

tion to her shoes. In view of the fact that he scarcely had been able to get in a word edge-wise, he was rather tickled when this admirable woman, at parting, commended him warmly for having so well mastered the Spanish tongue. Pem ventured, at this juncture, to cast a very slightly quizzical look at Carmen, and was both surprised and delighted by finding that his look was returned in kind.

"A Mexican woman who doesn't like pretty speeches, and who has such a charming way of qualifying her hatred of Americans, and who can see the point of a rather delicate joke," thought Pem, "would be worth investigating though she were sixty years old and as ugly as the National Palace. And Carmen"—this was the first time, by the way, that he had thought of her as Carmen—"I take it is not quite twenty yet; and what perfectly lovely eyes she has!"

At dinner that night Mr. Smith was unusually silent. When rallied by the lively Violet upon his taciturnity he replied that he was rather tired.

VI.

THE BATTLE OF CHURUBUSCO.

WHEN the American party played the return match, as Rowney Mauve, who had cricketing proclivities, expressed it, by giving their Mexican friends a breakfast in the pretty San Cosme Tivoli, Carmen did not appear. She had a headache that day, her aunt explained, and begged to be excused.

Rose commented upon this phase of the breakfast with her usual perspicacity. "I think that it all is working along very nicely, Van, don't you?" They had strolled off together and were out of ear-shot of the rest of the party.

"What is working along nicely? The breakfast? Yes, it seems to be all right. The food was very fair, and our friends seemed

to enjoy themselves after their customary rather demonstrative fashion."

"It is a great trial to me, Van, the way you never catch my meaning. I don't mean the breakfast at all; I mean about Mr. Smith and this lovely widow. Isn't it queer to think that she is a widow? Except that she has a serious way about her—that has come to her through her sorrow, of course, poor dear!—nobody ever would dream that she was anything but a young girl. What a romance her life has been!"

"Well, I can't say that I see much romance about it. First she was traded off by her father for a hydrant, or something of that sort; and then she had an old husband—a most objectionable old beast he must have been from what we have heard about him—die on her hands before she was much more than married to him. I should say that the whole business was much less like a romance than like a nightmare. And as to this new match that you have made up for her working along nicely, it strikes me that just now it is work-

ing along about as badly as it can work. Didn't you see how Smith went off into the dumps the moment that he found his widow had stayed at home? And don't you think that her staying at home this way is the best possible proof that she doesn't care a button for him? Smith saw it quick enough, and that was what made him drop right down into dumpiness. So would I, if I'd been him, and a girl had gone back on me that way. You used to come and take walks with me, Rosekin—in the old days when we were spooning in Greenwich—when your head was aching fit to split, you precious child." They were in an out-of-the-way part of the garden, and on the strength of this memory Brown put his arm around his wife and kissed her. After which interlude he added: "So can't you see that all your match-making is moonshine? It's a case of 'he loved the lady, but the lady loved not him,' and you might as well accept the situation and stop your castle-building."

"You are a very dear boy, Van, and of

course I'd go walking with you even without any head at all. But about love-matters you certainly are very short-sighted. You can't help it, I suppose, because you're a man; and men never understand these things at all. But any woman could tell you at a glance that this love affair between Mr. Smith and the dear little Mexican widow is going on splendidly. Even you can see that Mr. Smith is in love with her. Well, I don't think that she's exactly in love with him yet; but I am quite certain that she feels that if she doesn't take care she will be. That's the reason she had a headache and didn't come to-day."

"What a comfort it would be to Smith to know that!" Brown remarked with fine irony. "You had better tell him, my dear."

"Yes, of course it would be," Rose answered, entirely missing the irony. "And I've been thinking that I would tell him, Van; only I thought that perhaps you wouldn't like me to. I'm very glad you won't mind—for of course he doesn't see, men are so stupid about such things. Suppose we go and hunt

him up now, and then you go away and leave us together, and I'll tell him how much encouragement she is giving him."

"Suppose you tell me first. I'll be shot if I see much that's encouraging in her shying off from him this way."

"Why, I *have* told you, Van. It's because she is afraid that if she sees any more of him she really will fall in love with him; and of course, after her dreadful experience with that horrid old man she has made up her mind that she never will marry again. That is the way that any nice girl would feel about it. And of course, if she's so much interested in Mr. Smith that she won't trust herself to see him, it is perfectly clear that he has made a very good start toward getting her to love him. What we must do now is to help him——"

"Steady, Rose; don't go off your head, my child. This isn't our funeral."

"It *is* our funeral. Why, it's anybody's funeral who can help in a case of this sort. Think how much we owe to dear Verona for

the way that she helped us. Certainly we must help him. And the first thing for us to do is to give him another good chance to have a talk with her. That's all they want at present. No doubt we can do some other things later; and we will, of course. Why, Van, how can you be so heartless as not to be ready to do everything in your power to help your friend when the whole happiness of his life is at stake! And think what a good thing it will be for this poor sweet, broken-hearted girl, whose life has gone all wrong, to make it go right again."

Mrs. Brown's strongest characteristic was not, perhaps, moderation. In the present instance, while her husband was not wholly convinced by her vigorous line of argument, he found her enthusiasm rather contagious.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked, a little doubtfully.

"Why, I think we can manage just what has to be done now, getting them together again, you know, this way: You know Don Antonio has on hand an expedition for us to

that beautiful old convent that he has been talking about, where there is such lovely tile-work, out at Churubusco. We had better arrange things now to go day after to-morrow. And to-morrow Mr. Smith shall send a note to Don Antonio telling him that he is very sorry to miss the expedition, but that he has decided to go up to see a friend in Toluca. He has been talking about that engineer up at Toluca whom he used to go to school with, so Don Antonio will think it all right and perfectly natural. And that will fix things beautifully. For then she'll go, of course."

"I don't see how it will fix anything beautifully for him to go off to Toluca. He won't see his widow there."

"O you foolish boy! He won't stay there, of course. He must go, because if he didn't he wouldn't be telling the truth in his note to Don Antonio"—Rose had a very nice regard for the truth—"but instead of staying at least one night, as of course they will expect him to, he must come right back to

Mexico by the afternoon train. And then he can tell Don Antonio, when we all meet at the car as we did the other day, that he has returned on purpose to join his party; and that will please Don Antonio—and then it will be too late for her to back out. And if he needs any help to get her off to himself when we are out at the convent, he can depend upon me to see that he gets it! Isn't that a pretty good plan, Van? How delightful and exciting it all is! It's almost as though we were overcoming difficulties and obstacles and getting married again ourselves, isn't it, dear?"

"No, I don't think it is. I think it's mainly vigorous imagination let loose upon a very small amount of fact. But we'll play your little game, Rose, just for the fun of the thing. Only there's one thing, child, that you must be careful about. You can't make your plan go without explaining it to Smith. Now don't you tell him all the nonsense you have been telling me about the way you think the widow feels toward him. I don't think it's so;

and since he really seems to be rather hard hit, it isn't fair to set him up with a whole lot of hopes and then have things turn out the other way and knock him down again. Tell him that it is just barely possible that things are the way you think they are, and that your plan is in the nature of an experiment that probably will have no result at all, or will turn out altogether badly—as I certainly think it will. I don't believe that you can do him any good; but if you put the matter to him this way at least you won't do him any harm."

And Rose, perceiving the justice of her husband's utterance, promised him that in her treatment of this delicate affair she would be very circumspect indeed.

The first part of the plan thus skilfully elaborated worked to a charm. When the Americans joined Don Antonio and his party on the Plaza, to take the special tram-car in waiting for them on the Tlalpam tracks, Rose gave Van a delighted nudge and whispered:

"See, she has come, just as I said she would. And oh! oh!"—Rose squeezed Van's arm in her excitement with what he considered quite unnecessary vigor—"she has just seen Mr. Smith, and she is, indeed she is, changing color! Don't you see it? Now you know that I was right all along."

Brown, being on the lookout for it, did perceive this sign of confusion on the part of the Señora Carilla; but it was so slight that no one else, Pem alone excepted, noticed it. Another good sign, as Rose interpreted it, was that while Don Antonio and the rest were running over with voluble expressions of their pleasure because the Señor Esmit—the first letter and the digraph in Pem's name were too much for them—had cut short his visit to his friend in Toluca in order to join them in their outing, Carmen maintained a discreet silence. Pem, not being gifted with special powers of tortuous penetration, regarded this silence as ominous, until Rose, perceiving that he was going wrong, man-

aged to whisper to him cheerily: "It's all right. Quick, go and sit by her!"

But this friendly advice came too late to be acted upon. Carmen, possibly foreseeing Pem's intention, executed a rapid flank movement—that Rose thought made the case still more hopeful, and that Pem thought made it still more hopeless—by which she placed herself securely between her aunt and her cousin Rodolfo, and so decisively checked the enemy's advance.

Under these discouraging circumstances Pem fell back on his reserve—that is to say, on Rose; who made a place for him to sit beside her and, so far as this was possible without being too marked in her confidences, said what she could to cheer and comfort him.

And, indeed, this young gentleman's requirements in the way of cheering and comforting were very considerable. He had confided freely in Rose—who was a most refreshingly sympathetic confidante in a love affair—after she herself had broken the ice for him; and the very fact of talking to her

about his heart troubles had done a good deal to give them substance and directness. As the result of several conversations, Rose arrived at the conclusion that if Carmen had come to the breakfast at San Cosme, and had treated Pem in an every-day, matter-of-fact sort of way, the affair very likely would have been there and then ended. "But when I went to breakfast, and she was not there, Mrs. Brown," Pem exclaimed, "I suddenly realized how dreadfully much I had counted upon seeing her, and what a hold she had upon me generally. And then, while I was wretchedly low in my mind about it all, you came to me like an angel and told me that perhaps I had something to hope for. I shouldn't have hoped at all if it hadn't been for you. I think that I might even have had sense enough just to let it all go, and started right back for the States. And that would have been the end of it. But now that you have encouraged me, I'm quite another man. I shall fight it out now till she absolutely throws me over, or till I marry her.

"In the matter of family, Mrs. Brown," Pem went on, his Philadelphia instincts asserting themselves, "the marriage is a very desirable one. Her people have been established in America even longer than mine. Her cousin tells me that they trace their ancestry directly to the Conqueror himself—through the Cortés Tolosa line, you know—and they are connected with some of the very best families of Mexico and Spain. So, you see, there is no reason why I should not make her my wife. If it can be done, I'm going to do it; and if it can't—well, if it can't, there won't be much left in my life that's worth living for, that's all."

When Rose reported this conversation to her husband he listened with an air of serious concern. "You've shoved yourself into a tolerably good-sized responsibility, Rose," he said; "and I'm inclined to think, my child, that you're going to make a mess of it. I should advise you, if you are lucky enough to get out of this scrape with a whole skin, to take it as a sort of solemn warning that in

future you will save yourself a good deal of trouble if you will let other people's love-making alone. But since you are so far in, my dear, I don't see how you can do anything but go ahead and try to bring Smith out all right on the other side."

Rose would not admit, of course, that she felt at all overpowered by the weight of her responsibility; but she did feel it, at least a little, and consequently hailed with a very lively satisfaction every act on Carmen's part that possibly could be construed as supporting the hopeful view of the situation that she so energetically avowed. She went into the fight with all the more vigor now that victory was necessary not only to the happiness of her ally, but to the vindication of her own reputation as the projector of heart-winning campaigns.

Rose was encouraged by the fact that the tactics of the enemy were distinctly defensive. She argued that this betrayed a consciousness, possibly only instinctive, but none the less real, of forces insufficient to risk a

general engagement; and she further argued that the most effective plan of attack would be to cut off the main body of the enemy (that is to say, Carmen herself) from her reserves (that is to say, from the protection of her aunt and other relatives) and then to force a decisive battle. Before the car reached San Mateo she had communicated this plan to Pem, and he had agreed to it.

But it is one thing to plan a campaign in the cabinet, and it is quite another thing to carry on the campaign in the field. The allies presently had this fact in military science pointedly brought home to them.

From where the car was stopped, near the little old parish church of San Mateo—closed now and falling into ruin, for the near-by conventual church has been used in its stead—the party walked a short half-mile along a lane bordered by magueys, and then came out upon a *plazuela* whereon the main gate of the convent opened. In the middle of the *plazuela* Pem saw, much to his disgust, another pyramidal battle monument,