth to twins, Mercedes straightway predicted that an epidemic had set in, and rosy-fingered Hope piled the calculating pencil on a double basis. But when a gay ranchero rode into town, or a bilthe young cowboy from the foothills swung through the village streets, despair held Jim in its paralyzing clutch.

But a great day dawned for Jim and for Mercedes. It found the former, clad in buckskin pants and jumper, busy at the dipping-station. The flocks of Tony Gomez filled the corrals and were struggling through the annual dipping process to prevent disease. Jim, the erudite, held the post of honor on a raised platform above the steaming vat. From the yards below a narrow chute led towards him, up which a steady stream of sheep was forced by the wily collies. Jim dropped the frightened creatures one by one into the hot sulphur dip with the nonchalance of a housewife shelling peas, and shouted orders to the Mexicans armed with throat hooks who guided the floundering sheep through the long, narrow vat towards the dripping pens.

## A FAIR FEE

BY BERNICE C. CAUGHEY

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From his elevation Jim saw a vast flock of lambs draw near outside the dipping-station, surrounded by snapping collies and dark-skinned herders. A dusty horseman plunged into view, a burly westerner, whose name was known to every sheepman on the range, and asked for the owner of the station. The owner was absent from the valley and there was no one to represent him. Jim called old Gomez, who came forth with glowering face and angry mien. The stranger demanded immediate possession. He made the startling statement that he had contracted for the station for the entire week, and drew forth a written document to substantiate his claim. He explained his haste, and insisted that his Mexican should give way to his flock. He was under contract with a score of ranchmen in Colorado. A

special train was to meet him at the nearest station, and the law required that the lambs should be dipped before crossing the state line.

With mellifluous flow, of Spanish vowels, in striking contrast to his volcanic manner, old Gomez called upon the residents of heaven to witness his intention, and the fires of hell to eternally consume him if he budged an inch for a luridly modified Yankee. The stockman coaxed, threatened, and finally turned his pony's head towards the village for legal assistance.

Jim hurried home to change his clothes, and was quietly seated in his office when the stranger sputtered in. Jim explained the futility of the usual legal process when the ugly Mexicans were aroused and suggested a compromise, to which the stockman gladly consented. All day Jim camped on Gomez's trail. His native instinct, illumined by his Yankee wit, won the day. With smooth words and \$20 the corrals were cleared. The delighted stockman slapped Jim on the back and told him to come to the hotel that evening for his fee.

Jim hurried home to consult with his mother, and stopped on the way to tell Mercedes. "I ought to have \$50," he insisted, "for it was worth that to him."

Mercedes squeezed his hand, and his mother gazed proudly upon the man who could earn \$50 in a single day.

Arrayed in his bravest apparel, Jim sallied forth, walking on air, but before he reached the little "dobe" hotel he gradually neared the earth again. He was obliged to stop and recall Mercedes's proud look and his mother's wonderment to keep his courage at the proper pitch. "What if the stockman should offer me \$5?" Jim asked himself. A cold chill pierced his spine at the thought.

The stockman met him with a cheerful greeting. "Well, sir," he began, when they were comfortably seated, "what do I owe you? Let's get the matter settled."

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Jim hesitated and cleared his throat. "It saved you considerable, sir," he ventured.

"I know it did, and I am willing to pay for it," was the reply.

But Jim was loath to cast the die. "I'll tell you what I'll do," said the stockman; "I'll just spread out here on my knee what I think the job is worth, and you can tell me if it is satisfactory."

All hope of \$50 vanished, and Jim was mustering up his courage to face Mercedes.

The stockman drew a huge wallet from an inside pocket and carefully untied it. Jim watched him moodily, and saw him draw out a bill and smooth it carefully upon his knee; another one was added and another, until five one-hundred-dollar bills lay clinging together. "How's that?" asked the stockman laconically.

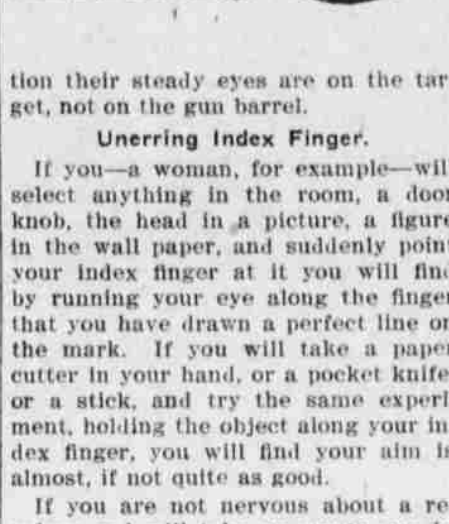
Jim could not reply at once. By a sudden metamorphosis the timid sheep dipper was transformed into the successful young attorney. His head was held erect, a bright spot burned in either cheek, a blaze of triumph shone in his eyes. His palms pressed hard against his rigid knees in a desperate effort to appear calm and unconcerned. Presently his power of speech returned. "Better make it another fifty," he said, and there was a ring in his voice as if New Mexico were his.

"I'll do it just for luck," replied the stockman.

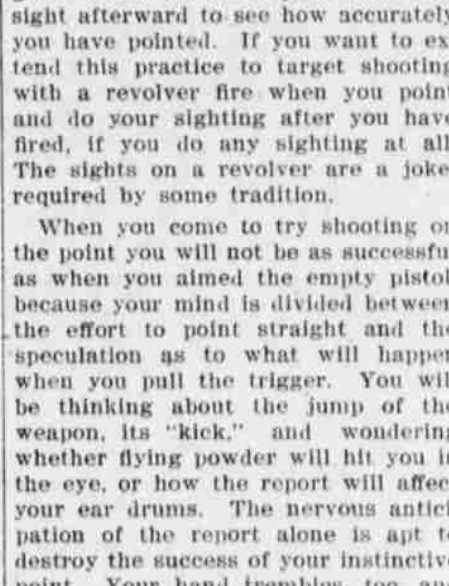
Next morning when Jim went out to feed his flock he found it had been augmented by 900 ewes, each bearing on its left ear old Pedro's brand. A trim mustang was tethered near the gate. A scrap of paper clung to the bride, on which was scrawled in Pedro's writing, "I mek present to my son Jeem."

Jim swung himself into the saddle. Twice round the little flock he raced and disappeared down the road in a cloud of dust. The mustang seemed to know its rider's mind, for when they reached the hedge in front of Pedro's cottage he leaped it like a rabbit. A moment more and Jim stood on the tiny porch with his arms about Mercedes.

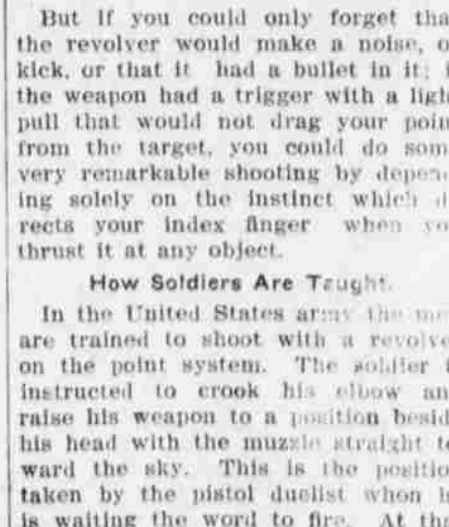
BERTHA CLAICHE WHO KILLED EMIL GERDORF



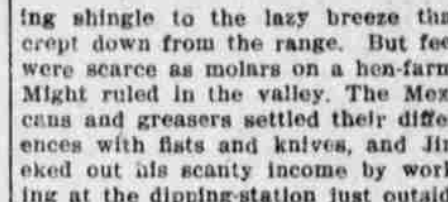
SARAH KOTEN WHO KILLED DR. MARTIN AUSPITZ



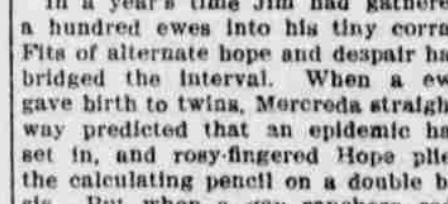
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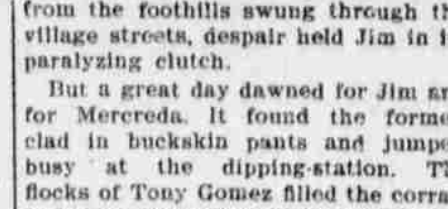
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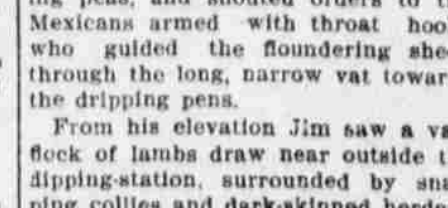
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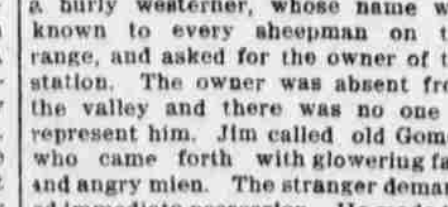
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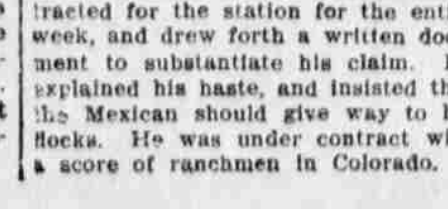
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