

The Shadow on the Fancher Twins

By Edward Page Mitchell

King Street is a highway that winds along the crest of the slightly ridge in the southeast corner of Westchester County, doubling and curving to conform to the contour of the land, and permitting, in these swervings from right to left, superb views of the distant waters of the sound and of the hazy blue hills of Long Island to be obtained. It is a noble highway, broad—for men, when in colonial days this road was built, were generous of their land—and finely drooping elms and here and there a warty oak stand like sentinels upon each side. It serves not only its original purpose as a means for passing to and fro between the harbor on the sound and the fertile and romantic valley to the north, but has also in some places been fixed upon as a boundary; so that if anyone riding from White Plains to the sea should meet another driving north, and should, therefore, turn to the right, the other turning to the left to permit easy passage, one would be upon the very outermost easterly rim of New York State, while the other would be skirting the extreme western edge of Connecticut. At one point, some six miles from the sea, the road makes a majestic sweep from east to west, revealing a glorious panorama of sea as far east as the bluffs that hem in Huntington Bay, and to the west until the waters appear to be brought to an abrupt halt by the gloomy Fort Schuyler; while a far-reaching view of the dissolute rocks of Connecticut gives contrast to the scene. Back from this point, and concealed from the highway by a scrubby piece of woodland, stand the melancholy ruins of a house set in the middle of a dreary and deserted field. So fragile and decayed with age and neglect does it appear that the wonder is that even the gentlest breeze had not long ago leveled it. Yet it has resisted tempests and solitude for more than a hundred years, and when it at last succumbs it will be with sudden dissipation into natural elements. It seems now like the skull and skeleton of something once alive. Great gaping holes, which brown and ragged shingles fringe like shaggy eyebrows, were once windows, and a yawning, cavernous space below, defined by moldering beams and scantling, articulated with bent and rusty nails, tells where once hung a heavy oaken door, now fallen upon the stone steps that show no signs of age except a cloak of greenish moss.

The wind seems always to be moaning about this remnant, and at night the screech of the owls awakens echoes of a century, for it is more than a hundred years since any sound was heard within these walls, except the mysterious tickings and rumblings with which the forces of nature destroy what man has made and then neglected, or the fearless twittering or screech of birds that occupy when men desert. But why so slightly and pleasing a spot as this must once have been, and might be, too, again, should have been deserted as though plague-stricken none are now left to tell. Was it the subtle influences that, like another atmosphere, were ever present with the Fancher boys and led them to their irresistible fate? If this be the real though perhaps the unconscious reason, may it not be true that even in lands where superstition is believed to be conquered, and facts alone command, there remain mysterious and unacknowledged tributes in human nature to the powers which the astrologers and necromancers of the Orient worship? It is certain that none ever occupied the place after the Fancher boys had quitted it, and after reading this tradition of their lives one may judge for himself whether reasons are good for thinking that in the olden times people believed there rested an evil spell upon this home.

When the earth was shadowed and palled in that great eclipse in the year 1733, terror seized the people, for nature seemed reversed, and a stifling calm came over all things, so that the beasts

in the field gave frightened cries, and the dogs bayed, and the fowls, even at midday, sought their perches. For people were not prepared as now, to the accuracy of a science, to witness this awful proof of the stupendous powers and laws of the Almighty.

Just at that hour there had gathered in the Fancier homestead neighbors, kindly bent on ministering to one in the most sacred of all necessities. And when the midday shadow began to permeate the atmosphere, and to grow deeper and denser, and the ghastly light revealed the other and unusual sights without, the neighbors sat crouched before the great fire in the living room, close together, and speaking only in hoarse whispers, casting half-averted glances from the window into the weird light beyond. But one, a motherly matron, was in the inner room, whence once she appeared with gloomy countenance, saying, "It were better that it were dead, for this will blight its life."

And the neighbors asked in whispers, not for the child but for the mother, and the matron replied, "She does not know that the sun was darkened when the baby came to us."

By and by the matron came into the great room bearing a burden in her pillowed arms and, having lifted the blanket of soft wool, she permitted her friends to peer at the little child.

"Is it—does it live?" one asked.

"Pity it, for it does. It is a boy, and he will be dark, and fierce, and who knows what; for do you suppose that such a thing as that which happened to the sun will not prevail over one who at that moment came to us?"

And the infant even then opened his eyes upon them, and they saw that, though so long as women remembered there had been none of the Fanchers, or the maternal Brushes, whose eyes were not the gentlest blue, yet this one stretched apart lids that revealed eyes that were surely dark and promised, when puerility had gone, to be the deepest black; and even the little tufts of hair were dark, and some of the matrons were sure that their penetrating eyes detected a swarthy undercolor beneath the smooth skin of the cheek.

"He does not cry," said one.

"No, but his fists are doubled," said another.

"They always are: that signifies nothing," said the matron.

"Aye, but not clenched and firm with resistance like his."

"If he would cry, I would like it," continued the first.

"I doubt if he ever sheds a tear," said the matron who bore him upon her anus.

And then the father came and looked for many moments upon his first born, and at length he said, "His name shall be Daniel."

Then, when the shadow on the earth had gone and the women were about to go, there came again a moment when the motherly matron looked from the inner room for an instant, and though she did not speak not a woman there failed to read her thoughts, so fine is women's intuition at such times, and they gathered about the fire again speaking with hushed voices and looking upon each other with anxious glances. And just as the sun was setting behind White Plains hills the matron came again, bearing another burden gently, and, as she lifted the tip of the covering to let them see, she said, "'Twas when the sun was shining brightly this one came to us, and he will be fair and gentle and comely, but the shadow of his brother's birth will be upon him all his days."

The women, when they saw this infant, said that his eyes were Fancier eyes—that is to say were very blue; and his hair, which was like a little ray of sunlight, was fair, like his mother's and all her kin.

When the father had looked upon this one he said, "He shall be called David."

Of course so unusual was all this that there was much conversation about it, far and near, and the little Fancher twins were observed above all children thereabout, for there was no small curiosity to note what the effect might be upon them of the strange and unnatural event that happened at their birth. As they grew older the people all agreed that rather than Daniel and David their names might better have been Esau and Jacob, for Daniel was dark, like some of the Indians that lived near by, and his head was shaggy with thick black hair. He was fierce, and imperious, and promised to become a mighty hunter or else a warrior, for he talked of war and bloodshed, and before he was ten years old had led his brother far away in search of Indians to conquer. But David was gentle. He loved the farm and the cattle. But he cared for no other mates, because he was content with Daniel. So the twin brothers grew, David dependent upon and yielding to his swarthy brother like a vine to the tree it embraces. They slept together, and they ate together, and learned their letters and did their sums from the same book, so that what one knew the other knew, and though so different as to seem to have sprung from distinct races, yet they had but one mind between them, and that was Daniel's, and all the people said, "The shadow of the brother is upon David and will be always till it puts out his Life."

Once their father said as he looked out in the morning upon his farm, 'Twill storm, I fear, before the night. The wind comes from the southeast. Mayhap 'twill bring rain."

And Daniel contradicted, saying, "Not southeast, but southwest."

"You are wrong, my son."

"Not wrong. I am never wrong. I would not have spoken if I was wrong. Ask David. He will tell you."

"David will say as you have said. You are two bodies and one mind, I tell you."

"We are one mind because we say and think the truth."

The father smiled when he heard the imperious little son say this, and then went away; and when he had gone, David said, "Daniel, we will prevail upon our father that he is wrong and we are right."

"If he will not believe our word he will believe nothing."

"Then he shall see."

"We will make a weathercock."

"It shall not be a cock, David."

"No, it shall not. What, then, shall it be?"

"It shall be a warrior."

"It shall. Can we make one?"

"You shall make the head and arms, for you have skill with the knife, and I will make the body and legs. Then we will join the parts, and if you make the arms with broad swords at the end, then the wind will strike them, and they will point the way it comes from. Our father shall not think we babble when we contradict him."

So the lads went to the shed, and by noon had constructed a marvelous image that they called a warrior, and its arms were elongated into broad swords shaped from tough hemlock shingles, and when one arm was lifted high above its head the other pointed rigidly to the earth, and if there was a breeze the arms were to gyrate with bewildering rapidity.

"A warrior should have color, Daniel," said David, when they looked upon the image.

"He should have a red coat," replied Daniel.

"And his breeches?"

"They should be white, and he should have a fierce beard and a stern eye."

So they thus decorated the image and set it up on the ridge piece of the shed, and when their father saw it its arms and sword were whirling away in a southwest breeze, and it was staring fiercely, though with irregularly marked eyes, away upon the horizon where the Long Island hills touch the sky. And there the warrior stayed, long after the storm had begun, and until the arms had become wounded in battling with the winds until one night it tottered and fell beneath a vigorous blast and lay unburied on the ground until the worms finished it. Daniel said, when his father saw it: "When you look upon it remember that David and I will not be disputed."

The neighbors heard this story of the warrior, and they said, "The shadow is upon the lads. Who can tell what yet may happen?"

When Daniel had come into possession of his strength, his fame as a strong man spread far and near, and they said that he had felled an ox with a blow, and had captured two robbers from the town below and held them with a grip of steel, each by an arm; and no one said yes or no to him until his desire was first ascertained. But David they loved because of his gentleness, and respected because of his skill with tools, and he was of such kindly disposition that he had but to surmise a desire of any of the neighbors when he would try to gratify it. So that when it was their desire that Daniel should do some act or lend some help, the wish was made known to David and Daniel was then overcome. For as they grew older so they seemed more and more closely to be united in common impulses and purposes, though the people asserted that the shadow was more and more potent, and that David's heart and mind were surely being absorbed, and that before many years he would simply be the shadow of his brother.

There lived in the town of Bedford, some miles distant, Miss Persia Rowland, and it was said of her that, fair as all other maids were, there was none like her, and she knew it, and was pleased thereat, and that she coveted not only admiration but the acknowledgment of it, whereby many a stalwart young fellow had favored her wish to his sorrow.

One day Miss Persia summoned one who obeyed her always, and said to him, "There is to be the great assembly of the year on St. Valentine's eve, and the sleighing is fine."

"That will be well, mistress. But whether the sleighing was fine or not the young fellows from miles around would come.

"No doubt. The winter is dull."

"Aye, but 'tis not that, and you know well, mistress, why they come, and why, if you were not there, they would quickly depart."

"But it tires me to see the same faces, with their staring, yearning eyes. There's no spunk to them. I hear of one below who, they say, never even so much as lets his eyes rest on a maid; not from abashment, but because he cares not for them at all, being in love with his own shadow—that is, his twin brother. It would please me to set my eyes upon such a man."

"Al, he never saw you, mistress, for if he had, the brother would be forgot"

"Have you seen him?"

"Often."

"And what looks he like? Is he strong and fierce, and does he scowl, and does he permit himself a beard?"

"He is all these things, and all men seem to fear him but the brother, and he says nothing to the women."

"If you wish to please me, as so often you assert you do, you will see that this strange being and his brother are present at the assembly. The sleighing will be fine, I said."

So it happened that the young man, being greatly desirous of doing whatever might make this woman smile even for an instant upon him, with caution approached David, and at last won his

promise that he and Daniel would attend the assembly. But when David and his brother talked about it, Daniel said, "You have said we would go; therefore we will. But why do they chatter so of this young woman? Is she unlike others? Have they not all eyes that they cast on young men, David, and do they not all pucker their lips that their smiles may seem more pleasing? Fools they be who are bewitched thereby; but you have said we will go, and we do what we say, David."

So, as the young men and women were engaged in the courtly minuet in the great assembly room, there came among them the Fancher twins. They stood side by side in the further end of the room, where the light from the great burning logs revealed them clearly. They were of an even height and tall, but one was muscular and strongly built and his face seemed in the dim light more swarthy than it really was, and his thick black hair stood in shaggy masses, as nature had arranged it, and without the rigid dressing of the time. The other was slight and fair as a maid, and there was a smile upon his face, for the bright faces and the gay dresses and the dance and the twinkling of candles pleased him.

Miss Persia had seen them enter, and though with demure and graceful manner she seemed occupied with the evolutions of the dance, yet she saw them all the while. When the cotillion was ended she summoned her adorer and said, "The dark one, that is he. Why do you permit them to stand there? Will his brother be his partner in the next set? He must not. Why do you not bring him to me?"

And so the youth, in stiff peruke and silken stockings and satin breeches, went to Daniel, and bowing, said, "'Tis dull for you, I fear."

"If so we can go as we came."

"But not until you have been presented?"

"We came to see, not to be seen."

"He wishes to present you, Daniel," said his twin brother David.

"Well, he may do it."

But the youth with some embarrassment perceived that Daniel had no thought of moving when David were by, and he thought how often had he heard it said, "The fair one is the other's shadow." But he led them both to the high-backed chair wherein the fair Persia sat; and though Daniel stood before her staring grimly at her without abashment, and David, with becoming humility, bowed low before her beauty, yet she took no heed of the fair one but spoke to the dark one only.

"We have heard of you, but we have never seen you here before," she said. "Why is it?"

"Because it has not been our wish," Daniel replied with grave dignity.

"But it should have been. Such men as you do wrong yourself and others by living as hermits." She perceived that by bold self-assertion and fearlessness of manner she could alone interest this man. "Come with me," she added. "Your arm, if you would be considerate. 'Tis a strong arm, I perceive. No wonder they tell us of your feats of strength. I wish to hear you talk and it is pleasanter to stroll about. Here, let me present your brother to a fair young woman. For once, sir, give me the preference, and permit him to entertain Miss Nancy Brush."

And before he knew it the fierce Daniel was promenading with the beauty on his arm, while David—Daniel for once forgot him.

"It is a delight for us to see a strong man here," she said. "A woman might almost lose her faith in men, did not such as you appear once in a while."

"My strength is my own, and David's. What is it to you?" he said.

"What to me? The pleasure of novelty. They say there is a war brooding, and troops have fought already on Bunker Hill. It is that to me that gives me and all women sense of safety, for I

now know that there are men fearless and brave, and quick to fight an enemy, and we shall, therefore, be safe. Ah! why was I a woman?"

"You talk of strength. It is weak to bemoan your fate."

"Would you not bemoan too had you been born without arms?"

"If you were a man what would you do?"

"Be strong and glory in it. If there were war, I would command an army, as you might, and if there were peace, I would compel the homage and affection of every fair maid."

"To command an army is well; to woo and will is pastime for puerile men."

"So little do you know and realize the power of strength. The greatest victories that a man can win are those which enable him to woo and wed whichever of all the maids he ever saw that he desires. If she be proud, he can subdue her pride, and that is a greater feat than winning a baffle; and if she be vain, he can humble her vanity, and if she be selfish, he can make her forget herself, and if she be well favored above all other maids, he can be conscious that, if he wed, the beauty is for him, and that is a conquest of all other men."

As she said this she looked up at him, bending her graceful neck that she might obtain full view of his stern face and compel him thereby to look upon her. And when he had perceived her face and the beauty of it he did not speak, but led her to the remote corner of the great room, and then, unloosing his arm, turned so that he might stand squarely before her. He looked at her steadily for a moment, she not quailing. She asked at length, "What is it? Why do you look so fiercely at me?"

"Because you spoke as you did, and I perceive now what woman's beauty is. Have you not more strength than I?"

"I? I stronger than you?"

"Yes, you think you are. I think you may be, but you are subtle. Is that one form of strength? Is there one of the men here, or whom you ever saw, who would not with joy obey you? And if that be so, is that not due to the very strength you just now complimented in men?"

"There may be some, who knows? I can be as frank as you. There is one who would not."

"I don't know whether I would not, for you mean me."

"Yes, and you don't know? Well, I'll try you. I have a powerful but vicious colt; no man dares approach him. I think you would dare. Will you come tomorrow and break it for me?"

"I will come with my brother."

"Then you dare not come alone."

He looked half angrily upon her a moment, and then said, "I will come alone."

"Now go and fetch your brother to me. He stands there now alone, looking with great eyes at you. Is there some intangible bond between you?"

"My brother is myself and I am he."

"Then bring him quickly, and leave us for a while, that I may perceive how Daniel acts in David's person, as I have already by your strange admission seen how David appears in Daniel's person."

"You are a strange woman," said he, looking almost fiercely upon her with his eyes black as the ornament of jet she wore, and reflecting brighter light. But he brought David, and then stepped aside and watched that supple, slender figure as, on David's arm, she walked, as the swan sails, without apparent volition; and he saw how white and graceful her neck was, as it was revealed above the soft lace about it, and how like a crown her dark hair was gathered upon her head, twinkling like stars in winter's night with the jewels set there; and he could hear the whistle of her silks as she once passed close by him, looking up with serious face at him, and he

perceived that her feet in slippers white and supple did now and then peep from her skirt like little chicks that thrust and withdrew their heads from their mother's wing.

"What is my strength and determination beside this power?" he thought. "I could crush, but this supple thing can compel."

While she was walking with David, Miss Persia had said, "Who would surmise that you and he were brothers?"

"Why not?" asked David.

"Have you never surveyed yourselves side by side in the mirror?" she asked.

"Why should we do that? I think the mirror belies, for no reflection would put out of my mind the conviction that I am like him and he like me. We cannot see ourselves."

"But your brother is so fierce and gloomy and imperious."

"Ah, that is but the other side of myself."

"And you, shall I say it? They say you are gentle and kindly and peaceful."

"Ah, but that is the other side of him."

"Being the complement of each other, together you make a man," she said.

He laughed, and she continued, "But you cannot live always thus. There is a better complement even than a brother."

"Tell me what you think it is."

"A fair maid: and there will come the realization of this to you. But you are most unneighborly. We have never seen you before. Come and be better friends. Come for I want to talk with you more. Will you?"

"We will come."

"Not together. You would embarrass me. I should not know to which I spoke. Come you the day after tomorrow and pay me a little visit at my home. My father would be glad to know you, and she looked up, pleadingly with an arch smile, and not serious and demure as she had when she obtained Daniel's promise to come. So he promised her.

On their way home in the still hour before dawn the twins were silent for a long time perhaps because Daniel drove furiously. At length Daniel said:

"She is not like other women, David."

"She is not, Daniel."

"She hath a luminous eye."

"And a cheek like the pink shell in our best room, Daniel."

"And her smile, it pleases, for it hath meaning, David."

"Yes, it pleases, but more her serious face."

"Even more that, and there is great power in her supple motion."

"So I surmise."

The next afternoon Daniel mounted his horse and went flying along the King Street to Bedford and when he returned he limped as though lamed, but he said nothing.

"You are lamed, Daniel," said David.

"Yes, a colt kicked me but I mastered him."

On the next day David mounted the horse and away he went, Daniel paying no heed to his departure. When he came back he said nothing.

"Are you going supperless to bed?" asked his twin brother.

"I have eaten supper with friends," said David quietly.

Then until the winter frosts were yielding to the summer sun Daniel and David ate and slept and worked together, but in silence, and almost every day one or the other went hurrying off toward the north, but never together.

One day after David had gone, Daniel an hour later followed. He drove straight to the door of Esquire Rowland's mansion, and without ceremony, entered, passing to the best room. There he saw David sitting beside the fair Persia, who had not heard Daniel enter.

He stood on the threshold for a moment. Then he said, 'David, I sat there yesterday and should tomorrow. Is it to be our curse that we have no mind except in common? Come, my brother; I say come.'

He did not speak to Persia but turned abruptly and quitted the house; and David, without one word, arose and followed him.

The girl sat there like one bewildered, speechless; and when at length her wits came she perceived that the brothers were far down the highway.

'Oh were there but one, and that one the dark one,' she said, as she stood peering through the little windowpanes and watching until the twins had passed out of sight.

Not a word did Daniel or David speak until they reached their home. Then Daniel said:

'David, in this, as in all things wise, we are agreed. You love the maid, as I love her. If you hated her, I should hate her. But though we may be one, we are to the world as two. We love her, and must be content with that.'

'That is true, Daniel. She cannot cut the bond that binds us.'

'I love you as myself, David, and you me, for we are indeed in all but body one. Therefore we must see her no more. And, as in men contrary customs part them this way and that, so one of us may be overcome by our passion, and visit the girl again. If so, whichever does shall go to the other and confess, and say, 'What shall I do? What will you do with me?' And what the other says, that will be done.'

'There is reason and purpose in this pledge, Daniel, and we will make it'

'David, if it is you who comes to me I shall say what I hope you will say to me if I fail.'

'And that is to end my life?'

'That is what it is.'

One day some weeks later Daniel came to David and led him to the glen that even to this day may be seen beyond the old house.

'David, I am a poor weakling. I have seen her again yesterday. You know our pledge,' and here Daniel drew from his pocket a pistol.

David looked upon his brother with an agonizing glance, while Daniel stood before him grim and fierce, and very dark. His hand was upon the trigger.

'I can't, I can't, Daniel,' David said.

'You can, for if I were in your place I could and would command you to keep your pledge and do as I bid. There is no escape, but here,' and he held up the weapon.

'No, I cannot bid you do it, though 'twas our pledge,' said David, and put his hands to his eyes and shuddered.

'You are a babe,' said Daniel, with contempt

But, Daniel, there is another thing that can be done. The war has come. Washington is below. You shall enlist, and be a soldier. Perhaps you will become a great commander, as you once felt sure you would.'

'You tell me to enlist, I will do it' And that night Daniel quitted his home and within three days was with Washington at Harlem.

Some months later the army was gathering near the natural fortification at White Plains, preparing there to resist the oncoming of the soldiers of King George. It was a time when men were gloomy, but determined, for the shadow of battle was upon them, and their courage was greater than their hopes. One morning the sentry on the extreme left wing that was encamped in the outskirts of the town of Bedford brought in a sad and sullen man. They said to the officer in command that he was a deserter whom they had captured that night.

“Who are you?” asked the officer.

“I am known as David Fancher.”

“You heard the accusation?”

“It is the truth. Do as you please with me. But let me say this thing—’twas not from cowardice I went away.”

“If not, what then?”

“That is my affair.”

“You know the penalty unless there be good excuse?” he was asked.

“I know the penalty. Perhaps I am glad of it. Who knows?” They led him away, and as he stood sullenly before the officers of the court-martial and admitted his guilt and would say no word in extenuation. They pronounced his sentence—to be shot at sunrise the next morning.

In the evening David sent a communication to the officer, saying that if it were not too late he would like to speak to one of the soldiers who were detailed to execute him, and the officer said, “Let his wish be granted.”

So it happened that in the darkness of the night a soldier was brought to the guardhouse and admitted. He stood by the door, for he could not see within, but he said: “Who is it that has sent for me and why?”

“It is I, Daniel.”

“That is David’s voice.”

“Yes, Daniel. Daniel, do you remember how you used, with the musket at fifty paces, to send a ball unerringly through a bit of wood no larger than my hand?”

“That I remember.”

“Remember that tomorrow when you see my hand.”

“Do not speak in riddles, David.”

“You remember the pledge we gave and that you promised that if I came to you and said ‘Daniel, I have seen her again,’ that you would do what I asked in recompense?”

“I remember that you would not keep your pledge with me.”

“But you said you would had you been in my place. Daniel, I have seen her again.”

“I knew you would, and so must I if I live. ’Tis a common impulse.”

“Daniel, when I am led out tomorrow, and you stand facing me, promise me that you will mark well the spot where my hand is placed. ’Twill be over my heart.”

“Is that in pursuance of our pledge?”

“It is.”

“Then I will do it. But wait: there is military order about this. The file will be selected.”

“It is selected, and you are one.”

“How know you that?”

“Because it was inevitable. No one told me, but I knew it.”

“Then I will do as you say,” and he turned to go away.

“Wait, Daniel. What happens to one will happen to both.”

“I know that. We cannot escape that.”

“Daniel, in my hand will be a tress of hair.”

“She gave it to you. Give me my part at once. No, keep it. What matters whether your hand or mine hold it?”

“When you enlisted I had to follow and though I could not find your regiment yet I knew we should be brought together.”

“I knew that.”

“We were in camp near Bedford, and, by chance, she strayed with some mates near us. She saw me first, and pleaded with me to return with her. Though I was on guard I could not resist, and I went. They found me and brought me here, and tomorrow morning the mystery of it all, of our lives, will be cut short.”

“It is better so, David. I am glad.”

“You loved her, Daniel?”

“Better than I loved myself, and therefore better than I loved you.

“And so, of course, it was with me. And I told her in my frenzy that I did.”

“As I had the day I came and demanded the fulfilment of your pledge.”

“She said that were we one she could have smiled on us. She could not marry both.”

“Those were her words to me. We could not escape our fate, Daniel. Together we came into the world, and under mysterious beclouding of nature.”

“Together we shall go out, David. And if such a thing is possible let us hope that there may be reunion complete, if so be it happens men’s spirits live after them.

“Sit here by me, Daniel for a while. You are not unhappy for I am not.”

“No, David, we are content.”

They sat there side by side for many moments, until at last the guard came and took the brother of the condemned away.

In the morning they led David out into the meadow beyond the encampment, and there followed a line of soldiers, at the head of which marched a swarthy and stern man whom not one of all that company knew to be the brother of that man who, with bared head, was kneeling, proudly and unflinchingly, some twenty paces away. He had asked that he might give the signal, and the request had been granted, and he told them that he would be ready when he passed his hand on his heart.

The file of soldiers stood before him with leveled muskets awaiting the word, and David looked upon Daniel for a moment—and the soldiers said he smiled—and then he placed his hand upon his heart.

There was a quick report. The swarthy soldier had fired before the word, and then the volley of the others was delivered, but David Fancher had fallen prone before their bullets reached him.

Then the soldiers saw a strange thing. The swarthy companion, unmindful of regulation, went forward to the dead man and seemed to be leaning over him, and then lay prostrate beside him; and when the soldiers went there they found that two were dead instead of one.

Though soldiers are accustomed to things that startle, this was such a mystery that much inquiry was made. At last one came and looked upon the faces of the dead.

“Those are the Fancher brothers. Twins,” he said.