PATRIA

THE GREAT ROMANCE of PREPAREDNESS & LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

Novelization of the Motion Picture Play of the Same Name Produced for the International Film Service, Inc., Under the Direction of Wharton, Inc.

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THE CAST.

MRS. VERNON CASTLE as Patria Channing.
MILTON SILLS as Donald Parr.
WARNER OLAND as Baron Hurski.
DOROTHY GREEN as Fanny Adair.

SYNOPSIS.

Baron Hurski of Tokra, conspiring to embroil the United States and Mexico in order to pave the way for the Japanese conquest of the Pacific coast, has obtained from the unwary Patria Channing, whose sole executor of the $50,000,000 trust estate he is, a power of attorney which will enable him to transfer the various parcels thereof to "appropriations." Establishing himself in her home, he proceeds to put his nefarious schemes to be executed upon Patria's fair, vast properties just north of the border.

TWELFTH EPISODE

"Peace" Which Passeth All Understanding!

BEFORE THE STORM.

The producers established by the Channing ranch hands to the raiding party which, under the leadership of that redoubtable scoundrel, Pancho Zelaya, had descended—literally like wolves upon a sheepfold—upon Patria's interests in the quiet of early morning, seemed to work with enlivening effect upon the determination of Senor Zelaya and his Japanese confrere, Baron Hurski.

Days of complete peace followed Donald Parr's departure, lengthening into weeks.

Scouts sent out by Captain Donald Parr, acting for Patria, reported that Zelaya and Baron Hurski had apparently separated, each returned to his own mountain fastness in which they had been driven by the Channing people, after their rescue of Donald Parr.

Nor was there perceptible any indication of a concentration of Zelaya's soldiery in the country south of the border—whether troops of the de facto government or followers of Zelaya's outlaw faction.

In natural consequence that vigilance which had been exerted among border landowners by the raid insensibly relaxed. The stronger guards which they had established against further attempts against their lives and properties were weakened by degrees. With a single exception, they relapsed into that fatally false sense of security which had characterized them before, thanks to long immunity from such outrages as had been visited upon other sections or the border country.

That solitary exception was a noteworthy one—Patria Channing, who had suffered too much at the hands of Baron Hurski and his associates to desire that anything short of complete preparation to cope with further attempts would discourage the enemy.

Such measures, then, as Patria and her executive officer could devise to provide against possible surprise by Zelaya's bandits, she had taken, in accordance with the greatest secrecy. A minimum of show could mark a marshaling of intelligently directed protective efforts.

Patria spent days riding over the lands in company with Donald. Rodman Pillsbury and a small staff of chosen lieutenants. The topography of the countryside was examined to the minute attention.

The tremendous acreage of the Channing ranch favored such secrecy. It would have been almost possible for a machine and sustain a great army within its boundaries without which would have been altogether possible had the resources of the land been exploited to clothe and equip and provision such a force.

As it was, a very considerable number of men was added to the usual population of the ranch without attracting any attention whatsoever.

Pickpl employees rode forth from the hacienda at night daily, but at no time, on long tours into the interior and east and west along the border, and the results of their observations appeared daily, by two and three and eight—seasoned horsemen all, of the quiet, determined pattern, as a rule—to Donald Parr privately in secret conference. Nor did the number of men so seen at the hacienda by day or by night ever exceed the normal.

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Donald Parr, they were assigned to specific duties at a discreet time in the main ranch houses, and disappeared into the night as silently as they had come. The hinterland of the ranch swallowed them up; in its resource stretches they lived and wrought sedulously at their tasks, all ready for that summons which might come at any hour. Meantime they drilled quietly, as, carefully, as artillerymen, and as marksmen grew. Within a period of time surprisingly brief, Patria had at her command a secret legion of trained fighting men, ready for any emergency, trained to hardship, familiar with the border country, resolute and willing.

Only the drills of her flying corps could not be kept under cover from the eyes of the peaceful Mexican settlers. In the dairyyard Ted Morgan and his sister Bess were watching with unfeigned amusement the efforts of Bird's little boy, Sam, to ride an aged and well-informed donkey—a sad-eyed creature who demonstrated his intelligence by lying down as often as the child got firmly seated on his back.

Bess Morgan was clearly in the ears of the Killer. His own eyes reflected amusement. Then he frowned and hoped that their summons would be delayed. It bored him to wait there in the hot, dusty yard with the adoring Bess.

He fondled the stock of his revolver and noticed that its orders had been obeyed—that the sight had been shot away and replaced with such fair targets, and have done with it. Then he would be free to take two of those prisoners if possible.

Then the familiar attack came like thunder from the blue. They breakfasted at the corrals and were dismissed to their duties in the usual manner.

There came a sudden rush of feet from the direction of the house and Bess was furiously battered with the flat of Ted Morgan's hand. Her chair with the table was smashed in. But Morgan's blow was lost in the air, for the cartridge belt and holster which hung on the back of the chair were not struck. He emptied a revolver into the air, then, with a triumphant whoop urging the two women and the child to follow, he dashed into the house.

As they disappeared the front door was flung open and Bird Sam came out. He had a second revolver ready for use, and stood in fierce attitude before the door. The satisfaction of seeing two of the enemy in the toils of his own trap he was charged and carried to the ground by the two prisoners.

Why he was not shot outright passed all understanding. He was overpowered by force of numbers, and spent the following hours in a state of helpless rage.

Ted Morgan, in the meantime, had burst out of the house, and, with a single glance at the situation, had turned and run for his horse. It was followed by all those present at this conference, the Killer being the last to mount. No word to advance would be given out by him.

"It is not only humiliating"—Bess declared, "it is shameful, unspeakably disgraceful, to contemplate a man's position as to what this accursed Killer has done. Ted Morgan, who has always had the reputation of being a man of hard-hitting fighters; but there is no strength of them in the face of an army's advance. From now on we shall depend entirely on the Killer's gleaming of means to equalize superior numbers with superior intelligence. We must be prepared to defend ourselves against the Killer's mercy can find out how insignificant our forces are."

They sat in silence for a little, both of them too out over the distance between them.

"Then we—violent—quiet alike—potter?" Pure mood aloud. "I can't accept that Hurski is responsible for there—hiding, planning, restlessly waiting, ready to serve his interests and purposes and at the same time to gain his own ends for the setbacks he has received at our hands."

"I wonder," the girl replied. "If one thing we may feel assured: That he has any voice in the matter. We are taking place down there, Ted. We—we—must. We shall fall here first of all."

The shadow of premonition darkened her mood tremendously. She shivered a little.

"I wonder," she said, "what passion he is hatching down yonder?"

There is a certain psychic sympathy between the minds of those that hate and those who are at ill with those who love; there was less coincidence than might be thought in the fact that, at approximately the same time, Baron Hurski was suffering substantially similar reservations concerning Patria, at a distance of something like a day's ride on horseback.

The scene was the main room of an adobe dwelling of somewhat more pretentious proportions and appointments than is commonly to be found in the more remote districts of Inland Mexico.

There were a number of other adobe houses near by; but they were the property of the set; and it was further distinguished by a more elaborate fencing of corralless and officers of superior rank. In short, it was the headquarters of General Nogal, chief of the Inland Mexican forces which had been mobilized to the northern border to prevent and were now marking time under arms, against the moment when word from Tokyo to proceed with the more serious invasion of the American western United States.

Through the slight entrance on which the headquarters building stood the Baron Hurski was in a position to observe the perspective; and as far as one could see it was a city of canvas-roofed tents, populated by regiment upon regiment of the Mexican army.

Within the headquarters building, in the room which had been assigned and stocked with military severity, as befitted the formal council of war which was to ensue, General Nogal himself paced to and fro.

He was a man of nearly sixty, yet still in the prime of his vigor, with the bearing of his hair, also betrayed his age. And the habit of incontrollable hatred in my way that should I do with it?" my duty was written large upon his face.

"Have you forgotten that our chosen leader has been driven from his country by the Channing ranch property? And you, Hurski, are you to find there? What are we doing there, all this time and more, but waiting for the moment to move? Then, and not before, shall we act. She can purchase, if need be, his most military intelligence in the United States. Is it possible to suppose that her attorney would be ignorant of the fact that via the Channing ranch lies the shortest and quickest route by land to the capital—that, if we strike at this quarter, it will naturally follow and surely be along that line? And, with being the probable case, is it wise to imagine she is taking no steps to prepare a trap for us?

"What would you suggest, then?" Torreon asked thoughtfully.

"That we should move to hasten the efficiency of your system. Get us some information immediately."

Baron Hurski alone seemed able to address Nogal in terms of equality—without once forgetting any reluctance to accept the commander in chief of the forces that was his due.

This, perhaps, was quite natural. He was the only authority outside Baron Hurski had been accredited by the imperial government at Tokyo—and he thereby only second to that personage. Nogal, who was Hurski's only ranking officer in the allied camp.

Upon which, had thought about this conference was to be called, the Mexican system of espionage to secure any accurate information on the conditions obtainable north of the border.

This was due to the necessity for thoroughgoing and tireless system of espionage organized by Donald Parr and maintained by Patria and her neighbors.

For several weeks spy after spy had sought to penetrate the lines—and invariably had been obliged to give up the attempt. No less than three through synchronized mischance, had been detected and unceremoniously shot, no information of any real value had been reported back to headquarters by those who, acting under instruction, had succeeded either in long-distance observation with the aid of powerful binoculars. They saw Patria's biplane hanging in the skies or heard the roaring through the silence that was all.

Then he hour it was believed by all those present at this conference, the Baron excepted, that a report of the word to advance would be given out by him.

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The Fight Was in Deadly Earnest.

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