

LAFFITTE of LOUISIANA

BY MARY DEVEREUX
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY DON C. WILSON
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CHAPTER XII.

An hour before sunset the fog rolled up, revealing the man-of-war anchored near enough for the men on her deck to be seen plainly without the aid of a glass. The anchors of both vessels were raised at once, and the chase was renewed, with the pursuer not a mile away, and heading about southwest, which would soon bring her within range of the brigantine, whose course lay due west.

A curl of smoke soon rose from the Englishman's deck, and a few seconds later there came the report of a gun. "A pressing invitation for us to show our colors," remarked Laffitte, as he watched the shot strike the water.

A short time passed, with the "Black Petrel's" crew uneasy and Lopez swearing softly in his native tongue. The pursuer then began a more persistent firing with her bow-guns, but none of the shots reached their mark. Presently Laffitte, who was standing near Lopez, asked quietly, "How would a shot work now? Try, and see."

The old gunner, with a shout due to his long repressed feelings, set about leveling his gun, calculated the distance, and obtained the proper elevation.

There was a report, soon followed by a trembling of the enemy's spars; and the brigantine's crew crowded to see the result.

"You have struck their foremast, just below the futtocks," announced Laffitte, looking through his glass.

"Aye, sir; and I will sing them another such sweet song," said Lopez coolly, watching his men reload the gun.

The enemy had meantime come a little closer, and was dropping shot viciously about the brigantine.

"Lopez, make haste with the gun!" cried Laro, with an oath. "Give them a dose such as will set them to repairing damages, and—turning to the crew—"should she get close enough

one of the hands that were already growing cold.

"Jean, you will take care of Lazalle?" And Laro's black eyes, their mockery forever slain, looked at him with appealing wistfulness.

Laffitte nodded, and pressed the hand he held.

"She will have plenty of wealth, as you know; see that it is delivered to her safely, and kept securely afterward. Take the girl away, Jean; take her to the nuns, in New Orleans, as I should have done before this; and do you and she have the church say masses for my soul. My soul!" he repeated, in a quick gasp. "To where will my soul go?"

As Laffitte's lips parted to speak, the dying man, as if divining what he might be about to say, cried with a sudden burst of strength, "No, no, boy; try to tell me no soothing lies! Living, I never knew fear; and dying I scorn it! Ah—Madre de Dios! Christ have mercy!"

And with this last cry, Laro's voice was stilled forever.

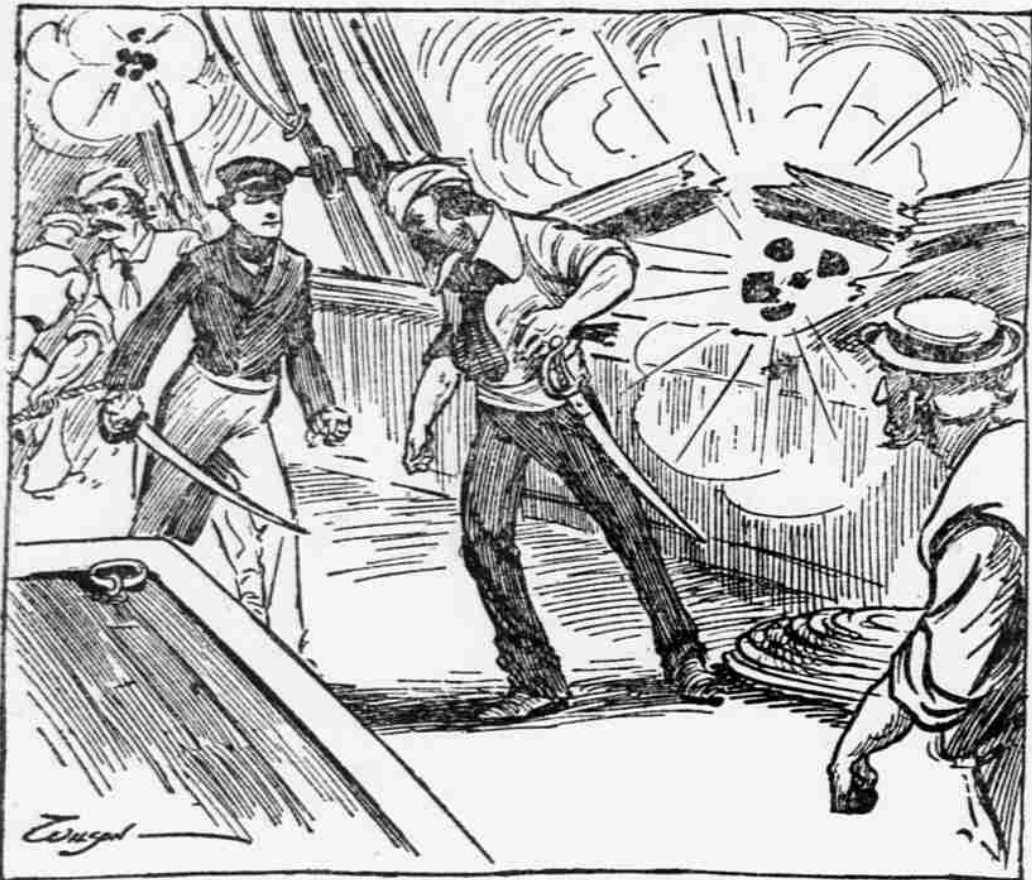
Laffitte's heart repeated the prayer, as he folded the dead man's hands across the broad chest; and scarcely had he done this when he was startled by the noise of a commotion above him.

Stopping only to draw a blanket over the face and form of the dead, he went on deck, where a number of excited men were gathered on the side toward the enemy. His glance had already followed the direction of their eyes, and he saw one of the "Black Petrel's" smallest boats being rowed by the Indian, Ehewah, toward the English vessel; and clinging to it, while his hoarse voice poured forth a volley of menacing words, was Lopez.

Lopez had loosed one of his hands from the boat's gunwale, and drawing his knife, hurled it at the Indian; but Ehewah dodged, and it fell into the sea. He then rowed on, and Lopez, no longer shouting, attempted to draw himself over the stern of the boat.

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With a cursing cry he sank.

to try any tricks with grappling-irons, have the cutlasses ready, my hearties. And remember that it is no quarter."

A sound, half roar, half snarl, came from the men; and the next moment there was a whistling amongst them as a cannon-ball struck the bulwark in front of Laro, filling the air with bits of wood, and then glancing into the water.

A large, sharply pointed piece of ragged wood struck him in the side, and with a cursing cry he sank, face downward, upon the deck, the blood from his wounds spattering those nearest him, several of whom had been hit by the flying splinters.

Laffitte sprang forward, and placing his arms around the quivering form, turned the distorted face to the air. Then, looking up at the gunner, who was staring wildly at the sight, he cried, "Fire, Lopez, as you never fired before!"

A prompt discharge followed the order, and a wild shout of joy went up from the crew of the "Black Petrel."

The enemy's foremast was again struck, this time with disastrous effect, as could be readily seen; for her crew were getting the sails off with all possible speed. Her fore-royal and top-gallant sails were clewed up, and the topsail-yard let go by the run, while the mast was swaying perceptibly.

Laro, by Laffitte's command, had been borne to the main cabin, where he was laid upon a divan; and the brigantine had been ordered to come to anchor. The enemy had already done this, and, in her present crippled condition, there was nothing to fear from her, as the distance between the vessels was too great for advantageous firing, even had the Englishman been in proper form to continue the fight.

Laro was breathing heavily, in broken gasps; and beckoning to Laffitte, he asked to have sent away those who were about him, still striving to check the blood that flowed so freely as to soak the red of the divan until it showed black.

Laffitte sent the others away, and sitting down by the dying man, took

At this, the Indian had stopped rowing, and struck the gunner over the head with an oar, continuing the blows until Lopez released his hold and sank from sight.

A boat which had been lowered from the English ship was now seen pulling rapidly to where Ehewah, still pausing, appeared waiting for the gunner's body to rise.

This it soon did; and the Indian, showing an agile strength one would not have accredited to his slight frame, drew it into the boat.

The crew of the brigantine saw Ehewah parley with the men from the enemy's vessel, after which he rowed in their company to the man-of-war; and Laffitte, watching through his glass saw the form of Lopez carried aboard in their midst.

Laffitte, bidding Garonne accompany him, went below, to Laro's cabin. Garonne lit the brass lamp swinging over the small table, and turned to Laffitte, who stood looking about him, as if for some sign of Ehewah's treacherous intention, when the gleam of a gold band, hanging over Laro's bunk, caught their eyes.

It was a bracelet which the Indian had always worn upon his naked arm since the day Laro placed it there, in a burst of gratitude to Ehewah for having saved his life.

Both Laffitte and Garonne knew enough of the Indian's tribe-lore to understand that this was Ehewah's mute announcement of ended friendship and loyalty.

"He doubtless stole in here to perform what to him was a religious rite, and having hung Laro's gift where we found it, went his way, intending to attempt that which he has now accomplished," mused Laffitte aloud.

Then, as if struck by an after-thought, he went to Laro's bunk, and throwing aside the rich draperies, disclosed a heavy wooden locker.

Its lid was, contrary to custom, locked; and when Laffitte opened it, a disarranged collection of papers and canvas bags showed within.

"It is as I supposed—not a coin nor jewel touched, but charts and papers gone that are of more importance than all the valuables. The rascal knows the way to the Barra de Hierro;

and the charts he has taken will inform others, showing them where to find what now belongs to the Senorita Lazalle."

Garonne, forgetful of his usual restraint when in Laffitte's presence, now broke forth into a flood of curses, which the latter checked at once.

The mate turned to the cabin door where he paused, and asked in a voice trembling with the anger he dared not show, "Have you any orders for me, captain?"

"None, save to let the men have their supper at once, and see to it that only half-allowance of grog is served. The fog is coming in, and we will sail as soon as may be."

Like an army of shrouded ghosts, the fog was again about the "Black Petrel," enclosing her in a world where she was the sole tangible thing. But, as over a path familiar to blind eyes, the hands that manned her could shape an unerring course for their secure haven.

Long before midnight she was feeling her way north, toward the mouth of the treacherous channel that would bring the crew to their island stronghold, the Barra de Hierro.

The early morning air was heavy with odors of aromatic shrubs growing beyond the beach, and the carol of waking birds was filling it with music, when Laffitte came ashore, leaving Garonne in charge of the brigantine.

His course lay inland, at first over waste fields, and then cultivated ones of sugar cane, coffee and tobacco. Then came banana and fig plantations, interspersed with groves of palms and cocoanut trees, until, after a walk of twenty minutes, he reached a clearing in which stood many small huts, evidently dwellings; and apart from these rose the walls of a stone building, surrounded by a high wall with circular towers at the angles.

Laffitte crossed the open space, and stopping before a stout oaken door in the wall, called for admission. But there was no response; and, after a longer silence than suited his humor he fell to striking upon the door, while he called still louder.

This resulted in its soon being opened cautiously, to show a stalwart giant, whose black face and naked arms showed all the darker by contrast with the white cotton of his raiment, draped in a barbaric fashion that told of its not having known thread and needle.

"My young captain!" he exclaimed in Spanish, a pleased surprise lighting his grave face; and catching Laffitte's hand, he kissed it as the latter replied, "Greetings to you, Ezrah. Is it all well here?"

"Yes, my young captain. All is well but it will be more than well, now that you have returned."

Laffitte waited until the Arab (for such he was) had closed and barred the gate; and then, in a few words he told him of what had taken place adding that Laro's body would be brought ashore later in the day, for burial.

Ezrah listened with a face showing no emotion whatever, save perhaps that of anger that the nation his master had taught him to hate should have been the means of the former's death.

His young mistress, the Senorita Lazalle, was of course not yet awake and Laffitte, after bidding the Arab to leave her undisturbed, went to his own apartments.

Lazalle was now sixteen; and, since leaving a convent school in Seville two years before, her entire time had been passed upon the Barra de Hierro to which Laro—her only living relative—had brought her, and where she had seemed fully contented with her luxurious and independent life.

Laro, of necessity, passed much of his time away from the Barra de Hierro; and, during his absence, Lazalle was his head and ruler, except when Laffitte found it necessary to visit the island. Then the Spanish girl gave place—and with entire williness—to the man whom, from their first meeting, she had loved with all the fervor of her uncurbed nature.

(To be continued.)

Cause of Thanks.

It was a Coffee county boy who married and went to Texas, and upon arriving there wrote promptly back to his friends that he "got there safe and well."

And that was the very last time that he ever did write to them. They waited and they waited, and they wondered and they wondered, and they wondered, and never a word further from the wanderers. Some anxiety was felt, or would have been felt but for one old woman of distant kin who whenever his name was mentioned would always say:

"Well, he got that safe, and they're all well, thank God."

Finally his name was dropped, himself forgotten, till one day, ten years after his departure, something brought up his name, and the old query came up, "Why doesn't he write?"

And the same old woman piped the same old song:

"Well, anyhow, he got that safe an' they're all well, thank God."—Nashville Banner.

Novel Relay Swimming Race.

A novel cross-channel swimming race from Calais to Dover has been promoted by the Belgian Swimming federation for a challenge cup, to be known as the cross-channel cup. The competition is open to the world for teams of five amateur swimmers. The first swimmer of each team would swim as far as possible across the channel. The second man would then take up the task, and would be followed by the others in turn. The team whose men first reaches shore would win the cup. The race is to take place in July or August.

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CHAPTER XIII.

The sun was nearly two hours high when Laffitte awoke from slumber, and prepared to make himself ready for the responsible and arduous duties lying before him.

In view of Laro's dying request, he had considered carefully the arrangements for Lazalle's immediate future, and this he unfolded to Ma'am Brigida, Lazalle's old nurse and companion, after sending Ezrah to superintend the gathering of such stores as were to be taken to the shore, preparatory to putting them aboard the "Black Petrel" and another craft, which was to sail under command of Ezrah, who, in addition to his other valuable attainments, was a skillful navigator.

As to the slaves, of whom there were several hundred, it was not prudent to attempt taking them in a body to Louisiana; and Laffitte decided, for the present, to leave by far the greater number of them upon the island, where there was abundant food and shelter, and take with him only a few, including such as Lazalle should select for her own.

A rustle of draperies, a stealing of perfume like that of jessamine flowers, a pair of soft arms thrown about his neck, and a rain of passionate kisses on his face and head—these roused him quickly, as a rich voice, broken by tears, cried, "Jean, my own Jean."

He tried to rise, and to unclasp the arms clinging to him so closely that it was difficult for him to disengage them without risk of hurting her.

Still clinging to him, she threw her supple form across his knees.

"You have been so long, so long away, and I was so glad you had come back to me! Ah, Jean, will you not know how dearly I love you? I would follow you to death if you would but say that you love me in return!"

Jean Laffitte was a man, and possessed a man's nature. But there was scarce an added throb to his heart-beats as he looked down into the beau-

empty the chests and pack their contents for removal.

The chests were soon emptied, and the bundles lying ready for removal.

Early in the afternoon the entire crew came ashore with the body of their dead captain; and all on the island were given a half-holiday, in order that they might show respect to its interment.

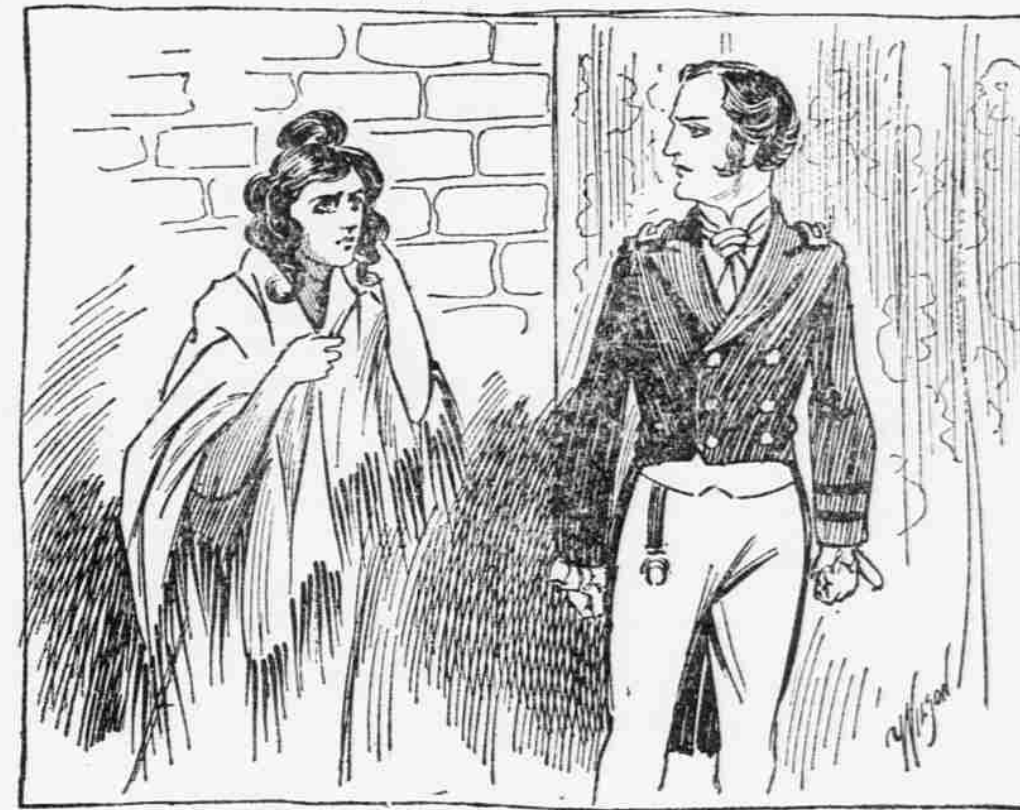
Lazalle was not present; and Laffitte saw her no more until evening, when, with high-held head and scornful air, she joined him and the others at the table, to partake of the last meal that would be eaten on the Barra de Hierro.

In the midst of it they were startled by the sudden appearance in their midst of a bedraggled and weary form. It was that of the gunner, Lopez, who, still wet from the sea, and his garments torn by the thickets through which he had pushed his way, dropped silently into a chair, seemingly too worn out for speech. His face was white, and a bandage enveloped his head.

It was as Laffitte had supposed and contemplated. Ehewah, by help of the charts he had stolen, had gained the enemy's favor; and the latter, in consequence of the information furnished by the Indian, had lost no time in repairing damages, and setting sail in pursuit of the brigantine.

There was general rejoicing over Lopez's escape. But this feeling was, in a measure, tempered by anger at Ehewah's treachery; and hard indeed would have been the Indian's fate could any of those sinewy hands have grasped his brown throat.

When the gunner's story was ended, a half-suppressed roar had surged through the room, to be hushed by the uplifted hand and reproving frown of Laffitte; for Lazalle had not yet left the table, but sat, with Ma'am Brigida beside her, at the farthest end. Her red lips were parted slightly, and an angry light glowed in her black eyes.



"Are you insane, Senorita Lazalle?" he asked.

tiful face. Its glorious eyes, brilliant coloring, and full crimson lips affected him with a sudden loathing, while he felt the velvet arms around his neck.

He yet had the arrogance of youth; and this gave severity to his judgment, making him fail to consider her girlishness, her ignorance of conventionalities, or to make excuses for her impetuous, untrained nature.

"Speak!" she cried, showering kisses upon his clothing. "Are you dumb, that you will not answer me? Then I will draw the words from your lips!" And pulling his head down, she kissed him.

At this, gripping her white arms with unconscious force, he tore them from his neck, and pushed her from him as he rose to his feet.

"Are you insane, Senorita Lazalle?" he asked, in a tone whose coldness caused her to shiver, as she stood like a criminal before a judge.

"You are unmoved by what has come to you, and do not know what you are saying," he continued, in a low, even voice that affected her like an icy torrent rushing into a tropical stream. "I will be your friend; and you must believe that you have my sympathy, and my wish to be of all possible service to you."

She showed no recognition of his offer, but remained silent, with drooping head and heaving breast.

"Forget what you have said, as shall I, and let us be friends," he added, still calmly, but with kindness. "Let us work together, for there is much to be done. Remember, he said finally, in answering to a questioning look in the face she now raised to him, "we must sail this night for New Orleans, or the English may make us prisoners, and deal out such insults to you as I might be unable to prevent."

She made no reply, but turned and left the room.

Two stories of the building were above ground; how many there were below was known definitely to no one save Laffitte, Lazalle and Ma'am Brigida. Ezrah and a few of the sub-officers knew something of the vaults and passages; but they were ignorant of the treasure concealed there—its bulk, value, and location.

Laffitte, not wishing the Arab to obtain more accurate knowledge, proceeded, with the Irishwoman's help, to

"Why did you fail to kill the Indian?" she demanded imperiously, as if holding Lopez accountable for a grave offense.

"Kill him?" repeated the old gunner, whose hand was carrying to his mouth a huge piece of turtle meat. "Kill him, Senorita Lazalle?"

"Yes," was her haughty reply. "You should have killed him."

"How was I to do that?" he asked with a scowl, as if feeling the injustice of her accusation. "I had wasted my knife on the traitor, and it now lies somewhere off Satan's Key; my powder and pistols were sea-soaked; and he took good care to keep out of reach, after I came to my senses aboard the English ship."

"I understand," she said, now in a more gracious tone; "and we are very glad you escaped. But," she added, "what could have happened, that Ehewah should think of committing such an act of treachery?"

Laffitte caught Lopez's eye; and, obeying the command he saw in the former's look, the gunner made no reply.

Lazalle appeared to have forgotten her question, for she remained silent, and in a few minutes went to her own apartments, followed by Ma'am Brigida.

The meal was soon finished; and then the men gathered from the table the gold and silver plate, packing it into canvas bags, which were borne to the shore, to be taken aboard the "Black Petrel."

The greater part of the slaves, together with those brought from the brigantine to be turned loose among their sable fellows, were, of course, ignorant as to the plans of their owner; and when they retired for the night, it was to slumber but little less deeply by reason of their brief respite from labor, while the new arrivals, half sick from their long imprisonment, with its darkness and poor air, slept far more soundly.

But the next morning, the former, awakening in affright at the lateness of the hour, and wondering why no overseer's lash had roused them long before, soon realized that something unusual had befallen; for the sun was not two hours high when a compact body of scarlet uniforms and shining

guns was seen advancing from the island's shore.

The greater number of the frightened slaves fled inland, to hide in the thickets and gullies. But some of the more intelligent sought the shelter of the stone stronghold; and, finding it deserted, they quickly shut and barred the oaken gate.

It was not long before a storm of blows upon the gate called some of them to it; and, looking through a loophole, they saw the strangers gathered behind a commanding officer who was demanding entrance in the king's name.

The terrified slaves—a few of whom understood the words—lost no time in obeying, and were soon assured that no harm would come to them from the invaders, whose leader, upon questioning the negroes, was made aware of the condition of affairs.

Meanwhile, northerly sailed the "Black Petrel," with Laffitte in command, and with him Lopez and a picked crew—such men as he knew had his own cause at heart.

It was noon when the "Black Petrel" reached New Orleans; and Laffitte came ashore immediately, bringing with him Lazalle and Ma'am Brigida.

No others left the brigantine, as its commander's sole business in the city was that of providing for the girl's immediate future, after which he proposed sailing at once for Baratavia.

One of his most intimate friends was Philip La Roche, a man of middle age, and a banker of New Orleans. He was of fine family, of high social position, and a gentleman of the strictest honor.

It was to his care that Laffitte committed Lazalle, after seeing her quartered safely, in company with Ma'am Brigida, at the Ursuline convent in the Place d'Armes.

Lazalle had, during the voyage, preserved an air of calmness to which was added an occasional touch of scorn; but when, while they were alone, Laffitte bade her adieu, she put out a detaining hand, as she stood with downcast eyes before him.

"When am I to see you again?" she asked in a listless tone.

"That I cannot now say; but the mother superior will know how to communicate with me, if I am needed," he answered gently.

"And may I not return to the Barra de Hierro later on—after a while?" she inquired, with a humility which surprised him.

"It would be most imprudent for you to do so for some time to come, if ever, as you must surely know," he replied firmly, looking down into her face. "The English must have seized the island, and will doubtless hold it; and, as Laro's next of kin, you can scarcely hope for success, should you assert a claim to it as owner. But why wish to go back, when you are in safety here, with a fortune which will insure you perfect independence? What more can you ask?"

"I ask your love, and I want to be with you!" she exclaimed impetuously, snatching her hands away and throwing her arms around his neck, while with a sobbing cry she laid her head against his breast.

Laffitte's face hardened as his fingers closed about her wrists and loosened her arms.

"That can never be, Lazalle—never. I have never known anything of love, and have no desire to learn of it now. I am not worth any woman's loving; nor can I afford to have any woman's fate linked with mine. Believe this, and accept it, and let us part friends."

She turned from him, covering her face with her hands.

"Mr. Philip La Roche will call upon you in a day or two. He is one whom you can trust, and with whom you can advise safely; and I shall place your affairs in his hands."

Laffitte had moved toward the door, and, turning at the threshold, he added, "Adios, Lazalle; and believe me when I say that if you ever need my services as a friend, you may count upon me."

She did not reply; and when she uncovered her face he was gone.

(To be continued.)

GOT PURSE FROM THE BAR.

Winner of Race Had Close Call in Collecting Money.

Mars Cassidy, the starter, is fond of telling the story of an incident which occurred when he was racing a string of horses on the unrecognized tracks of the outlaw circuit.

It was the last day of a meeting in a town not far from Jersey City and it was up to Cassidy to win a purse or walk to the next racing town. He had a fair skate in the last event of the day and had engaged a dare-devil jockey who he knew would take all kinds of chances. Just about a hundred yards from the finish on this roller-coaster track, there was a pitch-hole, such as often is seen on a country road in winter.

There had been so many falls at this spot, that the jockeys always eased up when approaching it. Cassidy commanded his rider to make his most desperate move right at this point and, sure enough, when the others took a wrap before reaching the gully, Cassidy's boy dug the spurs into his mount and won the race.

The owner, with a great load off his mind, went into the secretary's office to collect the purse.

"I'll have to send out for the money," said the secretary. "I have paid out everything on hand."

Cassidy's jaw dropped with a click, but he managed to say:

"Send out for it. Send where?"

"To the bartender," said the secretary, snavely.

"And, sure enough," says Cassidy, in relating the story, "it was from the bar till that they dug up my purse. If the bar had been closed, I guess I would be there yet."