

A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.¹

The Very Remarkable Adventures of Col. Monstery, a Modern Swordsman.

Thomas Hoyer Monstery (1824-1901)

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Armed combat, buried treasure, thrilling adventures ... these are the stuff of legend. They were also the enduring memories of an exceptional character, one whose accomplishments strike us today as larger than life. His name? Thomas Monstery — fencing master, swash-buckler and soldier of fortune.

Collected less than two years before his death, these recollections occasionally owe a debt to the imagination. But, taken overall, they make enjoyable reading and bear testimony to his bravura and indomitability in a sometimes-dangerous world.

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Chicago, April 7, [1899] — There is one of the Hohenzollerns in Chicago, and he hates the Hohenzollern blood. The purple drops of royalty that flow in his veins give him no comfort. He would like to siphon them out. He is Col. Thomas Hoyer Munster Monstery, a soldier of fortune and misfortune, who, from his height of eighty-five years, looks back and down upon a life by whose record the adventures of Harry Lyndon seem colorless and tame. He still wears his own hair— plenty of it. He grinds his beef with his own teeth. He smokes twenty cigars a day. The more he drinks, the steadier, quieter and saner he grows. He has defied every law of hygiene. He is as active as a cat, as springy as a young ash and, but for an accident which occurred two years ago, would be now as strong as a lion. Three of his ribs were broken then and crushed in upon his left lung. He suffered from insomnia for months and is now eighteen pounds under weight. This lack of flesh and the necessity of at last taking some care of himself kept him out of the war with Spain. It was not age.

For the main facts in the account of a remarkable life which follows he has documentary evidence that is indisputable. In many instances, names are omitted, for reasons that are obvious, but they could be stated. His explanation of his strange vigor at an advanced age is characteristic of him: “He who lives by the sword lives long,” he says. This is his way of declaring that martial exercises are

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the most healthful of all. For nearly seventy years he has been one of the chief *maîtres d'armes* of three continents. He is a *chevalier d'escrime*. There is nothing of the saber, rapier, and broadsword that he does not know. Literally, the "sweet white weapon" has been a staff of life to him. He has carved out three fortunes with it. It gives him bread today. One of his latest pupils, Francis Wilson, is to take part in a benefit performance to be held at the Grand Opera House soon. The money will go toward easing the later years of the old fighter. Teaching the rapier to the men of the theatre has been part of his business for more than half of a century. One of his earlier pupils was the elder Davenport, as were Forrest and Junius Brutus Booth, whom he still affectionately calls "June." Edwin Booth came later. John Wilkes Booth he never taught. That ill-fated and brilliant man got his sword instruction from his father.

Col. Monstery has been principal or second to fifty-three duels. He has been principal in twenty-three. Reference is here made to regularly arranged affairs of honor. Of impromptu combats he has had so many that he has forgotten dozens. He declares that he has never killed a man in a duel, although one of his opponents died from the effects of the wounds. Man of blood, as he is, he says that this is a comfort to him. He is 5 feet 11 inches tall and, when in perfect condition, weighs 154 pounds. He has been one of the strongest men of the century. His shoulders are broad, his chest deep, his flanks thin, his arms long and knotted with muscle. As a fencer he has been noted not only for the lightning quickness of his lunge, but also for the phenomenal distance he covers when extended. This quality has saved his life a hundred times. He is not an advocate of any particular school, and says that the Italian and French methods do not differ materially, except that the Italian swordsmen are always better trained and therefore, more apt to be successful. He advocates rather a high guard and believes more in attack than defense. "Alexandre Dumas was a great man," he says, "but he knew little of the sword. Tales of his heroes standing with back to a wall and defeating six or eight opponents are nonsensical on their face. A swordsman, no matter what his skill, can successfully engage many men only by a display of superior activity. He must leap here and there. He must advance and retreat. He must circle and dodge and swerve like a bird in flight. His endeavor must be to engage one of his adversaries at a time and to put them out of the combat successively. How can he do this while glued to a wall?"

A GLIMPSE OF TRAGEDY.

The mother of Thomas Hover Munster Monstery was a Prussian lady of wealth and position. Her mother was Sophia Anekarstrom, a Swedish beauty, who became the morganatic wife of Frederick William of Prussia. Sophia Anekarstrom was a first cousin of that Anekarstrom who slew Gustavus III of Sweden at a masquerade ball. The family was proscribed and Sophia went to Prussia with her parents. Monstery's father was a Dane of rank. He was the descendant of an Irishman who fled to Denmark after the battle of the Boyne. The name originally was Munster. The Danish Monstery held a position at the Copenhagen court of which he was deprived for dueling. In punishment he was made Governor of the little island of Santa Cruz [St. Croix], in West Indian waters. He left his post in 1812 and came to the United States. His son was born in Baltimore in 1814. The parents went back to Denmark when he was 4 years old and separated there. It was some old trouble connected with the morganatic wife business. Monstery thinks that there must have been a fight of some kind when he was taken from under his father's care, because his only recollection of that parent is of him standing erect, with his nightshirt bloodstained at the breast. He cannot say that there was a sword in the elder Monstery's hand, but he thinks there was. After that his mind goes back to a sort of dungeon, in which he, a child of less than 6 years, was kept. It had a high-grated window and stone walls. They used to feed him on bread sprinkled with sugar when he was good, and he is passionately fond of this confection today. In fact, for eighty years he has eaten no other form of dessert. He remembers then being with his mother in a handsome house in Copenhagen, a house kept in a style befitting her wealth. At 12 years of age his studies were broken off by the explosion of some fireworks, ignited in honor of the visit of the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia. The boy's eyes were badly injured, and he went to sea in the Danish navy for three years. When 15 years old, in Rio de Janeiro, a negro insulted him and was stabbed in the body. This was the first blood shed by him in anger. He got back home and quit the sea for a time.

At the age of 18, his eyes still troubling him, he was sent to Stockholm and became a pupil in the establishment of Dr. Linge, inventor of the Swedish movement system, Swedish massage and a very brilliant and effective style of sword-play, which, Monstery says, is the frame upon which all modern fencing hangs. Here in three years he became noted for feats of strength and for preternatural skill with the rapier, time and again defeating all comers of all nationalities in the public assaults held under Linge's direction. Of his life in Stockholm and his

tutelage there, he says that upon a naturally rugged and active frame it superimposed a set of muscles nearly as strong as those of a horse and as flexible as a watch spring.

AN ADVENTURE IN RUSSIA.

Bearing excellent letters of introduction from high Danish officials, he went to St. Petersburg when 22 years old and became sword-master to Constantine, the Grand Duke. His reputation as the strongest man in Europe had preceded him, and he found his hands full of combat and trials of muscular force. He was commanding officer of the Grand Duke's bodyguard. To uphold the honor of the royal household, he fought not only champion after champion from the nations to the south and west of the Czar's dominions, but also the strong and fierce men from all of the thousand wild tribes under the autocrat's sway. In the far northern capital he had adventures innumerable, some hard and some soft. A magnificent establishment had been given to him and a commensurate salary. He was rapidly growing rich when his lucky star went behind a cloud. Among the young noblemen about the palace was Ivan Orloff, son of a Prince. He and Monstery, both young, daring and expert, became inseparable. Orloff had an affair with a woman of the court whose husband was an official of power. During its progress Monstery stood on guard. One night the alarm was given. Lights flashed through the palace suddenly and the rush of heavy feet sounded in the corridors. Orloff had been betrayed by a serf employed as a body servant. The pair fled. Orloff slid in safety to the ground from the third story by clasping a water pipe. Monstery leaped straight out into the dark and struck the frozen ground on his back. He was picked up as a dead man. He was unconscious for twelve days, and when his senses returned he found himself exiled from Russia.

Having plenty of Russian money, Monstery spent one winter in Copenhagen and then did the grand tour for the second time, omitting St. Petersburg, however. He traveled from capital to capital, gaining a little, making love a little, and fighting a good deal; an errant man of the sword, not seeking trouble, but not avoiding it. He went to Berlin. There he sought an audience with the monarch and presented papers establishing his pretension to Hohenzollern blood. He was kindly received, though he was not greeted by the title of "cousin," and returned to his hotel much flattered. He was sitting in his room that night, dreaming of rapid advancement in the Prussian Army, when an officer tapped at his door. Behind him was a file of soldiers. Monstery was hurried to a closed carriage and taken to the fortress of Spandau. There he was kept closely confined

for months, his only amusement being swordplay with the officers of the garrison, who, he says, fenced in a heavy, slow German fashion and made very poor sport, indeed. He does not know why he was set free finally, but thinks that the tears of his mother and her prayers to her royal kinsman effected his release. At any rate, he was set across the frontier with an injunction never to return, and he never did.

HIS FIRST DUEL.

In 1844 he found himself again in Copenhagen, and here occurred his first duel, fought not from a desire to demonstrate superiority or to uphold the honor of his nation, but in bitter hatred. In the city was a Dane of high social position named Charles Hansen. He had money, youth, good looks, bravery and great skill with weapons. He and Monstery became intimate. Hansen was infatuated with a woman, who bled him and made love to his friend. That caused jealousy, then wrath, then insult, and, of course, the crossed swords on the sward. The men were nearly matched in strength, but not in skill. Hansen was an expert man-at-arms, but he had not fought in every country of the Continent and against men of all Continental races. He had insisted upon the use of the triangular sword as a weapon with which Monstery was presumably not so familiar as himself, but he was disarmed at the fifth pass. His sword fell with its handle near his feet. The victor, forbearing to pierce him as he stood unarmed, turned with a smile to his second and waited for the customary declaration that the disarmed man must be adjudged to have received every courtesy. As he stood so, Hansen stooped suddenly, seized the sword and plunged it into Monstery's body, just under the right armpit. The weapon entered to a depth of four inches, making the small but dangerous wound for which this sword is noted. The soldier of fortune fell, as if struck by lightning. Monstery was in bed five and one-half months. When he got out he was broken in purse, weak and dispirited.

He stayed about the city for a few days, rapidly regaining strength, and had made up his mind to go once more upon his travels when the event occurred which altered all the course of his life. He had decided to re-enter Germany, and on the night before his intended departure was sitting in a restaurant, his back to the door and some wine on the table in his front. As he fingered the glass absently and wondered into what strange field he was next to be projected, he felt himself seized by the hair. His head was jerked violently back, and, looking up, he saw Hansen towering over him.

“Not dead yet?” asked his foeman, and struck him a powerful blow in the face.

Monstery twisted himself around, seized the wine bottle and felled Hansen to the floor. Believing his skull to have been crushed by the blow, and intent only on escaping, he leaped through the window, carrying the sash with him, and started rapidly down the street. He was pursued, and, looking back, saw Hansen, with a companion, staggering in his wake. He waited for them. A parley ensued, and it was determined that the duel should be repeated. Monstery found a second without difficulty, and next morning they met. This duel was held within fifteen feet of the elder Monstery’s grave. Monstery fenced with his left hand, his right being still incapacitated from the stab of months before. The combat lasted for more than an hour. Monstery was repeatedly wounded, but not seriously. Hansen suffered as much or more. At last, the latter, bleeding from nineteen flesh wounds, fainted from loss of blood. Monstery, certain that his foeman had expired, made all possible haste to Hamburg, fearing that his life would pay the forfeit in Copenhagen. Hansen lingered on for two years, a mere wreck, and died at last from his injuries.

SOME LITTLE WARS.

In Hamburg, Monstery passed these two years in abject poverty. Often a crust of bread made his sole meal in the twenty-four hours. His strength kept up wonderfully, but he could find no employment and lacked the means to go elsewhere. There were no wars going on; he had been able to gain no bookish education because of his defective eyes, and suicide was constantly in his thoughts. He was rescued at last by a sculptor named Brock, a Dane and a friend of his mother, who had been requested to keep a lookout for him and had spotted him at last, a forlorn, unkempt figure, on the bench of a little public garden. With plenty of food and good clothing Monstery’s spirits revived. Sitting in the little garden one day, he opened a German newspaper and read of the Texan war of independence and the resulting troubles between the United States and Mexico. He saw that a conflict was inevitable, was joyed by the prospect of fighting for his native land, and started for America.

At Washington, Monstery had an audience with the President, showed him papers proving that he had held the rank of Colonel in the Imperial Guards of Russia, and begged for service. He was told that he might raise a battalion if he chose. He found that he was regarded as a foreigner, in spite of his American birth, and that no one would enlist with him. He was determined to fight for the

country somewhere, and, somehow, he enlisted as a common sailor in the United States Navy. He was examined for physical fitness in a ship's cabin, and, when stripped, astonished the surgeon by grasping a huge table by one leg with one hand and holding it out at arm's length. Being as a common sailor assigned to the *Vixen*, he was at the bombardment and fall of Tuxpam. Later he was in a fight at Tabasco. The rations he describes as being simply horrible. They proved too much for him, and he was invalided to Portsmouth, N. H.

Getting out of the Portsmouth Hospital, he went into the cigar business in Philadelphia and made some money. In 1849 he found himself again in New Orleans and started for Santa Fe, on his way to San Francisco. Instead, he reached Nicaragua. There was a revolution in progress, of course, and, equally of course, he went into it. He does not remember the names of the contestants or upon which side he fought. He says that he is satisfied, however, that he was on the side of the Liberals as opposed to the Conservatives or clergy. He is satisfied of this because, in all of the dozens of Central and South American wars in which he has been a participant, he was always against the Church. Near Nicaragua one day, in a desperate fight in which he was doing the usual yeoman service for the patriot whose name he has forgotten, he was cracked on the head with a musket butt. When he came to, the field was deserted. He did not know which side won, and does not know now. Blood was running from his ears, and he started to discover a doctor. He did not succeed, but after a day of travel found himself in a little town on the coast. Here he met an Italian, who agreed to operate under his direction. A poniard was run through the back of Monstery's neck and a piece of linen shirt inserted, forming a sort of seton. For fourteen months the seton did its work of suppuration, but brain fever was averted.

He went to Cuba with the expedition of Narciso Lopez, gave fencing lessons in Baltimore and took part in a war in the United States of Colombia. José Maria Melo was dictator, and Monstery fought for him because he was a Liberal. The Liberals were scattered and the heads of Melo and his new friend rolled loosely upon their shoulders. Disguised, they made their way to the coast. There Monstery smuggled Melo on board a British vessel, which put to sea. For himself he found a vessel sailing northward. Nursing two saber slashes, one on the head, the other on the arm, he reached New York eventually.

PROOFS OF HIS SKILL.

In Copenhagen, in 1855, Monstery saved the life of the Spanish Chargé d’Affaires, who sent him to Madrid. There he was asked to give some evidence of his skill. He announced a challenge to meet anyone desirous of obtaining fame with any weapon known to man. There were many replies, and, in consequence, Monstery fought with sabers, rapiers, broadswords, foils, knives and lances. “The Spaniard,” he says, “is the world’s greatest enthusiast in all weapons that shine. He has no use for firearms, though his personal bravery compels him to face them when necessary.” As he was successful in all his encounters he became the rage, and adventure after adventure followed in rapid succession. Three months after his arrival in Madrid the office of “Military Instructor to the Government” was created for him, and he was sent to Cuba to give lessons to the soldiers there. He landed at Puerto Principe [present-day Camagüey] with 70 ounces of gold in his pockets and his credentials. As he entered the door of the Governor’s palace he saw a long table piled high with glittering pieces, and behind the gold was a man dealing monte. It was a feast-time and the custom in Cuba then to run a monte game at the entrance to the palace. Monstery walked to the table and bet his seventy ounces on the queen. He lost, and a moment afterward entered the Governor’s presence penniless, save for the diamonds he wore.

After some months in Puerto Principe he was transferred to Havana, then one of the gayest capitals in the world. It was a life of labor with the sword, gambling, hard drinking, love making and dueling. He was once more on the high road to wealth when he fell a victim to treachery. Under pretense of bleeding him for a fever, a barber, bribed by a rival, severed a tendon of his right arm, and the best Havana physicians assured him that he would be a cripple for life. He sat himself down and patiently began work on his injured arm. Grasping his wrist with his left hand, he moved it backward and forward for hours every day. He used to wake in the night, turn upon his side and work on it. The result of this was that in six months the arm, barring a slight temporary slowness, was as good as new.

Having nothing to do in Cuba, he listened to Baron Carl von Wetholz, a German of education and bravery, who assured him that the people of Honduras were ripe for revolution, needed only a leader and pined for annexation to the United States. At the head of fifty-four men, well-armed, they landed at Truxillo. There was no opposition and neither were there enthusiastic crowds to welcome the

deliverers with open arms. The people took their arrival quietly, went inside their houses and closed and locked the doors. The filibusters were left standing in deserted streets, at a loss what to do.

“I began,” says Monstery, “to smell a mouse. The boats which had brought us, however, had set sail immediately. We could not escape to sea and it was best to make a bad bargain as good as possible. I found a deserted castle on a hill and housed the men in it. Next morning, we were summoned to surrender by a large force of sandaled ragamuffins, headed by a magnificently caparisoned Spanish officer. I went out to talk to them and assured them that we were peaceable miners, come to the country to prospect for gold, of which we had heard much. That tale was received with credulity, so far as my companions were concerned. They were ordered to get out of the country, and they got out with all speed. My trunks were broken open, however, and therein they found my commission from the Spanish government and other papers showing my military character. The officer’s name was Valderrama and he put me in jail until he could hear from President Guardiola, surnamed the Butcher, who was at Tegucigalpa. I was allowed to exercise in a paved court, and at the doorway opening into this court from the street a single soldier stood guard. I approached him too closely one day and he attempted to bayonet me. I had no idea of escape, but was forced to defend myself. I took his musket from him and stunned him with my fist. At that moment eight others, armed with muskets and bayonets, sprang out of the guardhouse and attacked me. Then followed one of the fights of my life. I demonstrated there that Dumas’s back-to-the-wall heroes were frauds. I would have been stuck like a pig but for the fact that I had a space in which to maneuver. They knew nothing, of course, of scientific bayonet play, and their weapons fortunately were unloaded. I had pinked two of them, broken the bayonets of three, and was nearly fainting from exhaustion when I heard a stern command behind me” ‘Halt!’ My opponents dropped their weapons. Turning I saw Valderrama who was standing in the doorway an interested spectator of the bout from the beginning. He approached me and looked me over.

“My God!” he said. ‘Can a man learn to do that?’ I told him that a sure-enough man could. He gave me my liberty at once and in return I gave him instruction.

“In a little while I was as happy as ever, the friend of all the leading citizens of the town and making much money from my pupils. Then came a gently worded request from President Guardiola that I make my appearance at Tegucigalpa. I did not understand then that the commands of this strange and ferocious man

were all put in the form of a soft request and I paid no attention to it, being well satisfied with Truxillo. In a month's time I earned from American Consul Purdot, with whose family I was intimate, that I was to be arrested and shot by command of the Butcher. I decided to take the bull by the horns, and, loading my belongings into four narrow trunks, designed to be carried mule-back, I set out for Tegucigalpa. I reached there early in the evening. There was a banquet at the President's palace, and I presented myself, travel-stained as I was. Guardiola was a Mestizo Indian. He scowled at me and said:

“You have decided, have you, to grant our simple request? That is a good thing for you. Have some wine.’

DUEL WITH A GIANT AND A BULL.

“I drank with him and next day was made instructor to his miserable unpaid and half-clad troops. In Tegucigalpa I was forced to make my footing good by fighting the Honduran champion. I have forgotten his name, if I ever knew it. I remember only that he was an enormous fellow, 6 feet 6 inches high, and insisted upon using a pair of tremendously long Toledo blades which belonged to him. The fight occurred in the plaza and was witnessed by 20,000 people. As I was held to be a representative of Spain, the Spanish merchants of the town bet 8,000 copper dollars on my success. These dollars were worth 12½ cents each in gold. They subsequently dropped to 8 cents, and the entire issue was bought up by an English syndicate, which rehabilitated the currency and made something like 100 [?] per cent on its investment. The Honduran's merit as a swordsman consisted almost wholly in strength. I disarmed him three times, making no attempt to injure him. From the thousands of his fellow countrymen fell on him a storm of appeal: ‘Kill him! Kill him!’ He was a giant country yokel and very naive.

“‘Yes,’ he said, standing with outstretched hands when disarmed for the third time. ‘I would kill him, but he keeps knocking my sword out of my fist.’ That caused a general laugh and my backers took down the money.

“One night at a banquet we were all heated with wine. Several of the Honduras gentlemen, having found that I was an American, began casting slurs upon this country, which in those times occupied a low place in the estimation of other countries. I told them that it ill became Hondurans to say things, as their nation amounted to nothing at all whatever; that they were imitators of the Spanish

and that even in their bullfights they sawed off the horns of their victims. They replied that the American did not live who dared enter the arena against a bull of temper and horns. Being full of wine myself and pot-valiant, I responded that I dared. The upshot of it was that a bet was made that I would not enter the arena a week from date against a bull of their selection. I knew nothing in the world of bullfighting, and when I waked the next morning I was a sorry man. I could not back out, however. I went to a friend, an American doctor named Wells, who had found his way to that far country, and told him my troubles. He suggested that we buy a bull and practice the matador death stroke. Bulls were \$2 each, and we bought five. Going to the suburbs we tied them, and I slew them with the straight downward thrust I had seen in the ring. In each case we cut the animal open after it fell and traced the course of the sword blade. The last bull dropped as if struck by lightning, and I found that my point had severed the cervical vertebrae just in front of the shoulder top.

“I went into the arena six days afterward and the bull my Honduran friends had furnished for my undoing was a wonder. He was of immense size, a dark dun in color, utterly wild, and his horns had not been cut. On the contrary, their points had been filed to a needle keenness. Furthermore, he was what is known as a *buscador*, [?] or follower; that is, he was not to be diverted from his charge, but followed straight after the object upon which he had set his red vision. The pe-leadores, or horsemen, and the banderillos, who throw the tiny barbed flags, deserted me after the first charge and I was obliged to enter the ring alone. Being a matador, I was on foot. Six times the bull chased me over the palings, and the last time I fell in the lap of my friend Wells, who was by no means sober. He had a six-shooter in each hand and swore that he would empty every chamber into the Hondurans if I were killed. In civilization Americans don't give a damn for one another, but in the wild places they stick together like brothers. It is very good in those places to have a friend like Wells.

“I reentered the ring for the seventh time, determined to die in my tracks before I would give another inch before the enraged animal. I had been already called a coward twenty thousand times and it angered me. As the bull came on, with head not a foot from the ground, I leaned forward and lunged with all my force. I did not know enough to leap to one side nor to withdraw my sword as the matadors sometimes do. The enormous brute stopped in his tracks, shivered and fell like some great tree. I still clung to my sword handle and was pulled to my knees. I did not hear a whisper of the wild shouts that rent the air, but when I rose I did hear a rapid fusillade. Looking to my left I saw Wells dancing about

his box on one leg, screaming at the top of his voice and working his six-shooters brilliantly straight up into the air. He was a good fellow and a brave. He died of delirium tremens, cursing America, the land that gave him birth.”

FIGHTING IN MEXICO.

Being more of a popular hero than ever, Monstery made the mistake of dancing too often with Mrs. Guardiola, the Butcher's wife, and was sent to the front to fight Cardenas, a revolutionist, in the hope that he would be killed. He was defeated, taken prisoner and tied to a tree. A revolutionist named Miguel was among the captors. Miguel had been valet to Dr. Wells. Monstery gave him his diamond studs to be cut loose that night. He was seen as the thongs fell from him, and was shot at by fifty soldiers, but, of course, not touched. He ran 300 yards to a wide stream, plunged into it, was swept over a waterfall, made his way through the foam at the bottom and floated quietly down for a mile or two. Gaining the further bank, he struck out through the forest in the direction of the San Salvador line, knowing that he would be killed if he returned to Guardiola. After weeks of incredible hardship, he reached San Miguel, and, the veriest vagabond in appearance, presented himself to Señor Antonio Blanco, a Spanish merchant of wealth and breeding, introducing himself as Tomas Monstery, the *maître d'armes*. His fame had gone through all of the Central American republics, and he was welcomed. Blanco gave a dinner in his honor that night to sixteen merchants, and each of them placed on the table an ounce of gold for the adventurer. As he says, “In the morning I was a loafer and at night I was a cavalier.”

Then began the old life of sword instruction, swordplay, gold, gaming and love. Here he met his old friend Melo, whom he had last seen disguised as a servant and making his way to sea on a British ship after their defeat in Colombia. Melo was high in place in San Salvador, and the two men swore a blood brotherhood. One feature of their compact was that the survivor of the twain should carry news of the other's death to relatives in person, no matter where they might be or how far the travel. Melo was a Venezuelan, an accomplished soldier, a man of high literary attainments and an adept in statecraft. Monstery has as a memento of him only his lance butt, which he saw gallantly borne on fifty fields.

These two became such a power in San Salvador that they excited the alarm of Gerardo Barrios, the President. To quiet him and give him time to think better of them they took some soldiers and went into Costa Rica, where President

Mora was combating a full-grown revolution. They were beaten. Mora was captured and shot. Melo and Monstery got back to San Salvador, after a hard chase, with little glory and a new assortment of wounds. Two weeks afterward they were notified by friends that Barrios had condemned them to death. They mounted their horses at 1 o'clock of a moonless night and rode hard for the Guatemalan frontier. They were pursued, but got across the line in safety. Here and there they picked up a man-at-arms until they had twelve in their train. With this trifling force they made their way across Guatemala into the state of Chiapas, Mexico.

Mexico was in the throes of a tremendous conflict between the Liberals and Conservatives, and for the time being the Conservatives were the under dogs. Melo and Monstery's band of twelve had met many parties of them, fleeing into Guatemala, and, as they were headed the other way, their Liberal tendencies were apparent, and many handsome fights resulted. In Chiapas the pair were welcomed by the Liberals and from Mexico City Melo received a commission as commanding General of Chiapas, and he made Monstery his chief of cavalry. Then began a long war against Miramon, the Conservative leader. There was a man named Ortega who had been the Chiapas Governor of Customs and whose speculations had run into the millions. He had been dismissed from office by the central Liberal Government and in revenge joined Miramon. He was a soldier and a valiant captain, as well as thief, and one of the most murderous leaders in the history of that land of murder. His hundreds of followers were distinguished by a white cross worn on the left shoulder, and where the white crosses rode, there death and ruin were most plentiful. Against this General, Monstery and Melo were specially pitted. The American had at his command 331 cavalrymen, each of whom was trained to the nine and a master of his weapons. He had in addition a force of 2,000 infantrymen, who were of little value to him, as Ortega adopted the guerrilla style of warfare. For months clash after clash strewn the Mexican soil with corpses. Ortega had amassed a large part of his plunder from churches. It consisted of gold pieces, and jewels stamped from chalices by his boot-heels. This treasure he had secreted in the mountains and it became Monstery's chief task to discover the hiding place. This he accomplished at last by means of spies and he moved on the rocky stronghold. Ortega was defeated and the treasure was captured, but the white cross bandit escaped with most of his men. Five days afterward he met Melo, defeated him, took Melo prisoner and executed him. Thirst for vengeance then took possession of Monstery and he resumed the pursuit with added zest. The last battle between the two occurred upon an elevated plateau, thick with chaparral. One side of it

sloped down to the country beneath. Ortega had been driven to the top and made his stand there. Monstery sent his men into the engagement and, with a few chosen troops, placed himself to one side of the slope and remained hidden in the trees, knowing that his foeman would endeavor to escape by that exit, and determined to cut him down with his own hand. When the battle had been in progress for an hour and the advancing tide of shouts showed that the Liberals were winning, Monstery saw a small detachment of cavalymen, headed by an officer and bearing the white crosses on their shoulders, break through the edge of the chaparral and start at a hand [?] gallop down the slope. Convinced that it was his enemy at last rushing to destruction, Monstery gave the word of command, dropped the reins, struck his spurs home and dashed from his ambushade to intercept the flight. For some reason his men did not follow him and he found himself facing a party of nine, headed by a young officer who was not Ortega. There was no time to rectify the mistake. Instantly the contending parties, ten to one, were deep in strife.

ONE AGAINST TEN.

Though it happened forty years ago, the old soldier of fortune cannot mention this affray without deep excitement. He rises from his chair and recounts its various phases with flashing eyes. He emptied three saddles with his revolvers before they closed in on him, and a fourth man fell before a thrust of his lance. The attacking party threw themselves from their horses, and one of them stabbed his horse in the chest, piercing its heart. The animal fell, pinning its rider under it, and for a moment he lay at the mercy of his enemies. In five seconds, twenty blows fell on him. He was freed by the death struggles of his steed and hobbled to his feet. His left knee had been broken by the fall, and he stood on one leg, like a stork. His lance, too, had been smashed, but he still held to the business of it. As one of the white cross men turned to flee, Monstery levelled this broken bit of lance like a javelin and sent it through him at a distance of five yards, with such force that the spearhead projected a foot beyond the breast. The man fell upon his face, gasping. Balancing himself on one foot and partly braced by the dead body of his horse, against which he leaned, the master of arms drew the rapier, which had never failed him, and engaged his five adversaries. The young officer was first to fall before a lunge that caught him on the throat. A trooper who sprang in with clubbed musket was struck with such violence that the hilt thumped against his breast bone. As he fell the sword snapped. The other three leaped back out of reach of the terrible American and began reloading their muskets, intending to finish him at leisure. At this

juncture some of Monstery's victorious riders broke from the chaparral in pursuit of stragglers, and his assailants fled. The warrior did not see them. He had fainted. He does not know now what became of the men who were with him when he made his charge alone, nor why they deserted him. In this fight he had been struck in the chest by a spent ball, and was coughing blood. His sword hand was wounded. His left knee was broken. His brother officer, Melo, was dead. Ortega, for the twentieth time, had escaped. He decided to give up the pursuit.

STORY OF A TREASURE.

From Ortega's treasure he had paid his soldiers liberally and had for his own portion near \$400,000 in gold and jewels. It was put into mule trunks, bound on the backs of Indian bearers and, himself seated in a chair strapped to a man's back, he took up his march for the Atlantic coast, hoping to find in one of the sea towns a competent physician. Near the ancient city of Palenque, it became necessary to cross a lake in a canoe. Knowing that the frail craft would not bear the weight of the men and all of the metal, he separated the gold from the jewels, put it into four trunks, and, making a diagram of the place, buried it. The fifth trunk, containing gold and diamonds, was placed in a canoe. Among these jewels was the diadem of an Archbishop, stolen from some wealthy church by Ortega. Contrary to his custom, that bandit had not broken it to pieces. It was of massive gold, spangled with diamonds, sapphires and rubies, and was valued at \$65,000 [?]. At the frontier city of Petucalco, [sic, Pichucalco] ruled by a Governor and patrolled by a commander of his own appointing, Monstery stopped to rest. The Governor's name was Martinez; the military commander was Pancho Flores. Martinez gave a banquet, which Monstery attended. When he returned to his quarters he found that the back door had been broken open with a bayonet, while his dozen sentries stood about the front door, and his jewel trunk abstracted. He remained in Pichucalco three weeks, endeavoring to trace his property. He did find a Sergeant who told how he and companions had forced the door, acting under the command of Flores, and of how they had borne the trunk into the hills, where Flores broke it open and buried the treasure in places known only to himself, while they stood guard along the pathways.

"It was the rainy season," says Monstery, "and the mountain torrents were bank-full. I found the trunk as the Sergeant had said. The few papers still in had been beaten to mush by the falling water, yet, in the middle of the mass lay an open daguerreotype uninjured, and out of it smiled at me the face of my wife.

The jewels, of course, were gone, and, among the papers that Flores had abstracted was the diagram showing the location of my buried trunks of gold. They are there yet, I make no doubt. No man can find them. I could not find them myself should I make the effort. That lake rises once each year and overflows the spot where they are hidden, and doubtless they are now under twenty feet of deposit. Twenty-five years ago, while in San Francisco and giving sword lessons to Bandmann, the actor, he told me that his brother, a civil engineer, had met a man of my name and military rank in Bolivia. As Bolivia is the only South American republic I have never visited I thought this singular. I met Bandmann's brother and he described the Col. Monstery he had seen down there. Instantly I recognized Pancho Flores, who had fled from Pichucalco years before. He had ascertained from my papers that I had never been in Bolivia, so he made for that country. He not only took my gold and jewels and papers, but he took my name, and as he was a fairly expert swordsman, though not by any means a phenomenon, I do not doubt that he made the title good against such fighters as he could meet there."

As a member of the American Legion, so called, in the city of Mexico, after the death of the Austrian [Archduke Maximilian of Austria, Emperor of Mexico, executed 1867], Monstery fought his last duel. It was in 1868 [?] against Ramon Valdez, a Colonel in the Mexican Army. Valdez had made public reflections against America and Americans and the fiery fighter in fifty wars resented it with a blow. The weapons were six-shooters, distance thirty yards, advance at the word and fire at will. At the first crack of Monstery's pistol the Mexican's right arm dropped and hung to a shattered shoulder. That ended the quarrel.

COL. MONSTERY'S OLD AGE.

Since that time, Thomas Hoyer Munster Monstery has been simply a *maître d'armes*. He has trained men for duels, but has not fought. It was he who, twenty-six years ago, prepared Col. Gansey for his duel with Gen. Fordelli on Long Island. The weapons were sabers and, at the first pass, Fordelli's sword arm was split from the elbow to the wrist. Since 1870 the great swordsman has met the champions of all nations and suffered no defeats. In 1893, when 79 years old, he met Pini, the great Italian, at the World's Fair, and made it an even break. He still gives fencing lessons, working for hours each day, and apparently has lost nothing of his skill or agility. There is no food which his iron stomach does not digest. After frankfurters, sauerkraut and beer at 3 in the morning, he sinks into the dreamless sleep of infancy. All liquors are alike to him. Weathers,

hot or cold, wet or dry, do not affect him. Verily, "he who lives by the sword lives long."

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