

When San Jose Was Young

A Series of Interesting Articles of An Historical Nature Prepared Especially for The News by a Well Known Author and Journalist.

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AN INDIAN DUEL

San Jose history does not disclose many duels. However, there was one. It had great intimacy, and was fought between two Indians, Marcello and Inygo. Each was a chief. Each had been a great man at the Mission Santa Clara. Their duel was not a punctilious, code duello affair. It was fought to the death, with clubs. Like all duels of romance, it was fought for a woman. The woman was Marcello's wife, his fourth.

"He was very pretty," said Marcello in Spanish to the Fentons, on whose ranch he lived. "Prettier than any of your American women, prettier than Spanish women either."

When the duel occurred Marcello was only 90 and middle-aged, but his heart was not even middle-aged. The cause of the duel was Inygo, the rival who lived six miles to the north.

Inygo also thought that Mrs. Marcello was beautiful. He brought her baskets and red handkerchiefs from San Jose. He felt that Mrs. Marcello understood secrets in his soul that others were too blind to see. He told her so. He told her also that she was beautiful. He pointed to his own rancheria. He told her that there she should always find the best fish and game and plenty of hides for furs, furs that the gringo women looked at with envy and covetousness. He told her also that Marcello did not appreciate her. He intimated that Marcello had fed his other wives ground glass when he wanted freedom. He, Inygo, respected and loved Mrs. Marcello too much ever to give her ground glass.

He would treat her better than any Spaniard would treat his lady. And as for the Americans—he grunted with disgust. Again and again in secret Inygo charmed Mrs. Marcello until always she sat with her eyes fixed on the low marshes waiting for his coming.

One day in Marcello's absence, without warning or without explanation, Mrs. Marcello fled with Inygo to his rancheria.

Marcello returned to his deserted dwelling. His tribesmen explained what had happened. At first he grunted, then he yelled his anger. His squaw had left him, him the great Marcello. Why, all this valley had belonged to him. He had ridden from eastern foothills to the western before a white man had built a fence. Who was Inygo? No more than a Digger.

Brandishing a club, Marcello went swift as a jack rabbit to the Inygo ranch. He confronted the guilty lovers. What did they care about the fathers or the church? What did they care about the gringo's law made to protect gringo thieves? Mrs. Marcello and Inygo loved each other. They defied the fathers, the laws and Marcello.

Such a whoop from Marcello! He had not forgotten when long afterward he tranquilly told the Fentons how he attacked Inygo with his club, how Inygo defended himself. Quite tranquilly he told how he beat his rival's club out of his hands, how he made him look like quivering red jelly, how

in a climax of anger he bit off his ear and left him for dead.

Inygo did not die, but always after that duel he was a broken man. His face was scarred and marred by a swelling on one side of his head. The missing ear has puzzled historians. Frequently I had wondered about it, and asked its whenabouts. I was told that Inygo lost his ear "while being civilized."

Marcello regained his wife by taking her roughly by the arm and leading her back to the rancheria. Once more in possession of the beautiful woman, Marcello had no anger against Inygo. Nor did he lose faith in women. He married two more, but even after they died there shone always in his memory like a star the face of his beautiful fourth wife.

Twenty-five years later when Marcello was 115 he still longed for adventures in love. He engaged himself to a fair young squaw of Alviso. There was a betrothal supper, but when the merriment was at its height there appeared at the supper table a bold young Lochinvar who carried off the bride-to-be. Had Marcello been a few years younger, there would have been another duel with clubs. But he felt that it was time for him to give up romance. He went quietly back to his hut, took a drink of whiskey, fell asleep and snored.