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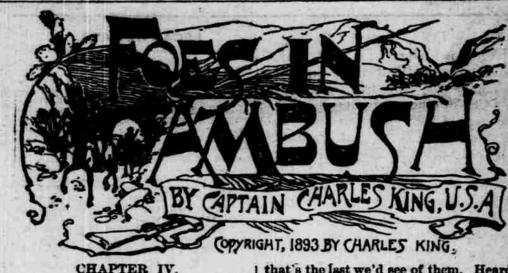
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anything further out this way, sir?"

throwing up a warning hand.

Apparently not. Even the well di-

"It can't be far away. Ride ahea

And then Feeny's challenge again

excitement in the ranch behind them.

"Hello! What's that? Who's that?

"Who comes there, I say? Halt! or

"For God's sake, don't fire, man

"What ladies? Who are you any-

"God be praised!" shouted Feeny,

Where did you overtake them?"

here's the major just back of me."

he was beginning to see light.

son begged an instant's interruption.

In 10 minutes the Concord wagon

the paymaster's ambulance. The weary

dle horses led in to water. The major

the Christobal?"

Yes, an hour ago."

saddle. "Who are you?"

and here's more cartridges.'

springs, then a voice:

"Who comes there?"

We've got ladies here."

Is that Moreno?"

how? Quick!"

son. I'm his son.

I'll fire!"

"Why, confound it, yes. I try to

convince myself it's only imagination,

CHAPTER IV. And now, with such confirmation of the truth of the story of an Apache raid, the paymaster thought it only right to release Moreno from the duress | but two or three times, far out there in which Sergeant Feeny had placed toward the Picacho, I've heard that him. When so old an inhabitant of Ar. | whip cracking. I have felt sure there izona as Mr. Harvey gave entire cre. | was a hammering sound, as though dence to the report, recognized the note some one were pounding on a wagon as really his son's handiwork and has- tire. Once I was sure I heard a horse sucrs, what room for doubt could be ing. If those fellows mean to attack, ranch against the enemy common to it here.' both. But again Feeny shook his head

"I may have been wrong as to the Apaches, sir, but I can't be mistaken as to Moreno. He's in the pay of the there now, I'll warrant you, with two the coming of the main body. They'd panse of desert, plainly and distinctly, hadn't been for the Apache story. or stone beating on iron. Whether it would get there, you know, just about They're more afraid of one of Cochise's | were tire or linchpin, hame or brake, band than of all the sheriffs from Tucson to Tacoma. I wish the rest of Har. | buckboard was being pounded into | vey's people would get here," he continued, looking longingly out into the darkness. "Unless they are of better geant. "It's that bloody gang, for large that your father's gone."

'No. We've simply got to stay here, large that your father's gone."

'No. We've simply got to stay here, large that your father's gone." in the territory, you won't catch them hustling out alone trying to find their master this night. And yet what use would they be to us?"

will have missed the trail in the territory, you won't catch them hustling out alone trying to find their its from the northeast it would be coming."

"Mightn't they have missed the trail

Plummer turned anxiously away and gave himself up to thought. Nothing but a faint glimmer now remained of the beacon light. All was still as the grave about the lonely ranch. Walking over to the eastward door, he entered the dark room and was instantly hailed by the voice of his clerk.

'You're there, are you, Dawes?" he asked. "Not getting sleepy, I hope." "Not a whit, major. I couldn't, even if I hadn't slept most of the day. I'm sitting here on the safe with a Colt's six shooter in each hand. If old Moreno's

door cracks, by gad! I'll let drive." 'Well, that's all right, but suppose they come around through the corral to this door :" "I'm ready. I came within an ace

of blazing away at you, but I happened to recognize your figure and step just in the nick of time. A low whistle without broke up the colloquy. Plummer waddled off in

the direction of the sound. "What is it, sergeant?" "They're coming, sir. Harvey's men, I mean. Will you deliver his carbine to full cock. Another moment

"Just as you say. Why shouldn't "It'll have so much more effect from your lips, major. They may misdoubt

Far out on the trail the quick tripping hoofs of mules could now be heard. Presently a horseman shot up

"Halt there!" sang out Feeny. Whose party's this?" "Harvey's, Tucson. Looking fo Moreno's. Are we near?"

"You're there now, but you can't stop. Mr. Harvey wants you to come right along after him. He has taken the trail to the Christobal, where the Indians have carried off his daughters." The man fairly reeled in his saddle,

shocked at the dreadful tidings.
"When? How did it happen? Who's gone with him?" "Some time this morning, from all we can learn. Two squads of cavalry are on the trail, one with Ned Harvey, the other just out from here at dark. The old man and George followed them

as soon as they got in. Who's with "Two Mexicans, that's all. They're no account. I'd best leave them here with the mules. They're just behind and have been scared to death already.' And so in 10 minutes two more of

the low caste half breed Mexicans were added to the paymaster's garrison, and Sergeant Feeny's brief exposition of the situation at the ranch only delayed the incoming American long enough to water his horse and stow a little grain "I wouldn't wonder a d-d bi

if the Morales gang were around here, was his discomforting assurance. "None of 'em have been seen about Tucson for a week before we left. Wish I could stay and stand by you, but my first duty employ nigh onto eight years." What sort of looking man is Ned

Harvey?" persisted the sergeant, still hopeful of some fraud. "Tall, dark, smooth face-looks like

a Spaniard, almost. I never saw anybody who resembled him hereabouts. I'm afraid it's no plant. I don't want to offend you, sergeant, but I wish to God it was all the Morales gang's doings and that it was only your money they were after. If it's Apaches, and they have got the old man's children, he'll never get over it."

"By heaven!" muttered Feeny to himself, as the loyal fellow put spurs to his horse and disappeared; "by heaven, I begin to believe it's both."

And now with gloomy face the ser geant returned to where he had left Major Plummer watching the westward trail. A brief word at the doorway assured him the clerk was still alert and ready. A pause under the open window. high above the ground, of the room where slept Moreno's wife and daughter, if they slept at all, told him that all was silence there, if not slumber, and then he joined his superior.

"That fellow was of the right sort, sergeant," said Plummer. "I wish we had one or two like him." are safe here at Moreno's." with its fair freight, now trembling and excited, was standing side by side with

"I wish we had, sir. Those greasers are worse than no guards at all. They'll sit there in the corral and smoke papelitos by the hour and brag about how they fought their way through the Apaches with Harvey's mules, but for our purpose they're worse than useless. At the first sign of an attack they'd be stampeding out into the darkness, and

they ever put up," he burst in, grind-Run around into the corral and smashing his teeth in wrath. "Of course the first man that tries to come out, they knew of father's movements and I'll tend to any feller that shows a head they knew of father's movements and of mine. They know everything. They knew we were to meet here probably. They felt assured you knew nothing of it at all. They have used our supposed peril to draw away your guard. They have succeeded even better than they planned, for they have drawn off father, too, and four of our best men into the bargain. But to think that this old scoundrel Moreno should be in it! We've always suspected the Ceralvo

vous for thugs and assassins. By heav- to attack him. en, I'm glad you have him trapped... How many has he with him do you "I don't know. I only feel sure he

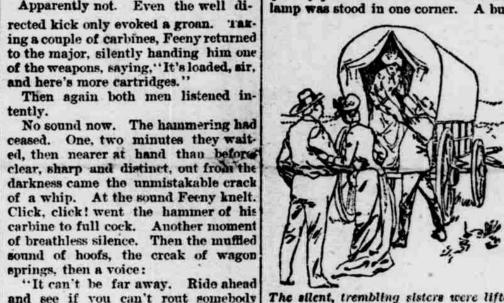
must have one or two, but it's the main gang we have to watch," answered Feeny. "They may be along any min. ute, and I thought it was them when we heard you.

"And that's what is worrying me, sucrs, what room for doubt could be left in the mind of a newcomer to the left in the mind of a newcomer to the they'll come mounted, of course, but drew the young man aside. "All they was time thought Plummer what wason would they have?" "There! Hark now, sergeant! Didn't without a fight. You and your sisters you hear?" suddenly spoke the major, ordinarily they would not molest, but by this time they know you are here. Both men held their breath, listening Very possibly they've followed closely intently. For a moment nothing but on your trail and may be gathering all Morales brothers, even if not an active the beating of their own hearts served around us at this moment. Let me be member of the gang. He is lurking in to give the faintest sound. Then, out to brief. The sooner you can hitch in the west, under the starlit vault of the | those mules again, or those relay mules or three of them in hiding, waiting for | heavens, somewhere in that black ex- | rather, and get out of here the better." "Ah, but, major, how about the 'a' been here before this perhaps if it | there rose the measured sound of iron | Apaches in the Santa Maria? We

> daybreak. "By Jupiter, I never thought of them! something metallic about a wagon or You wouldn't have your guard now

stuff than most of these mule whackers [there's no stage due tonight, and if it | to be here to help you out. It cannot

in the darkness, and having no ranch lights to guide them got lost somewhere "Not likely, sir. Shure, there'd be We're to stay here at Moreno's toa squad of the troops and half a dozen old hands with 'em if it was Harvey's. the silent, trembling sisters were lifted This has come from the pass, and it from the wagon and led away into the won't be long before they'll be coming one guestroom—the east room—where, pistol in hand, still sat Dawes on the shead. You'll need your carbine then. D-n that man Mullan! Can't I wake safe. The wraps and pillows were quickly passed in. The little hurricane lamp was stood in one corner. A bun-



dle of cavalry blankets, left behind by the detachment when it took the trail, rang out on the still night air, followed instantly by muffled sound of stir and was spread out upon the earthen floor. The safe was hauled into the empty barroom, and bidding his sisters lie down and fear nothing, assuring them of their perfect safety there and urging them to sleep all they could against their move at dawn, Edward Harvey, looking well to his arms and bidding his two men to do likewise, came forth

and joined his soldier friends. "There are five of us now against Morales and his outfit, and I'll just bet "George Harvey's daughters of Tuc-

my horse we can thrash 'em." "Only 11 o'clock," muttered old Plummer as he struck a match and springing to his feet and rushing forconsulted his watch. "It's been the ward. "Are they all safe-unharmed? longest evening I've ever spent; but, thank God, our worst fears are at an "Overtake whom? What in blazee end. I never doubted for a moment are you talking about?" queried a tall. slender fellow, bending down from his that your sisters were captives. Who could the man have been who personat-"Sergeant Feeny of the cavalry, and ed you?"

"I don't know. I've heard of him once before. He is about my height "Major Plummer-him you was talk- and build, but darker, they say, and ing with this morning when you came with more of Mexico in his manner. for help," answered Feeny, his voice He has been to Tucson, but I never tremulous with excitement. Already heard of his masquerading over my name until now, though I have heard "Why, I've never seen Major Plum-mer nor any other major today. The ied my writing, too, to so completely only troops I met were Sergeant Wing fool father.'

and his guard at the pass just after "Oh, that was a mere scrawl on soft nightfall. Have you met the Apaches? paper with a broad, pointed pencil.
You saw the signal of course." There was no time to scrutinize it close-"Signal, yes, but devil an Apache.

Tell me now, wasn't it you was here at Moreno's this morning begging for troops to go and fetch your ladies down "It's what I've been thinking of, sir,

from the Gila? Wasn't it you sent the note saying they was run off by Innote saying they was run off ever excited, Feeny's grammar ran to the door of these two rooms and stand off a good sized gang. Mr. Harvey will "Not a bit of it. My sisters are here, of course want to be where he can look safe and sound. We'd have been here after the ladies, but if I can put one an hour ago but for slipping a tire. of his men in the corral-one who can Is father here?"

"Talk to him, major. I'm done up entirely," was all poor Feeny could say, as between relief, rejoicing and the rest. Any minute now they'll be inestimable comfort of finding he was coming. First thing, run these two wagright in his theories, after all, he dropped his carbine, threw himself upon the soft, sandy ground and fairly rolled over and over in his excitement and the shelter." And laying hold of the pole while willing hands manned the What wondering eyes, what startled ears were at the wagon doorway as, in his ponderous manner, the major endeavored to tell of the morning's adventure and the counterfeit presentment of consultation as to which of Harvey's ture and the counterfeit presentment of the would be best suited for the onerthe Ned Harvey now before him. Long before he could finish the thoughtful son begged an instant's interruption.

ous post opposite the enemy's door and them a sudden and breathless silence.

"Listen!" whispered Feeny. "That "And father has gone on the trail to is a signal. Hist! you'll hear it again

"After him, Leon! Ride like the hands, the five men stood huddling in a devil, even if you have to ride all little group at the west end of the low, night. Fetch him back here as quick fat building.

Somewhere out on the dark expanse

toward the peak a long, low whistle, ending in an abrupt high note, had ed. For a moment there was no The invisible foe was signaling for reply. From whom could mules were unhitched and with the sad- answer be expected but Moreno? "Watch the old scoundrel's window

and the sergeant, prompting each other, went on with their recital, Harvey listening with attentive ear.

"It is one of the most perfect plants" which the body structured the sergeant, indicating a board covered port in the westward wall.

"They'll try to show a light perhaps." ed by Apach

We've always suspected the Ceralvo and don't be frightened. It looks as set, but father has done everything for Moreno, practically built his ranch for him, dug his well, set him up in busiter unguarded. We'll give them a lester unguarded. ness, and now he makes this a rendez- son they'll never forget if they attempt For all answer Ruth Harvey only nes-

tled closer to her sister and clung to her for courage and support. Paquita, however, became amazonian at once. "Is there nothing I can do, Ned? I can't bear to lie here listening and taking no part. Surely I could shoot a pis-

"You can help us best and most by lying flat and showing not so much as a finger at the door. We can tend to them, Fan. It won't be long before fato form an alliance, offensive and defen-sive, with the Mexican denizens of the the safe in, if they couldn't burst into of money. It is my business to defend the roop come galloping back.

One of Ceralvo's perhaps, to cart off the safe in, if they couldn't burst into of money. It is my business to defend the safe in, if they couldn't burst into of money.

Then he darted to the barroom. "Are they coming?" hailed the clerk in a hoarse whisper.

Somebody signaled out on the plain. It's probably they. Look out for Moreno now. Don't let him or anybody through that door." Far out on the desert again, louder,

shriller, clearer, the whistle was re-"Ah, blow and be d-d to ye!" nuttered Feeny. "There's no answer from here ye'll get this night. Watch out now. Some of 'em will try to

crawl up after a little." But nearly five minutes passed within a horse stamped and snorted. A coarse Mexican voice muttered a savage be long before the troops come hurry- oath. Feeny, crouching low, darted ing back when they find they've been into the darkness in the direction of the tricked. Very probably they have sound. Plummer and Harvey would found it out by this time." Then, with have restrained him, but it was too late. have restrained him, but it was too late. quick decision, he stepped back to the door of the Concord. "Girls! Paquita! Then a latch creaked and snapped be-Ruthie! Tumble out, both of you. hind them, and slowly and cautiously the wooden shutter began to open out ward. In an instant Harvey had raised his rifle and struck the resounding board a fierce blow with the butt. The door flew back, crashing in violent contact against the grizzled pate of Morenc himself, who, with a howl of mingled rage and anguish, fell back from the

> 'Open that again, and I'll blow your head off, you scoundrel!" growled Harvey. "Don't you dare show hair nor hide outside your room. Every man has orders to shoot you on sight, if

that's any comfort to you."

Only for a second had the old Mexican's head appeared, only an instant had he for plea or protestation, but that instant had served to show a narrow streak of light from the room within, and this mere crack revealed to the watchful eyes out upon the plain the position of the ranch—possibly told them something more, for in less than half a minute two horsemen came looming up out of the darkness and cantering fearlessly toward them. Phlegmatic as he was, old Plummer's nerves gave a twitch as, sharp and stern, young Harvey challenged.

"Halt there! Who are you? Halt! "Friends, "shouted one voice," Americans," the other, as promptly the or-der to halt was obeyed, the trained horses going almost on their haunches under the cruel force of the huge Mexi-

"We are seeking Moreno's," continued the first voice. "The Apaches jumped our outfit just after sunset, and we had to run for it."

"How many are there of you all told?" demanded Harvey. "Only us two. We're partners, prospecting. Been down toward the Sonora line. For the Lord's sake, gentlemen, don't keep us out here. We've lost everything we've had—packs. pack-ers and grub. We're about dead beat for a drink and something to eat." "What do you think of this, major?"

whispered Harvey. "Those are Amer-"Well, I'd let 'em in," said the major, "but where the devil's Feeny? He's the best judge, really. Their story

may be all true. They may be alone. "I don't know-it isn't likely. You heard that voice out there a moment ago. That was Mexican beyond any doubt. We've got to stand those fellows off till we hear from Feeny." Then, raising his voice, Harvey called: "Just stay where you are a moment. You're all right perhaps, but our guards have orders to be on the lookout for Morales and his gang, and you might get shot by mistake.

"Well, for God's sake, turn out your men, if you've got any, and help us

"Oh, there's plenty of us here," was Harvey's cheery answer. "Most of C troop, but we've other business on hand



just now. You wait there quietly for minute or two until the sergeant comes around with the patrol. He'll

And then, as though the whole thing had been planned beforehand, out in the darkness to the north Feeny's voice was heard in low toned but sharp com-

"Patrol, halt! Close up there, Kenedy. Where are you, No. 5?" And so, cool and confident as though he had a dozen troopers at his back Feeny came striding up to the spot. "What's the matter, sentry? Didn't hear you parleying here with some-

say they're prospectors and been jump-

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"Where away are they?" Then in a low tone, "Go you out beyond the corral," he whispered to old Plummer. "There's four of them out there. Chal-lenge if they try to come in." Then aloud again, "Shure, I don't see any-

thing, sentry." "Right out ahead there, sergeant. Two men, mounted." "Come down, one of ye. Dismount and come in here. L'ave your gun behind. Give your reins to your pal there," was Feeny's next mandate.

There was a moment of hesitation, faint sound of whispering as though the self styled prospectors were in con-sultation, and again Feeny spoke in a tone more sharp and imperative:

"Dismount, one, I say. Come in here, or I'll send a bullet for your cards. Quick now." Still another delay. 'The "prospec-tors' seemed anxious to edge off into

deeper darkness. "If ye're not off that horse's back in thought on reaching his comrades was 10 seconds, be jabers, I'll fire. So be to barricade. lively." And as his excitement rose Springing into the walled inclosure and bidding Harvey watch while the 30 did Feeny's Irish.

there was no approach. Fiercely, with in lugging a score of big barley sacks sharp emphasis, the sergeant brought into the interior and piling them into his carbine to full cock. "It's aiming breastworks at the three doors, I am," said he as he quickly raised opening into the corral being provided the butt to his shoulder. There was in addition with a high traverse to a sudden scurry and scramble of horses' protect its guard against shots that hoofs, low voiced words of warning might come through from Moreno's and a muttered curse or two. Then room. All this was accomplished amid leaped a tongue of fire into the night, and from the corral corner came a sharp report, followed by a cry, a gurgle, a hopes of terrorizing the defense before

men in front of the post. No use to and a dozen guns where there was in fire. They were shrouded in thick reality only one, and even the temptadarkness and out of harm's way before tion of that vast sum in the paymaster's one could pull trigger. Then came two safe was not sufficient to nerve the fol-flashes, two quick reports, then half a lowers of Morales to instant attack. dozen rapid, sputtering revolver shots, then a vengeful howl and a rush out on and the appalling death of one of their

bate back those blackguards yet," mut-tered Feeny as he took a quick snap evident that the defenders had retired shot at some dim object flitting across to the shelter of the ranch, and then the plain and sent another into the dark- only very slowly and cautiously, would hear the thud of horses' hoofs. For a to resume their stealthy approach. For moment, running from point to point fully half an hour there was a lull in the after each discharge, he kept up a rapid fight, and then, guided by the light Mofusillade, under cover of which the hapreno was now able to show, Pasqual less paymaster was born swiftly away and two of the stouter hearted knaves around the corner of the ranch and car-ried into the bar, where, wild with a brief consultation with the rascally anxiety, but faithful to his trust, Mr. owner. Dawes still guarded the safe. Then doorway to the eastern room.

"I have to borrow the lamp a mo-ment, Fan," he whispered. "Now, lie reno's fiery assurances and encouragestill. We may have to stand a siege

awhile until father can reach us." Two minutes more, bending low and with his last cartridge crammed into the charaber of his carbine, Feeny turned to make a run for the ranch. Just as he came speeding in past the westward wall the wooden shutter was hurled open, and a strange voice, loud, exultant, strident, burst upon his ear. "Come on, Pasqual! Come"-

But the rest was lost in the roar of Feeny's ready weapon. The rude fa-cade of adobe blazed red one instant in the flash of the carbine, and the loud report went bellowing out across the plain. But within the ranch there went up a wail of terror and dismay. for Ramon Morales, shot through the brain, was stretched lifeless at the foot of Moreno and his shuddering wife. inside the barroom.

"Now for it, men! Drag in those two drunken brute bastes," he cried, left. Let his companeros make comlaying hold of Mullan's limp carcass. "Lug in wan of them water jars. Stick (Moreno's) rooms, two or three rush in their d-d heads into that trough beyant. Now be lively. The whole from the south front at once, and begang'll be on us in less than a minute." | youd doubt the cursed Yankees would

CHAPTER V. At midnight the situation at Moreno's ranch was a strange one. The oc- witnesses must be put to death. Then 15 outlawed men, some Mexican, some mint of money to be divided among the 'gringo," but all cutthroats, and up to this moment the besieged had had spoil and with old Harvey's beautiful the best of it.

And yet their plight was desperate. In the easternmost room, secure from bullet or missile of any kind so long as they crouched close to the ground and back from the doorway, lay trembling in silence old Harvey's daughters. At the door, only the barrel of his rifle protruding, keeping under cover all he possibly could behind an improvised parapet of barley bags, knelt their de number crept into the corral. Others voted brother, cool and determined, every now and then whispering words of front. Three of the lighter and more hope and encouragement. In the ad- slender of the band were "boosted" joining room, connected with the east- through the high west window into Moern chamber by a doorless aperture reno's domain. Then through the midthrough the adobe wall, lay the pay-master, sorely wounded, but still con-sat the senora, rocking, weeping and scious and plucky, his faithful clerk | moaning over the body of the outlaw ministering to him as best he could, leader, where, hiding under the bed.

ing him with cool water. At the doorway opening on the hard, footed, they crept into the room adjointrampled space at the southern front of ing the bar and listened, breathless, to the ranch, sheltering himself behind the low toned instructions of the veterhis breastwork of barley, but never re-laxing vigilant watch, knelt Sergeant mer of light could guide the assailants Feeny, a bandana bound about his forehead, the blood trickling down his right cheek, the sleeve of his flannel shirt marks for night shooting, and the more rent by a bullet that just grazed the enterprising and adventurous, crawling upper arm. Kneeling on the counter like snakes to reconnoiter, were soon and peeping through a hole in the bot-tom of the wooden window shutter, one of Harvey's men kept guard. The

"from monkeying with the bolt on the

In planning his roadside ranch More-no had allowed outer doors only to those rooms which were for public use. The three which lay to the west of the bar could not be entered except through that resort or by a door giving on the corral, both of these doors being supplied with massive bolts as security against intruders, and all three rooms being furnished with air ports rather than windows, pierced at such a height through the adobe that no one from without, except in saddle, could peer through the aperture and see what was going on within. The travelers' room and the barroom ports, however, were low and large, and all the rooms were spacious. The bar of course, being the dining as well as drinking room, carried off the honors in point of size. This, too, was furnished with an opening into the corral, but Feeny's first

Four, five seconds ticked by, and still others worked, he had soon succeeded venturing to closer quarters. Like fa-"My God! they've shot the major!" mous Croghan of Fort Stephenson, Feeexclaimed Harvey as he leaped away ny had kept up a fire from so many difin the direction of the shot. At the same moment away sped the two horse- with the idea there were a dozen men

the plain. Feeny ran like a deer on leaders had so unnerved them that Pasthe trail of Mr. Harvey, and in less time qual himself, raging, imploring, threatthan it takes to tell it they came upon the paymaster, sinking, shocked and nerveless to the sandy soil, his hands are cowards in the dark" is a theory clasping on his side.

"Pick him up, you and your man are only brave against defenseless womthere. Carry him into the ranch. I'll en and children at such a time. Not ness, aiming vaguely where he could these brigands of the desert be induced

Rage at the death of their leader's Harvey stepped through the narrow brother and ally, the thirst for vengeance and the hope of securing such



ment. All the soldiers were gone, he said, except the "pig of a sergeant" And then Feeny, unscathed, leaped and two drugged and senseless swine. Somebody among them was wounded. There were only three, possibly four. bined attack, two or three through his from the corral, and the same number succumb. Then no quarter, no quarter for the men. His connection with the outlaw band was now known, and these victors, then away to Sonora with their daughters. What ransom would be not be willing to pay—that proud, disdainful father! Was ever luck so great? But haste! haste-not a moment could be lost. They must act at once.

And so Morales hurried to station and instruct his men. Prowling like coyotes through the darkness and at respectful distance from the guarded end of the corral ranch, half a dozen of the were distributed over the southern stanching the flow of blood and comfort- shivering and praying, crouched the senorita, her daughter, and then, bare-

other faced the doorway into Moreno's domestic apartments, every now and then letting drive a shot through the woodwork to keep them, as he said, [CONTINUED ON FOURTH PAGE.]