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A LYNCHING AT TUCSON IN 1873

As written up by JOHN G. BOURKE

Edited by LANSING B. BLOOM

WHILE he was gathering ethnological data at Zuñi in the spring of 1881, Lieutenant John G. Bourke became acquainted with Sylvester Baxter, a young newspaper correspondent from Boston.¹ Evidently the latter, in subsequent years, urged Bourke to put some of his rich source materials into popular form; at least in 1886, while pursuing his ethnological research in Washington, Bourke did write up the "Tucson Tragedy" which we are here reproducing and sent it to Baxter who placed it with the *Boston Commercial Bulletin*. Clippings from their issues of May 21 and May 28, 1887, were pasted by Bourke into his notebook of that year.²

The style essayed by Bourke may seem to the reader suspiciously like that of the "Nick Carter" and "Deadwood Dick" dime novels of the 1880's, yet he would find that it is very much in the journalistic style of that period. Also it differed from dime novel literature in that Bourke was recounting an actual episode—and he had gone through Tucson at, or very near, the time of its occurrence.³

An historical account of this murder and the lynching which followed is given by Dean Frank C. Lockwood in his *Pioneer Days in Arizona*. Comparison shows some factual discrepancies, which may be explained in part by the fact that some of Bourke's early notebooks were lost or stolen. When he wrote in 1886 about this affair of 1873, he was probably relying on his memory. For example, he dates the affair in September instead of August of that year;⁴ and all names used by him are fictitious except that of Willis.

1. *New Mexico Historical Review*, xi, 242.

2. Under date of September 5, 1887, with the comment: "I wrote it while in Rockville, Maryland last fall" (1886).

3. *New Mexico Historical Review*, x, 2.

4. Richardson and Rister, *The Greater Southwest*, 407-408, quote the report of the coroner's jury as of August 8, 1873. These authors, and probably Dean Lockwood also, found their data in part at least in *Bancroft's Works*, xxxvi (Popular Tribunals, vol. 1), 730-731.

The Lockwood account may be described as objective, photographic; the Bourke account as subjective, artistic. Each has its own distinctive value.

A TUCSON TRAGEDY

A True Tale of Terror

Knights of the Green Cloth
and

The Pawnbroker's Last Pledge

Written for the Boston Commercial Bulletin

It was early morn in Tucson; the eastern peaks of the Santa Catarina were already peering through the darkness of night and standing out bold and majestic in the rosy glow creeping slowly from horizon to zenith.

Off in the west the glittering stars still looked kindly down upon the tiny current of the Santa Cruz and the rugged, grass-clad hills which crowded close upon it. The sun grew bolder; his brightest rays now glinted upon the timbered pinnacles of the Santa Rita, lit up the dome and towers of the sacred fane of San Xavier del Bac and gilded into gladness the melancholy dusty streets of the quaint old presidio on the banks of the Holy Cross.

Outside of town the last coyote was skulking to his hole, irresponsive to the yelps of distant kindred which announced a treasure trove of dead burro in the mesquite jungle; an energetic old mother quail was calling to her brood; a pink-eared jack-rabbit, almost large enough to be taken for the twin brother of the burro upon which the coyotes were banqueting, scurried homeward to his summer residence under the roots of the sage brush.

Within the borough nature was awakening to the daily round of toil or what passed for such among a people with whom decorous idleness has long been refined into philosophy. Game cocks, hens and pullets were scratching for the hapless early worm or crowing and clucking welcome to the coming day.

One of Doña Guadalupe Montoya's razor-backed pigs was sedately trudging down the street, hunting for his daily provender. In the "good old days" piles of garbage were always conveniently handy at every corner; but, since the coming of the accursed *Gringos*, it was a red-letter day in any pig's calendar when he could find so much as a mess of corn-husks within a distance of less than six blocks.

WAKING UP

Before long the lords of creation began to stir. First those outside the houses and then those within, for by the indulgence of a simple and Arcadian community it was the privilege of the wayfarer, destitute of money, entering the town after nightfall to camp on the main "plaza" and make down his blankets with the earth for a pillow and the stars for a canopy.

Don Manuel Martínez and his companion belonged to this favored class and, in the absence of hotel or lodging house, had nightly made free with the earth and sky of Arizona. The air was cool and fresh, a degree or so too crisp for comfort, but as Don Manuel arose from the ground and adjusted his rainbow serape to his shivering shoulders, he consoled himself with the reflection: "Ahorita viene la fri-sada del pobre."*

Mechanically he rolled himself a cigarette, mechanically he kicked the dog which had kept warm by fighting fleas all night, and mechanically he growled to his companion to get up.

There was work in store for Don Manuel Martínez and his friend; not dull, coarse, plodding, every-day work, but work of a more elevated type such as gentlemen could safely put their hands to. For, be it understood, both our *dramatis personae* were gentlemen in the loftiest sense of the term and would scorn any such degradation as manual labor.

Don Manuel indeed could write his name double. He was not simply a Martínez, but by right of his mother a Salazar, as well as a close relation of the Salazar who had led the revolution in Sonora in favor of liberty and the constitution.

"Which revolution?"

"Why the revolution when Gándara was governor."

"But I thought that Pesquiera led that?"

"Caramba! Amigo! That was the *third* revolution that Pesquiera conducted. This was after the second revolution of Gándara and the first of Ortiz. You should know, my friend, that in Sonora we have had 47 revolutions in the past nineteen years, and all of them for liberty and the constitution."

INDOLENT AND INDIFFERENT

And Don Manuel Martínez y Salazar puffed contemptuously at his cigarette, wondering what manner of man

* A Mexican proverb: "Presently comes the poor man's blanket, the sun."

his Gringo interlocutor¹ could be who knew so little of history.

He rather despised the slowness of the American element about him—slow in manner, quiet in dress, and glorying in the absence of revolutions.

He knew that since the unsuccessful *pronunciamiento* of Señor Davis, of which he had a hazy and distorted recollection,² nothing to change the form of their government had been attempted by the well-meaning and slow-moving "Americanos" of the North, and that farmers, blacksmiths, bankers, priests and merchants pursued the even tenor of their respective ways, indifferent to such soul-stirring appeals, as were then constantly appearing in Sonora, of "Gándara and the Constitution!" "Pesquiera and Liberty!" "Ortiz and the People!"

Our friends were what are known to the initiated as Knights of the Green Cloth,—gamblers, in blunt language. Not that there was anything strange about that. They were not the only gamblers in Arizona by a good deal. There were so many of the noble fraternity clustered about the different little mining communities in the Southwest, at the period whereof we write that the "Quartz Rock," the "Palace," the "Gem," the "Senate," and all the other scores upon scores of "sample-rooms" and "club-rooms" found comfort and profit in keeping open, night and day, week in and week out, the clicking of "chips," the dropping of cards upon the tables, and the stolid calls of the dealers being in striking but agreeable contrast to the squeaking of tuneless harps and violins which ground out the music of the respective orchestras.

A RUN OF LUCK

The blind goddess had dealt generously with Martínez and his friend Valenzuela on this visit to Tucson. During the whole week of the *fiesta* of San Agustinas, their "run of luck" had neither turned nor slackened, and whether at the purely Mexican games of Monte, "Chusas" and "Loteria," or the more strictly American ones of Faro, Keno and Diana, their stock of silver dollars had grown by degrees until they were now able to return to the delightful land of Sonora, in time for a repetition of the same career in the grander *función* of San Francisco, soon to be celebrated in the border pueblo of Magdalena. They had only to redeem the few articles upon which the obliging pawnbroker had advanced the money with which they had begun their contest with the

1. Implying that Bourke himself had just quizzed him.—L.B.B.

2. An allusion to Jeff. Davis and the Civil war.—L. B. B.

"tiger" and then all would be in readiness for them to join the first train of heavily-laden wagons rolling out of town.

This was why they had arisen so early and why they now made their way down dusty streets, not altogether free from garbage, past flat-roofed adobe houses, of simple structure and single story, to the broader avenue in which stood the *montepio* of Muñoz.

The bells of the church were clanging their harsh summons to early mass; pious matrons, wrapped in black "tápalos," were wending their way to divine service, anxious to begin the day well.

The door of the bakery was open and the sleepy-eyed baker's boy gaped while awaiting customers. So too was the door of the shop of Pedro Ramírez, who was placing in best position for display his assorted wares of onions, broad in diameter, silvery in lustre, exquisite in flavor; chile colorado, redder than the ruddiest glow of the setting sun; cigarettos for smoking; *panoche*, in dense, compact, black, conical frusta, sweeter than the juice of the sugar-cane lying in bundles alongside; amole root, so good for washing clothing, hair or person; earthen pots and matting—most of this last the work of Pápago Indians; *carne seca*, or native jerked beef; bacon of American manufacture; mescal, clear as water, hotter than breath of Tophet; and all the varied list of articles which make up the stock in trade of these Mexican magazines.

QUIÉN SABE?

Over the line, in their own country, they attain respectable dimensions and assume titles as elaborate as their pretensions. There, they style themselves the "Emporium of the Two Hemispheres," the "New World," or the "Incomparable," etc.; while, on the American side, either through humility or lack of cash, they shrink from competition with their proud American rivals and venture only upon such shallows of commerce as are disdained by the Anglo-Saxon.

The creaking of ungreased wheels, disappearing in a side-alley, might have proceeded from the wagon of some "contrabandista," evading the customs officials; or it might have been from the vehicle of the honest old water carrier on his way to the spring near the Bishop's farm. *Quién sabe?*

Such were a few of the things, however, which our Mexicans might have noticed that fresh, glorious morning, had not their minds been absorbed in the discussion of a question to which Martínez, at least, addressed himself with vehemence and energy. "No, comrade, I am not mistaken. Last

night, near the chusas table, I saw those three men, and look you, my friend, they pleased me not. In the year when my mother's uncle pronounced for liberty and the Constitution, there were many outlaws in Sonora, as you may have heard,—men lost to shame,—who robbed and plundered, broke into houses, and when forced to do so, never shrunk from murder. But they never used knife or pistol. Always, their victim was killed with a heavy wooden club. You being in the States at the time, can know but little of the terror this excommunicated gang inspired, but, gracias á Dios! nearly all were captured and shot. But, Caramba! some of them managed, by artful stories, to raise a doubt of their guilt and saved their lives on condition of leaving Ures at once and forever.

"And those three men I saw with the wagon were of that gang, and I know it. We must be careful of ourselves and money going down, my friend."

By this time their cigarettes were smoked out and turning a corner sharply, they stood in front of the *montepio* (pawnbroker's).

An air of stillness shrouded the building, the doors were closed, the windows barred; no smoke wreathing upward from the narrow-throated chimney evinced the industrious cares of cheerful housewife.

"'Tis strange!" muttered Valenzuela, "Señor Muñoz is always the first man to arise in Tucson."

"Truly," replied Martínez, "and Doña Louisa has never failed to hear the early Mass. There's something wrong. Look! Here's the dog and blood is upon his feet."

A DOLEFUL DOG

The dog was one of those wretched mongrels whose appearance belies every suggestion of pedigree, and yet his very homeliness seemed to attract and to accent the affectionate nature which appealed for sympathy and tenderness.

It was not whining or howling, but giving voice in a tone which might be called a subdued form of either, and in which abject terror and impotent rage struggled for expression.

"The doors are firmly bolted," said Valenzuela, "and the windows are closed from the inside. What better can we do than follow the poor little dog and see what he has to show us? There has been some terrible crime committed—"

"Said and done," replied Martínez, pushing aside the shoots of iron cactus which formed the fence to the house; "here we are, and we shall soon see."

"First, I see blood here in the sand," called out Valenzuela, "and here is a plain foot-track and here another, and look! a third."

The dog was scratching and pushing with all his might against the back-door, which yielded enough to the pressure to admit half his body.

Martínez and Valenzuela were men of quick perceptions. They hesitated not a moment in concluding that this door had been forced during the night, if, indeed, it had not been left open by the family. And the murderers—if murderers they were—in leaving the premises had nothing to do but pull the door to after them, letting fall loosely against it the heavy cottonwood log, so generally used in that region in place of lock or key.

"We must be careful, José María," said Martínez; "there has surely been murder within. This silence, these bloody foot-tracks, this mourning dog, this line of buzzing flies streaming into the house, means a massacre; no doubt the family has been martyred."

All this colloquy took but a minute. The Mexican of the border shows his Indian lineage in nothing more plainly than in the quickness with which he seizes upon every little indication in the tracks left by man or beast.

"Well, here goes," said Valenzuela, and in a trice he had forced an entrance and stood within the kitchen.

On the hearth, no fire,—a proof that no cooking had been done since the evening previous. A mocking-bird hopped about nervously in his little cage of willow twigs, fastened to the wall. A bloody track led into the next room. Here an appalling spectacle froze the blood in the veins of the two Mexicans.

Were this little sketch a romance, space and time could well be given to a description of what they saw. In a simple narrative of an incident which is still remembered with horror by the old settlers, and in which names alone were slightly changed, it is hardly worth while to wound the feelings of such relatives as may still be in existence.

Briefly, then, Muñoz, his wife and babe lay dead, brutally murdered. The mother had, apparently, been killed first, and in awakening to her defence, the father had grappled desperately with his assailants and fought his last struggle upon the earthen floor, pooled with his blood.

In the last gasp of life, the poor mother had instinctively clasped in her arms the innocent babe which also had received a deadly blow,—all with some heavy, blunt instrument,—crushing in the skull.

The two now shouted to those within, but received no reply. The dog whined more piteously, the buzzing of the flies grew louder and more clamorous, almost drowning the ghastly tick, tick, ticking of a cheap wooden clock which sounded from within.

"Have a care, compadre, the murderers may still be within." *Quién sabe?*"

"Never fear," replied Valenzuela, stoutly; "let's cock our pistols and go in boldly. This is a terrible tragedy surely."

WAS IT A MURDER?

"Cool villains they must be. Look! Here by the olla they stood, drinking water, while, no doubt, their victims were not yet cold."

"Not drinking water so much as washing their feet," said Martínez, correcting him. "Do you not notice these barefoot prints, all going into the house? The villains crept up to the door in their bare feet, which must have tramped in blood;—here we have the bloody footprints and here moccasin tracks, as they made their way through the fence. There were two of them, maybe more."

WHO DID THE BLOODY DEED?

Martínez and Valenzuela were both brave men. No ordinary foe would have made either of them "take water." Here, in the presence of an awful, mysterious death, fear seized upon their limbs. Their tongues refused to speak. They dared not look at their own reflections in the mirrors which adorned the walls, and trembled whenever they touched against a rawhide bottomed chair or other furniture scattered about the room.

"They have broken open every drawer, trunk and box in the house" was all that Valenzuela could manage to say to his friend. "Yes, let us get away from here and give the alarm. Who knows? We may catch the murderers yet." Like magic, the direful news spread through the town. The distance to the Post Office was very short. The morning was well-advanced and numbers were in the streets. Ere another hour has passed, hundreds had gathered about the enclosure in which stood the house of the pawnbroker. A half dozen cool-headed Americans had assumed charge of matters and stationed sentinels who kept the crowd at a distance. "No man must go within the fence to tread in the foot tracks"—was the terse order given to the sentinel who quietly took post by the cactus paling. None of the leaders had the faintest hope of catching the mysterious murderers, but

their resolution was that no reasonable precaution looking to that end, should be omitted,—“and at least we can say, boys,” said Tom Evans, who was prominent in this small circle of leaders, “at least we can say that we’ve done all that can be done.”

Kind hands, prompted by gentle hearts, had in the meanwhile been busy. The bodies of the victims had been placed in more presentable postures and the various rooms put in order, and then the population surged in, men, women, toddling children, babes at the breast,—some impelled by curiosity, others by affection, but all manifesting the tenderest respect.

The Americans said little, did little, apparently, but their faces spoke volumes. The Mexicans, more demonstrative, bewailed the loss of friends whom they had known for years.

The sobs of women were unrestrained. Grief was confined to no particular class. It pervaded the whole community and extended its infliction to strangers as well as residents.

A DISCOVERY

Martínez alone seemed displeased, annoyed or worried by this general outburst. He had been in conference with Evans and the rest of the small party of Americans for an hour or more; and again he sought the leader.

“Señor, I have something to say for your ear alone. A few words only. *I have found the murderers!*”

“Nonsense! the news is too good to be true. Our mounted pickets are out on every trail and not one of them has reported a track.” “Soft and easy, Don Tomás, the robbers are in this very house.”

Evans who was usually cool as ice, was so astounded at this unexpected information that he shook from head to foot. “Make no mistake,” he managed to gasp out, “tell me for the Good Lord’s sake, who and where they are.”

“Don’t be excited, Don Tomás, we have our birds, but we must be careful lest they fly. Do you see that swarthy Mexican yonder—him of the new serape? Yes!—and that other in the plush jacket and him beyond, wearing the sombrero, with the silver snake about it? Those three who are so loudly lamenting this foul murder? Those are they and that one in serape rolling himself a cigarette, did the deed. I did not see him do it, but Señor Evans, *his feet are washed, have been washed this morning*. I dropped my sombrero to the ground, as if by accident, and in stooping to recover it, I raised his loose cotton trousers without being detected and

I saw that his feet had just been washed to the ankles. Señor, I know those men. They are members of the most desperate gang that ever held fair Sonora in terror," and here. Martínez rapidly poured in to Evans' ear all that he had mentioned to Valenzuela on his way down from the plaza.

(To be concluded)