

"The Grip of Evil"

Author of "The Wings of the Morning," "The Pillar of Light," "The Terms of Surrender," "Number 17," Etc.
Novelized from the Series of Photographs of the Same Name.
Released by Patha.

By LOUIS TRACY

Copyright, 1916, by Louis Tracy.

Eleventh Episode—Mammon and Moloch

CAST OF CHARACTERS.
CAPTAIN RICHARD F. MARKHAM—Commander Troop B, Twenty-first United States Cavalry.
SMITHSON—Troop sergeant-major, Troop B.
JONES—Corporal Troop B.
SEBASTIAN PANCHO—Leader of Mexican bandits.
JOHN BURTON—Tenth Lord Castleton, once a poor steelworker, who is controlling owner of a manufacturing plant.
ROGERS—His partner and manager.
MRS. MADGE KERR—An alleged niece of Pancho's and later newspaper correspondent.
JUANITA—A half-caste Mexican girl, in love with Pancho.

Chapter XXII. Intervention—In the Open.

Captain Richard F. Markham, commanding Troop B, Twenty-first United States Cavalry, emerged through the flap of a field-service tent, straightened his well set-up frame, and searched with careful eyes the far-flung vista presented by an open valley of the Rio Grande. The blue hills of Mexico were already steeped in shadow, but the setting sun was still high enough in the heavens to flood with light the waters of the river and the gentle slope on the American side of the frontier to which clung that quaint mixture of picturesque adobe huts and ugly modern buildings, known as the town of San Jose.

To say that San Jose was "known" on that day of March, 1916, is perhaps, not strictly in accordance with actual fact. It might be found on the most exact maps of Texas; its existence was undoubtedly recognized by a section of the inhabitants of the border state, and it was beyond all question the cause of some anxiety to the commander-in-chief of the United States troops scattered throughout the vexed region. But the notoriety of San Jose began and ended there. No one in the wide world—least of all the handsome young cavalry officer now turning his back on his comrades, and scanning the undulating country which fell away toward the river—might have suspected that world-wide fame was about to be thrust upon it.

The camp lay athwart a rough road which led from the town to the river, and reaching Mexican territory by a trestle bridge. Certain signs of activity were toward. Some of the troopers were grooming their horses and distributing forage for the night's feed, others were cleaning their arms, and a few were drawing rations. Field kitchen, smoking pipes were alight. Soon the horses would be picketed and the men gathered in lively groups, eating their evening meal. A trumpet was blowing the first call to mess. Indeed, the cheerful notes had brought Dick Markham from his tent, time having stolen a march on him while preoccupied with regimental accounts.

A gaunt-looking troop sergeant-major, whose appearance suggested that steel springs and leather had replaced bones and flesh in his anatomy, noted the officer's attitude. He strode near. "No news of the patrol yet, sir?" he inquired, halting at the salute.

"None, Smithson," said Markham. "They ought to be showing up soon. Have a cigarette."

A certain silent constraint endured for a minute while the two blew wreaths of smoke into the thin air. The same thought dwelt in both minds, and neither cared to give utterance to it. That placid, brooding landscape was deceptive. At any instant, red-faced war might spring from some hidden lair. They had to be prepared for it daily, hourly—prepared in the pitifully inadequate way possible to one depleted troop of a regiment charged with guarding 100 miles of the frontier.

"All the others are in," said the officer at last.

He was not asking a question, but merely stating a casual item of the day's doing. Captain Markham needed no information as to anything that happened within the bounds of his small command.

"Yes, sir," said Smithson, sweeping a wide amphitheater of hills, river and valley in one comprehensive glance. "I have changed the guard at the bridge, and your orders as to the sentries are being carried out. Each post on the flanks is advanced quarter of a mile, and pickets are stationed at the most convenient points."

Clearly this weatherbeaten soldier was talking for the sake of saying something which would conceal a gnawing doubt.

"I wonder what has become of that Mexican push," murmured Markham, looking again at the jumbled mass of the hills. "The general's information sounded quite definite. This new rebel, Sebastian Pancho, is known to have come north from Chihuahua."

"and we were delayed an hour or more by investigating the story of a peon who said that a strong body of rebels came north yesterday afternoon. They broke camp, however, about four o'clock and disappeared through the Carroya canyon."

"The Carroya," repeated Markham in a puzzled tone, and his eyes and the sergeant-major's forthwith sought the same gap in the serrated mountain ridge. "That leads due southwest."

"Yes, sir," said the corporal. "There's no doubt about it," he added. "We followed their track a little ways."

At that he grinned, and the ghost of a smile fitted over the face of each of his hearers. There are times on the frontier when neither officer nor trooper is too communicative. As viewed from the standpoints of Washington and Mexico City, the Rio Grande offers an impassable barrier, but upon men charged with safeguarding the lives and property of American citizens who may be exposed day to day to outrage and murder at the hands of robber halfcasts holds more elastic opinions as to scouting areas.

"You are quite sure, Jones?" inquired Markham gravely, after a slight pause.

"Quite sure, sir."

"Then that's all right. Sergeant-major, see that this patrol is relieved from duty for the next twenty-four hours, if practicable."

The second mess call rang out, and the camp assumed an even busier aspect. Markham's practiced eye took in every detail. Things were going smoothly, so he turned and looked up the main street of San Jose.

In front of the hotel, a pretentious building horribly at variance with the Mexican aspect of the majority of the town's buildings, had gathered some of the leading citizens. In half an hour he was due to dine with the bank manager and a couple of ranchers. His friends awaited him already. He knew quite well that they had noted the return of the patrol, and would read the signs of an undisturbed evening in prospect. With a sigh, for he hated the dull routine of office work, he divided under the flap of the tent and plunged into figures once more.

Suddenly, as though Medusa's teeth had been sown in that arid soil, the earth seemed to vomit forth a horde of galloping, yelling, death-dealing Mexican outlaws! They came, not from the river, an impossible direction in the circumstances, but from a deep gully on the Texas side of the street, through which a trail led to a strip of barren country on the northwest. Shouting like madmen, and in an uncontrollable frenzy, inspired partly by rye whisky and partly by hatred of the "gringos," the murderous band swept down on town and camp.

Each alike was doomed. San Jose numbered only 300 inhabitants, all told, and of these barely two score men were armed or physically capable of self-defense, while the soldiers, though well trained, were taken at disadvantage, and might easily be cut to pieces before they could offer organized resistance.

reach the center of the line, he noticed that the rebels were already setting fire to the hotel. The main street had cleared as though by magic, except for a number of bodies, both Americans and Mexicans, some lying ominously still, while others were dragging painfully to the shelter of a building or an inclosed yard. From doorways and windows came scattered shots. The men of San Jose were at least striking a blow in defense of their homes and families.

It was a singular moment to think of poetry, yet four lines of one of Kipling's jingling ballads hammered on Markham's brain with a curious insistence:

A foray in a border station,
A gallop down a dark defile,
Two thousand pounds of education
Drop to a ten-pipe jezail.

But it was no antiquated rifle these Mexican cut-throats carried. Markham recognized at once that they were armed with a thoroughly up-to-date weapon, equal if not superior to the cavalry carbine, and he found himself wondering vaguely how it was possible that a gang of nondescripts could have obtained such a servicable equipment.

And now the United States troopers took a deadly toll of the oncoming enemy. Pancho quickly found himself advancing alone. An incomparable horseman, he swung a hardy mustang almost at a right angle as he changed his course. He must have borne a charmed life, since bullets passed through his hat and jacket, and lodged repeatedly in the heavy Mexican saddle, without inflicting any serious wound on either man or animal.

Thenceforth, of course, discipline established its superiority. The cavalrymen advanced in open order, and a machine gun detachment brought a withering fire to bear along the main street.

The savage pandemonium passed away almost as speedily as it commenced. Soon San Jose was quiet, save for the weeping of women and children and the groans of the wounded, while the rebel band fled over the hills, closely pursued by the infuriated troopers. By Markham's side rode the stern-visaged sergeant-major. They drew up to a crumpled body lying in the scrub. It was the sentry who should have given warning of the enemy's approach.

He had been stabbed between the shoulder blades. Creeping snake-like through the sage, some Mexican outlaw had flung himself on the unsuspecting soldier and murdered him ere he could utter a cry or fire a single shot!

A desultory fight went on till dusk fell. Scattered units of flying rebels and infuriated Americans crossed the Rio Grande by a ford and passed far into Mexican territory on the right bank of the river. At last, when darkness set in, Markham recalled his men by long-drawn trumpet blasts. A hasty roll call revealed that there were no stragglers. The ranks of the little company had been sadly depleted, but every missing man could be accounted for only too accurately.

On the way back to the town the young officer ascertained the facts of the raid from a prisoner. He was eagerly relieved to find that the report brought by the patrol was correct in every detail. Pancho had crossed back from the frontier, only to turn again under cover of the night, and cross the river at a point well above the line for which B troop was responsible. Then, well served by spies and traitors among the half-breeds claiming American citizenship, he secreted his force in a canyon until the hour seemed ripe for the assault on San Jose.

The plan was boldly laid. It miscarried only at the last moment, and then merely because of Mexican cupidity and the sheer lust of murdering unarmed people. Save for its dead and its dying, the little town recovered its sang-froid with singular rapidity. It was not San Jose but the remainder of the United States which seethed with indignation next day.



JOHN ACCUSES MADGE OF HER MANY FALSIFICATIONS.

young and energetic man, that same Rogers who spoke over the telephone, had persuaded Burton to buy the carbine in conjunction with several other notables of the iron and steel trades. The reconstruction had come too late, however, to share in the first boom resulting from the European war. Very unwillingly, John had been coerced by his colleagues on the board of directors into equipping the works for the production of munitions. He was overborne by the argument that the allies were in desperate need of these aids to civilization, which would be imperiled if American manufacturers did not get busy.

By reason of his money, Burton was appointed president, but he little dreamed how thoroughly Rogers, the manager, had manipulated matters. The orders for arms and ammunition had already been gobbled up by hundreds of old-established works in all parts of the country. A newcomer found it difficult to obtain any share of the trade. Purchasing agents demanded the warranty of experience and unquestioned excellence in the finished article, so Rogers had to run the works at their maximum output, yet bide his time ere picking up any part of the golden shower coming from Europe.

Obviously, if America itself caught the craze for armaments, the trick would be done, and the Burton & Rogers Iron and Steel company put on the solid base of prosperity. Rogers looked only to the end. He was absolutely unscrupulous as to the means of obtaining it.

Rogers was a man of mystery. He called himself a cosmopolitan, and said that he was a citizen of the world. When asked what nationality he was, he always evaded the question. While he lived and carried on his business in the United States he never voted.

John passed a full day prior to the meeting in the convention hall. Somehow, his name figured prominently in the new movement, and telegrams poured in on him from all parts of the country. A few sane people appealed for restraint and the exercise of reason, but the vast majority demanded the prompt raising of an army of 100,000 men and the piling up of sufficient stores to insure victory in the threatened war.

In spite of himself, John was carried bodily on the tide. He hated war, but ever before his eyes lay the picture of desolated San Jose and its hapless victims. These things were not war but murder, and the arming of American citizens savored more of police protection than militarism.

Before the meeting began he was met by Rogers, who introduced an unknown lady as one deeply interested in the capture and punishment of Sebastian Pancho. In the hurry of the moment John gathered only that she was a Mrs. Madge Kerr, whose husband had been killed during a small frontier fray which took place long before San Jose loomed into such prominence.

fine eyes were ablaze with tragic fire. "I, a weak woman, have a message for you men men of America!" she cried, her well-trained voice reaching every ear and its pathos touching every heart. "It is brief, but very much to the purpose. Get Pancho! Get Pancho! Get Pancho!"

Thrusting a hand into her bodice, she produced a small American flag and held it aloft!

That supreme moment gave Madge Kerr the chance of her life, and she seized it with magnificent abandon. Her success was instantaneous. Never again would she be compelled to fawn on theatrical agents or pestering managers already bewildered by the ever-increasing mob of applicants for stage honors. Now they would hunt her in droves. She had become a notability. That cry, "Get Pancho!" was destined to become the slogan of a great party in the state, a party of which Madge Kerr, the actress, was recognized as at once the mouthpiece and the prophetess.

Truly, she did then look inspired. Small wonder if men shouted themselves hoarse, and well-balanced minds forgot the dictates of common sense. Apparently overcome with emotion, she sank back out of sight. Burton imagined that a frail woman had bent under too great a strain. He little dreamed that the incident had been planned beforehand, and its effect calculated to a nicety.

He was so concerned about her that she played up to him with a skill she had seldom displayed in her profession. At the close of the meeting he insisted on driving her home in his car. With well-feigned hesitation, she told him her story—how she and her husband lived happily on a ranch in Chihuahua, until the day when Pancho rode up to their homestead, shot Mr. Kerr at sight, and offered a helpless woman the vilest indignity his depraved mind could conceive.

This thrilling story provided the last straw so far as John Burton was concerned. He entered heart and soul into a political campaign designed to bring about the introduction of American law and order into disturbed Mexico. He backed the project with all his energies and accumulated wealth. At his own cost he recruited and equipped a company among his fellow workers, and his services were recognized by the government by the bestowal of a temporary commission.

Thus, the whirlwind of life saw John Burton, the philanthropist, the social worker, a man essentially devoted to the arts of peace, become a khaki-clad warrior. Yet never did knight embark on deeds of daring do with truer sense of high purpose than this young millionaire. He was convinced that his crusade against racial lawlessness was a holy one. It was, he thought, only one of the accidents of an extraordinary situation that the foundry should now be coining money by producing rifles and bayonets. Such fearsome implements offered the sole effective means yet devised by mankind whereby crime might be avenged and the guilty punished. Never before had he been so sure of rectitude of purpose.

campaign may be passed over without comment. It is one thing to whoop up "preparedness" in a public meeting, but quite another to lead troops against the enemy. Burton had a great deal to learn and much to occupy his mind, and many a day of hard routine work had to pass before a stony-eyed general adjudged him and his men adequately fitted to stop a gap in the fighting line.

Even then there was neither sight or sound of the foe, because such is the pleasant way of Mexican bandits—who are ever ready to swoop down on defenceless communities, but vanish into thin air as soon as the serried ranks of American regulars appear on the skyline. Still, there was scouting to be done, with the consciousness that the unexpected might happen and any narrow cleft in the hills produce a veritable enemy.

One day, a day differing in no respect from many others which had gone before, John was asked to sanction a bit of scout work along a mountain track leading well into the interior. An experienced sergeant was anxious for the duty, but to the young commander's open dismay, Madge Kerr was wished to accompany him. The sergeant promised that the lady would not be allowed to run any needless risks, so against his better judgment, John gave the requisite permission. In so doing he quite unwittingly fired a train which metaphorically blew up a powder magazine, because Madge and the sergeant were captured, and by no less important a person than Sebastian Pancho himself!

It was a singular fact that when the pair was brought into the outlaw's camp, and Pancho discovered that one of his prisoners was a woman, there could not be the slightest doubt that the two had never met before. The sergeant was treated roughly, and bound in merciless cowardice, though Pancho affected an almost chivalric air in addressing Madge.

"You are not engaged in woman's work, snora," he said, sweeping off his sombrero with a flourish, but far be it from me to offer the slightest incivility to one of your beauty. And now that I can look at you closely, let me congratulate you on being a most charming soldier!"

He ran a bold eye over her faultless lines, but Madge did not flinch. Here was a man, a mere male creature whose untamed passions and unpleasant attributes were very much on the surface, and well she knew how to handle him. She smiled defiance.

"Your repute has gone before you, senor," she cried. "No one has ever imagined that you make war on women!"

Assuredly, the situation was matchless in its irony. Here was Madge Kerr, the new Joan of Arc who had enraptured her country with her cry of "Get Pancho!" telling that arch villain himself that he was regarded by his opponents as a sort of Chevalier Bayard! And here was the man who had wronged her quite evidently the willing slave of an unknown goddess!

There was only one tent in the tumble-down camp, and the rebel leader indicated with a fine gesture that it was wholly at the senorita's disposal. With much ceremony and florid words he lifted the flap and bowed her within.

fair progressed exactly along the expected lines, and the Mexicans, caught between two fires, fought like rats in a pit.

Oddly enough, Pancho himself could have escaped, as he headed a strong contingent which contrived to smash its path along the selected line of retreat. But he discovered that Madge Kerr had been left behind, and, literally daring everything for her sake, rode back into the camp, where a hot fight was now reaching its inevitable end. Groups of Mexicans, deprived of their horses by the first batch of their compatriots, were selling their lives dearly, or surrendering when any notice was taken of their frenzied signals.

The ring of steel and lead was fast closing in, yet Pancho did not fly, but continued his search. At last he found her covering behind a pile of empty ammunition boxes.

"Come with me!" he cried passionately. "I love you! I can save you! In a few months I will make you a queen!"

She refused, whereupon the Mexican, rendered frantic by the thought that he would probably lose her forever now, clasped her to his breast. She uttered a choking appeal that he would save himself, and the infuriated man interpreted the words as conveying a hint that she returned his love.

So he relaxed his grip, and, wrenching herself free, the girl angrily bade him go, since the American troops were now within a few yards of her. At that instant a Mexican woman, none other than Juanita, came from some hiding place in the camp, and, noting the imminent danger of her one-time lover's position, sped swiftly to his rescue. Pancho leaped to regain his horse, but was brought down by a bayonet thrust, which inflicted a serious though not vital wound. His assailant shortened the rifle for another stab, but the unhappy Juanita flung herself on Pancho's body, and received the steel intended for him.

The battle was now ended. Burton was a prisoner, and Madge Kerr safe and sound. But his delight was short-lived. In the confusion Rogers drew near.

"Pancho is not dead," whispered the manager. "None of the men has recognized him. Let him be taken back to his own people on a safe conduct."

"Pancho?" cried Burton, looking at the wounded man in amazement. "Is this he?"

March 2, 1916.
Received of Messrs. Burton and Rogers two thousand dollars in payment for my services in the campaign for intervention and for myself in persuading John Burton to finance it.
(Signed) MADGE KERR.
The woman herself had witnessed the scene between the two men and was now striving to assume an air of indifference.
"Is this true?" demanded John brokenly, holding out the accusing paper.
"Why shouldn't it be?" she retorted with sullen browbeatenness. "One has to live somehow."
A new light dawned on her unhappy hearer.
"Had you ever met Pancho before?" he asked.
"No," she said. "You had better have the straight tale now. This trouble needed engineering, and you were too easy."
Burton groaned aloud. He almost reeled as he put a hand to his eyes in a vain effort to shut out the horrible reality. All, all, were false—friends, patriotic motives, even the most sacred name of womanhood. In that mortal hour how could he fail to believe that Humanity was in the Grip of Evil!
(END OF ELEVENTH EPISODE)
GIVES RULES FOR HAPPINESS.
Say "Good Morning" As Though You Mean It, Advises Milkmen.
Recipes of Charles Johnson, milkman, for a happy life.
Get up at 6 o'clock.
Say "good morning" to everybody as if you mean it.
Smile.
Get some kind of work that you like and stick to it.
Charles Johnson, whose round, ruddy, cheery face and friendly eyes have lightened the back door of many a home on frosty winter mornings, or in summer, spring and fall, has been twenty years on the job of delivering milk in Lincoln, Neb.
Mr. Johnson is not only a man among men, but he is a milkman among milkmen. For two decades he has been making the rounds, seven days in the week, and on Fourth of July, Labor day, Christmas, Arbor day, St. Patrick's day, Lincoln's, Washington's, yes, Johnson's birthday, too, and every other day.
Some day Mr. Johnson is going to take a vacation. But not yet. Too many people need the milk delivered and he can't get away.
Charles Johnson is 52 years old, with a wife and four children.
"The simple life is the best," is Johnson's condensation of his philosophy. "I do not drink, smoke, chew or gamble. I don't want to, and besides, I haven't time."
"The simple life would make many men happy. Every morning of the year I jump out of bed at 6 o'clock and go to work. It is fun to work when you like to do it."
"My customers all know me and all are my friends. It is a pleasure to take the milk around to them. Getting up in the morning is a healthy habit. People who lie abed until late miss the best part of the day."
Persistent Advertising Is the Road to Success.