

# A Brazilian Blood Feud.

By ASHMORE RUSSAN.

Of course Raoul was justified in shooting and killing Diego Macedo, but, seeing that Macedo had fired both barrels of his foolish little pistol and missed, it would have been more politic and, as it turned out, far better business to have let the gullian go. But Raoul always said that it was too dark to distinguish Macedo's weapon. It might have been a long-barrelled six-chambered Colt instead of the nickel-plated twin-shot toy usually carried in the "Sertao" by Brazilian fazendeiros, and if so, and if Raoul had hesitated—well, he, and not the Brazilian, would most likely have been the victim.

Da Costa did not fire at all. Macedo and he had crept through the scrub to where Raoul sat by his camp-fire polishing his spurs, or his stirrup-irons, or his pony's bit and curb, for Raoul du Chalroy had once been an officer in a crack European cavalry regiment, and smartness had remained a religion with him. Macedo, who was leading, blazed away at ten paces. Raoul snatched up the double-shot-gun which he was seldom without, and returned the fire. The full charge struck the would-be assassin in the neck, and Macedo fell dead without so much as a groan. Buck-shot at close quarters may be trusted to do its work effectually. Da Costa ran to his horse, left among the rubber trees, and rode hard back to Villa Nova. So the blood-feud began.

Now as to the events that led up to it. Raoul du Chalroy and Macedo represented opposing rubber interests. Villa Nova is in a famous rubber district where the maniocoa grows wild in its millions. Both men was marking out new rubber lands for purchase, and the rivalry between them was keen. Each had erected a few makeshift buildings. One night Raoul's huts caught fire and were burnt to the ground. It may have been an accident—a spark from a cooking fire burning in "catinga" scrub forest, almost as dry and inflammable as tinder. Raoul, however, did not stop to think. Within an hour or so Macedo's huts were likewise ashes.

Pedro Gonsalves, who actually set them alight, made no secret as to who gave the order.

"So, you villains, Senhor Raoul gets back his own!" he shouted from the scrub, before riding away. For the same number of miles Raoul's negro henchmen would have been willing to do much more damage. Life is cheap in the "Sertao" of Brazil.

The shooting followed the same night, as might have been expected.

Raoul was not so imprudent as to stay in the neighbourhood of Villa Nova. Long before Da Costa got back with Macedo's sons, his brothers, his uncles and cousins, his compadres and his neighbours, and some score of variously-coloured rapscallions who were neither relations nor neighbours, all armed to the teeth, Raoul was riding hard to Maranaos, the principal town of the district and the seat of the local Government. There he gave himself up to the political chief, Colonel Esteves, who, luckily for Raoul, was deeply interested in his rubber ventures.

"It's a bad business," said the chief, when he had heard the story. "You won't be able to go back. The Macedos are powerful, and there's a delegado in the family. Fortunately he's absent; the delegates are sitting at Todos Santos. But he'll soon be told. You won't even be safe here in Maranaos without guards. I must see the judge and the tentente of police. I am afraid I shall have to let them look you up for your safety and my own. I wish to keep my position under the Government."

So Raoul, who counted a duke among his uncles, for his own good made acquaintance with the interior of a Brazilian prison, pending an inquiry and possible trial. At Maranaos he remained some months—six in all, I think—but not exactly as a prisoner. Every morning at eight o'clock the door of the jail was opened to him, and, accompanied by two black policemen, armed with service rifles and a sufficiency of ball cartridges, he was free to go where his mood inclined him. Often he went hunting deer, or shooting quail or duck, always accompanied by his black protectors, and frequently by the coronel and the tenente.

At sunset, however, he was back at the prison, about the only safe place for him in Maranaos just then after night-fall.

Now, a certain Luzzoni resided in the Rua Direita, which street led straight to the scrub forest, Raoul's hunting-ground. Morning and evening the prisoner on parole had occasion to pass Luzzoni's, and almost as often his nose was greeted with an appetizing smell which reminded him of better days. No Brazilian cooking, that! No bacalhau and red peppers, no tough stewed beef and green peppers, no rice, farinha, and peppers, no arnaddillo and peppers; no, nor porco and peppers—nothing of the Brazilian "Sertao" cookery about it. The second or third time that Raoul encountered the savoury odour he paused. Luzzoni saw him from a casement and came to the door.

"Parlon, signore, will you honour me by partaking of my breakfast?" he said, in a mixture of Italian and Portuguese. "Signore!" exclaimed Raoul, recognis-

hours. Afterwards, there were frequent messengers. Thus it happened that when the Macedos got wind of Raoul's hunting expeditions, and went out in strength to ambush and shoot him, it was Luzzoni who rode through the cordão on a horse lathered from bit to crupper, gave the warning which he had received almost too late from his countryman, and by a ruse rescued Raoul and his attendant policemen from pretty certain death.

"Hide—hide! And keep silent!" he gasped, as he pulled up in the calderao of the woods, where he had found Raoul. "Give me your shot-gun and plenty of cartridges. No time for explanations. The Macedos are too near. When you hear me shouting over yonder," pointing to the farther edge of the wooded hollow, "ride straight and hard for Maranaos. Keep a sharp look-out."

Raoul gave him the gun without a word, unslinging his rifle from his back, and rode with his attendants into the scrub, where they quickly muzzled their horses. The Italian had dashed off at the best speed of his tired animal. Presently they heard him shooting at intervals a mile or so away.

Raoul understood the ruse, but sat silent. There was not another double-breech-loading shot-gun in that part of Brazil. All the fazendeiros used Winchester rifles for game and carried little double-barrelled pistols for protection, or show. No other gun had half the volume of sound his possessed, or half

don. Luzzoni also sang—Italian operatic airs to the guitar; he also danced, but not the "Matteiche." I was struck by his great concern for the ex-officer, my guide. Indeed, he watched Raoul with the look almost of a hound for his master—affection and admiration, blended with a determination to protect. Others laid their pistols on the table before dancing. Not so Luzzoni; the long Colt remained in the pouch attached to his belt. Occasionally he glanced at the one case—men as if fearing the rifle of an avenging Macedo, might suddenly be thrust between its bars. There was an audience outside, of course, men, women, and children—that was usual.

With Raoul as guide, I rode some six hundred miles over shocking bad roads, and trails, inspecting properties, or, rather, vast areas of derelict land in the maniocoa belt. We visited Villa Nova, but there, as at Porto Alegre and everywhere else we were accompanied by a police-guard. Seventeen strong, and mostly well armed, we rode into villages, where the blood-feud had been sworn against Raoul, and naturally nothing happened. But I noticed that the slayer of Macedo never sling his hammock at nights where he might have been shot from an unshuttered casement, and I followed his example. To learn that one had been made a target in error would have been small satisfaction after the event, assuming that one had survived. But we got through the dangerous country without mishap, or, indeed, any attempt on Raoul's life. It would have been rather perilous, anyway, for the shot-gun with which he had killed Macedo was seldom or never out of his right hand when riding through the forest tracks, and never out of his hammock when he slept.

At one halting-place, near Villa Nova—a large house on a hundred-thousand-acre fazenda, where at least half the people must have sympathised with the Macedo clan—Raoul boldly challenged all and sundry, to a shooting match. The target was the ace of clubs, stuck in a cleft stick, an inch in diameter; the distance about a hundred paces. Every fazendeiro present tried hand, eye, and rifle—and missed. But Raoul, who had just, after his first shot, and split the stick at the lower edge of the card, with his second. I felt safer after that exhibition. But such personal matters have little to do with this story.

Luzzoni remained at Maranaos. No doubt he considered that his friend would come to no harm, seeing that he was not only accompanied by police, but also by the representative of an English syndicate, inspecting rubber lands with a view to purchasing them. The fazendeiro of the "Sertao," has a keen eye to the main chance. Most of the big estates are held in common by anything from ten to fifty members of a family, and a Macedo, owing through marriage a five per cent. interest in a Gonzales estate, for instance, might be trusted to forget his thirst for Raoul's blood while there was hope of a deal.

It was some time after my departure from Brazil when the feud came once more to a head and Luzzoni again intervened. The English syndicate had not bought any of the lands, and consequently, Raoul had lost a stoguard far more potent than his protectors of the police. The fazendeiros of the "Sertao" were disappointed, singly and in the mass. All the deals were "off," consequently the blood-feud was on again with a vengeance.

That the English syndicate refused to buy, was no fault of Raoul's, and a philosophic man would have taken small notice of the sneers and recriminations. But the ex-officer, who had more reason to be disappointed than any of the fazendeiros, was not philosophic. He lost his temper, and gave back gift for gift. Finally, he quarrelled with Delegado Major da Silva, a connection of the Macedos, but hitherto friendly. The trouble was over some land which Da Silva had bought and paid for in the belief that it would be taken over at a good profit, by the English syndicate. Raoul was Da Silva's guest at his home at Porto Alegre at the time of the quarrel.

In Brazil if you wish to annoy your enemy or antagonist, you allege that his descent is more or less contemptible. You may assure him that he is the son of an ass, the son of a mule, the son of a rattlesnake or of a jaracara—a serpent still more venomous and far more hideous—the son of a forest monkey, or even the son of a worm or a carapato, without much risk to yourself; but if you call him the son of a certain something, which in its full



"Raoul snatched up a double shot-gun and returned the fire."

ing and repeating the Italian pronunciation. "Who are you?"

"Luigi Luzzoni, Italiano from Milan, at your service," replied the little Milanese, who, by the way, stood perhaps five feet in his boots and might have weighed seven stone with his spurs, heavy Colt, and belt of cartridges.

Raoul, being a linguist, promptly thanked him in his own language, and entered the house with his protectors.

No doubt Luzzoni surpassed himself. The representative in the interior country—the "Sertao"—of a firm of Italian produce merchants at Todos Santos, he was a most excellent cook. I have breakfasted and dined with Luzzoni myself, and I know. I never heard what he gave to Raoul on that occasion, but there would most likely be soup, fish, macaroni and tomatoes, and lamb—Brazilians of the "Sertao" prefer goat; there are religious scruples with regard to lamb. There would be quail, or a duck, or a chicken, a salad of sorts, and plenty of good Chianti, food and drink for the gods; to a duke's nephew who was spending his days in the woods and his nights in prison, eating anything he could get, and when he could get it.

So the friendship began. As long as Raoul remained on parole at Maranaos, he breakfasted and dined sumptuously every day at Luzzoni's. The Italian would accept no refusal, listen to no excuse, accept no remuneration, or even thanks.

"No, signore," he would say; "we are the only Europeans in this desert of a Maranaos; therefore it is my duty. It is also an honour to me to do this, and it is my pleasure." Yet he did not know, perhaps, never knew, that Raoul could call a duke his uncle, for the ex-officer never spoke of his family.

Luzzoni had an agent, a compatriot, at Villa Nova, which was some eighty miles by an awful road from Maranaos. There and back the Italian rode in forty

the reverberation. Raoul waited for half-dozen shots, listened to the beating of horses' hoofs on the rocky road and a signal or two; then he left the shelter and rode for safety. In the Rua Direita he waited until Luzzoni arrived.

"Yes, Signore Raoul, they caught me," said the Italian, laughing rather breathlessly. "Fifty of them there were. João Macedo, the delegado, was chief. They were suspicious and angry, but they let me go. You see, my agent at Villa Nova buys their rubber and their hides. He pays the best price, and they know where the money comes from. No, signore, no fear of their wringing the neck of the goose that lays the golden eggs, the goose whose kilo always weighs a thousand grammes and not eight hundred. Besides, I told them I was seeking you, as you had left your shot-gun behind, and it was not a day for the deer and the rifle. No doubt they are still in the calderao, for I rode on fast, hid in the "catinga," and let them pass by." And Luzzoni laughed again—a silvery little laugh, which accorded well with his slender, tiny figure and handsome, beardless face.

Raoul was not tried for the shooting of Macedo. At an inquiry it was held to be justifiable, and he was a foreigner notwithstanding that he was a foreigner and the slain man a native. The name of the Governor of the State chanced to be Esteves, the same as that of the political chief of Maranaos. Blood is thicker than water everywhere, but particularly so in the "Sertao."

It was about this time that I found myself at Maranaos on a visit to the rubber forests, under Raoul's guidance. He introduced me to Luzzoni, who had called at our temporary residence with half-a-dozen bottles of wine and a guitar. A score or so of the young men of the town also looked in. They enjoyed my Scotch whisky very much, sang the "Matteiche" and danced it, too—with abn-