in a series we the

COMRADES OF PERIL

By RANDALL PARRISH

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"I HATE HER."

Synopsis.-Tom Shelby, a rancher, Ponca, looking for a good time af-ter a long spell of hard work and eliness on the ranch. Instead, he runs into a funeral-that of Dad Calkins, a retired army man of whom little is known. A girl, still in her teens, survives Calkins, Mc-Carthy, a saloon keeper and Ponca's leading citizen, decides that the girl, now alone in the world, should marry. She agrees to pick out a husband from the score of men lined up in her home. To his consternation, she selects Shelby, who had gone along merely as a spectator. The wedding takes place and the couple set out for Shelby's ranch. With them is "Kid" Macklin, whom Shelby has hired as a helper. On the way the girl tells her husband her name is Olga Carlyn, and also tells him something of the peculiar circum-stances of her life. Upon their arrival at the ranch Shelby is struck down from behind and left for dead. He recovers consciousness to find that Macklin and his wife have gone. He starts in pursuit. He learns his wife is an helress, that her abduction has been carefully planned and that she has been taken to Wolves' Hole, a strong-hold of the bandits and bad Indians. Reaching Wolves' Hole, he is discovered by "Indian Joe" and forced o accompany him into the hole. Here he claims to be one of the conspirators and is locked up pending developments. He confides in a Mexican girl, Pancha, in love with Macklin, who intends to marry Olga,

CHAPTER IX-Continued.

"SI senor; I know the way that others do not. I get you out, but," passionately, "eet is not to save you. I belong here—see; with Junn, my brother. I am born outlaw, yet she must go! That I resolve. If she stay here I keel her. But 'tis easier way to have her married to you, an' safe." "You love Macklin?"

"Si, senor," proudly, "why not? He say he love me; yet she come. Madre de Dios! I hate her! She take my love! She! Eet shall not be. You swear, senor, that she go with you, an' never come back any more?"

"Yes, Pancha, I swear that Once we are away she shall never come back." he answered soberly, impressed by the violence of her passion, "yet how is that to be done?"

She glanced apprehensively behind, still clinging tightly to her perch, lowcautious whisper.

"Listen, senor; I tell you. Eet is late now, for I walt before I come, an' think eet all out, so I know what to say. Indian Joe, he bad man, verra bad man, an' I much afraid. But now he sleep in there; I creep past while he breathe, an' not wake beem. 'Tis because he drank. Juan, my brother, go up to the cove to find Senor Hanley, an' he not be back teel morning. Tonight eet must be done, an' so they will not know I helped. Is eet so?"

"Yes; I understand; yer have opportunity tonight; but I must get away so no one shall suspect yer had any hand in it."

"That is eet," eagerly. "Indian Joe, he keel me if he found out; maybe my brother, too. I see heem keel men. quick, like that. Then he laugh. So



He Managed to Scrape Painfully Out of the Hole.

I think; he look in here, but not to search, so he not sure what might be. Perhaps there was a knife under the bed, he dropped somewhere what you found-see? Maybe you had eet hid in your boot-bow he know that?"

Yes, but I haven't, Pancha." "So I know; but I breeng one see," and she pressed the handle into his hand. "How he know how you get cet? Eet is strong, sharp, so you cut

these bars, an' when morning come you are not here. Who knows how eet happen, senor? I am also asleep, an' you are gone; 'tis the mercy of

Shelby caught his breath to her expressive gestures, his fingers gripping the knife. "I doubt if I can get through that

hole," he said mournfully, "after the

bars are cut. I'm pretty big." "But you must, senor; there is no other way," she insisted impatiently. "The blade is strong, sharp; eet will dlg out the log, but do not be long. See-there is a tree yonder; I will wait you there, an' show where you must go, so there be no trail. You come to me quick, but be still like

death. Madre de Dios! 'tis the only She was gone before he could protest again, vanishing into the black night so swiftly and silently he could only stare out helplessly through the bars. Yet she had left hope and deter-

mination behind. With teeth set he began the work, finding the steel blade effective against the tough hickory. It was no light job, at that, but he plied the knife desperately, possessing some skill and unusual strength of wrist and fingers. The stakes gave way one after the other, but he was not satisfled until he enlarged the opening somewhat by removing all bark from the logs, and prying loose the box frame. This required all of half an hour to accomplish, yet left an aperture through which he believed he might force his body. At that he found no room to spare; but, by venturing it head first, screwing his shoulders through one at a time, and drawing in his breath tightly, he managed to scrape painfully out of the hole, clawing at the rough outside bark for purchase, and finally coming down face first onto the solid earth. At that, he made little noise, but his flesh smarted, and for a moment he rested where he fell, confused and panting for breath. The night was so black there in the shadow of the great hills, he could scarcely determine directions, yet the girl had pointed toward the right, and, as soon as he could attain his feet, he advanced cautiously that way, with hands held out before him. The path was rocky and uneven. probably leaving little trace of his passage. She touched him before he was even aware of her near presence, and then she was but the dimmest outline, her face indistinguishable through the gloom.

"Speak low, senor," she whispered briefly. "Come with me this way." He permitted her to lead him forward over ground sloping upward, but before they had thus advanced fifty yards, Shelby stopped, determined to question her purpose.

"Where are you taking me? To Olga?"

"No, senor; not now. I must leave you in safety first. Later I bring her to you. Why you ask? You not trust

"Yes, I trust-you, Pancha; but isn't it better that I understand the plan? Then we can work together."

She drew in a quick breath impatiently, her fingers clutching at his sleeve.

"Dios! this is not time to stand and talk, senor," she burst forth, "yet listen, if not do otherwise. There is no time left tonight in which to escape. I must be back in the house before Indian Joe wakes, or my brother returns. All I can hope to do is hide you where you not be found. Then we must plan what is best to do." "You know where she is?"

"SI, senor; I know; yet eet will not be easy to get her away. She is not left unwatched, and nothing can be done tonight. I must watch and wait, Eet will only be safe when Senor Macklin and my brother are both away."

"You mean that I am to hide out yonder somewhere until you are ready?" he questioned. "Is that the scheme?"

"There is no other thing possible. Even that may fall. Senor, do not be a fool," she urged earnestly. "I know the danger of all this; you not vealize even yet what eet means to be a prisoner in Wolves' hole. These men keel; it is their only law. I risk my life to do this, and there is but one chance of success. Alone, unaided, you can never get out of here-never. Why? you ask. Because, senor, every pass is under guard; they are never left open."

"Then how are we to go?" "Along a path known only to myself and one other, senor. A young Indian found eet by accident and confided his secret to me! He come, and went that way for a year, but no one else know. Once he took me half way to top; eet is rough, yet can be followed. Now you see I am right?" "I have no choice; I owe you my

life already." "Then do as I say, senor, I will leave you where you can never be found. I have food here in this sack. You must wait there hidden until I come. Eet may be a day, two days, three days; that make no difference. You have my pledge that I will bring her. I do not lie. Then you will do

this, as I say?" "Yes, Pancha."

we come, and you will have to climb those rocks in the dark. You will need stout hearts for that trip; but eet is better to risk than stay here an' die, senor. Now I tell you-Indian Joe will believe you found that knife, and cut your way out alone; he will try to follow, an' he is like wolf on the trail. He will not believe you can get away; my brother is great tracker, an' they think eet easy to run you down. Me fool them, senor."

"But how? they will surely see your footprints,"

"Mine!" she laughed softly. "Not to ever know them, senor-see; eet is man's boot I wear, and scarcely have stepped off solid rock. Now we go to the stream yonder, and then wade up through the water. There will be no trail. Let us not walt, senor."

The man followed without a word, touching her with one hand in guidance. They were upon a crest of solld rock, worn smooth by the ages, and so advanced unchecked for a hundred



feet, until the ridge suddenly terminated at the bank of a narrow stream. A single step, and both were standing in the water, and she had grasped his hand.

"Eet is swift, but not deep," she said confidently. "I have waded eet many a time. We must hurry."

He took the bag of provisions and swung it across one shoulder and together they began plowing their way through the downward rush of water. It was tiresome, but they plunged steadily forward, finding the bottom firm. Shelby did not know how far they advanced, nor could he tell, in the darkness, the exact nature of their surroundings. His impression was that they were penetrating a narrow side ravine, between great overshadowing masses of outcropping stone, which intensified the gloom, Every step took them higher above the floor of the Hole, and, at times the stream became a veritable torrent, against which they scarcely could make progress. The girl kept close to the rocks on the right, and struggled forward bravely, never loosening her grasp on his hand. Meeting as he must the stronger sweep of the current, Shelby felt the strain, and was glad when she finally came to a halt.

"Eet's here," she said, "a few steps more, and I leave you. The greatest danger is my not getting back in time."

There was an opening in the solid rock of the wall, a mere crevice, so concealed by tangled shrubbery as to be invisible even in daylight. How she had recognized the spot in that darkness was a mystery; through the sense of feeling probably, for her hands instantly parted the interlaced branches, and ste crept through them with Shelby, on his hands and knees, close bebind. They emerged into a guich, as though some giant ax of the gods had cleaved the very face of the cliff, a guich dry, scarcely four feet in width, rock walled on either side, and almost a tunnel because of stunted growth, where dwarf oaks had found some lodgment in cracks and crevices. Pancha stopped, breathing heavily from the exertion of the climb.

"You go on alone from here, senor." she instructed, the words panting between her lips. "There is nothing to do but follow the gulch. A hundred yards and there is an opening at the right, a small cave. You will feel eet with your hand. You need have no fear to enter, and no one can ever find you there. That is where you will wait until I come."

Shelby tried in vain to distinguish her outlines; he could only be sure of her presence by the voice.

"Do not use any fire," she went on warningly, "or show yourself by daylight. They will seek you, and watch

"Gracias! eet will be at night when I these cliffs. Eet may be several days before I will dare act; you must be patient. When we come I will bring arms, but I didn't dare touch any tonight."

"You will not tell me where my wife is being held?"

"What good, senor! You could aid her not at all. There is no great harm coming to her yet. Sacrista! why you worry about her? I bring her with me; did I not promise?"

"Yes, I trust you, Pancha," he said warmly, "and will do just what you say. But-but, don't you understand? If I knew where she was I would feel better."

She laughed almost avornfully.

"Bah! what the difference, senor? You not know if I told you. But 'tis not far away; perhaps by daylight you might see eet from up there; a log house all alone under the bluff. Yet you lie hid, senor, and trust all to me."

"I have promised that." "Good, senor; I will go."

She drew her hand away, and he knew she was gone, although no movement of her figure could be distinguished. Shelby swung the bag of provisions again to his shoulder, and began feeling his way blindly forward. He had retained the knife, with which he had effected escape from the cabin, and, although the point of the blade had been broken, he did not feel entirely unarmed. There was no possibility for him to lose the way, the unbroken walls shutting him tightly in, so that even the star-decked sky was invisible, while the path he must follow led almost dizzily upward. It was boulder-strewn, and he fell twice, yet tolled steadily on, never permitting his hand to leave the guidance of the wall to the right, and carefully testing the placing of each foot in fear of some pitfall. He could neither judge time nor distance, yet it was long before light came into the sky, when he finally clambered over a rock barrier across the path, and came upon a shelf of stone, the left wall of this strange cavern abruptly disappearing. Fearful of what precipice might yawn there, as soon as he again attained his feet Shelby flattened himself against the one rock front remaining, scarcely daring to venture forward more than an inch or so at a time. A few feet brought him to the cave's mouth, a mere hole, scarcely wide or high enough to receive his body. He explored the black interior to the length of his arms, finding it | ready struck, and driven the remlarger within than at the entrance. She insisted there was no danger, and the silence seemed to prove the place contained no Inhabitant, Doubtless the open shelf of rock would be exposed to view from the valley below with the first flush of day. To avoid discovery he must creep in out of

sight. This was accomplished without difficulty, the floor being fairly level, and the roof rising so that he could almost stand erect. Shelby explored every inch of the space, knife in hand, and not entirely satisfied until the task was completed. It was only a box of a place, less than fifteen feet long. and perhaps half as wide, narrowing at the top, as though in some great cataclysm of past ages two masses of rock had been hurled together, leaving this little jog between. It was hot in there, and Shelby, dragging after him the bag of provisions, removed his coat. A few moments later he rolled it into the form of a pillow, and lay

down, staring up at the black vault. He could think now, recall all that had occurred so swiftly, and weave this and that together. He had acted recklessly; there was no doubt of that. No one but a blind fool would have ever ventured alone into this place to free a prisoner. He should have ridden to Ponca, and called upon his friends for help; perhaps he might even have been able to obtain the services of a troop of cavalrymen from the fort down below-the major knew him and would believe his story. Why hadn't he done this? Why had he been so rash, and bull-headed? The answer flashed into his mind, as though some voice had spoken-it was love of Olga Carlyn! He knew it instantly; made no further effort to deceive himself. Lying there in that black silence, staring blindly upward, he saw the woman again as plainly as though in the flesh-saw her, and knew that he loved her. Her eyes smiled at him, with such wistfulness in their depths; there was nothing sullen about her expression any longer; she was all woman, and-he loved her.

He covered his eyes with an arm. and rolled over. God! wasn't there anything he could do but wait? He felt wild to act; to accomplish something; to strike some definite blow in her behalf. His wife! She was his wife-Olga Carlyn! It meant much to him now. How deathly still it was; how terribly dark. He felt hot and stifled there in the cave, yet did not move, or change his position, and so he finally fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.

The Darkness of the Cabin. It was broad daylight-a dull-gray within the small cave, but bright sunshine without-when Shelby aroused

himself, and looked about in an instant of bewilderment. As the truth of his situation reasserted itself, he sat up, conscious of stiffness in every joint, yet reinvigorated by several hours of rest. He faced a day of inactivity, a hard demand upon a man of his temperament, and he was as slow as possible over a meager breakfast, his eyes continually wandering toward the narrow opening, as his mind again reviewed the occurrences of the day before,

Finally, unable to resist the temptation longer, he ventured to thrust his head through the entrance to learn something more definite as to his surroundings. All he could perceive was the shelf of rock, with a considerable coping about its outer edge, together with a few feet of the descending trail. On the other hand a new cleft appeared in the front of the cliff overshadowing him, and he suspicioned that the path he had followed the night previous continued upwardwas, perhaps, that secret passageway which Pancha had said led finally to the top of the gorge, and along which she planned to guide their future escape. Beyond the outer edge of the shelf there was nothing but sky visible, and, believing the coping would conceal his movements from observation below, Shelby pushed his way out through the opening, and crept on hands and knees to where he cautiously could gaze over.

He was higher up on the cliff than he had previously realized, although its precipitous front yet towered menacingly above. The view below was like that of a distant picture, its detalls indistinct. He felt no longer any special fear of being observed, however, and leaned far enough forward to see clearly up and down the broad valley. His position lay somewhat removed, around the angle of a side ravine, so that he could not trace the entire course of the Cottonwood, or even discern the waterfall beneath which he had entered the Hole. Yet he had a glimpse of the main stream, could pick out what he believed to be the log house from which he had escaped, while, within a grove so as to be scarcely distinguishable, appeared the roof of another, smaller building. He would not have noticed this, but for a thin spiral of smoke arising from the chimney. Pancha had said the place where Otga was confined was visible from this spot. Could this be it? He stared down a long while, but

without reward. Yet there seemed to be much passing and repassing along the main valley; black, ill-defined figures of men on horseback almost constantly visible. He was surprised at the number, never having supposed that this colony of outlaws was so numerous. Another thing, while he could not clearly distinguish such small objects at that distance, the majority of these riders had the appearance of being Indians. Could they be Sloux warriors gathered here in preparation for some raid on the exposed settlements? or was it possible that the troops had alnants of scattered war parties into this Hole for refuge? In either case their presence in such numbers rendered his own position so much more precarious, and increased the danger surrounding Olga. He felt that, in spite of his pledge to the Mexican girl, he could not remain in his hiding place quietly, without endeavoring to learn more of what had actually occurred during the night.

Indeed he could perceive no reason why he should remain entirely inactive. At the very best she could accomplish nothing before night, and had held out very little hope for even then. There were no signs that he was being sought after down below. It might be that in the excitement of other happenings, his escape had been considered as of minor importance; that Indian Joe, convinced that he could never get out of the Hole unobserved, took no immediate interest in trailing him. What was the use, when he must eventually surrender? It would be a simple matter to steal cautlously down through that deep cleft in the rocks, as far, at least, as the stream below. He would be concealed all the way, and once there, hidden securely among those thick bushes, he might then learn what was actually occurring. It would be far better for him to know. Besides, this would be no disloyalty to Pancha; even if she sought him he would still be in the path she must follow, and, so long as he remained undiscovered, fust-where he was concented could make no possible difference. The argument satisfied his mind, because he felt he must act; must make some effort of his

> "See; touch me. You thought I was dead?"

> > (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Old Bell Splendidly Preserved. In an old graveyard in County Antrim, Ireland, a farmer, while plowing, unearthed a bronze church bell weighing more than 160 lbs., and believed to be over 300 years old. The bell is in a splendid state of preservation, with a clear, powerful tone. The old Kirkmoyle parish church, where the find was made, has been in ruins since 1622.

Idleness.

I am not the only one that condemns the idle; for once when I was going to give our minister a pretty long list of the sins of one of our people that he was asking after, I began with: "He's dreadfully lazy." "That's enough," said the old gentleman, "all sorts of sins are in that one."-C. H. Mechanical Courtesy.

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