A BUSY TIME IN MEXICO

H. B. C. POLLARD

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MADERO AND HIS EXECUTIVE

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AN UNCONVENTIONAL RECORD OF MEXICAN INCIDENT

BY

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NEW YORK
DUFFIELD AND COMPANY
1913

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A BUSY TIME IN MEXICO

CHAPTER I

FRESH FIELDS AND PASTURES NEW

It was an awful disappointment.

I had been sent out to a company by their London office, and there had been nobody in the office who had visited the company's sphere of action in Mexico, their knowledge of the concern being entirely gained through the monthly reports and balance-sheet of their manager abroad. The manager was not pleased; he was thoroughly over-worked and under-staffed, and was impatiently awaiting the arrival of an assistant who must of necessity be a complete and certificated surveyor, a book-keeper and salesman, and a finished Spanish scholar. Instead of this the London office had sent me—with a year's contract and an infinitesimal salary, and possessed of no qualifications for the job, having been lured into accepting a billet that was supposed to be one of those delightful tropical sinecures where, after about a year's apprenticeship (hence the infinitesimal

salary), you graduated into a position in which you drew a thousand a year and played polo in the afternoons.

I had set forth cheerfully prepared to explore unknown country, discover Aztec treasures, shoot big game, and be generally picturesque, so when I arrived we were both disappointed. The manager considered that the company had insulted him, and I felt that I had been grossly misled. We sympathized with one another, but from that hour we both felt the awkwardness of the position, and began to play for our own hands.

The manager, having received the shock and talked over the situation a bit, sent me to the local hotel, in which I was to take up my quarters temporarily. A crisis in the company's affairs had occurred while I was *en route*, and a visit of directors fresh from England was impending. They were coming out via New York, and should be due in a fortnight, then my position could be discussed; meanwhile I was at liberty to settle down and get accustomed to the local conditions.

The town of Tapachula, where I was situated, is practically the most southerly outpost of the Mexican Republic, and is located close to the Guatemalan border, in the State of Chiapas. Chiapas is still unknown Mexico, and is regarded by the civilized people of the States north of the Isthmus of Tehuan-

tepec as an utterly barbarian land full of wicked people and savage Indians; while its one and only railroad track, the Pan-American, is a standing jest from one end of the Republic to the other.

The keynote of Tapachula is its utter desolation and generally casual tone. Nothing matters, and everything is slipshod and squalid. The train service is nominally one train every two days; but months pass during the rainy season in which Tapachula is left absolutely devoid of communication—a little isolated steam-bath in the Tropics.

Hemken's Hotel was typical of the southern frontier. It consisted of a big bar-room, containing a venerable small-size billiard-table and two large bars. At the back of this was a veranda full of tables, where meals were served. This veranda looked on to a courtyard, or patio, two sides of which were occupied with cubicles; and the other contained the kitchen and servants' offices. The servants had no bedrooms; they slept in the patio or at the doors of guests' rooms.

The guests' rooms were simply devised, and consisted of a long, corrugated-iron-roofed shed divided by partitions of whitewashed canvas, particularly designed to harbour vermin. The furniture of the rooms was simple: one plain camp-bed, with mosquito curtains; one washstand of continental model, the basin holding perhaps two breakfast-cups-full of

water; one fragment of looking-glass nailed on to the wall; a chair; and a few nails to hang things on comprising the rest of the accommodation.

The hotel-keeper, Hemken, was a German, and should have been a millionaire, but, owing to a mania for worthless mining claims, he was forced to go on keeping the hotel instead of retiring. All meals were, of course, a blend of German and Mexican taste in food. Everything was cooked in fat (a German method), and tough and dirty as a concession to Mexican taste. The bar, however, was magnificent, and inferior drink is fairly cheap in Mexico.

White society in Tapachula is elementary. Beyond a few coffee-planters, the German storekeepers and their assistants, and an odd Vice-Consul or two, there is no one of respectability. A few wanderers, broken gentlemen, come in sometimes, and high revel is held, during which the joys of London, the efficiency of a public-school education, and their kindred tastes, are talked over. But the broken gentleman moves on; he never stays at Tapachula.

The community is an armed one — everybody carries a revolver. One judges a man's social standing by his arms. The men of action carry blue Colt revolvers of ·45 calibre; the merchants, refined and unreliable automatic pistols; their inoffensive

clerks, nickel-plated, pearl-handled, small-calibre revolvers, the kind the salesmen call "suitable for home defence"; and as Mexico is a country where the lariat or lasso is a fighting-weapon, your man who rides beyond the outskirts of the town carries a knife in his boot. If a man is roped while in the saddle, he can draw a knife from his boot and sever the rope. Homicides are frequent (they average three a week); but as it is only twenty minutes' ride to the Guatemala frontier, beyond which the law does not carry, the local natives do not set a high value on human life, neither do they concern themselves much over the activities of the police. There is a military police force stationed in the town, and the local prison and police headquarters were opposite the hotel. Smallpox and every known disease raged in the gaol, and the guards used to bring out the dead on stretchers at breakfast-time till Hemken protested to the Jefe Politico. Hemken hated the military police, and particularly their doctor, who used to parade them for medical inspection in the open street opposite the hotel. When this occurred, any ladies in the hotel retired to their rooms, while the male visitors lined up and criticized the show.

The police took their duties seriously. One afternoon a Spaniard got drunk, and, walking in the Plaza (the Market Square), he emptied his revolver into a Mexican who displeased him. The Mexican

fell dead, but the Spaniard, in order to make sure, reloaded and fired another six shots into the corpse. A policeman, who had been standing by, an interested spectator, ticked off the last six shots on his fingers, then, drawing his club and revolver, walked up and arrested the Spaniard, who was too drunk to resist. The policeman bent over the corpse and stirred it with his boot. The man was quite dead; but to make sure, he hammered the remains about the head with his club, then turned and marched his prisoner to the gaol. The corpse lay where it had fallen till nightfall, and every child in the town had seen it before it was removed across the square to the police-station.

My manager had now found work for me. He sent for me one morning and explained that he had a little mission for me to undertake, that would take me about a week and enable me to see some of the surrounding country. He told me that I was to go to a ranch known as El Naranjo and collect some money (a considerable sum) that was due to the company. My route was roughly indicated to me, and I was told to start at once.

CHAPTER II

THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL

I was over-joyed at the prospect of the trip, and going round to the hotel I got together such things as would be needed on the journey.

As I was to go unaccompanied the question of packing was simple. I put a spare shirt and some food into my saddle-bags; put a compass, a tooth-brush, and a safety razor into my shirt-pocket; looked to my revolver, and was complete. My horse was brought round, and I was fastening my shot-gun to the saddle when Hemken turned up.

"Hullo, kid! Where are you off to?" he asked. I told him I was bound for the mountains, to collect some money from the El Naranjo people. He seemed interested, and asked me who was sending me. I told him that our manager had just given me the order. He asked me if I had been told anything about the country; then lost his temper in a flash.

"That blockhead! He send you up to El Naranjo? Why, boy, dey is outlaws, and kill de last three men dat vent up. Dey kill you, sure! You go an tell the manager to hell! Tell him to go himself."

Then he cooled down, and gave me the history of the El Naranjo people.

It appeared that their ranch was high up in the mountains and exactly on the Guatemalan frontier line; that they were smugglers of contraband, robbers, and stock thieves—in fact, they were outlaws. But owing to their being related to the local authorities they had always gone unpunished for their crimes. They had killed cheerfully, and being of pure Indian blood were sure of local support.

Hemken implored me not to go, and said exactly what he thought concerning my manager.

I felt rather thoughtful, and appreciated the manager's kindness in sending me on the trip. His thoughtfulness in sparing my feelings by not warning me of the character of the trip touched me deeply—so deeply, in fact, that I cursed him heartily, and changed my shot-gun for a repeating carbine, and left for the job feeling slightly less cheerful than I had been.

I had a good deal to think over, and I summed it up on the trail. For me to travel round with so much money on me would be clearly inadvisable. On the other hand, the owner of the money would be safe, and therefore he must bring it in person to the town. But I did not see my way to giving receipts, etc. No; only the boss could do that.

The mountain trail was delightful. Tapachula

THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL

lies practically at sea-level, and a two hours' ride brought me into the foot-hills of the Sierras. Up to now the vegetation was purely tropical, but at about 1,000 feet above sea-level the palms and purely tropical plants gave place to the big forest trees; all round one were coffee plantations, or green clearings of cacao-trees. Far away underneath, the strip of coast country stretches from the foot-hills to meet the Pacific, breaking up into lagoon country, which is a deep emerald green, broken here and there by lakes of water which glitter like mirrors in the sun.

The trail was just wide enough for two horses to pass, and by no means easy to follow. A little higher there was a wide, boulder-strewn valley, and here the trail ran out altogether and was lost among the rocks. I tied up the horse and cast round a bit, and soon picked up the line leading to the ford.

Crossing the river, which owing to the season was not very deep, I off-saddled and rested under some big trees. My horse was glad of a rest in the heat of the day, and I was quite content to smoke and watch him. Presumably this was the beginning of the siesta habit.

My horse was one with a history. He was an iron-grey, with a very martial appearance. This is a distinct asset in a Mexican horse. He had been the property of a local colonel, whose imagination

was so fired by possessing him that he started a revolution. The colonel got shot, so did the horse. But he was still serviceable, and of a peculiarly amiable disposition, the chief surviving tradition of his military past being a marvellous appetite and a pure, unconscious disregard of firearms. You could shoot off his back without his throwing up his head at the report—this I considered rather an advantage.

I watched my horse lazily, and saw him prick his ears and gaze up-trail. Soon a party of Indians came in sight. They were "Enganchars" (contract labourers)—that is to say, they were signed on for so much work in the plantation at a nominal wage. Actually they were slaves, for the schedule of work and terms were on a sliding scale so arranged that they could never get out of debt. This is the only way of securing labour in Mexico. Indians don't like work. The plantations need labour. With this arrangement everybody was satisfied except the Indians; but as they died everybody was quite happy.

The universal tool and weapon of these Indians is the machete, a very heavy chopping-knife about a yard long. They are very expert with this, so all overseers, managers, and employers of labour go heavily armed. Sometimes an Indian resents outrage and kills an overseer and takes to the bush.

Then there is a hunt with hounds—a queer Mexican Uncle Tom's Cabin show.

I finished my smoke, saddled up, and started on the trail. My horse climbed like a cat, in and out of dry river-beds, skirting the base of huge boulders, slipping on greasy shale. Anywhere a man can go without using his hands a Mexican horse can follow.

That night I was to stay at an American ranch. I carried no letter of introduction, but all white strangers are welcome in that country. As I drew near the ranch, signs of life became apparent: groups of Indians cutting down weeds in the plantations, donkeys laden with sacks of produce, Indian women driving flocks of turkeys. It was evident I was approaching a settlement.

The trail grew wider, and branch trails appeared in several directions. I stopped an old Indian and asked which led to the ranch. He could not tell me, for he only spoke the Indian dialect, "Tumbulteco," and did not understand Spanish. I followed the most used trail and soon struck the ranch, or, as they call them in the coffee country, "finka."

The ranch-house was a big wooden bungalow with a corrugated-iron roof. In front of it, in place of a garden, stretched the terraced drying-patios—the cemented floors on which the coffee beans are dried. Flanking these were the machine shops and the huts of the overseers. Slightly down the hill-

side were the huts of the Enganchars, all set in a big enclosure of wire-netting. By its gate was a bell-tower. This signalled the hours of work, and after work the labour is safely locked up—if not, it would run away. There is no slavery in Mexico; it is a republic—there is contract labour.

I rode up to the house and dismounted. A native servant took my horse, while the major-domo showed me into the sitting-room. The owner of the ranch was out, but food and drink were brought to me at once by the servants, and a bedroom made ready for me.

Soon an old prospector turned up and gave me welcome. He and I sat on the veranda. I smoked and watched the sudden fall of night as the sun sank behind the mountains. The shadows of the mountains raced across the lowlands, and, without any dusk or half-light, night fell. The old prospector produced specimens and a pocket magnifier, and invited me to admire his wonderful trophies, getting more and more exasperated while I invariably mistook pyrites and mica for "free gold," and manfully resisted his offer to make me half owner of the richest gold proposition in Mexico, although he came down in price from 1,000 dollars to 50 dollars for the claim registration fees. Even at 50 dollars I did not think I could live up to a gold-mine.

Finally the rancher turned up and saved me from

the ancient "blowhard."* The rancher was a trim, spare American, Californian by birth, but bred in Mexico. He spoke English with the soft Spanish drawl, and made me welcome. I gave him the news of Tapachula, and informed him of my destination. He made no comment, but later examined my weapons and showed me his own arsenal. His revolver had several notches on the butt, each notch representing a homicide. He, however, was not communicative. We fed on quite good plain food, and sat afterwards on the veranda, drinking coffee with native spirit as a liqueur. The lamps were not lighted, as he explained—"they attracted mosquitoes," and he pointed to two bullet-holes in the match-boarding of the house. It struck me that a leaden "mosquito" might have a dangerous sting. Foreigners are not popular among the Indians.

Next morning I bade him good-bye, and he insisted upon sending a servant with me to act as a guide. Before leaving he laid his hand on my saddle, and remarked that after quitting my next night's stopping-place I had better keep my eyes peeled.

I made the second day's journey with his servant, who was a walking dictionary of inaccurate information, and told many unreliable nature stories. He led me to within sight of the ranch whither I was

* "Blowhard" is a beautifully descriptive American term for an old-timer given to boasting.

bound, and bade me farewell, accepting a dollar tip with alacrity.

This ranch was owned by Germans, and the lady of the house made me welcome immediately. Luckily, I spoke German fluently, and was received as an honoured guest. The whole establishment was a little bit of the fatherland dropped down into the Tropics.

Beer was produced at dinner; and I was taken to my room, which had a real bed, and real oleographs on the wall. Both my host and hostess were loud in their advice to me not to go on with my trip, but I explained that I had my orders and was convinced that nothing would happen.

The El Naranjo ranch was about half a day's ride from the Germans', and I started off about five in the morning, meaning to get there before midday. About half-way to the ranch the trail was very bad, and I was walking slowly when a shot rang out in the bush and ripped through the foliage at my side. I slipped my carbine clear, dismounted, and took cover behind the horse and got ready for trouble, all in one motion. An Indian rose from behind a rock, and I saw that his gun was a muzzle-loader single-shot gas-pipe. I covered him and called him up. He was very apologetic, and explained that he was shooting at a squirrel and had not seen me coming. I decided that he was lying, and did not

know what to do. Finally I inquired who was his master. He replied that he belonged to Don Guillermo de la Cerda of the Naranjo ranch.

"Good," said I; "I am in search of Señor de la Cerda; you may lead me to him."

The native accepted the situation without discussion, and, in his rôle as guide, preceded me along the trail.

I still held my carbine cocked.

Together we reached the El Naranjo ranch. It was a mean little assemblage of thatched huts. Tied to the posts outside was a good horse with a fine silver-mounted saddle. From this I judged that the owner was at home. I threw my reins over a hitching-post, dismounted, and walked in. I found the man I wanted eating his lunch. He was most urbane and pleased to see me, and inquired how I enjoyed the trip. I told him of the amusing incident of the native hunter. He was delighted, and invited me to share his meal. Selecting a seat with its back to the wall, I joined him. He read my letters from the office, and we had a short conversation. My Spanish was execrable, but whenever he talked technics I could hide behind the veil of not understanding. It was a lovely interview. Both our minds were working overtime, and he decided rapidly. Going to a table, he opened a drawer and took out a roll of bills of big denominations.

"Please do me the favour of checking these over," he said.

I soon counted out the correct sum, and he asked for a receipt.

Now I had no idea of carrying that money myself—it would never reach the office. So I lied brilliantly.

"I am a subordinate and can give no receipts," said I. "You must come to the office and sign the transfer deed."

Here he grew inquisitive, and I fled behind my bad Spanish and smiled vacantly.

I then told him of the urgency of the business, and explained that he must come at once.

He was quite annoyed, as it would have been so easy to recover the money if I had taken it—an ambush—one shot. In due course the inquiry, his production of my receipt, his sympathy and sorrow at hearing that matters had gone astray—all so nicely arranged. And now I was upsetting the carefully prepared scheme. At last he gave in with good grace, and said that he would accompany me. Together we took the trail, attended by three armed servants.

The return trip we made through different country; much of it along the winding course of a mountain stream. Everything seemed gigantic, the tall trees hung with creepers and orchids whose

dangling air-roots hung like snakes across our path, the enormous boulders on which the horses' hoofs slipped on the greasy stone. The thick confusion of giant canes, shrubs, and undergrowth, and the hot silence of the forest, all seemed to impress on me the extraordinary fertility of the Tropics. Trees, plants, even insects, were all bigger and more harmful than they ought to be; the poisonous undergrowth of the monte, harbouring bloated and venomous vermin of all kinds, seemed an illustration of a mad world all run to monstrous evil overgrowth, the whole country marvellously beautiful, but unwholesome, repellent, and hostile to man.

Two days later we reached Tapachula, and the outstanding debt was settled. Hemken was more than a bit surprised that I had not been killed, and was sceptical that I had been to El Naranjo until he saw the men who had come in with me. But that is always the way in Mexico—the people in the next village, or over the next mountain, or in the next state, are invariably evildoers, murderers, and bandits.

CHAPTER III

I BECOME AN EXPLORER

Soon after this the directors arrived, and after considerable discussion they said that I had better return to England, and offered me my passage home, with many apologies for having misunderstood the situation and having sent me out. I was not at all pleased with this suggestion, and pointed out that I had been engaged for a definite job, and that it was not my fault that the company had no use for me. Eventually we compromised, and I accepted gifts—a lump sum, cash down—and severed my connection with the company.

I found myself then in a strange country, unused to local conditions, not speaking the language well, and possessed of fifty pounds and an outfit; so I set to work to learn Spanish and pick up the customs of the country, seeking meanwhile for something to do until qualified to go up to Mexico City and look for a permanent job.

The country round the railway was fairly well developed, but the State of Chiapas has always been the least known of any in Mexico.

Large areas of land were purchased by land companies, and in many cases the land was not even surveyed. Many American and European settlers have been deluded into buying worthless land on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and in Chiapas. A favourite trick of the land companies is to sell the same ranch to several purchasers. The *bona fide* companies decided to survey their land carefully, and try to form some estimate as to its value. One company, owning a long strip of country on the Pacific side, had it marked on their maps as "Esterros," or lagoons; but when viewed from the mountains it seemed well wooded and exceptionally fertile, so it was decided to run an exploration trip through it.

I was asked if I cared to make an expedition, and consented, after a brief discussion of ways and means. Information regarding the district was hard to get and rather disconcerting. When digested it amounted to this: that the lagoons were inhabited by bandits and "bad Indians," which latter were accustomed to fell various valuable woods that grew in the swamp, and would certainly shoot any white folk who should seem to be spying on them. There were also excellent reports of the quantity of game and birds that were to be secured, but no one could be found who had ever been through the lagoons. I was accompanied in part by a German, who was an

excellent cook and a keen naturalist. Together we arranged for the gathering of supplies, and got into touch with the Indians.

In order to secure canoes and guides we selected the station of Pijijapam, on the railroad, as our starting-place, and arranged with an old Indian woman who did an enormous trade in hides to meet us there and provide transport to the embarking-place. The supplies consisted of tinned foods, flour, ammunition, and some rough surveying material. We took with us a fairly heavy armament, our battery consisting of a ·303 Savage rifle, a ·44 Winchester carbine, and a heavy 12-bore Paradox for use with solid ball or buckshot. In addition we each carried the customary heavy revolver which forms an indispensable article of toilet in Southern Mexico.

Pijijapam was reached by nightfall, and we made for the local hotel for the night. It was a good specimen of the typical hotel on the Pan-American railroad, and consisted of a large hut thatched with palm-branches, and inhabited by a family of Mexican Indians and their domestic animals. The usual meal of "frijoles" (beans) and "tortillas" (a tasteless pancake of ground maize) was forthcoming. At nightfall a few hammocks and native beds were laid out, and the hotel-keeper, his family, and his guests, all retired to rest in one room.

There was neither peace nor rest that night.

Mosquitoes and fleas kept us busy, and, short of sitting in a bath of paraffin-oil, there was no way of keeping them off. The Indians do not mind. The insects bite them, but do not worry them any more than house-flies embarrass a European.

Before dawn the barking of the dogs and the challenge of the night-watchmen announced the arrival of our escort. A creaking bullock-cart drew near, and several horsemen rode up to the hotel. The hotel staff arose, and the volume of empty noise that the native must needs raise over every slight occasion showed that someone of importance had come.

We went out and found that the señora with whom we had made arrangements had come to meet us in person. She was seated in the bullock-cart upon several mattresses, and was loudly directing her retinue of mounted Mexicans how to bring up the cart to the door of the hotel with the dignity befitting her station. The cart halted, and the bullocks laid down in the dust.

The señora descended and greeted us warmly, and then producing from under her shawl a couple of pullets, gave orders for them to be killed and breakfast prepared. Our kit had to be inspected and everything displayed and explained.

We got over the breakfast safely and loaded our

heavy baggage into the bullock-waggon, the señora took her seat upon it, and, puffing at a large cigar, made bitter comments on the lad whose duty it was to drive these bullocks. He walked alongside with a Mexican riding-crop—a stout packing-needle wired to a cane shaft. With this instrument it was possible to urge the conveyance along at a slow walk. The cart itself was home-made, the wheels being solid sections of trees set on a hard-wood axle. The axles were never greased, and the squeaking and groaning was an unendurable noise to English ears; but a Mexican will not lubricate his axles—he prefers the music.

My partner and myself were mounted on aged Mexican ponies. We travelled till midday, when we stopped at one of the señora's ranches for the midday meal and siesta.

We sat in the shade of a roofed palm-hut (walls are unnecessary in this climate) and waited while lunch was prepared. This is a simple process, for, owing to the extreme heat, the only meat food for the country, with the exception of fresh-killed game, is dried beef, or "jerky"; this is usually called "kilometre meat," owing to the fact that it is exposed for sale in strips of varying lengths. The fresh beef is cut in narrow strips and hung over poles in the sun. The result is a product looking like greasy rope, and more often than not full of

maggots. A section of this is chopped off and thrown on the glowing ashes of a wood fire; there it curls up, and by the time the outside is charred it is warmed through and ready to eat. A knife and fork make no impression upon it at all.

The only way is to eat it *au naturel*, and seize it in the teeth and shred it apart. The whole party sat round tearing up this meat, and eating stewed beans out of the pot. Spoons were unknown. One has to fold up one's tortilla and dip out the stew into it, and thus transfer it to the mouth. In a few minutes the tortilla becomes sloppy, and quite useless as a spoon. There are no plates, or glasses for drinking purposes. A calabash floating in a big earthenware jug of brackish water is the only thing.

To successfully negotiate a meal with the Mexican Indians is no mean test of one's adaptability! However, we did our best to conform with the local customs.

After a short rest we began to enter the lagoon country, and swarms of mosquitoes settled on us. Our faces and hands were covered, while the horses were thick with them. The poor beasts did not seem to mind; but we Europeans were obliged to don heavy buckskin gauntlets, and wrap our silk neck-handkerchiefs around our faces.

Shortly we reached the canoes; these were long

dugouts, hewn from a single tree-trunk, and about thirty feet long by three feet wide. The embarkation was at last safely accomplished, and all the stores stowed carefully and covered with waterproofs.

The señora now informed us that she was coming with us part of the way in order to visit one of her numerous relations. As the old lady and her retinue made more noise than a pile-driver, and I wished to shoot game, I was not too pleased. But as she was the local autocrat I did not see how to get her to understand that her presence was not regarded as indispensable.

The canoes slipped off, and, taking the time from the canoe-boy of the leading canoe, the whole crowd began to chant an Indian canoe song. The channel through which we were steering was little more than six feet wide, and everywhere above the water showed the gnarled and blackened trunks of fallen trees. Above us towered the green foliage of the great forest trees, bright with the flowers of creepers and orchids, while on each side the grey roots and suckers of the mangroves reached down into the mud.

The lagoons were crowded with wild life. On every snag sat cormorants and herons; bitterns sat motionless and unafraid within a few feet of the boat. As we approached an open lake of water, such as the Indians call a "pampas," my boy pointed out a string of small white herons flying across.

MANGROVE SWAMPS

IN THE LAGOONS, A NATIVE CANOE

"Those are 'garson'—'egrets,'" he said. "In the spring we kill lots of them for their plumes," and he told me of the slaughter of the birds by the Indian hunters, and the bloody fights between the different villages for the possession of the egret plumes.

CHAPTER IV

"ALLIGATOR LAND"

It was then mid-afternoon, and we determined to push on, to reach the fishing village of Agua Dulce that evening.

The channel leading to the village was about fifty yards broad, and so deep that the poles could no longer be used, and we were forced to paddle. The señora was by this time asleep, and the retinue had dropped into silence. The canoe-boy in the bows pointed out something down the river, and following the direction of his hand I saw something moving across the waters.

"Lagarta grande" (a big alligator), he whispered, and I got my heavy 12-bore Paradox ready.

Gradually the canoe crept down-stream, till I could see the outline of the top of his head, the heavy arches over his eyes, and the point of his snout showing like pieces of log above the water. He moved silently; only the big V-shaped ripples on the surface showed that he was moving at all. At about fifty yards I fired at the hinder corner of the eye, and heard the heavy bullet tell upon the

head. The recoil shook the whole boat, and the señora awoke with a scream.

Shouts from the boys announced the success of my shot, and they feverishly urged the canoe to the spot where the brute had sunk. Clouds of mud rising from the bottom showed where he lay. A barbed iron head was fitted to the canoe-pole and lashed on with rope, and a little prodding about soon discovered the corpse. Speared through the soft underpart, he was speedily brought to the surface.

An alligator is most unpleasant, alive or dead, and I think he is worst when you have to skin him. He has a disgusting smell, intermediate between musk and fish. The skin on the back is so thick that it practically adheres to the backbone, and has to be chopped free with an axe or heavy knife. It is very difficult to avoid cutting through the skin itself during the process.

Just before sunset we reached Agua Dulce, which turned out to be a little fishing village on a strip of beach between the Pacific and the lagoons. It was almost impossible to hear ourselves speak at first, owing to the continual booming of the Pacific surf, but after a while our ears got tuned to it.

I was introduced to the headman, or "jefe," of the village, and was promptly invited to his hut to feed. We commenced with the inevitable tortillas, and I was given a variety of black-pudding or sausage.

It was quite edible until my partner arrived.

"Do you know what you are eating?" he asked.

I said, "No, but it seems all right."

He grinned, and explained that it was a weird delicacy made of alligator's blood. I gave the remainder of the saurian to the dogs.

A native bedstead was produced, and I rigged up my mosquito net and turned in, but not to sleep. The bedstead was a loose wooden frame, laced across in wide squares with strips of cowhide. The result was, that these made a chequer-board pattern on one's back. After an uneasy night and much chasing of fleas and jungle ticks, I lay awake before the dawn, and all the noises of the village began to break the stillness. The deep boom of the surf seemed now a dull murmur, and the clear notes of a cock crowing were taken up by other distant birds. The leaves of the trees began to shake as hidden night animals retired at the approach of the day and disturbed the roosting waterfowl, waking the forest to life. At last the sun rose.

The first beams struck the mountain-tops and changed the clouds that concealed them to billows of rose-coloured mists. Above the horizon the rays shot up like the sticks of a crimson fan, and gradually the edge of the golden disc itself appeared above the sea.

The sunlight seemed to race along the waves and

turn the crests of the great surf-breakers into vivid blue. The whole colour of the ocean changed from grey to blue flecked with white, and a golden pathway ran over it to the centre of the sun.

The flood of light rushed inland, dispelling the shadows and mists of the night and forming great golden patches on the surfaces of the lagoons. Birds began to twitter in the thickets, and solemn cranes flapped to the water's edge. Flight after flight of cranes, egrets, cormorants, and gorgeous flamingo-coloured spoonbills, flew over the village, and little wisps of smoke arose from the houses as the women began to light the fires. Children came out, and soon the village life was in full swing.

After a hasty drink of coffee and a mouthful of food, we obtained a calabash or two of fresh water, and, strenuously avoiding the señora, stole away. Once clear of the village the waterways were alive with wildfowl, and a shot or two soon brought in enough food for the canoe-boys. They seemed fairly omnivorous, but only had about three names to use for all known varieties of bird. Everything was either "pajarito," or "garson"; but it was obvious that the subject did not interest them.

Midday brought us to the Isla de las Brujhas, the "Isle of Witches," and here we paused for lunch and siesta.

The island was about four acres in extent, and only about twenty feet higher than the surrounding country. A few cocoa-palms grew here and there, and following an overgrown track, we reached a tumble-down palm hut, and a cleared patch in the undergrowth where a few charred posts showed that a hut, or "rancho," had once stood.

As we approached, a big zopilote, or scavenger buzzard, got up and flopped heavily away to a neighbouring tree. The canoe-boy crossed himself, and I asked why the island was thus abandoned.

He told me the story of how three brothers who were bandits had been outlawed from the hill country, and came to live in the secrecy of the "monte," as they termed the swamps. With them came their women-folk, and it chanced that the Rurales (the mounted police force) recognized one of the women as she was selling dried fish in an inland market. They tortured her till she betrayed the hiding-place. And they sent an expedition of forty men in canoes to wipe out the bandits. Warning reached the brothers too late, but they were well armed, desperate, and good shots. The battle lasted two days and two nights. On the morning of the third day it was seen that only one man was firing from the island. Two Rurales landed, and, circling round to the side of the house, shot down the bandit and all the women. The

rancho was burnt to the ground, and the little plantation laid waste.

Since that time no Indian will settle on the island, and indeed it seemed as if some taint still clung to it. Rank weeds grew in the maize path, and the small fruit-trees and palms seemed untouched by man or bird.

Our stop for the evening was to be the Bar of Tolomita. About two-thirds of the distance had been covered when I decided to land for a while, and rest on a small "hard" of sand on the jungle side of the pathway. I got ashore, carrying my rifle and bandolier, and lit a pipe to keep off the mosquitoes.

I had hardly advanced six yards before I noticed the ground was covered with what I took to be deer tracks. Reaching a clearing under some big trees, a rustling in the bushes startled me, and a wild pig rushed out into the open. On seeing me he stopped dead. I fired and bowled him over. An instant's silence followed the report. Then the whole forest seemed to go mad. Screams and grunts came from the bush, and birds and parrots flew around shrieking. About ten pigs came out of the bush and rushed to their fallen comrade. It then occurred to me what I had done. I had shot one of a herd of peccary!

Now, I knew of the persistence of these animals,

and how feared they were by the Indians, and it did not make me waste time in moving. I grabbed on the nearest creeper that would bear my weight, and, rifle and all, hustled up to the parent tree as quickly as possible. I managed to swing astride a lower branch, and, crawling along, was soon safe in the crutch of a big red cedar. The peccaries were now looking at me, and one was evidently smelling the creeper I had climbed. All of a sudden he squealed with rage and charged to the foot of the tree. The others joined him, and a wave of rage seemed to run right through the herd. Some gnashed at the creepers with their tusks, and others just stood and watched me with their little red eyes gleaming with obstinate hate.

I estimated the herd as being about thirty to thirty-five strong, and it was of both sexes. There were no little pigs with the sows, but quite a proportion of "yearlings."

I began to shoot, picking out the noisiest members of the herd. The peccaries were immediately interested, but beyond investigating the corpses, did not retreat. They seemed absolutely devoid of fear. It was then I discovered the full horror of my predicament—that tree was full of fire ants, and a fire ant is a small ant that feels like a hot cigarette-end wherever he touches; so I felt that it was no time for humanitarian principles when I had a few

dozen of these little beasts in my shirt. They were swarming over me: I reloaded the magazine of my Savage, and commenced the slaughter, often getting two pigs with the same bullet. In about two minutes there were only about five pigs left, and my rifle ammunition was exhausted. I determined to make a run for the boat, and leaving the trunk of the tree between myself and the enemy, I slid down a creeper rope.

Drawing my heavy Colt revolver, I started and made a run for the beach, shooting back as I ran. I got on board the canoe and refilled my rifle magazine, then, taking the Paradox loaded with the buckshot, I and the canoe-boys landed. The remainder of the peccaries fled into the bush, and we set to work to count the dead. While the boys were cutting out the tusks, I sat down to a quiet ant hunt, and soon was free of my visitors.

We took some of the peccaries along for food, for if the scent glands are removed they make very fair pork. The remainder we left for wandering Indians or the creatures of the forest.

If it had not been for my habit of carrying a bandolier full of cartridges and a hip revolver as well, I might have remained up in the tree till Doomsday.

CHAPTER V

CROSSING THE BAR

AFTER the peccary incident I was a bit more careful about shooting on sight. That night we made an early camp at El Barras de Tolomita (the Bar of Tolomita), on a slight spit of sand where the fisher-folk had erected one or two tumble-down palm shelters under the lee of the beech. We then hastily built a fire of drift-wood to cook our meal of pork.

The fire was barely alight, and one of the boys was half-way through the dissection of a pig, when night fell. The mosquito nets were soon rigged up, and by the light of the fire we enjoyed a sumptuous peccary supper. The rest of the animal was hung up, and we turned in, the cool sea-breeze making a pleasant change from the usual tropical night.

About one o'clock I was awakened by a most startling howl, and sat up under the net. The canoe-boys were awake and gazing into the dark. Wild thoughts of attacks by bandits or savage Indians ran through my mind; but the night was dead silent

except for the hum of insects and an occasional splash from the lagoons.

Suddenly, almost at my elbow, the howl came again, and the boys yelled "Tigre"! (tiger), and jumped up to put more wood on the red embers of the fire. There was a crash or two under one of the shelters, and then we heard something being dragged along the sand. The fire blazed up again, and, reassured by the light, we made investigations.

The body of the pig was gone, and the boys pointed to the tracks, saying, "Tigre grande!" (a big tiger). After a hasty search to see that everything else was all right, we built up a blazing fire and turned in again.

At dawn I got up, and, taking the Paradox, started to follow the tracks. With me came Luis, one of the canoe-boys; a heavy breeze enabled me to work up-wind. The tracks were deep in the sand, but there was very little sign of the pig's body having been dragged along. I fancy that the tiger had held it clear in his jaws, and bounded along when scared by the fire, for the tracks were very deep and far apart.

Soon we came to the fringe of thorn-bush that showed the beginning of the "monte." Luis signalled me to remain behind, and crept forward quietly. Soon he beckoned to me to creep up. I got to where he was, and he pointed to a spot about

fifty yards ahead, where, on a patch of sunlit sand, lay a leopard.

Handing him the Paradox, I took the ·303 Savage instead, and, taking a rest over his shoulder, I fired. Reloading as I ran, I reached the clearing. The leopard lay stretched out by his stolen meat (which was practically untouched); my bullet had ploughed him from side to side, and he was stone-dead.

Leaving Luis to skin him, I set out to return to camp along the seashore, and encountered a turtle. It was the first I had met, and I was puzzled whether to shoot it or catch it alive.

The latter seemed more entertaining, so, remembering the stories of my youth, I sought for drift-wood in order to turn it on its back.

Having found the drift-wood, I approached the sleeping turtle, laid my rifle down on the sand, and, taking up a strategic position between the sea and the turtle, tried to lever him up. The beast was much heavier than I expected, and the heave did not work. Instead, the turtle woke and bolted. I pursued, and managed to spill him over at the second try, and, by smiting him lustily, induced him to keep quiet. I could not safely leave him, for the brute would try and turn over, and once did so. Luckily Luis appeared. We soon cut creepers and made a sling with which to drag the capture to the camp.

There was much joy when we returned laden with a leopard-skin and a "tortuga." It seemed that turtle meat was appreciated, and we determined to kill it at once. Luis superintended the execution. He turned the turtle on to its belly and stood by with gleaming machete for the brute to put its head out. Slowly the cruel beak and leathery neck protruded, one by one the flippers came out of the sockets, and it stood on tiptoe. Luis's machete descended, and the execution was over. I was interested in the anatomy of turtles and had never investigated one, so I set to work with knife and axe to detach the lower plate of the corpse. Turtle-shell is about as hard to cut as horn, and I made a fearful job of it, but finally opened the case. I found the bell-crank arrangement, on which a turtle's head works, a most fascinating piece of anatomy. It had always been a mystery to me before. We cut out hunks of the white meat and threw away the rest, and, loading up the canoes, prepared to cross the Bar of Tolomita.

The bar looked horrid. A break in the sand-bank and reef enclosing the lagoons allowed the Pacific surf to beat into a wide lake, which, though deep in the centre, had several unsuspected bars and shoals. To add to the joys of crossing, the boys pointed out the black fins of sharks cutting about in the shoal water, impressing on me, "Son

muchos tiburones—que comen hombres" (there are many sharks—who eat men).

Cautiously we set off, and after being rocked and tossed sideways by the waves, and soaked to the bone, we reached the shelter of the other reef with the dugout half-full of water.

The second canoe was in difficulties and had dropped behind about two-thirds of the way over, and, when within a few yards of safety, a wave took it broadside on, filling it with water. The canoe promptly sank. The boy clung to his paddle, and, splashing through the water, he soon swam to us, his face grey with fear of the sharks, who, as we watched, were investigating the scene of the wreck. I sat on the bank and cursed, as that canoe contained all spare food and supplies, a good deal of ammunition, and my mosquito net. To recover it was impossible; the water was fathoms deep, full of sharks, and possibly alligators.

To blow off some steam at this calamity, I took a casual shot at the spot where I judged some vital portion of a shark would be. The bullet splashed up the water, and the great fish lurched clear of the waves, showing the dead white underside and enormous mouth. As he fell back the others made a rush for him, attracted by the scent of blood, and all around the water bubbled and boiled with the fury of the combat

We had now only one canoe and a limited amount of supplies.

I held a commission and investigated what we had left, and found that of tinned food we had enough for two days on half rations, but no bread or starch of any kind, with the exception of a handful of corn cobs; and only one calabash of sweet water, enough for a day's journey.

The ammunition was reduced to about a dozen shot-gun cartridges and twenty rounds of rifle ammunition apiece. Our revolver belts were, luckily, full.

Reviewing the situation, I decided to push on as we were, and try to reach an Indian village that I believed to be about two days' journey distant through the swamp. The canoe-boys were not pleased, but accepted the situation for what it was worth, so we repacked the kit and started through the unknown channel.

By midday the heat was terrible, and instead of open lakes of salt water connected by streams, we were slowly poling away through narrow channels, where the water was only a few inches deep, and the canoe bottom scraped through the thick mud.

Every leaf hid mosquitoes and every mangrove-root concealed little black and red crabs. When we came to a point where the channel was blocked by a snag, or fallen tree, and the canoe could go no

farther, then it was that we realized the joys of swamp travel. We had to disembark, and, with machetes, cut a way through the roots, then, waist-deep in squirmy black mud, heave, lift, and drag the clumsy dugout over the obstacle. At other points the turns in the channel were too sharp to admit of easy management of the long canoe, and it meant half an hour's hard work to negotiate the turn.

I was a mass of insect bites, and all over my body the jungle ticks had fixed fast in the flesh. These cannot be pulled off without leaving their jaws embedded in you and making a festering wound: the only way to deal with them is to heat them with a hot cigarette-end till they relax their grip, when they can then be pulled off clean.

The shallow shoals were crowded with fish. Great pike lay idly basking an inch or two beneath the surface, and the rush of the shoals of "lissa" (a big edible fish rather like a giant carp) made swirls in the water.

The canoe-boy laid down his pole and, taking up a position in the bows of the canoe, lent over, machete in hand. A swift slash into the water, and a big pike was secured, the blow having broken its backbone. In this way half a dozen fish were secured, and it was up to me to provide the meat course.

Edible game was scarce, but it was now not a question of taste but of hunger, and I could not afford to be fastidious about the fishy flavour of a heron or a crane, although we drew the line at eating a fish eagle.

High over against the sun came a string of flamingo-coloured birds, and as they cleared the tops of the trees I fired, and the foremost fell amidst the swamp-bush.

Quickly we urged the canoe to the spot, and groping our way through the mangrove stems collected the game, and then pushed on to find a camping-place for the night.

We came at sunset into a small lake, or pampa, of water, where the ground on one side was not pure mud, and one or two cocoanut-palms and a few ceiba-trees grew amidst the bush. Here we decided to camp; the dugout was beached, and the remaining stores carried ashore. A fire was soon built and the fish cooked. This process is simple: A stick is run through the fish lengthways, and, supported on two forked rests, it is slowly turned over the fire. In about ten minutes the skin and scales were charred to cinders, and the inside was beautifully cooked in its own juice. We felt the loss of the salt and pepper, but still, that fish was glorious eating.

My pink bird—he was a spoonbill, with lovely

salmon-pink plumage, green beak and legs, and scarlet eyes—was not a success. We boiled him in a pail, and he gave off a large quantity of yellow-reddish oil, and fat that tasted and smelt of all the most dreadful kinds of fish. The flesh was dark-coloured and tough as rubber; altogether it was a most ghastly dish, and even the canoe-boys could not eat it.

The cocoa-palms were a godsend, the great, green husks furnishing us with fresh water, or, rather, fresh cocoanut-juice. We soon chopped down enough to freight the canoe heavily, and were relieved of our fear of thirst.

We had no tents, and so slept in the open. About two o'clock in the morning, when the fire had burnt low, a deafening crash of thunder woke us all, and a fierce wind began to blow through the camp. By the light of the fire we hastily covered up stores and got things ready. A tropical storm was coming. We carried the dugout shoulder high up the beach, and used it as a tent to protect ourselves and our kit. We were barely in time to get all ship-shape before the storm was upon us.

With a roar of wind the rain came down, and in an instant it was as if we were beneath a wall of water. The fire was instantly quenched, and the darkness was lit by flashes of lightning—not the mild display of the temperate zones, but the vicious

fire of the Tropics. The blaze was almost continuous; the flashes came with a hissing crack of their own, followed instantly by the deafening crash of thunder.

We sat there huddled together under the boat, while the torrential rain drummed upon the upturned canoe and turned the ground upon which we were seated into a marsh; the temperature changed from dry heat to bitter, damp chill.

The storm passed as suddenly as it had come, but we could not light a fire, and so sat shivering together waiting for the dawn.

The remainder of the trip was similar in its discomforts. I shot birds and alligators and cursed the insects. An iguana, or tree-lizard, furnished a change in the menu, and was not at all bad eating. Finally we reached an Indian settlement.

These Indians were log-thieves and bandits; nevertheless, they entertained us most hospitably. The settlement was composed of about six palm huts, the furniture of which was a bed and two stools, while the only decoration was a small picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe, decorated with strips of coloured paper. Before one of these tiny altars were two ornaments—two green glass insulators from a telegraph-pole! The people were miserably poor and ill-clad, and all the live-stock on their rancho were a few hens and a couple of mangy dogs. They had enormous families of children,

though the infant mortality is said to be very great.

Two days later I reached the railroad near Tonala, and, striking a construction-camp, had again reached civilization. I wrote a nice report on the economic resources of the swamp country, and included a beautiful map of the trail I had followed.

The time will come when some European syndicate will want the timber, and then the Indian fisher-folk will vanish.

CHAPTER VI

A JUNGLE HUNT

"You are so keen on hunting in the 'monte,' why don't you get up to the hills behind Cocoyule and get that black tiger they talk about?" said the owner of the saw-mill.

"Black tiger?"

"Yes, black—or, at least, so the natives say. My foreman, Sabino, can tell you something about it."

I left the man of planks and shingles, and, going into the yard of his works, hunted up Sabino, who proved to be an intelligent native, and, what was more, a keen sportsman.

"The señor knows the direction of Cocoyule, near to Juchitan? Well, quite near is a 'monte' that is an old 'pueblo'—an antiqua from whence run traces of a paved road right into the sierras; there can be found 'el tigre negro' and much 'venado' (game) of all kinds. The señor should go there."

"How far is it to ride, and what are the trails like?" I queried.

Sabino explained that it was only about a day's

ride, and that I could get a local guide and supplies from the native towns.

A day later I met an American naturalist at San Geronimo, and, as he was interested in the fauna of the country, soon asked him if he would care to accompany me upon the trip. His time was limited, and he could only spare four days, as he had to join his boss (a professor of some college) at Tehuantepec; but he eagerly availed himself of my offer, and set about preparing a mule-load of specimen boxes and outfit.

This man, whose name was Jackson, was a young American, and in many ways typical of his nationality; he was dead keen on natural history and botany, and knew his subjects thoroughly, but was completely ignorant of most other matters, and did not "mix well" with natives, whom he disliked as "coloured," and who regarded him as mad as a hatter. I found him a pleasant companion for a four days' trip, but could not have stood the close companionship of the trail with him for, say, a fortnight's work.

José, my boy, soon secured horses, and these were waiting for us at the little wayside station, and were accompanied by their owner, who would act as our guide. I carried my ·303 Savage, and lent my ball-and-shot gun to Jackson, whose armament was limited to a revolver and that fearsome cannon—

the American six-shot repeating shot-gun. These weapons are greatly prized by Americans, and are remarkable for their weight, wicked balance, and enormous noise of the action, which, instead of the single "snick" of a respectable English gun, says "Snick-clack-clacketty-clacketty-chunk!"—a special war-cry of its own—every time the breech is operated.

Travelling was slow, as Jackson was an enthusiast, and every lizard, iguana, and evil insect, had to be hunted, and, if caught, classified, potted, or rejected, and with it a special label had to made out to say where, when, and how; mean barometric pressure, and probable winner of the next race; length from nose to tail when alive, when dead; and what it might have grown to, or something of the kind.

He knew little Spanish, and I had to interpret for him: he wanted the native name of everything in sight. When you ask a native the name of any special kind of bird he never knows, but remarks, "Es pajarito!" (It is a bird!) He grew dissatisfied with José, to whom he was a source of unending amusement, and it was only my interference that prevented the probable printing in a scientific brochure of the most unseemly Spanish words as the correct names of sundry animals.

We halted at a small pueblo for lunch and to rest

during the heat of the day, and I engaged the services of the local native children to dig out an iguana, some "ratons" (generic name for any rat-like animal), tortoises, and other small fry. We had some difficulty in getting the children to understand that they were wanted now and would be paid for, and soon were rewarded by a visit from the schoolmaster. A "peso" to him secured the kiddies a half-holiday, and as the news spread that Rothschild and another millionaire were in the village paying good money for uneatable food, in a few minutes the hunt was up.

Armed with sticks and machetes and assisted by all the native curs, the local Boy Scouts took to the bush. Jackson was wild to accompany them, but as I did not care to chaperone him on the delicate subject of snakes, scorpions, and poisonous plants, I refused to let him go out in the sun. The schoolmaster stayed with us; he was a very decent Indian, a Zapoteco, well educated, and a master of the local Indian dialect; but even he was puzzled by this hunting of useless wildfowl.

Soon the hunt returned, dribbling in in twos and threes, laden with specimens—lizards of all kinds, a fat grey-black iguana, tortoises, and two or three mice, some battered snakes, and the *pièce de résistance*—a jack rabbit.

Counselled by the schoolmaster, I distributed vast

wealth in "centavos" to the fortunate hunters, and left Jackson to classify the spoil.

He did, and suffered much from fleas, for which he blamed the jack rabbit. This, by the way, turned out to be a hare, and yellower than other specimens. The iguana produced lots of fun, as Jackson, knowing it was harmless, got familiar with it, instead of holding it in a grass noose like the natives do. Resenting his handling, it slapped hard with its tail, landing him across the face; it then scratched badly, and got away, running up a pole into the roof.

At last Jackson finished with his zoo, and we saddled up to resume the trail. This ran through the sandy, reddish scrub country, where all the plants and most of the lizards wore spikes, and I was able to point out some of the peculiarities of insect-life to Jackson. One bright device of Nature is a thorny tree, a species of acacia, which produces two big thorns springing out of a bulb-shaped knob, the whole rather like a miniature cow's head. These knobs are the homes of a special little ant, reddish-yellow in colour, and capable of causing more anguish than any other insect of its size. These, if they cross your hand, leave a bright red weal, and feel exactly like sparks of fire. I explained this to Jackson, who immediately experimented on the next bush we passed, apparently in order to see how the ants

lived inside the knob. He was badly stung, and began to appreciate some of the beauties of life in the Tropics.

Late that evening we reached Juchitan, and I at once set on foot inquiries about the black tiger at Cocoyule. The "jefe" and a local "rurale" had heard of its existence, and, after a liberal consumption of "tepache" (fermented pineapple juice) and "tequila," gave me a letter to the headman, ensuring to me the goodwill of the local native authorities.

I laid in a few tins of sardines and food at Juchitan from a store kept by a Chinaman, and returned to find Jackson ready for his supper. He did not take kindly to native food, and being a scientist was much impressed by the insanitariness of a genuine native town; also the lizards in the banana-palm roof worried him.

Cocoyule was our next stop, and the "Jefe" proved not to be a model of courtesy, billeting us and our horses reluctantly. The "tigre negro" existed, but in the "monte," and was seldom seen, as he lived among the "antiguas" (ruins). I detected hesitancy in his manner, and soon found that the beast was a kind of local deity, if not entirely fabulous, so I announced that we were going to look at the "monte," and was successful in raising a native hunter as a guide. This man, who answered to the name of "Chato" (snub-nose), was clad in a pair of jaguar-skin bathing-

drawers and armed with a muzzle-loading gas-pipe gun. I told José to pack what was necessary for a night in the jungle, and leaving the rest of the kit behind, we started without telling the "jefe" of our intention to camp the night amidst the Aztec ruins.

About two hours before dusk we arrived. The ruined city was not visible; all around were the bush-covered hills, without a trace of man's handiwork, yet the very mound on which we pitched our camp was an Aztec teocalli, and the stream at which we got our water was the water-supply of an old and vanished city. Chato was not pleased when we insisted upon camping there; he had had his orders from the "jefe," but our obduracy and a dollar or two bribe quelled his scruples, though he was still rather afraid of ghosts.

Before turning in, Jackson shot one or two birds —none of them good to eat—and I killed a "cascabel" (rattle-snake) when we were clearing the camp. That night, round the camp-fire, I learnt some queer hunting facts from old Chato, who explained how, when one killed an animal, the head must be buried after being offered some water—if not, you would spoil your luck.

We turned in, and, in spite of nets, passed an insect-troubled night.

At the first blush of dawn we were up, and, accompanying Chato, followed a winding trail beside

the stream for about half a mile. We came upon two great monoliths, relics of some Aztec temple or house.

The forest teemed with bird-life, and Jackson was with difficulty restrained from shooting; but as I was out for jaguar—black, if possible—I did not want the neighbourhood scared.

At last old Chato made a sign to us to halt, and we watched his brown body disappear among the bush. Soon he reappeared and signalled me to follow him. As silently as possible I did so. On a boulder near the stream lay a jaguar, apparently watching the reeds. As I raised my rifle he rose on his fore-feet, but I pressed the trigger, and he was bowled over in a wild flurry. Hastily jerking in another cartridge, I ran forward, and from a safe distance put in another shot that finished him.

He was not a big beast, being under eight feet from tail to nose, but the pelt was in good condition and well marked. I skinned him then and there, Chato retaining a few portions of his interior economy to use as medicines or for food; but I did not follow his advice to cut off the head and bury it after offering it a drink! Perhaps that is why I saw no black jaguar, though Chato whispered to me that some large tracks we found were undoubtedly his.

The ride back was one of modified triumph. I

had a jaguar, though not a black one, and Jackson was very happy. He had secured an insect, rather like a diamond or lozenge-shaped beetle, with a joint in its middle. If you put it flat on the palm of your hand it would suddenly bend up and straighten out with a jerk that would throw it several feet. He had found a native child playing with it, and, seizing it from the infant, had given the babe half a dollar.

The babe's father came to me hurriedly.

"If that beetle is worth fifty cents, it is worth a dollar. Why steal from a babe?" quoth he, seeing hopes of more wealth.

I had great trouble in explaining that Jackson was "muy rico" and "muy loco" (rich and mad), and that the bug was worth nothing, but he had been pleased to buy it as a kind of medicine!

Thoroughly satisfied, the father departed; but I could not help but admire his business capacity.

I don't think that that bug was as rare and unknown as Jackson thought. He promised to write and let me know; but he never did, and I have since regretted not letting him compile a Spanish zoological dictionary as composed by José, as he carried off my screw-topped salt and pepper box as a receptacle for handy specimens!

CHAPTER VII

A RAILROAD JOURNEY IN SOUTHERN MEXICO

HAVING finished my exploration trip on the lagoons and acquired a working knowledge of Spanish, I decided to leave the State of Chiapas and go up to the city of Mexico. Returning to Tapachula, I collected my belongings, packed up my hunting trophies, and prepared to leave. The railroad from Tapachula is the Pan-American line, which joins the isthmus route at San Geronimo. The train is scheduled to perform its journey in two days, but has seldom done so.

Having made my farewells, I left Tapachula and went down to the railroad station, which is situated at least a mile from the town. The station is comprised of one brick building—a combined warehouse, telegraph station, ticket office, and express office. Outside in the roadway are planted heavy wooden stakes—hitching-posts for the horses, who stand in the sun while their masters and all the local loafers gather round the station. They make a picturesque scene, the men in their big straw sombreros, smoking native cigarettes, while the women chatter and bar-

gain for fruit, eggs, and tortillas; for the railway station is, in its lazy way, a small market, where the third-class passengers can purchase food for the trip.

The train is already waiting, and reminds one of the Buffalo Bill shows of Europe: the old-fashioned engine, with its queer funnel and clanging bell (a genuine "Baldwin," but of early vintage, finishing its last days in the Tropics); the Indians and the "rurales," all variously armed and accoutred; the passengers ablaze with silver-embroidered pistol-holsters and glittering brass cartridges, are all reminiscent of the Wild West stories of one's youth.

The rolling stock is of the long American type, and the train is usually a "composite"—passengers and freight mixed—while the end is brought up by a brilliant yellow express waggon for valuable freight and mails.

The bell clangs, and the conductor shouts furiously, telling the passengers to get aboard; so we leave the shade of the station veranda, where we have been reading the placards of rewards for "wanted" men—murderers and train robbers—little bills with a picture of the fugitive, nearly always taken in his square-cut sombre Sunday clothes, and in big figures above his head the blood-money to be paid to anyone delivering him, alive or dead, to the Wells Fargo Express Company.

The third-class passengers get into one end of a passenger coach and the first into the other; a thin partition half-way down separates the classes. The thirds have only wooden benches, covered with filth, while the first have all the glory of cane seats like those on the London electric railways. These also are filthy beyond anything in Europe. No English workman would care to use the Pan-American first-class accommodation for half an hour's ride, but we are condemned to have two days of it! The natives take with them a few chickens and game-cocks; dogs and babies are plentiful. All these people prefer to squat cross-legged on the benches in preference to sitting on them. Chairs are unknown in Indian villages. The ticket auditor and the conductor go round demanding tickets, but custom demands that you should travel without one and pay the conductor half the legal fare. Even with this little perquisite the conductor's job is not one that is much sought after.

The heat soon gets unbearable, and the passengers lie inert on the blistering seats, drinking tepid beer, too slack to read or smoke, and almost unconscious of the attacks of clouds of venomous mosquitoes and coffee flies.

All the stations are the same—a brick building and a couple of native huts in a little clearing beside

the line, which stretches like a green pathway through the jungle. At each stop a crowd of native children surround the cars, and rush to sell their little baskets of fruit—mangoes, papayas, and zapotes. The latter is a queer brown fruit, full of sweet, cool pulp, the fruit of the chicle, or chewing-gum tree.

The journey drones on through the same scenery, and the train slows down to cross the little culverts and bridges. Everybody looks anxious. You feel the bridge sink and tremble beneath you, but the train crawls across without its collapsing. The conductor curses the construction engineers, and tells stories of wrecks that have occurred, when the sudden rising of the rivers have swept away the supports from beneath the bridges.

We are timed to reach a native town, where lunch can be procured at midday; but a sudden series of bumps and rockings, finishing with a terrific jolt as the train comes to a standstill, announces that we have run off the line. Everyone gets out and goes forward to look at what has happened, while the natives raise a deafening clamour, and fight to secure their bundles of food. The engine is off the line, and the tender and first coach are leaning over at a dangerous angle. Underneath you can see the bent rail torn up from the sleepers, but the powdery nature of the wood shows why this has happened. The damp earth and the ants have rotted some six or

seven sleepers to such an extent that the engine's weight had forced the rails apart and caused the wreck.

The heat is merciless, but all hands, train crew, natives and passengers alike, turn to, while tools are brought, and with infinite trouble the engine is jacked up and the track relaid. The sleepers that we put under the jack sink into the soft mould, and everyone strains at lifting gear, while the stinging sweat runs into our eyes, and the mosquitoes bite through our thin garments.

At last the wreck is cleared and the tools stowed away, the conductor shepherds the passengers in, and after a delay, in order to get up steam, we proceed—three hours late.

The train crawled into a little town where the passengers were supposed to feed at a restaurant. This splendid and ambitious project—a railway restaurant in Southern Mexico—resolved itself into a large native hut set with a few tables and forms, and superintended by a Chinese hotel-keeper and cook.

The food was appalling and the company worse. Foreigners and Mexicans sat together with the train officials, the engine-driver and his fireman, black with dirt and bedewed with greasy perspiration, were not nice table companions, though their table manners were worth watching. The meal was

disgusting, though out of the medley of filth at least the eggs and the rice were edible. The other dishes were seasoned with green peppers and various sauces dear to the native palate. As I had not at this time acquired the asbestos mouth, common to residents in the Republic, it was a long time before I could find food—tasteless enough to eat.

Before we had half finished we were hustled away and on board the train. Our driver had been slaking his thirst with copious amounts of beer, so when I heard him declare he would make up time before we got to Tonala, if only the ——(!) engine held together, I regretted that my insurance policy did not cover travel overseas. It was dark before we reached Tonala. The carriages were provided with one lamp apiece; the chimneys of these lamps were choked with suicidal insects within a quarter of an hour of their being lighted, so in the darkness the passengers sat and smoked, while the shrill war-song of the mosquitoes sounded above the noise of the train.

Tonala was reached at last. Dead tired, we clambered out to take refuge in a corrugated-iron hotel. It was a lovely night, the food was iron and the beds corrugated, but after the exercise I had in the wreck I slept like a log. The servants woke us before dawn, for the train was to pull out early. I was still very tired, but I did not delay catching the

train, the prospect of two days to wait before another train came in—if it ever did—was too heavy a risk.

We had not got far on our journey before we were halted by a construction train in front of us. They brought us nice news—all traffic was temporarily suspended! It appeared that a local Indian township had suddenly hit upon a new scheme for raising money. The idea was ingenious, and it consisted in arresting all the railroad employés in their territory for non-payment of taxes, the Indian Jefe Politico claiming that, as they were within his grounds, they were assessable. The local police had arrested the whole of the native labour in the construction camp, and were now arguing the matter with the white engineers, who were making the telegraph wire red-hot with appeals to headquarters. We obeyed orders and kept outside the trouble zone till the news came down the line that all was clear. I heard later that the railwaymen had dealt with the matter personally, and that the Indian town was rather sore.

About midday we reached another "railroad hotel," and the food was as bad as the last Chinese joint, though this establishment was kept by the most amazingly well-developed Indian woman I have ever seen. She was a cheery hostess, but her cooking was frankly impossible.

The track grew better beyond this point, for

ballast had been laid between the sleepers. The country grew less fertile until we ran into the State of Oaxaca, where the land is very much poorer than in Chiapas, more resembling the worthless isthmus country. Without further incident we reached San Geronimo, where the terminal of the line is situated, and where the Pan-American joins the Tehuantepec railroad system. It was a relief to see a real railroad once again, and the English engines (the Isthmus road is run by British capital) seemed quite home-like.

San Geronimo is notable by reason of its brewery, to which the majority of the first-class passengers paid a hasty visit. It says much for American and Teutonic enterprise that such a blessed gift as beer can be obtained in such an out-of-the-way place. I am aware that the above sentiment does not seem strictly in accordance with the views of Exeter Hall, but in a country where water is pregnant with typhoid, and there is little to drink, mild bottled beer has saved many lives, as it is about the only pure drink one can obtain.

At dusk the train from Salina Cruz came into the station, and I was able to get direct into a Pullman sleeping-car, scheduled through to Mexico City. The change from the Pan-American system was marked. One can have no idea of the exquisite luxury an ordinary Pullman sleeping-car can afford

until one has travelled on a line whose stage of development and whose rolling stock is of the pattern common in Western America forty years ago.

Two nights and a day in the train, climbing from the fertile valleys of the Tropics to the cold plateau, and then the drop down into Mexico City, where I arrived at eight o'clock in the morning.

CHAPTER VIII

LIFE IN MEXICO CITY

THE new-comer's first impressions of the City of Mexico are usually rather vague. The traveller suddenly leaves the wild country of the Tropics and enters a zone of barren mountains; then, descending to a parched plain, arrives in a city which, at first sight, seems almost French.

I have heard Mexico City compared to Paris, to Constantinople, to Ispahan, and to Washington. Practically speaking, it has not the faintest resemblance to any of them, taken as a whole, but the wanderer can find many scenes and groups of architecture that seem to have been transplanted bodily from any capital you choose to name.

Mexico is a city of palaces—an architect's paradise, and at the same time despair, for the soil is bottomless mud. Foundations are absorbed with such rapidity that, if great care is not taken, by the time a house is built it has settled till the ground-level is higher than the floor. All big buildings are hopelessly out of plumb, and great cracks appear in their walls. The frequent earthquakes that shake the

valley also tend to distort the buildings in such a manner that the big structures of the city have all a distinct variation from the perpendicular.

The earthquakes are a feature of life in Mexico City, but you soon get used to them. The first earthquake I experienced occurred when I was at the top of a three-story building. I was writing at a table, when I suddenly felt deadly sick—the same feeling that occurs when a lift descends too fast Rather concerned, I briefly reviewed what I had eaten, imagining that I was plagued with a sudden turn of biliousness.

While still reflecting over the phenomenon, I noticed the electric light swinging violently, and the true explanation occurred to me. Going to the window, I looked out into the street. It was a remarkable scene. Men, women, and children had rushed out into the open and were praying strenuously. One of the overhead wires of the tramway had snapped, and the end struck out blue flashes as it swung against the iron support. Everybody had remained exactly as they were when the shock commenced. In a few seconds the motion ceased, and they got up from their knees and began to discuss the "tremblor." Little damage was done, and the incident was only accorded a short paragraph in the evening papers.

Mexico City is essentially cosmopolitan. It boasts

of clubs for every nationality, and one sees a foreigner to every ten Mexicans in its street. The big hotels are crowded with tourists, and attract as well the enormous brigade of adventurers who make Mexico their happy hunting-ground.

In the lobbies of the uncomfortable American-style hotels you will find all kinds of men—the specious concessionaire (everybody in Mexico has something in the way of a concession, and only needs a little capital to be a millionaire), the rubber expert or company director, who has come out from England and acquired a few hundred acres of jungle which he proposes to palm off on the confiding British public as suitable for growing rubber, pointing out to the credulous that it adjoins a well-known rubber estate, etc.

If Mexico had to depend on its own products for rubber goods, a pair of goloshes would be worth many hundred dollars.

There is a certain station in the south of Mexico near which grew a large rubber-tree surrounded by jungle. An enterprising photographer cleared the surrounding bush, and made a large amount of money by producing nominally amateur photographs of "Our Director," and "Mr. So-and-so, our Manager," standing beneath a natural rubber-tree on the company's estate. These nice little groups —directors, managers, etc.—backed by mules and

white-clad servants in native hats, are a godsend to the cheery promoter.

I hold no shares in Mexican rubber, principally because I have been to Mexico and seen the process of running a "rubber plant." All that you need is an acre or two of rubber carefully raised from seed to a height of six feet. If you have more than one acre or two acres it costs you so much in labour to keep the plantation free of weeds and insects that you lose your money, so you keep down to the two acres, and sell it and the surrounding land to a company, with the help of a "rubber expert." A rubber expert is a man who has written something about rubber. The degree of rubber expert is self-conferred. There are lots of them in Mexico City, who will report on a plantation for a five-dollar bill and the price of the elaborately headed notepaper necessary.

Mining propositions are as frequent as rubber plants, and sunburnt men with beautiful "specimens" and assayers' reports await the unwary in every hotel bar. However, some of their schemes bear fruit. Mining is always a gamble as opposed to the certainty of rubber.

"Land" is the next industry, and a very profitable one. All land in Mexico which has no private owner who can produce correct title-deeds is the property of the Government. Enterprising companies have bought large tracts of virgin—and mostly

worthless—land from the Mexican Government. Having surveyed and cut this up into lots, it is offered at a price well above its value to any individual who wishes to establish a ranch. A ranch is an agricultural proposition not necessarily implying cattle or horses. You can find sugar ranches, hen ranches, and coffee ranches; the latter are usually called "finkas," and most of the coffee land has been bought up years ago—now it has depreciated in value.

An American improvement on the land business was the Colonization Scheme, by which emigrants were to enjoy a pastoral life in which the ideas of the Utopia—the Garden of Eden—were to be practically applied, and eventually translate them to the Heaven of Millionairedom. Hundreds of poor families were induced to leave the States of the Middle West and emigrate to occupy the "desirable lots" of the land companies. They found the same conditions still prevailed in South Mexico that the original settlers in Darien had to contend with. The issue was much the same.

Fever, lack of money, lack of labour (for in that country personal field work on the part of the white man is impossible), no knowledge of local conditions, no help from the treacherous companies, all combined to destroy the scheme. Colonization was a failure, and the poor broken creatures who had left their

homes in the States to found a new one in Old Mexico eventually wandered back, absolutely ruined, only the little private graveyards and the rusted useless northern field machinery remaining in the jungle to show that they had been.

I have seen sales of "settlers' and homesteads' effects" left at one of the Mexican Custom-houses. It was terribly pathetic, the big deal packing-cases with their poor contents: the little household things of the settlers—crockery, babies' clothes, packets of seeds, and little home-made things like knitted comforters; the family Bible and a few books of the Sunday-school type—some of them prizes—all carried to the new home in glorious Mexico!

The land companies are not all bad, but in Mexican eyes they must be very similar; they never get prosecuted.

The respectable foreign residents in Mexico City have a saying that nobody comes to Mexico who has not been everywhere else first, and that most of those who come are not desirable. This is rather a hard statement; but it is not customary to inquire into a stranger's past: it is a country of great politeness.

With reference to the British element, most newcomers have their station well defined by the nature of the position that they occupy and the salary they

draw in connection with the big British engineering and mining firms. But the man who arrives without letters of introduction and valuable qualifications stands little chance of getting a job. The letters themselves are no good; a letter of introduction in Mexico means, "Please give bearer a square meal" —nothing more.

The British paterfamilias has a great habit of sending out his offspring, passage paid, with fifty pounds and an outfit, to the uttermost ends of the earth. This is understood as "practical imperialism," the theory underlying it being that barbarous countries thousands of miles away will pay large salaries to Cecil and Harold for the privilege of enjoying their services. The result is that the world is dotted with the useless products of our public schools and Universities, and for every one that "makes good" hundreds fall by the wayside.

It is dreadful to contemplate the number of decent Englishmen belonging to the professional and upper middle classes who are to be found earning a bare living wage amidst the most appalling surroundings, *and with no future before them.* They can never earn enough to support a wife and family, and can never be sure of a permanent situation. When I hear of Tom and Bill "doing well" in Canada, it calls up to my mind a picture of Tom (pass B.A. Oxford!) digging in a railroad trench between a Pole and a

Swede, while Bill (ex-Lieutenant cavalry) chops wood on a small farm.

The British parent has yet to learn that in the New World and the Colonies it is the highly specialized expert who earns money, and the fellow who will "take any job that he can get" is already represented. Sometimes they starve or go to the devil; more often they die lonely deaths—fever, dysentery, and accidents. Occasionally they live on the boundless charity of their fellow-countrymen abroad, but seldom do they draw any dividend on their expensive and useless education.

To succeed in Mexico you need special knowledge of a trade or profession, a good knowledge of Spanish, a sufficiency of capital for your enterprise, and at least a year's experience of the country before you invest a penny of it.

There is little social life in the city: it is the usual small community where gossip, scandal, and the most recent death form the staple conversation. The death-rate is enormous, and illness the rule rather than the exception. Outside of the Corps Diplomatique, and a few of the older residents unconnected with trade, there is no social life.

On the part of the Mexicans there is no informal social life such as one finds in England or the States. Mexican ladies spend most of their time in dressing-gowns, and are not prepared to receive visitors

except on State occasions. A call on them is usually rather a long process and deadly humorous.

Having arrived at your destination—a big house standing in its own grounds—you ring the bell outside, and after a few minutes a sleepy native appears. In response to your inquiry whether your victims are in, he replies, "Ah! who can tell? I will go and see." He looks at you with surly suspicion, and, still leaving you outside the locked gate, disappears to the back of the house. Five minutes elapse, and then, with much drawing of bolts and chains, the front door opens, and a butler in plain clothes, hastily dragging on a coat, appears and unlocks the garden gate. You are escorted inside and led into the "sala" (the drawing-room), a grotesque apartment, upon which much money and no taste has been expended. He withdraws and you examine your surroundings.

The furniture is expensive, probably French, and the floor is possibly linoleum, on which side by side are a good Persian and an impossible Kidderminster rug. There are a few good pictures and valuable ornaments, and a host of ghastly photographs of the family, and shilling knick-knacks. The chairs are arranged all round the walls, and a sofa is at the end of the room—this is the seat of honour, and to be avoided.

Eventually your hostess arrives, obviously only

just that minute dressed, and finally the whole family come down and are presented. The company range themselves along the wall and gaze at you while you try to make conversation. Calls in Mexico are regulated by an elaborate system of etiquette, and once in the "sala" you cannot escape under the regulation half-hour. The minutes drag on and on, and your conversational subjects are by now exhausted, principally because your hostess has no ideas of conversation beyond "Yes" and "No" and "Perhaps—who knows?"

At last a servant arrives, bearing the equivalent of afternoon tea—cups of thick native chocolate, flavoured with cinnamon, and sugary biscuits, somewhat after the style of meringues. They are also things that it is well to avoid. They fall to pieces all over you at a touch.

Mexicans are kindly, hospitable folk, but they have the old Spanish traditions, and are consequently about two hundred years behind modern manners. Foreign ladies regard Mexican women as hopeless, unless they have been educated abroad. Foreign men are liable to blunder when they first arrive, as Mexican ladies invariably use a good deal of paint and powder, and their native love of colour and fine clothes renders it difficult for the foreigner to distinguish between the European "demi-mondaine" and the Mexican "haute-monde."

CHAPTER IX

"LO," THE POOR INDIAN

THE Mexican Indian is a hard proposition to understand, and is divided into two distinct classes by the Mexicans themselves—"gente de Razon" and "cerrados"; that is to say, reasonable people who can think and "locked-up ones," with whom it is waste of time to argue, as they cannot follow a line of thought.

"Cerrados" preponderate, and it is maddening to work with them, as for sheer unadulterated cussedness and pig-headed stupidity they are beyond competition. Suppose you are in camp about twenty miles from a big township, and natives carrying on their backs big loads of pottery are passing along your trail daily. For some reason you need pottery, so you stop a laden native and propose to buy part or all of his stock for a much higher price than he will get in the town. The Indian refuses to sell, pleading that "no es el costumbre" (it is not the custom). You can talk till you are blue in the face, pointing out the advantages of selling for a higher price, the lightened load, and

the obvious soundness of the scheme, but never a pot will he sell, because he is absolutely unable to think in logical sequence. In the end he does not want to think, and so, without moving a muscle of his face, he first sponges out all trace of expression and remains smiling or sulky, his face and eyes an absolute blank. To get good work out of these people needs infinite patience and tact—in fact, it is just like training a wild animal.

Their ideas as to proportion and distance are hopeless; they seem incapable of expressing any idea of distance—for instance, a five-mile journey may be described as "cerca" (near by), "muy lejo" (very far), "un pedacito" (a little step), or "todavia falta algo" (it still want some). The despair of the anxious stranger confronted with unknown distances and trails, and dependent upon native information, is absolutely bottomless.

In order to ensure a certain amount of accuracy, the Government have ordered lists of distances to be put up in all the local prefectures; these tables are always very full and hopelessly inaccurate.

Superstition is still rampant, and everywhere survivals of paganism occur. Although nominally a Catholic country, the Indian Catholicism is purely a form of idol-worship, and, in spite of prohibitions, clay gods are to be found side by side with pictures and shrines to the Virgin in most of the native

churches, while sacrifice and propitiation of local deities take many forms.

The passing of Halley's comet caused a wave of reversion to paganism among the natives, and often sacrifices were made secretly outside the church. I myself came across one such offering. Upon a tortilla spiked to the ground with agave thorns lay the head of a white cock and its heart, the latter transfixed with a thorn. Round the tortilla was arranged in a circle the intestine of the sacrifice, and near by was a gourd of water.

Often during the time of the comet white residents in the Mexican interior saw the natives leaving for the secret groves in the bush where the ceremonies were to be held. The men wore plumed head-dresses and were painted like skeletons with white clay, and all night the mysterious ceremonies continued, but no white was allowed to witness them. Afterwards queer stories of missing children were current, and it is an undoubted fact that two girls were sacrificed to the alligator gods of the lagoons.

Nowhere do the old superstitions hold so strongly as in the death and burial rites; these are openly pagan and "los Muertos." All Souls' Day—the feast of the dead—is one of the greatest festivals of the year. The markets are crowded with booths, selling sweets shaped like skulls and coffins, and

an endless variety of baked clay and pasteboard horrors, skull and skeleton pins, etc. These are for the children, to remind them of death, but are really symbols of the old worship of Teomique, the Goddess of Death.

All day during the feast the people go out to picnic in the Dolores Cemetery, where they lay out tables adorned with skulls, candles, and holy water, and, dressed in sombre black, enjoy a picnic upon their relatives' graves.

Funerals among the natives are great "fiestas," and one of the most striking sights of Mexico City, for the Dolores Cemetery is connected up by tram, and all funerals must be carried by the electric car route. These motor-hearses are imposing black-canopied trucks, with a table for the coffin, and are followed by a special car, provided free for the mourners. For expensive funerals and children, white hearses and cars can be obtained; but the black ones are usual, and can be seen every day. They are nicknamed "cucaruchas" (cockroaches), or burying beetles, by the cheerful natives, and, indeed, the sight of these hearses travelling at about thirty miles an hour does little to suggest the dignity of death.

Children are sometimes laid out in state upon a board, dressed in white cerements, and rouged and painted to resemble life, festooned in flowers

and gilt paper. They are carried to the grave, put into coffins in which tortillas, money, and possibly little charms have been stowed, then buried while rockets are fired to heaven by the mourners to announce the departure of the child-soul.

After all, Mexicans set little value on life, and a funeral party resembles for cheerfulness a blend of picnic and of Irish wake, and middle-class graves are only hired for seven years; after that the deceased is dug up and his bones stowed in a cellar, while the grave is let to someone else. Probably, as corpses are usually buried in evening dress, or in their best clothes, they think that with the burial and an occasional picnic on the grave, the deceased is having as much notice taken of him as is necessary.

Native medicine men and women keep up the old superstition, and are great students of astrology and successful in defeating the evil spells of witches. Toothache is cured by applying a patch of snake-skin or prepared black plaster to the temple, and filthy brews of various herbs and insects are taken for all known diseases. Moles and bats and portions of the smaller animals are much in demand for anæmia and love-philtres, while weird amulets and spells may be purchased to defeat the evil-eye or cure the spells of witches.

Witchcraft is universal, and may be divided into

two classes—good and evil. White, or good witches, influence the local weather and cure cattle; they also tell you when to plant seeds and at what time of the moon to transplant seedlings.

Black witches, however, poison and bewitch cattle, overlook children, and blight the crops, besides setting spells on objects of their dislike, causing them to waste away.

One victim of witchcraft that I saw was really suffering from an advanced case of phthisis; another, a coachman, whose horses had been bewitched, had tied up their heads in red flannel. He was dismissed when this artistic effort was discovered by his irate master, who did not believe in the anti-witch efficacy of red flannel.

Scattered all over the Republic are vast family estates controlled from a large headquarters, called the hacienda. These are the equivalent of the castles of feudal times, and the whole atmosphere of the estate is feudalism pure and simple.

The haciendas themselves are enormous historic buildings of adobe and stone, and bear everywhere the mark of ecclesiastical influence. With walls whose thickness reminds one of grey Norman keeps among the English uplands, and their vast courtyards and chapels, endless passages of ill-lighted rooms, and clusters of farm-sheds and offices, the whole swarming with dependents and retainers,

one is transported at once into a medieval atmosphere, where the greatness of the "patron" and the word of the priest control all human interests, lay and spiritual.

The very scent of the air is a blend of farm smells and incense, and within the hacienda every room has its shrine to the Virgin, and in the evening tolls the clanging chapel bell. The peons who work the hacienda land work on peculiar terms—they own no free land, not even the patch on which they build their huts; all is lent to them, and each man has to work for the hacienda for an allotted number of days; on others they work their own small patch.

The village shop—no competition is allowed—is the property of the hacienda, and there the peon must buy everything, even the bare necessities of life. At some haciendas the principle still obtains of paying the people no money, but allowing them credit at the store. This plan is popular, as it makes the men virtually slaves, and the hacienda is sure of effective labour supply, particularly as the "ventena" —the ranch police—have plenary powers, and, like everything else, belong to the hacienda.

The whole system is a marvel of Christianity, economy, and feudal organization. The Indians have to pay in kind for the ground they till, as well as working perpetually for the hacienda for its rent;

thus the proprietor, the haciendado, lives fatly and does nothing except distribute through his agent and his underlings a very little charity, and carefully selected education. It is all most feudal—and most damnable.

The haciendado is the local deity and can do no wrong, so under him flourish all the beauties of the old feudal system, which the English nation abolished with Magna Charta and a Reformation, yet the people who do these things are often gentlemen—natives educated in Europe and frequently related to quite good Spanish families. Personally they are kind and hospitable, yet the hacienda evil goes on, and they are content to let it be as it is, and wonder why it is that revolutions happen.

Apart from this state of oppression and servitude, the life of the natives at the better regulated of the haciendas is not so bad. All their industry is centred in the hacienda, where wheelwrights, smiths, coppersmiths, millers, carpenters, masons, and other trades are continually employed.

Fiestas and saints' days are regularly observed as holidays, and then the peons show the lighter side of their nature, and turn out the local musicians for a "baile," or dance. Some of these dances are survivals of religious or historical ceremonies, and are danced in the most fearsome of carved masks, decorated with horns, tufts of hair, and teeth. These

masks are communal property, and on certain saints' days a set form of dance, representing the stalking and killing of various animals, such as the stag and the jaguar, is carried out as a means of expiating vows to the special saint whose day it is.

The ceremony is much debased, and usually ends in more or less of an orgie, as the hard work makes the dancers thirsty, and the drink increases their licentiousness. For this reason the local authorities do not welcome the attendance of strangers at these functions.

Dancing at these "bailes de hacienda" is a thorough process. All weapons must be discarded and left in charge of the cloak-room keeper, though the stranger will be well advised to keep a small but loaded weapon of some kind concealed about him, leaving the larger and more obvious revolver and belt at the gate. Inside the baile shed is congregated the local populace, old and young; the men in their best charro suits and the girls in their finest rebosos. The musicians are usually a fiddler or two, helped out by exponents of weird local tom-toms and flutes. In the far South marimbas played by four players are the local equivalent for the Pink Hungarian Band.

The music is mixed: barbarous Mexican national airs and the ever-present "Viuda Alegre" ("The Merry Widow"). This tune haunted me from Fez in North Africa to the southernmost parts of Mexico,

where it had just become the rage when I arrived, and to its irritating strains I have watched dances of all kinds and more weird versions of the waltz than ever its composer is likely to see.

Men and maidens dance in pairs opposite one another, executing the difficult and intricate Spanish dances—La Jota and the Bolero—with wonderful grace; while at intervals a Tropic version of the waltz is danced. The fiery Mexican blood leads to trouble over partners, and it is no uncommon thing to see a quarrel end fatally, both parties resorting to the use of the knife, over some real or fancied slight at one of these bailes.

CHAPTER X

FANTASTIC FOOD

One of the most fascinating things in the world is exploring other people's cookery; but it takes nerve to plunge into a gastronomic voyage of exploration in Mexico.

Of course, the staple food is the tortilla, and the seasoning for everything is chilli and garlic. If there was a failure in the chilli crop the Mexican nation would take cold and die in a month.

One day, when I was properly acclimatized to chillies, I asked a Mexican student to take me out to a genuine dinner of native food. He was absolutely horrified at my passion for low life; but eventually seeing prospects of causing me acute anguish and possibly nausea, consented, specifying, however, that we should not feed at a restaurant, but off itinerant hawkers in the streets, and at low eating-houses.

The first treat was "enchiladas," a weird confection of cheese, garlic, and onion, and a liberal dose of chilli sauce, the whole enclosed in a neatly folded tortilla. The ancient dame who sold these was a

mass of rags, and apparently spent most of her time sitting over her brazier—a bucket of live coals with a tin plate on top—peacefully slumbering. Ruthlessly friend Pascual woke her, and she started in to do business.

Wishing to ascertain if the stove was in going order, she spat on top of it, and, instantly reassured by a gratifying sizzle, planked down on the plate two ready prepared enchiladas, which she warmed up for us.

Pascual had his eye on me, and I was too proud to draw back—I ate that enchilada. Really it was not so bad, but I could not help thinking what a splendid qualifying examination it would make for a professional fire-eater. Gasping from the heat of the pepper, I demanded drink: "Pulque!" said my inexorable custodian—"you must have some pulque."

Pulque was not known to the inhabitants of the Old World; if it had been, it would have been included among the plagues of Egypt; it still is one of the plagues of Mexico. This liquor is the fermented juice of the maguey plant, and is brought into Mexico City every morning by train-loads.

All round the city are the endless fields of magueys planted in rows. These plants are known in Europe as "century plants," because they so seldom flower; when they do, they send up a huge spike like a

hop-pole, which if left bursts into a blaze of clustered blossom at the top. To energize this wonderful efflorescence the plant lies quiet for several years, and when it is about to commence, the pulque-gatherer cuts a hole about eight inches in diameter in the base of the plant, utilizing the stored energy of the plant to produce the pulque liquor. In this hole the juice collects; it is called "agua-miel," and resembles honey-water with a bitterish after-taste. A peon collects this by sucking it up into an "acojote" (a flask-shaped gourd), the thin neck of which he pushes into the juice while he sucks a hole in the bottom of the flask.

From the gourd it is put into a goat-skin, which he carries on his back, and transferred to the pulque hacienda, where it is put into tubs and fermented by the addition of a specified quantity of already sour pulque and rennet, which, as a rule, is solemnly blessed by the priest before addition.

Rennet, be it known, is sour, putrid cow's stomach, and the resulting properly fermented pulque is the most revolting drink.

The scent of the stuff is awful, like the worst kinds of cheese blended with the sour alcoholic scent of stale bar-rooms.

All pulquerias, or saloons, where it is sold, reek of it, and all peons love it and smell of it too. A pulqueria is the dreariest drinking-booth in the

world. Imagine a single room with no windows, the walls painted with the name of the saloon, "El Azteco" or "La Reforma de la Constitucion"—anything inappropriate and in many cases Biblical, such as "El Sagrado Corazon de Jesu." The decorations are strings of paper ribbons and rows of jugs and glasses. There are no seats, no comfort, and such is the cheapness of the liquor that the peon can get properly drunk for threepence. Men, women, and children all drink this filth, and will pawn or steal anything to get it.

Pulque is responsible for nine-tenths of the crime in Mexico City, but as the shares of the pulque trust are held by the leading officials, it will be long before it is abolished.

We drank pulque—it was beastly, and I had to confess that Pascual had scored.

Undeterred by this temporary defeat, we prosecuted our search, and turned into a native eating-house in the San Lazaro quarter. Our entry caused a sensation, but I explained the reason of my presence, and became painfully popular. Advice was showered upon us, and the wife of the restaurant-keeper even went to the length of providing a piece of cotton as a table-cloth. I inquired if they could procure axolotl, and saw Pascual wince, for these are newts, a special kind of water-lizard that only lives among the waterways of Xochimilco.

A boy was hastily despatched to the market, but luckily returned empty-handed—axolotl were off.

We started in on "huevos y arros"—eggs and rice. This is a typical Mexican dish, and is really excellent, though the rice is seasoned with dried shrimps, and frequently produces the worst kind of ptomaine-poisoning. Then came the staple Mexican dish, "frijoles" (brown beans served in a thick glutinous brown sauce flavoured with cheese, and eaten by scooping them out on to a toasted tortilla). Forks are not used; one lifts the frijole dish to one's mouth and from it one scoops the tortillas. It is bad manners to speak or put it down before finishing it, but as much noise is made with the mouth as possible—this shows you like it.

As a crowning delight, "mole de guajalote" was served. For this dish, turkey and chilli sauce, a Mexican will commit murder. I am almost inclined to think it worth while, for the combination is delightful, particularly in a climate where nothing in the way of meat is tender.

Pascual was pleased with my approval of Mexican dishes, but rather grieved that I had not suffered more; but he excused this by saying that none of these dishes were really "piquante," and he proceeded to chew green pepper as hot as the edge of the Pit to prove it.

On a later expedition I consumed such weird

delicacies as "tortuja steak" (turtle meat) and baked armadillo; but these are only for Mexican epicures, they are not the food of the peons. Frijoles, tortillas, green corn, and sugar-cane as a treat, are his staple.

Meat is a rarity, and hot meals come but seldom during the month; this possibly accounts for their lack of energy and doubtful power of resistance to disease, for the vegetarian white man is an even easier prey to disease in the Tropics than even the heavy flesh-feeder; it is always the moderate people who survive.

CHAPTER XI

AZTECS AND RUINS

WHEN you first project going to Mexico you naturally begin to think about the Aztecs, and, as a rule, confuse them and Cortez, Drake, and the Incas of Peru into a vague blend of sixteenth-century Latin-American romance. Eventually you separate out Cortez and the Aztecs as genuinely Mexican, and comfort yourself with the idea that when you get there you will know all about them. As a matter of fact you only learn about Cortez, because nobody knows anything about the Aztecs.

Once upon a time there were some Aztecs, but that was only just before the Conquest, and they were merely a military tribe—certainly not the people who are responsible for the vast prehistoric ruins that cover all Mexico and Guatemala. Nowadays "Aztec" remains is the name given to all these monuments of a bygone civilization, which were really built by the Toltecs. This word "Toltec" is nearly as bad as "Aztec," because nobody knows who the Toltecs were, except that they preceded the Aztecs! Authorities differ and advance

theories, but nobody knows definitely whether these so-called Toltecs were the aboriginals of the Mexican plateau, whether they were the original of the Aztec race, whether they came from the North or the South, or whether they ever existed at all! The latter theory is now popular, several scientists having proved that the vanished Toltecs are as fabulous as their gods; but no one knows who built the ruins! For the plain person who is content to call these people "Aztecs" and avoid the archæologists, there is any amount of interest in the Aztec question.

From Mexico City to far Yucatan the country is studded with their temples and "teocalis," or pyramids. These were originally large mounds of clay and adobe bricks, built in terraces; but as the Spaniards wrecked all the temples and forbade the religion, they are now, unless in tourist localities, mere scrub and tree-covered hills amid the jungle.

The fanaticism of the priests destroyed all the popular up-to-date temples where the Mexicans were still carrying on paganism, but luckily they did not bother to destroy the prehistoric temples that had been abandoned and were no longer popular; apparently, as they were not used they were not dangerous.

Having decided that nobody knows who built the temples and initiated the worship of Quetzal-

coatl (the Morning Star), we get to when were they built? This point is still doubtful, but we get more help from the fact that these Aztecs had invented a calendar, and with it dated most of their monuments. Unfortunately they have left no reliable record of when they started this calendar—no zero, no year One. Around this calendar the whole of Aztec civilization revolved. Every day, every hour had its name and its special deity and significance, and all the spiritual and administrative life of the Empire was regulated by this marvellous system. The year was 260 days long, and was divided up into twenty names, or day signs, each of which occurred thirteen times during the year: thus, January the first might be Flower-day the fourth, and January the second Wind-day the second. You would not come across another Flower-day till somewhere in the middle of February.

Briefly, every day had its special name and number, the names or signs for the days being:

1. Cipactli, the Crocodile.
2. Eecatl, the Wind.
3. Calli, the House.
4. Cuetzpalin, the Iguana.
5. Coatl, the Snake.
6. Misquitzli, the Skeleton.
7. Mazatl, the Stag.
8. Tochtli, the Rabbit.
9. Atl, the Water.
10. Istzquintli, the Dog.
11. Ozomatli, the Monkey.
12. Mallinalli, the Twisting Herb.
13. Acatl, the Reed.
14. Ocelotl, the Jaguar.
15. Cuanhtli, the Eagle.
16. Cozcacuahtli, the Vulture.
17. Olin, the Rolling Ball.
18. Tecpatl, the Flint.
19. Cuianitl, the Rain.
20. Xochitl, the Flower.

The actual civil year consisted of 365 days, so the 260 calendar overlapped into next year by 105 days, and they were not aware of Leap Year; the result was that the feasts were always getting badly mixed, and New Year's Day was as movable as our Easter. The Aztecs occasionally missed out a bit of time in order to catch up and straighten things up, but as they left no record of these calculations all their dates are no use, and cannot be calculated out in ordinary years. But it is assumed that the earliest known monuments at Palenque date from A.D. 700 to A.D. 800.

A few codices, or Aztec books, are still preserved, and some of these have with them translations done into Aztec speech by Spanish monks, but written in Roman characters; thus we know something of Aztec theology and tradition.

All Aztec writing was picture-writing, and the codices are long books of leather, or agave paper, covered with a wonderful series of coloured conventional pictures.

The Aztec, or native, languages are still current in Mexico, and they are not in the least alike in words or pronunciation, and exceed some eight hundred known languages exclusive of local dialects!

Most of them, however, have very limited vocabularies, and depend upon inflections of the voice.

As theorists are for ever identifying the Aztecs with the Chinese, the ancient Egyptians, survivors of Atlantis, Mongolian Tartars, and the lost tribes of Israel, they have no difficulty in picking a few words out of most of the eight hundred languages and proving that their theory is correct. Personally I am on the side of the natives, and say with them, "Quien sabe?"

Dead cities in the jungle are only good for the archæologist or the hunter, and much more satisfaction is to be got out of a well-known place, easily accessible and properly explained.

Teotihuacan is only a few miles from Mexico City, not particularly tourist-ridden, and accessible by railroad, where are the two great pyramids of the sun and moon, the remains of the citadel and the Road of the Dead.

The two pyramids are now scrub-covered and somewhat disappointing, though the sun pyramid contains a little stone chamber; from the top a good view of the plain is commanded, and all round one can see the traces of a once populous city, now nothing but little mounds of earth. The Road of the Dead, a causeway over a mile long and about seventy paces wide, is still guarded on either side by ramparts of pedregal lava stone, on which are the remains of little houses and tombs. These have all been rifled of their relics; but

plenty are still for sale, for the Indians seldom plough a field or dig the foundations of a house without finding quantities of little clay Aztec heads and pottery.

Good genuine specimens can be purchased in Teotihuacan village, though occasionally frauds are palmed off upon the unwary, as the natives possess moulds—themselves antiques—from which they turn out modern replicas of the originals.

In the big towns and in the city quantities of faked antiques are for sale, but they are easily detected, being for the most part clumsily made; at the same time, really good curios of all kinds can be picked up dirt-cheap in the pawnshops and the Thieves' Market—this health resort, though nothing to do with Aztecs, is well worth a visit, as good Aztec curios can be found there, as well as more modern but more valuable prizes. At one corner of the Zocalo is this Thieves' Market, where upon stalls is laid out the most tempting array of old junk that the mind of the curio-hunter can conceive: armour, swords, curios, saddlery, sewing-machines, pictures, pottery, flat-irons, and junk. One can buy anything from a steam-engine to a second-hand teething-ring at knock-down prices, but it means hard and determined haggling, and never give more than half the price demanded.

The Indians are clever at faking curios; one tried

to sell me a spear—"late property of Cortez el Conquistador!"—a beautiful weapon that looked remarkably deadly and medieval. It was composed of the point of a modern bayonet set into the inverted conical base of a brass candlestick, the whole mounted on a brass nail-studded spear-shaft.

He was not in the least abashed when I discussed the manufacture of the weapon with him, but he gave me a valuable insight into what people who should know better will buy to take home.

It is sometimes useful to know of a curio-shop where prices are moderate and the goods really genuine; one at least I can recommend, and that is the "Aztec" Curio Store, corner of Gante. The owner is a keen antiquary, and trades direct with the natives, encouraging them to keep to the old Aztecs' methods of dyeing and weaving Zerapes and to eschew aniline dyes. The result is that his goods are sound and durable, where the cheap machine-made stuff will never stand wear, sunlight, or washing.

CHAPTER XII

ARMS AND THE ARMY

THE Mexican army is recruited from the criminal classes, officered from the lower middle and equipped by the upper; the result is sublime comic opera varied by touches of tragedy.

When a person has committed a few prominent crimes of violence and the local "jefe politico" can extort no more money from the malefactor's relations, the "jefe" is forced to adopt the last resort, and sends him to join the battalion for a term of years, thus ridding the "pueblo" of his presence and relieving the feeling of law-abiding citizens by encouraging patriotism.

The strength of the standing army was fixed at 30,000 men, backed by a reserve of 28,000 and a second reserve of 150,000. These were divided into 120,000 foot, 20,000 cavalry, and 6,000 artillery, no provision being made for transport, ammunition, and supply columns, such matters as transport and commissariat being solved by the process of commandeering and living on the country.

The whole arrangement of the War Department

was splendidly Mexican. At the top were eminent generals, whose war service dated from the revolutionary days; below them came a crowd of well-taught young officers who had been cadets at St. Cyr or West Point, and studied at European war schools. The cadets at Tlalpam were taught the goose-step, but the men were armed with "Porfirio Diaz" rifles—a single shot, native-made, bastard Remington action—firelock! Some of the better battalions were equipped with 1901 7-millimetre calibre Mausers, but were never taught to use them properly. The artillery were nominally equipped with Schneider-Canet mountain guns of a very modern type, but more often than not old-fashioned Krupps and obsolete black-powder Armstrongs were the real weapon. As for the machine-guns, they embraced every pattern and every calibre from the mitrailleuse of 1870 to the five-barrelled American 1-inch bored Gatling, from hopper-fed Hotchkiss volley-firers to modern Maxims; but there was no standard weapon and little effective ammunition reserve.

It is often stated that the Mexican army is equipped with the Mondragon automatic rifle, and "gunsharps" in Europe were interested to hear how the automatic behaved under real service conditions. I have often been asked about it, and take this opportunity of explaining once and for all that none

of the troops were armed with the Mondragon. This rifle, which I had the privilege of examining, is not automatic—that is to say, gas or recoil operated; its only approach to this is that by setting the "safety bolt" to a certain position, the mere closing of the bolt fires the cartridge without any touching of the trigger, the inventor's idea being to secure a volume of rapid fire for unaimed use at close quarters.

The cartridge used in the Mondragon is peculiar, consisting of a square-shouldered, rimless cartridge into which the conical bullet of ·22 calibre is deeply sunk. The whole design of the rifle is bad, though interesting from the point of view of novelty. It has no good points of design, ballistics, or practicability to recommend it, being, as it is, in every way a good ten years behind modern European practice.

The mounted Gendarmerie are armed with a queer repeating carbine, made by Piepers of Liége. It has revolving chambers like a revolver and a wood-encased barrel. The whole action is similar to a double-action side-ejecting revolver, but it is a splendid weapon for police use, the calibre (about ·38) making it an efficient stopping weapon, and the low velocity and slight penetration enabling it to be used in streets without danger to the occupants of dwelling-houses. The police also carry the frontier pattern Colt revolver of ·44 calibre, though the

officers of the army are armed with the ·38 automatic Colt.

When on trek, Mexican soldiers are accompanied by their women-folk—"the soldaderas." These are responsible for the comfort and feeding of their men, and carry along with them bundles of tortillas, and wretched fowls slung head downward to their girdles. They are expert thieves, and are not popular with the country-folk.

The most striking force in Mexico are the Rurales, the celebrated Rural Police. After the Maximilian troubles the country was overrun with bandits, and as the forces of law and order could not cope with them, Diaz called many of the leaders together and suggested that they should be organized into a mounted police, something on the lines of the English irregular colonial forces. They were promised good pay and a free hand, and realizing the benefit they joined at once.

It took but a little time to eliminate "bandolerismo," and soon the roads were safe. The Rurales do not often take prisoners; the latter always attempt to escape and are always "shot while escaping." Discipline of an irregular kind is perfect, and the Rurale is honest and reliable, but a bad man to quarrel with. The uniform is a modification of the picturesque "charro" costume of the native vaqueros, and consists of a short jacket of grey

cloth, tight-fitting trousers to match, silver-braided facings, and silver-braided grey sombreros, bearing the initials of their State. They are armed with Remington carbines carried slung across the back, Colt revolvers, loose over the right hip, and a machete attached to the saddle.

The saddle is of the usual Mexican type. This varies according to the part of the Republic in the shape of its horn, but always maintains the same structural characteristics. To a wood frame carved from the solid, panels are attached, and the whole covered with cured raw hide, making a clumsy but very strong and heavy tree. Between the panels is left a wide space to accommodate the horse's withers, and the whole tree is covered in housings of carved leather and fitted with wide stirrup-leathers (adjustable by laces), ending in clumsy leather-covered wooden stirrups ("tapaderos").

Behind the cantle are carried two wallets, and all metal-work and bosses are of silver. The cinches, or girths, of which there are two, are made of plaited horse-hair, as are the bridle and picketing rope. The lariat is usually raw hide or manila, and is carried round the horn or pommel.

Mexican spurs and bits are always of blued steel, inlaid with silver, and very large and severe in appearance. Actually they are not at all cruel, because the horses are ridden more by bridle-rein

A COLONEL OF RURALES

than on the mouth, and as the saddles are so cumbrous, no leg pressure can reach the horse, so a long spur is necessary. A good pair of Mexican spurs should ring to the same note, and really good ones are worth much money—four or five pounds being by no means an unusual price to pay.

A European horseman will find the Mexican saddle abominable, it needing an entirely different seat to that to which he is used. To ride for long on one means great discomfort, as the seat is usually too wide for one's fork, and the stirrups so narrow as to only partially admit the European boot. The English saddle is of little use in mountain country, as, having only one girth, it moves forward and backward upon inclines. The best pattern is a good American double-cinch stock saddle, weighing about thirty-six pounds.

The extra weight is distributed about the horse's withers, and is easier for him than the best English models, besides seldom, if ever, causing sore backs.

CHAPTER XIII

ART AND THE NATIVES

One of the most remarkable things about the Mexican is his wonderful artistic bent. From the earliest days sculpture, painting, and music have flourished, and marvellous jewellery and pottery have been made by uncultured Indians.

In the Maya monuments of Yucatan expression has been converted into a most cast-iron symbolism. For instance, the sign for jaguar has been reduced to a jaguar's ear with the unmistakable rosette spot. It is astonishing, but there is nothing more wonderfully expressive than just this ear; it strikes you at once, and is absolutely unmistakable. They seem to have started on lines similar to the Futurists and Post-Impressionists of to-day, and then rendered down and down till they arrived at the jaguar's ear as a complete expression. It rather leads the unprejudiced observer to wonder if our most modern art will end up in conventional hieroglyphics in spite of the efforts of the inventors to break away from convention.

After the Spanish occupation, when the clerics had finished demolishing native art, they imported artists from Spain to fill their churches and establish schools of more or less clerical art. These were not wildly successful; but as much money was spent on European pictures for the churches, an imitation Flemish school sprang up, of which samples still exist. With the development of the mineral wealth of the country a craze for the importation of art works set in, and Mexico imported Italian and Spanish masters as cheerfully as the Chicagoans do to-day.

Titians, Tintorettos, and Riberas, followed by Murillos, flowed to the New World, and the ecclesiastics soon possessed more art treasures than the Old World churches owned. Slowly this began to influence the latent talents of the Indian mind, and, about a hundred years after, a school of painters developed in Mexico City.

José Ibarra, Miguel Cabrera, Baltaras de Ochave, and Arteaga, all were noted for their work, and a national art, distinctive and founded upon European influence, became established. With the revolutionary period the art collections were scattered or destroyed, sold to raise funds for powder, or hidden and lost. Of what is left little but ecclesiastical subjects survive, but scattered about Mexico are still many art treasures

whose existence is unknown to European connoisseurs.

All art and literature in Mexico's early days fell under the ban of the Church, and, with the Inquisition and the ecclesiastics ruling the land, most of the Indian arts fell into disuse. One notable cleric, Bishop Zumarraga, collected all accessible native codices and writings, which he found to be deeply tainted with the ideas of the devil—and so burnt!

This *auto-da-fe* obliterated Mexican history for good and all. Beyond religious matter little was written for many years until the beginning of the nineteenth century; political agitation began to stir Mexico, and Freemasonry began to spread the cause of liberty. With this awakening came the first crop of Mexican writers; but it was not till some thirty years ago that a national school of writers came into being.

Most Mexican work is fervidly patriotic, and they are now producing excellent poets and novelists, while journalism is exceptionally brilliant and sincere.

Among the Indians, pottery making and modelling is still a predominant art, although here, as usual, the baneful effect of clerical taste and bigotry has destroyed many old-time secrets of craftsmanship. Early Mexican art was wonderful, and the exquisite

design and workmanship of some of the idols, vases, toys, and "caretas" dug up during excavations says much for their civilization. At Puebla, Mexican majolica ware is still turned out, but it is cruder and more vivid than the work of a century ago, when the factories were emulating the imported Spanish majolica. Puebla is still celebrated for tiles, and the newly-built British Legation, the work of the well-known Anglo-Mexican architect, Don Carlos Grove-Johnson, F.R.I.B.A., has a most wonderful hall and staircase decorated by designs in Puebla tiles.

These tiles have a softness of colouring and an iridescent sheen under the glaze that make them of great value in a decorative scheme. The effect of the firing and the irregularities of their surface—for they are hand-made—giving them a depth and richness that is absolutely missing in the regularity and flatness of machine-made tiles.

All the big towns of the Republic have their own speciality in pottery, and it is well worth while collecting specimens of the ware ; but it is unwise to use it, as the lead glaze which is in universal use has undoubtedly poisonous effects.

Of woven fabrics, the only worthy of notice are the serapes or blanket cloaks made all over the Republic. These maintain the traditional Indian designs and are dyed with vegetable dyes. Unfor-

tunately, the ubiquitous German aniline dyes have penetrated to the mountains, and the manufacture of good serapes is fast becoming an obsolete art. For tourists ready-made, machine-woven, aniline-dyed, imitation serapes are imported from Germany.

CHAPTER XIV

OUTFIT—TRAVEL

ANYONE who purposes to travel is always full of questions and doubts concerning outfit, and is more than anxious to know what to take, and, what is more important, what it is better to buy out there, and not have to pay duty upon.

To the person who has not been there Mexico always means Central America, and is vaguely regarded as being a neighbour of Chili and Colombia. Actually it is the tail end of North America, and accessible, either direct from England, or from New York, by rail or sea. This results in one being able to get mostly anything in Mexico City that one can get in any American or European capital.

Clothes depend upon where, in the Republic, you are going, as it is all different altitudes—from perpetual snow to tropic jungle. If you propose to tour about you will need a fairly comprehensive outfit. For Mexico City light summer clothes are the best, medium weight underwear, and shirts which can be worn with belt or cummerbund, and no waistcoat, after the American fashion. An over-

coat is necessary in the evenings, and solar topees are not needed—an ordinary straw hat or panama being ample protection against the sun. Most important of all is a cholera belt—about six feet of red flannel strip, six inches wide, wound round the abdomen. Red flannel is undoubtedly the best—why I do not know, but there is some mystic value in the colour that beats all other devices hollow; true, the colour at first comes out, and discolours your vest, but for all that I personally swear by red flannel, and refuse all others.

The cholera belts of commerce that one buys in shops are useless, as they are not thick enough to be of service, and expand in the wash till they fail to retain their position; also they are expensive, while my cholera belts cost about ninepence each, can be got anywhere, and last for years.

Riding-breeches should be of light khaki twill or white drill; the latter are cooler, but need washing after one day's use, as saddle soap discolours them. For the sea-coast and the Tropics white drill suits, and lots of them, are the only cool wear; for out-door work khaki or Burberry shooting-kit is the best. Personally I believe in the cow-punchers' and frontiersmen's shirt and no coat for outdoor work; as for headgear, the "Stetson" is the one and only hat. It must be a genuine "Stetson," and although costing about twenty-five shillings, it will last for

ever, and never let rain come through. For tropical rain a real waterproof is essential—no "raincoat" or fabric will withstand the downpour.

A cow-puncher's oilskin "slicker" is the best for riding purposes, as it is built to cover the saddle and keep the whole of the wearer and his outfit dry; but it is unlovely and rather heavy, and cannot be bought in England, although they only cost about fifteen shillings in the States.

The boot question is one of great importance, for the Mexican stirrup will not admit a wide-soled outdoor English boot. It is better to wear a rather pointed riding-boot with solid leather legs than the stouter lace-up pattern "field-boot." For walking, any light English or American boot will do. Shoes are to be avoided, as the mosquito steers immediately for the exposed ankles, and poisoned sores may lay one up for a week or more.

Apropos of mosquitoes, never travel without a "pabellon," a mosquito-net—not the type sold at outfitters' and really looking like a net, but an enormous cone of cheese-cloth with no apparent meshes. Bought nets are futile, and need special jointed rigging; but a big cone, or "pabellon," can be tied up to a nail in the wall or ceiling, and then spread entirely over the bed and sleeper. Lotions to frighten away mosquitoes are of little use, as they evaporate so quickly; but ladies may find them useful

when wearing garments so thin as to afford no protection against mosquitoes. The best is a stuff called "Muscatol," which has a pleasant odour, and can be bought at any big shop in London. Keating's is useful, as Mexican trains and hotels are peculiarly verminous, and the native is a host to all the plagues of Egypt. In spite of personal cleanliness, even the best people may pick up a stray insect or so; but a petrol hairwash will clear the situation, while calomel ointment will rid the person of jungle ticks and other pests, and it is as well to know these remedies.

The Mexican washerwoman is a beast, and the Chinese lavador a good second. You send a new shirt to the wash, and it comes back without buttons and torn to rags. This is because the wash-lady takes it out to the river, or more likely a dirty pond, and hammers it between two stones, till every button is pulverized. In the big cities there are steam laundries; they are expensive, but worth patronizing, as the boiling sterilizes one's clothes, and there is no fear of the infections that are spread by the Chinese and native methods of washing. All white drill suits should have detachable buttons; these should be detached before sending to the wash, from which they never return.

For a sportsman a twelve-bore shot-gun and a rifle are ample battery; but the rifle should not be

an English one, as no cartridges can be obtained for it. Any American weapon will do—Winchester, Marlin, Remington, or Savage—but it should be either a carbine or a saddle-gun, and of small calibre and high velocity, such as the well-known 30-30 or ·303 Savage (*not* the English army cartridge, but a special American sporting cartridge). I personally believe in the ·303 Savage saddle-gun as the best weapon for Latin-America or the States. Fitted with ivory sights for bad lights, which change to globe and orthoptic for long ranges, you have a weapon with a very low trajectory, very high velocity, and suitable for any range. The simplicity of the mechanism and the revolving box magazine and under-lever action make it a quick, reliable, and compact weapon.

Automatic rifles are to be avoided, and the automatic pistol, unless of large calibre, is not over-reliable. In the Tropics explosives deteriorate quickly, and a miss-fire or a jam in an automatic may cause you to lose valuable time at a moment when you need your pistol exceedingly badly. In a revolver the next chamber will come round and you do not lose half the time that you do when a miss-fire occurs in an auto.

The big pistol is the best, and a ·45 or ·44–40 Colt can be depended on, but for the occasional traveller a ·38 hammerless Smith and Wesson or Colt Positive will be easier to carry and quite

efficient; three twenties of any kind are too small to be effective. While travelling the revolver is carried openly in a belt holster, but in towns it must be concealed; it is well to have one for ostentation if necessary; but if a man is shot, leave Mexico at once, and write to someone to send your things on afterwards. This is not because homicide is disapproved of, but because the white man has little chance in a Mexican court, and will be bled of all his money, even if he does not die of disease in gaol during the months or years before his "trial." It is better to kill than to wound if you are forced to defend yourself, as you have time to get away before the laws begin to operate. The penalty is the same in either case.

The golden rule in Mexico is, "When in doubt or trouble try a bribe." Five dollars to a policeman will save you having to bribe the commissario with fifty. Using one's fists is also a serious offence, for if you draw blood—from nose or mouth—it is the same as if you had stabbed a man. The native is seldom troublesome, but white men of other nationalities are sometimes turbulent, and the miner down on a bust, or the rancher in his cups, can start trouble mighty quick. Never butt into anybody's trouble, or it becomes your own property at once. Never render first aid or interfere with a corpse, or you become a witness, and may be detained for months.

A good medicine-case is a sound thing to carry. Calomel, aspirin, quinine (5-grain tabloids), Collis Browne's chlorodyne, boracic acid, and liver pills are about all that is needed; but as native food often disorganizes the digestion, salol and soda mint are good to carry as well. For poisoned bites hot bread poultices are the only thing that works, and a snake-bite pencil—lancet one end, permanganate the other—may come in useful for scorpion or snake bites. A good antiseptic should be carried: "chinosol" is sound and easy to handle, as it is non-poisonous and non-corrosive. Ointments are to be avoided, as they melt in the heat and leak out, messing up everything in the case. Compressed bandages and cyanide gauze and lint are sound, also an eye-bath for inflamed eyes.

Opium pills of 1 grain are good if you are far away from aid and anæsthetics. All the above, except chlorodyne and chinosol, can be got of Burroughs and Wellcome, whose tabloids can always be relied on. The chlorodyne must be Collis Browne's; the others do not work, although the people who have never had to use them swear that they are better. Ninety-nine out of a hundred travellers will swear by Collis Browne, and, after all, they probably know what they are talking about. Calomel and chlorodyne taken early prevent tropical colic, and diarrhœa from turning into dysentery.

Never neglect the slightest trouble in the Tropics, or it is sure to get worse; indigestion changes to gastric ulcer, and scratches refuse to heal.

Camp outfit can be bought as cheaply in Mexico City as in London, and you save freight. The Customs are not obnoxious, and a "peso" to the inspector will probably see you through without hindrance. To get to Mexico you have the choice of the Royal Mail or a German line; if possible take the former, but on no account go by any of the other English lines, whose boats are cargo tramps with room for about twenty passengers. On these boats the food is vile and the accommodation abominable. They charge first-class fares for steerage comfort, and should be avoided at all costs.

The Ward line from New York can be well recommended, and the trip via Havana is well worth while. The boats are cool and comfortable, and the food and service good and not at all expensive. Railroad through from New York to Mexico City is a hot and trying journey, although much quicker than the sea voyage. Travelling expenses are about a pound per day, but it can be done much cheaper if you speak Spanish, and are not particular as to first-class accommodation.

A slight knowledge of Spanish is essential if you are to travel in the interior. The best way is to learn as many necessary words and phrases

as possible. Don't attempt grammar, but stick solidly to phrases and nouns. It does not matter how incorrectly you speak, as the natives are quick-witted and usually grasp your meaning; they are also polite and do not laugh at your errors.

The rainy season (June to September) is the best time for Mexico City, but just after the rains is best for the Tropics. Up to 3,000 feet the country is "tierra caliente"—tropical; then comes the "tierra templada," or temperate zone, which is the best all-round climate; then the "tierra fria," at about 6,000. In the "tierra fria" everything is rather upset—hot days and frosty nights, northers with snow, or blazing hot dust-storms. Food requires special cooking, and health is doubtful. At that altitude the strain on the heart is heavy, and colds change to pneumonia, which is usually fatal. Another peculiarity is nerve trouble due to the altitude and intense sun. A change to a lower level for a rest every six months is a necessity if you wish to keep well.

Game in Mexico is plentiful, but not always easy to reach. Everybody will assure you that there is "mucho venado," but this does not imply any real truth in the statement; it is merely due to a sporting desire to please. "Tigre," or jaguar, is the biggest prize, though bears are found in the north. All jaguars and tiger-cats are called "tigre" or

"tigrito," irrespective of whether they are really "gatos de montes" or *bona fide* "tigres." Actually there are jaguars, ocelots, and many different kinds of tiger-cats. Pumas are called "pumas" or "leoncillo," and in the Sierras of Chiapas the rare "felis yaguarondi" is to be found.

The ordinary Mexican deer and whitetails are common, and in the north the blacktail is met with. Wild pig ("jabali"), peccary, coyotes, wolves, racoons, armadillos, sloths, tapir ("anteborussa"), ant-eaters ("formigueros"), alligators, and snakes of all kinds, including the dreaded water-boa, or "camouti," are to be found. As for birds, practically all kinds of water-fowl, quail, partridge, pheasants, and wild turkeys are to be found. On the Guatemalan frontier the quetzal, the royal bird of the Aztecs, can be found: it has a vivid metallic green plumage, and is of a very retiring nature, living for the most part in deep jungle, and very rarely shot.

Skins can be tanned very well and cheaply in Mexico City, but the natives spoil heads and skins if not carefully watched while skinning. It is best to dress and dry the skins with alum and arsenic, and when dry dip in paraffin oil to keep out insects.

Tarpon-fishing at Tampico begins in December and runs till May; the cost of fishing, hire of boat, etc., is about a pound a day, but the hotels cater

specially for fishermen during the season, and inclusive terms can be got, though arrangements should be made well in advance.

Films and all photographic necessaries can be got in Mexico City, and it is better to buy them fresh than to bring them over. The light is good, but exceedingly tricky, often seeming much stronger than it really is. Good average work can be done with one-twenty-fifth exposure and a No. 8 diaphragm, and the vivid contrast of high lights and subject can be overcome by photographing against the light. For views it is necessary to stop down well, and it must be remembered that in the Tropics a long exposure is often necessary.

Films should be kept in sealed tin canisters, and plates and film-packs avoided, as the damp heat deforms the emulsion on plates and makes film-packs sticky. Developing in the hot country is almost impossible, and films should be sent to Mexico City at once; if you wait to do them on your return they are usually spoilt with the damp.

For the traveller Mexico is a charming country, and offers boundless possibilities to the artist and pleasure-seeker, archæologist, or tourist, and to people in search of something entirely different to everywhere else; it is one of the most charming of countries, and, although one of the oldest civilized countries in the world, it is still one of the least

known, and even in parts still unexplored. Adventure and romance are still to be found, and the primitive is within a day's journey of the railroad. In Mexico there is still the spirit of the early days of the West and places little changed since the advent of Cortez. The country exerts a spell over all those who have ever visited it, and yet on every hand civilization of the modern kind is making vast strides of progress. It would be well to visit Mexico before it is too late.

CHAPTER XV

"EL FOXCHASE"

I HAD not been long in Mexico City before I met an enthusiastic horseman. He strolled in my rooms to borrow something, saw a pair of riding-boots, and stayed to talk horse. The upshot of it was that I was invited to join the Cosmopolitan Riding Club and attend a "foxchase."

My friend explained the rules of "El Foxchase" as practised in Mexico City. There were no foxes and no hounds; a drag had been tried, but the altitude with its sharp night frosts and morning sun was fatal to the scent. The idea of a gallop still remained, and the "sport" was obtained by fastening a silver-mounted fox brush on to the left arm of an ambitious horseman, who was chased by the remainder of the club.

The course was carefully laid out, and jumps arranged at intervals of a few hundred yards, while the natural river-beds of the country formed a series of formidable obstacles.

The meet took place in the Chapultepec Park at eight o'clock on Sunday morning, and the field

began to turn up. To English eyes the whole proceeding was a brilliant burlesque. The weird horses and the still weirder costumes of the riders belonged to either the circus or Margate sands—no hunt on earth had ever been so brilliant in costume.

The members of the hunt rode in the regulation "pink"—a pink of a hue never seen in England—actually a dull claret colour. Here and there a man was dressed in sky-blue or green—a visitor from some other club whose hunting colours were different. The majority wore little black velvet hunting-caps or white sun-helmets, but the actual crux came over the question of riding-breeches and boots.

Some wore ready-made German riding-breeches "cut on English model"—remarkable garments resembling balloons. Others wore ordinary trousers, brown gaiters, and black boots. Here and there was someone disguised as a stage explorer in tight-fitting khaki drill and manifold belts and pockets. A little group of Mexican officers and cadets in full uniform, members of the Military Riding Club, completed the picture.

The horses chafed and snorted while much tightening of girths and shortening of stirrups went on among the nervous riders. We were waiting for the arrival of the master. The master is newly elected for each meet, and his duties are to keep back the field and see that no one breaks the rules.

EL FOX CHASE

Anyone passing the master is fined five dollars, and as many of the members cannot hold their horses (often ex-steeplechasers) this rule considerably augments the revenue of the club. The "fox" is not allowed to be caught till the end of the run, when everybody who has jumped all the obstacles is eligible to compete as a "hound," and attempt to tear the brush from the "fox's" arm.

Finally, the master arrived. He was an elderly Mexican of aldermanic proportions. Flushed with pride in his raiment, but insecure in his English saddle, he saluted the assembled company. Behind him rode a gentleman wearing a French horn, bandolier fashion, across his shoulder.

We all formed up to be photographed, and with much shuffling got into line. Enterprising reporters sped up and down, taking our names for the Press notice. At last we moved off.

Through the slums of Mexico City to the open country beyond our procession took its way. Wondering peons gazed amazed at the weird cavalcade, a solemn Englishman in full and correct hunting kit attracting much attention. Eventually the starting-place was reached.

The "fox" led off, with three brilliant refusals, his mount objecting to leaving the party. Finally he got away. Midst clouds of dust the field—about fifty strong—charged the carefully built hurdle

jumps that would accommodate, possibly, four horses abreast. Under the onslaught the fences were pounded flat, and the mob surged on. I was in the first flight, and rode for my life. Behind me the field behaved like a circus. Men on horses they could not hold swung round in wide circles to avoid passing the master and incurring a five-dollar fine.

Soon we had half a dozen empty saddles, the riderless horses careering ahead. The field tailed out, and it was possible to ride without being ridden over. The sun was fierce, and the whole hunt grey with powdery dust. Down their faces the sweat had trickled, making little runlets through the coating of dust.

An accident happened about half-way through the run. A young German was thrown and dragged. Half the field stopped to watch and give assistance, the other half swept on. Eventually we came in sight of the white tents erected for the hunt breakfast, and in a wide meadow we pulled up on the heels of the panting "fox."

After a wait to allow the remainder of the field to come up, all those who had successfully taken the jumps ranged in a line, and on the master giving the word, raced to catch the "fox." He rode in circles, and eventually two enthusiastic "hounds" having ridden at him from opposite sides, he was hurled out of his saddle. The master decided that

he could keep the brush, having successfully "gone to earth."

Breathless and dusty, the hunt dismounted, and throwing their reins to native grooms, entered the tents. Here an enormous meal, with drink of every kind, was awaiting us, and a native band of blind musicians played excruciating music.

The hunt breakfast was a real "quarry," and the company fell to with a will, consuming enormous quantities of beer and light German wines. Soon the breakfast was demolished, and cigars and cigarettes were handed round. It was proclaimed by the master that all "hounds" who felt equal to it might compete in a jumping competition for prizes provided out of the club funds.

As the horses had now recovered their wind, the leading heroes of the club regretfully put down their drinks and got ready to compete. The peons hastily arranged a few jumps and retired to consume the remains of the hunt breakfast.

The jumps were none of them more than a metre high, but still they caused several casualties, as the riding was deplorable. At last a man, riding a horse with a cast-steel mouth, to which he clung with the fear of despair, managed to clear all the jumps and was awarded first prize. The second and third prizes were given on points, and as the judges kept no lists, the two other competitors were awarded

prizes. They were genuine supporters of the Hunt Club, and one of them owned his horse. Such a distinguished person must receive a prize! About eleven o'clock the party broke up, and rode back to the city in time to wash and change. The bull-fight or the races claimed us all, for in Mexico these are Sunday amusements.

Mexico has the largest bull-ring in the world, and the ambition of every small boy of the lower classes, and of some degenerates among the upper, is to be a bull-fighter. "Toreros" (bull-fighters) are very popular indeed; they are looked upon as supermen by the votaries of the bull-ring, but by ordinary common-sense folk are regarded as unspeakably nasty. Luckily they seldom live long.

The torero is undeniably brave when he faces a bull, but this is about the only good point he has. He is immoral to a degree unbelievable to those who have not examined police records, and usually an uneducated man from the lowest possible class. Between the average torero and a Parisian Apache there is no gap.

Bull-fights are disappointing when regarded as a spectacle. A lot of drivel has been written about the pageantry of the bull-ring and the wonderful dignity of its barbarism.

It is fascinating, of course; but you do not grudge the successful matador the applause that greets a

clean kill or a daring feat, but for anyone to be impressed by the dirty howling mob, redolent of garlic, oranges, and cheap cigarettes, is inconceivable.

The exasperated little black bulls come tearing in to be killed, and the poor old blinded horses are forced up to them to be slaughtered, for a bull is not excited enough till he has blood on his horns. The scent of blood fills the hot amphitheatre; six bulls are slaughtered and a dozen horses or so. The corpses lie about in the arena till dragged away by mules. Sometimes a torero gets wounded, and by a special providence a wound from a bull's horn is usually so septic as to prove fatal.

The native Mexicans are so addicted to "Los Toros" that the bull feast is regarded by the Government as a dangerous gathering, for, inflamed by the copious slaughter, the audience frequently riots, so every "corrida" has a regiment of soldiers on duty: you see them all over the amphitheatre, and the sunlight glints on their loaded rifles. It is not so many years back to the public *auto-da-fé* of the Holy Office, and to the human sacrifices of these Aztecs. Indian nature is slow to change, but the public are educated enough to regard the bull-ring as a modern substitute for the reeking sacrifice on the Teocalli.

Racing in Mexico is on a very sound basis, the control being vested in the Jocky Club de Mexico,

an institution founded on the same lines as the British, and exercising the same functions with regard to racing.

Unfortunately the lower-class Mexican is not so interested in racing as he is in bull-fighting, but it must be admitted that horses come next in favour.

The Jockey Club has a splendid race track—La Condesa—situated in the best quarter of the city; and race meetings are held every Sunday during the season. These gatherings are always brilliant, and represent the best element in Mexico.

At the Mexican Derby the President attended the racecourse in state, and everybody of importance in the social and official world could be found in the grand stand. Mexican ladies wearing Parisian clothes and marvellous jewellery. Mexican men in their best, honouring the occasion with top hats. There was every variety present: veterans from the period of 1860, others the latest thing from London or Paris. It was a marvellous education in the way of hats. In Mexico a topper lasts for ever, as it is only used on great occasions; so its presence at the racecourse showed that racing was regarded as a function of the same importance as a marriage or a funeral. The horses are not at all bad—most of them import Kentucky stock; the Derby candidates, of course, are bred in the country. Mexicans are a

little bit uncertain about the rules governing blood-stock, and one wealthy Mexican, when in the States, bought a thorough-bred colt by the well-known sire "Yankee." He was bitterly disappointed when he found that he could not enter a gelding for the Derby.

There are many good steeplechases open to gentlemen riders, and the weights are by no means low. When one considers the fact that Mexico City is some 8,000 feet above the sea-level, and that the air at this altitude is very rarefied, the horses make pretty fair time. It is also hard work for the jockeys.

Book-makers are not allowed, but the Jockey Club has established pari mutuels. These do a thriving business, and heavy betting is the rule rather than the exception. Much has been urged against horse-racing, but it is by no means a bad thing for a young man in the Tropics, where other active pursuits are out of the question. Your rider must keep fit and in training, and this is more likely to keep him in good health than a complete case of mixed medicines. The regular morning gallop and the atmosphere of the stable is not half as bad as many other relaxations that are attractive to youth. As for the betting, it is perfectly certain that the riding man is usually the one who bets least. He knows more of the game.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAN WHO DISLIKED BULL-FIGHTERS

THE European Colony in Mexico City was inflamed against the bull-fighting element. There is no need to go into details, but an episode concerning a white girl had taken place—the punishment for which in Mexico was a fortnight's imprisonment, and which would have incurred a sentence of penal servitude for life in England, or a speedy lynching in the States. It was then that I received a visit from Pulteney.

My acquaintance with him was of the slightest. We had once travelled up from Vera Cruz together, and had met possibly twice since.

I was reading in my rooms when he came in, bringing with him a friend. The friend he introduced with a wave of the hand as "This is Johnny Trott, our smelter foreman," and Pulteney rushed headlong into an explanation of the object of his visit to Mexico City. It appeared that he and his friend had a hobby that was unusual, and that I was invited to join in the game.

The object of the night centred round bull-

fighters. Bull-fighting is the most popular sport in Mexico, and leading toreros are regarded as demi-gods. They are usually in hard training and have the reputation of being bravoes of the worst type, frequently forcing quarrels on strangers and carrying weapons that ensure a speedy ending. Altogether in an Englishman's eyes they are about as undesirable a set of blackguards as can be imagined. The lower-class Mexicans regard them as heroes, just as an English newsboy looks up to a professional footballer.

The bull-fighter dresses in a distinctive manner, and wears a hat which resembles an English straw hat in shape, but is made of felt. This is pushed down over his brows in order to show the pigtail on the back of his head. This is the distinctive badge of the professional bull-fighter. It was these little pigtails that Johnny Trott collected.

It seemed evident that Pulteney and Trott had no idea of the danger of their scheme, so I expatiated on the reputations of the toreros and their ability with the knife. With a pained expression Pulteney informed me that this was no frivolous whim, but a serious enterprise which they had tried before. They had already secured three of the coveted trophies. He was not a subscribing member of the S.P.C.A., but merely a crusader.

I flatly refused to join in any such foolhardiness :

but when I was presented with a beautiful black cloak and found that even if I did not join them I could not dissuade them, I gave way gracefully and promised to adopt the rôle of spectator.

We were all wearing the garb of adventure—the Spanish capote. It has the advantage of leaving your arms free, and wrapped around the left is a shield useful to guard knives. A lovely disguise, too, as with hat pulled well down and cloak muffled up, little can be seen of the wearer.

Attired as three comic-opera conspirators we set out, first arranging a rendezvous at the Miners' Club, in case we had to separate. Johnny Trott carried not a delicate pair of barber's scissors, but an eight-inch knife. He said that he preferred it for hair-cutting; as, if a bull-fighter turned nasty, it gave him a more pleasing sense of security. I carried a serviceable revolver, but this was only for a last resort.

We soon reached a café noted for its bull-ring clientele. It was seldom entered by any white people. "Gringos," as Europeans are called in Mexico, were not popular, and to enter that café was to be certain of being insulted openly or even attacked by some of the customers.

Pulteney selected a table not too far from the door, and we ordered coffee. The room was misty with cigarette smoke, and the click of the counters

sounded from the back of the room. Gambling is forbidden in Mexico City, but even the police knew better than to interfere with the café of the Three Cats.

Our entry passed unobserved till someone noticed that we were talking in English, then things began to happen. The men at the next table began to talk in loud tones and the word "Gringo" could be heard. My friend took no notice. Encouraged by this the conversation got more sultry. Finally a bull-fighter, accompanied by two satellites, moved across till he was directly opposite our table. He leant over and struck a match on the marble surface. Dead silence fell in the café as everyone waited for the coming insult. Trott's face wore a sweet smile. Pulteney looked perfectly unconscious. I felt a tight feeling across my temples, and my stomach seemed to shrink up, leaving a feeling of deadly emptiness.

The torero lit his cigarette, slowly inhaled a puff of smoke, then suddenly blew into Trott's face and hissed at him one burning Spanish comment.

Trott's enormous brown paw caught the torero round the nape of the neck, and before he could move, his legs flew under him, and he sprawled face downwards across the table. With the crash of the falling crockery the spell of silence was broken; everyone jumped up and a general mêlée took place.

Pulteney threw one of the torero's satellites against the other, and I was busily engaged in preventing interference by the occupants of the table on my right. Trott took no notice of the surrounding skirmish, but proceeded with his work of sawing off the pigtail in spite of his victim's wild struggles to be set free.

The fat was now fairly in the fire; there were curses, and shouts of "Muera los Gringos!" Waiters flew about, and men left their tables, crowding to the scene of the row. At the back of the room the red flash from a pistol cut across the smoke, and some plaster fell from the ceiling. With a wild rush they panicked to the door and jammed — a struggling mass in the entrance. Someone threw a heavy porcelain match-stand, which missed me by the fraction of an inch, and smashed one of the big mirrors.

Trott shouted above the noise of fight, "Righto! All clear!" and picking up chairs, we piled into the crush at the door. Behind us the mob crashed the tables to the floor. In half a minute we were out in the street and into the arms of a crowd, on the skirts of which appeared the uniform caps of the police.

We stood not on the order of our going—but we went—separating in case of pursuit, but all to meet again at the Miners' Club. My last view of the café of the Three Cats was a solid phalanx of police in

the doorway using their clubs on the frenzied mob who were trying to break out!

We met again at the Miners' Club, and, while our thirst was slaked in the smoke-room, the tale was told to a delighted audience. This new game was distinctly thirsty work for the Tropics. We got washed, tidied ourselves up, and waited for the excitement to subside.

Trott being pleased with himself and flushed with success, he insisted on repeating the exploit, this time at the "Casa d'Or." The "Golden House" was a lively all-night café situated in one of the gayest suburbs of the city. It was the Latin-American equivalent of a celebrated Montmartre restaurant.

We were reinforced by two men from the club—Cartright and Marlake—and packing into a couple of cabs, drove off in search of adventure.

The restaurant was a typical Mexican house. Tables were set in an open courtyard, or patio, and on the first floor was a wide gallery, where small tables were set for foods and drinks. The iron railings that guarded the edge of this balcony were hung with flower-pots, and from it the people above could look down upon the people feeding below.

Everything was very luxurious. Cool fountains played into marble basins full of water-lilies, and the strains of a band came from the dancing-rooms

that opened off the gallery. The decorations were exclusively red plush and gold.

When we arrived everything was in full swing. People of all nationalities, and girls of every shade of colour, from a Hayti half-bred to a blonde Flamande, were seated in the gallery. At a big table in the patio sat two toreros and their jackals, with several ladies. The head of the table was taken by a young Mexican connoisseur of bull-fighting, who was evidently paying for the feast. As we entered the dining-room one of the toreros sprang to his feet, and seizing the chair of the girl next to him, tipped her with it into the basin in the fountain. His companions all screamed with laughter at the sight of the poor bedraggled creature. All was gaiety and mirth.

Then we took a hand. The table went over bodily as Trott and Pulteney tackled a bull-fighter apiece. Marlake and Cartright took charge of the jackals, and as I was merely a spectator, the gilded youth fell to me. The waiters and chuckers-out fell upon us in a body, but the ladies clung to them, and swore like cats in blistering Spanish. My young exquisite tried to brain me with an empty champagne bottle, and other parties began to cheer on the show, and pelt raiders and raided with rolls and fruit.

The noise of the battle rose, and Trott had sawn

off his adversary's pigtail, and was going to Pulteney's assistance, when Marlake received a knife stab in his arm. Up till now the game, though rough, had not been serious; with the flash of the knife the whole complexion of matters changed.

From the door came the hoarse challenge of the police, and the sound of clubs hammering on the big doors. It was time to move. A straight blow or two cleaned up the remainder, and we went in a body for the gallery stairs. At the foot of these a diversion took place. A Mexican who had been shouting "Death to the Gringos!" and dancing on a chair, attracted the notice of a giant German, who threw him bodily at the advancing police, and joined a group with a yell.

There were no other white men down below, and together we gained the gallery. Here a panic was in progress. With shouts of "Police!" and screams from the girls, everything was in an uproar, and the music of the band stopped short. From the ballrooms and the private rooms came Americans and Britishers, Germans and Swedes, all ready for a scrap, and all pleased at the excitement.

A pistol squibbed off down below, and a big lumberman in the gallery shot twice at a cluster of electric lamps; pieces of the shades fell tinkling on the tiled floor of the patio.

Below, the police were arresting the bull-fighters,

and a group of police officials were visible in the porch. An officer called on us to surrender, and led his squad to the foot of the stairs to arrest us! Then came the "great idea." Someone dropped one of the decorative pots on the bunch. We used the flower-pots as missiles, and with shouts of joy the white men began to hurl these down on to the police below. Plants, shards, and earth fell on the enemy; they replied with a shot or two, which drew from us a return fire. A policeman yelped and dropped his shattered pistol-arm, turned and ran for the door. The others followed him, and the restaurant roof rocked to our laughter, as a big electroplated soup-tureen chased the officer down the hall. Subdued by our mixed fusillade, the police took cover in the porch.

Matters were now serious, and demanded organized work. The girls were shrieking in the rooms, or huddled together in corners, hiding their jewellery in their stockings. Automatically we took command, and with laughter and cheerful cursing set to work to get out of the row with whole skins. The enemy had developed a policy of siege, and outside the blowing of whistles and the murmur of a crowd was audible. Pulteney and I went to a window overlooking the entrance, and saw the street lined with police and a semicircle of mounted men drawn up round the door, while at each end of the street the

lamps shone on the carbine barrels of other mounted pickets. The windows were all clustered with faces, as the occupants of the houses looked out on the fun. A bullet smashed a pane of glass in the window, and passed between us, and a yell rose from the street. We retreated hurriedly, and as we did so, heard the clanging of a fire-alarm bell in the distance.

All Mexico was humming like a hive of angry bees. A waiter was caught, and we inquired for a side door. Yes, there was one, but it was next to the front door, and opened into the street; so there was no escape that way. Led by Pulteney and Trott, a party made a quick survey of the premises and found that we were caged. Every window was barred with iron, and the walls were thick; the roof higher than the surrounding houses and leading nowhere. Startled at the news, we looked at each other with serious faces.

At this juncture a little Cuban girl stepped forward and said that if the señores would follow her she could show us a way. As for those dirty pigs of police, etc., etc.

She led us to a small barred window looking out on to the flat roof of the house immediately behind the restaurant. If we could get the bars out we were safe. A wrecking party set to with a will, but the stout iron bars resisted till the giant German

broke the top off a marble table, and used the iron pedestal as a crowbar. We watched the bars bend and then tear loose from the brickwork; in a few minutes the way was clear, and a party led by Pulteney and Cartright set out to find the way. Marlake, with his arm wrapped in a napkin, and the little Cuban girl clinging to him, were the next to go, and all the ladies followed, several Mexicans having to be taught the politeness of letting ladies go first.

A thunderous summons from the street drove some of us back to the firing line, and a few pistol-shots kept the police from rushing the door. An American in evening dress stood by the main switchboard, and put out one set of lights after another, while silently the besieged evaporated through the back window. Trott and I and the switchboard man came last, keeping up a deafening racket to deceive the police, till we reached the escape window. Quickly we fled over the roofs and descended through the house of a respectable Mexican, who with his family was gazing in astonishment at the mad procession filing down his stairs. At his elbow stood Pulteney with drawn revolver ensuring silence during the flight.

Bruised, dusty, and happy beyond belief, we tumbled out into the street, and, later, woke the

sleepy steward of the Miners' Club to hear the story of the man who disliked bull-fighters.

The morning train bore Pulteney and Trott back to their mine, and one leaving half an hour later carried me to Cuernavaca. I found the air of Mexico City a good deal too exhilarating—for that week at least.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LOWER ORDERS

THE back-wash of the world drifts eventually down to Central America. There you can find men who have been in every country under the sun, just natural born tramps and wanderers. The line of the railroad is their highway, and as the iron roads push farther down towards the Equator they are followed by their slaves. The American has a lovely series of names for them: they are all "bums"—that is to say, profitless accepters of charity—but those that are professional tramps are called "hoboes," and the criminal "hobo" is a "yeg."

Drink is cheap in Mexico: for ten cents a man can get enough cane spirit, or "tequila," to be drunk for twenty-four hours. As no white man can refuse charity to another destitute white man in a coloured country, thirsty tramps thrive in Mexico and Guatemala, till they are picked up dead outside a native village.

Like birds, they are migratory, and in the winter come south in search of warmth, travelling on

freight trains over the border, or landing from cargo steamers at Manzanillo or Salina Cruz. In the United States and Canada there is little charity, and work-shy men who fear the austerities of railroad construction or lumbering, drift to the Tropics, where for a white there is no manual labour; they soon discover charity, and become members of the "hobo" fraternity.

The shameless swell usually calls upon the Consul (or if it be the Capital, the Minister) to do something for him. In some cases he arrives first class, puts up at the best hotel, carries letters of introduction to the best people, and has only about 100 dollars in the world. This money is at once spent on unnecessary extravagances; after that he tries to live on his acquaintances.

On one occasion a little group of "hoboes" were sitting in the shade of a water-tank by the side of a railroad track in Southern Mexico, and an analysis of their various callings revealed the fact that one was an ex-German cavalry officer, one an ex-English Guardsman, and also, of all things, claimed to be an aviator; the third was an expert surveyor and a hopeless drunkard; the fourth claimed a medical degree and was called "Doc," but apparently never got beyond his student years.

They were playing poker with a pack of filthy old cards, and were using pea-nut shells for chips.

None of them had any money, and they were waiting for a freight train to carry them down to Guatemala. I offered them temporary employment on the line, but the offer was indignantly rejected. Why should they work when they could live without it? They were not viciously ambitious.

More than one tramp has explained to me that he is not a "hobo" by force of circumstances, but simply from an artistic love of vagabondage as a profession; but I should very much distrust the average "bum's" capacity for holding any job, however trivial. When "hoboes" are around, anything that is above the value of twopence and easier to carry than a locomotive has to be nailed down. As a tribe they are human jackdaws.

The white rancher, or ranch, or mine employé, is also a peculiar product of the country. Such exiles are to be pitied anywhere, but in Mexico something of the spirit of the country, the atmosphere of the primeval jungles, or the hopelessness of the Sierras, creeps into their being and makes their life seem sadder than that of the colonial or settler in the temperate zones.

It is a peculiar attribute of the British that they educate their sons to embrace eagerly the idea of an overseas career, and strenuously avoid teaching them the meaning of exile. Parents and relatives who probably consider that they are sincerely fond

of their sons or kinsmen seem to be able to send them out to an unbearable and hopeless existence with less consideration than they would devote to the problem of their appearing suitably clad at a garden-party. The truth never crosses their minds, or even if it does they dismiss it as unthinkable, and plunge feverishly into a dream of tropical life, adventure, and careers of millionaires, that they persist in believing to be the "overseas career."

Some types of Englishmen can stand exile and monotony, but these types are usually just as successfully plodding and unenterprising at home. It is not these who as a rule get sent out; instead, we receive the boy who has faults or failings, weak spots, or periods of nervous temperament which were perfectly natural and probably misunderstood. The world is full of well-bred, educated Britishers, who have been shot out to a strange country before they had ever had a chance to decide what profession in life they really were suited for. Flotsam and jetsam, they wander from one badly paid job to another, visiting all the out ranges of the world and slowly deteriorating.

Some are successful, some are lucky and die young, but most of them live dreadful lives and suffer for years entirely because of the preposterous, carve-out-a-career-abroad theory. If a man cannot carve out one at home he won't anywhere else,

unless you give him more opportunity and more capital than he would have had at home. The parental idea is a vague belief in the prevalence of opportunity; it is as a rule as well founded as all their other ideas of an overseas career.

To some life may not be so hard, but to the average upper-class English boy, the loneliness, savagery, and mental monotony of a ranch job are hopeless. Adventure, romance, and change of scene—these dreams soon fade from the imagination, and the savage animalism of nature, the weary futility of it all, the heavy drag of time, take their place. Enthusiasm and energy give way before fever and the unutterable squalor of life. Dirt and mosquitoes attract few poets, and the romance of overseas is only a romance to look back to afterwards when the time of trial is over.

For a ploughboy or a country-bred lad these may not be so bad, but to the boy from the big cities—he who has lived in touch with civilization and the energy centres of the world—the burden is an impossible one. One can never appreciate civilization, comfort, amusement, and art until one has been exiled. Exile—compulsory simple life—is merely a complete vindication of the correctness of popular judgment in preferring the cities to the waste places. In the old days it was a punishment, now a career.

It is not exactly fair to label the feelings of the

exiled as "home-sickness"—it is a much broader and wider sentiment; probably the Germans have a way of expressing it by some wonderful compound word beginning with "Heimat"; we only have it in the sentiment underlying the phrase, "The Old Country," or "Home."

To sit on a heat-blistering veranda and read the Christmas numbers of illustrated papers fresh from the mail, to see the dear old advertisements of restaurants and theatres and the inevitable picture of "Christmas Eve in Piccadilly," or "Christmas at the Savoy Hotel—Children's Party," is to feel home-sick, and Christmas Day parties are really rather pathetic functions when you are one of a few strays in another hemisphere. Roast turkey—described on American menus as "Roast *Young* Turkey"—with cranberry sauce, plum-pudding (tinned), and the invasion of other alien dishes, like pumpkin-pie and succotash, are poor substitutes for the real thing; besides, everyone in the room is thinking of "home," and such gaiety as there is is forced, wild, in the hope of it proving a mental sleeping draught.

Christmas in Mexico is a horrible season, and everyone is glad when it is over; it also has horrible trials for the foreigner's temper in the shape of the parcel post department. Everyone in Mexico hires a mail-box, because the itinerant postmen are too

dishonest to be trusted, and parcels must be collected from the central post-office in person. One is handed a slip of paper upon which is written the statement: "A parcel has arrived for you: apply at the window"; and torn with feelings of hope and emotion at the prospect of a parcel from home, you rush round. Half an hour later, having expended about a dollar on Customs, stamps, and visited many official departments and windows, you are handed a crushed cardboard box containing a calendar—value sixpence ha'penny—and a card, with the best wishes for Christmas, and — oh, hell!—it may be a silk tie, price half a crown; Custom duty in excess, five shillings, and you hard up at the time!

The Mexican peon is the only form of labour available in the Republic, and there is only one way of securing a sufficiency of peons for work outside the big towns—that is to employ the contract labour, or, as they are called, "enganchars."

Much has been written condemning the contract labour system in vogue in Mexico, but it has nearly all been written by people who were not conversant with the subject. Before condemning the system for its abuses it is as well to see if there is any satisfactory substitute. The native Mexican peon is human in several respects, his leading human attribute being that he does not like work. He pre-

fers to loaf and breed in idleness. The native is well paid, and can in two months earn sufficient to support him in idleness for the remainder of the year. He lacks ambition, preferring to watch his wife do the work and live on the produce of his little garden or maize-patch. The planter and the contractor, on the other hand, have urgent need of manual labour, in order to gather their produce or build their embankments; so a middleman's profession, that of supplier of labour, was invented. The natives are bound to do a certain amount of work for so many months at a definite rate of pay. So far so good. In many cases this arrangement is carried out properly by both sides, the planter having to take precautions against desertion and shirking, for the peon is absolutely untrustworthy and non-moral. The trouble starts when he goes to a plantation where the planter is also a thief. The peon's labour is appointed by piece-work, and he is compelled to buy his food and small necessaries at the store on the ranch. On a bad plantation he soon gets into debt, and by the simple process of keeping him in debt by setting him a daily task that he cannot accomplish, he is made into a slave.

The Mexican law is powerless and always corruptly administered, so the poor peon has no remedy, and as he is usually housed in a wide enclosure he cannot run away. Writers have

drawn attention to the shocking laxity of morals among the peons and their employers. This is a matter totally apart from the contract labour system. The morals of the natives are practically non-existent, and cohabitation is the rule rather than the exception, one reason being that very high fees are charged for the performance of the marriage ceremony by the Church; hence the peon regards it as a luxury for the idle rich.

The sweeping condemnation of the only way of getting labour in the Republic—because some few plantations are wickedly run—is unfair and foolish. Many ranches are conducted on perfectly fair lines, and the majority are managed in a way suggesting the best era of feudal times, the relations between labour and the managers being those of baron and retainer, and perfectly suited to the needs of the people and the country.

In the cities unskilled labour is plentiful, but the town-bred Mexican is usually a thorough blackguard. In the City of Mexico I had control of a large gang of peons in an engineering yard, and was able to study them at my leisure. Briefly speaking, they are all thieves, and will steal anything pawnable. They are absolutely non-moral, lazy and thickheaded to a degree, and if left to themselves perfectly useless. On the other hand, if looked after by a white foreman who can direct petty details of their labours

and keep them working, they are fairly satisfactory. A bully will get little work out of them and lots of trouble; but treat them as big children, and they are fairly efficient.

The next class is the mechanic or artisan class, and these are of much better stock. They are painstaking, careful workers, but slow and casual with regard to finish. For the most part they are purely mechanical workers, and lack initiative and resource; but as their wages are about a quarter those of a white man they are enabled to produce work at a very cheap rate. Their mental limitations are not those of the peon class, and they can mostly read and write, but they do not exercise these talents any more than do the lower classes of our European cities.

The servant problem is just as bad in Mexico City as it is elsewhere; indeed, one can easily say that it is very much worse, as one has to deal with the "custom of the country." A house-boy (a combination of housemaid and butler) receives as much as forty dollars a month, and, in addition, can be expected to steal and wear his master's clothes, support a family with stolen food, and bring strangers into the house. He will, in return for these perquisites, make your bed, flick up the dust in your rooms, and receive visitors in his shirt-sleeves. He has no regular day out, but is out most evenings

and afternoons; continually brings bills for brooms, soap, and household implements, and never by any chance keeps them. The bill is—like his other services—imaginary. Still, you cannot do without him, so have to put up with it.

Cooks are rare, and command high prices. The usual Mexican cook is a fat old Indian woman, with a large and noisy family, who wears a filthy, shapeless white garment, and her hair loose down her back. She steals two-thirds of the money you give her for marketing purposes, and feeds one on garbage with the remainder. Should the unhappy householder object to any of their servants' ways, the servants just walk out—no giving notice, no consideration affects them; they just go, and the householder cooks his own dinner on a blazing hot day in an unventilated kitchen. Another pleasing trait of cooks is that when they go they take all the kitchen utensils—enamelled saucepans, plates, knives and forks—every scrap of food, and everything portable. They leave the kitchen absolutely bare, and—vanish.

Characters are useless to go upon, and the want of decent servants is such that I have known a lady to tempt her friend's cook with an offer of higher wages! There is only one way to deal with a bad cook who persists in sending in inedible dishes, which she knows will be returned untasted to the

kitchen, where they will be devoured by her relations, and that is to keep a dog. Give the dog the abomination, and the cook will either improve or leave. No Mexican feeds a dog—it strikes them as sacrilege.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DAWN OF THE REVOLUTION

THE Mexican "Centennial," the Republic's hundredth birthday, had been celebrated, and the various diplomatic missions from Europe had returned home. The people were resting after a month's continuous gaiety, and the faded decorations still hung in the streets, when a small paragraph appeared in the paper stating that "the agitator, Francisco Madero, had been released."

No one knew much about him except that he had foolishly opposed the re-election of President Porfirio Diaz, and had been put in prison on a faked charge in order to keep him out of harm's way during the Centennial.

Madero, after his release, left for his native State of Coahuila, and soon we heard rumours of a revolt on the American frontier, and of outrages in Chihuahua. The general consensus of opinion was that the rising would be put down in a day or two; even reactionary opinion was favourable to Diaz, though all joined in condemning the Vice-President,

FRANCISCO I MADERO
REBEL LEADER, LATE PRESIDENT OF MEXICO

Don Ramon Corral. No one had a good word to say for him except President Diaz.

News reached us slowly, and for a week the revolution smouldered as a local uprising, till a fierce affray took place at Puebla, where a reactionary, called Cerdan, had started a plot against the Government. When the soldiers went to arrest him, he armed his household and his women-folk, and stood out a siege of twenty-four hours. The military at last broke in, and on the persons of the captives documents were discovered that showed the existence of a regularly organized plot all over the country, including large quantities of correspondence and a great deal of money, also commissions in the rebel army signed by Madero.

The Government began to take the plot seriously, and sent an army corps north into Chihuahua in order to crush the rising. Battles were fought, and it was claimed that the rebels had been annihilated on the field of Cerro Prieto, which victory was celebrated in Mexico City. Unofficial information credited the rebels with the victory, and announced that dead Federals were to be seen, but few dead rebels.

Troops went to the front continually, and none returned. General Luque, a personal friend of the President and Chief of Staff, went on a private mission, and did not come back. Madero was in

the United States, controlling the revolutionary Junta. Then for a month or two came no news except of skirmishes.

The public opinion was changing, and Diaz was unpopular. The end of the revolution was continually announced, but the railway traffic was persistently interrupted. Finally, the rebels took one or two towns, and eventually invested the important city of Chihuahua.

When this news arrived there was a general sensation, and the news of the mobilization by the United States of an army corps for the border increased the tension to an almost unbearable degree. All foreigners became unpopular, and an invasion would have provoked a massacre. It was now evident that the whole of the northern provinces were out of control, and fighting was in progress in the State of Lower California, where a gang of American Socialists had proclaimed an independent Republic.

A British naval officer was appealed to for protection by the authorities of one of the coast towns in Lower California, and he landed a small party of bluejackets. The Mexicans were furious, and the Americans felt that they were rather behindhand if the "Johnny Bulls" were going to act as promptly as this for the protection of British interests. Europeans became very unpopular, and

the Japanese were hailed as friends. Being much of the same colour as Mexicans, they are greatly approved of by the natives.

The South of Mexico now began to rise, and soon the States of Guerrero and Oaxaca were in revolt. Figuerroa, a well-known and respected Mexican, was the revolutionary leader on the South, and under his leadership the rising extended.

Foreigners were, for the most part, unmolested, but wisely they sent in their women and children to Mexico City, from whence nearly all those who could afford to go went to the States.

Haciendas were raided, and massacres of Spaniards and Chinese took place.

Robberies were common, and property lost its value. Foreign firms in Mexico City had to close down, and "society," such as existed, was depleted.

The attitude of the foreign colony was peculiar. It refused to recognize the existence of the revolution till it actually came home to them in the shape of the death or ruin of a friend. The state of affairs in the country was hopeless. Mines had to be abandoned, for the labourers preferred robbery under arms to manual labour, and joined the rebels in a body, looting the stores of the mines and giving valueless bills, "payable on the success of the revolution," in exchange.

Many incidents were related of attacks and insult

to foreigners, but the Mexican Government censored news, and the diplomatists had instructions to keep quiet. In fact, the Corps Diplomatique in Mexico sent the strongest representations to their home Governments that American intervention would be fatal. These views were duly communicated to Washington.

An old school friend of mine, who was a manager for the English Lumber Company in Michoacan, came up to the city. He had been forced to leave his mill and belongings, as the mountain Indians had joined the rebels and were destroying all foreigners' property His narrative was vivid—a picture in itself of the Mexican temperament, barbarism and Spanish cruelty. The native foreman of his mill had been seized by the revolutionaries, tortured, and finally torn apart between two horses. The native clerks had been stoned to death, and their bodies thrown into the burning ruin of the mill. Later, this same band of rebels sacked the town of Morelia.

The native Press took advantage of the general disturbance to issue the most flagrant incitements to treason; some local journals even advocating the expulsion of Americans and foreigners. Ramon Corral, the Vice-President, whose health had been bad for some time, sent in his resignation, under the pressure of public opinion. This move, earlier in

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the trouble, would have saved the situation, but disorder had now spread too far.

The outward causes of the revolt were the unpopularity of the Vice-President, and the general feeling that President Diaz was not immortal, and that he had taken no steps to nominate and secure a popular successor. From these two facts sprang the revolution which advanced the political doctrines of Universal Franchise and no re-election. These became popular slogans, in spite of the fact that about 60 per cent. of the population of Mexico is illiterate.

This large proportion of voters would either take the advice of the local priest in political matters, or vote for a popular candidate without in the least examining his qualifications for a responsible post. An educated Mexican gentleman, one of the partisans of the Diaz, or, as it is more usually called, "Scientifico" Party, explained the mental power of the Mexican peon.

"The peon," he said, "is a great hero-worshipper." Bull-fighters are their greatest heroes, and next to that a leading bandit is their most popular character. These are the only two rôles that they are ambitious to play. An impartial election would return a bull-fighter as President and a bandit as Prime Minister. Whichever party rules Mexico there can be no "Universal Suffrage."

The "No re-election" cry was popular. The people saw that it would prevent the establishment of another military dictatorship, and President Diaz himself was in favour of the movement; at least he issued a proclamation to that effect.

The final scenes of the revolution were pathetic. The Chamber of Deputies was divided against itself, and the city was in the hands of the mob. President Diaz at last consented to resign, and it was arranged that Señor de la Barra, who had been the Mexican Minister at Washington, should be proclaimed as "*interim* President" until the revolution should cease and an election could be carried out.

The day on which the President was expected to resign was memorable, for, instead of handing in his resignation, he sent a message excusing himself on the grounds of ill-health, and saying he would appear—"mañana!"

The Chamber rose in disorder, and bloody fighting took place in the capital. The next day Diaz resigned, and in the midst of the rejoicings, fled to Vera Cruz.

Madero and his successful rebels marched south, and the rebels, surrounding the city, entered to preserve order, and decorated the battered streets to greet the popular hero, Don Francisco I. Madero.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SHOT-GUN JOURNALIST

MEXICO CITY was depressed. Wars and rumours of wars were frightening away foreign capital, and the business people were looking blue. On the top of this came news that the U.S.A. had mobilized an army corps to sit on the Texas-Mexico border, and the City of Mexico, usually asleep, began to wake up and develop incidents.

I immediately turned to pen and ink and bombarded some of the big papers in the States for an appointment as "the man on the spot." Having bought a Sunday edition of the journal I preferred, I waded through the comic and football sections, and eventually found the news page. Its happy disregard for truth was charming. I immediately sent a contribution, which appeared with red capitals an inch high in the next Sunday edition, and I was authorized to go ahead and "cover" the revolution.

The Mexican Government was not enthusiastic about foreign journalists, as a number of articles

detrimental to Mexico had been published in the States, and an English archæologist, who had been a tourist trip in Yucatan, was busy in a new rôle as Critic of Tropical Morality. Under these circumstances I laid low, and did not advertise my latest job.

The rebels were unfortunately several hundred miles away, but there were rumours of rebels everywhere, and I betook myself to a leading "Maderista" (a political follower of Don Francisco I. Madero, the rebel leader) for information.

He was a cheery soul, totally irresponsible, and a typical lower-class Mexican. By profession he was an engineer's draughtsman, and earned about thirty shillings per week. His hobby was conspiracy, and to him I explained my desperate need of news. I explained freedom with a large "F," and babbled of the liberty of the Anglo-Saxon Press. He succumbed to the temptation of having his club mentioned as a real revolutionary secret society, and swore me to secrecy as far as Mexico was concerned; then, assuming an air of great mystery, I was told to wait outside the Café Colon at seven o'clock that evening. Punctually I was at the rendezvous, and after a minute or two's wait, a newsboy approached me, and under cover of selling me a paper, pushed a note into my hand and departed mysteriously. I opened the missive and found that my instructions were to go to Maria Guerrero Theatre and wait till

approached by a man who would whisper to me "Libertad," then I was to follow him closely.

It seemed rather like a game of "follow my leader," but I was interested, and hiring a hack, set off for the "Maria Guerrero." This theatre is the liveliest in Mexico City, and caters to the lower orders. Its foyer is rather like the under side of a railway bridge, or the hall of a cheap tenement. Having avoided the attentions of the ticket speculators, and entered the foyer, I was greeted by a mysterious and dirty Mexican, who breathed on me a garlic-scented "Libertad." I gasped, turned, and followed him through the garbage of endless slums, down narrow alleys of high Spanish houses, their windows barred and shuttered, under dark archways, disturbing peaceful, sleeping watchmen. Finally he drew up at a low door in a street somewhere in the suburb of Peralvillo, and knocked twice.

With rattling of chains and scraping of bolts, the door opened and an aged crone looked out, holding a lamp above her head. She recognized my guide and reluctantly admitted us. We followed her down a long passage and across a courtyard, where we disturbed the roosting hens, and finally entered a small room at the back. There I was greeted by my revolutionary friend, and introduced to the members of the circle.

Round a table covered with glasses and packets

of cigarettes, sat as queer a body of men as one could find. Some were elderly respectable citizens clad in dark European clothes, others were in the national dress of Mexico—the charro riding costume; and a sprinkling of soldiers in uniform, and students in crimson-lined conspirators' cloaks, completed the setting.

By the door an old Indian rocked to and fro on his haunches. He was as old as the mountain from which he came, and he had seen Benito Juarez and Maximilian in his youth. The room was blue with cigarette smoke and hot with humanity. The clink of glasses came from outside, where a woman was washing the coarse tumblers in a fountain in the patio; and through the door, where the cigarette smoke floated out in wisps across the light of the lamp, one caught a glimpse of the night sky, crisp with stars over the black masses of the neighbouring roofs.

When the stir caused by our entry and introduction had subsided, a seat was found for me, and a short man of almost pure Indian blood commenced speaking. In short, impassioned sentences he attacked the tyranny of the Diaz régime, and enumerated the virtues of Madero and his policy, till, working up to his climax, in which the liquid Spanish accents seemed to chill and turn to speech of diamond hardness, he threw out his hands to the

TROOPS MUSTERED ON THE PASEO DE LA REFORMA

picture of Madero on the wall, and with dramatic suddenness ceased. A subdued buzz of "vivas" broke out, and general health was drunk to "Los rebeldes" (the rebels). Maps were brought out: I was shown the towns on the map where other Circles of "Red Liberals" were in being, and told the number of arms that they had in store. The North of the Republic had risen against the Tyrant; the South was waiting for definite news, and then a wave of armed patriots would sweep the Presidency clear, and seat Madero in Chapultepec. I soon saw enough evidence to grasp that nothing could save the Government. Half their own men were sold to the rebels, while treachery stalked through the official circles, where a grim political throat-cutting was in progress. The real cause of the revolution was lack of promotion for the younger generation—and senile decay of the older officials.

Here were men who, outwardly staunch supporters of the existing régime, were intriguing night and day, and in order to grab some Government billet. They were typical Latin-American patriots!

It was now nearly three in the morning, and the conspirators proceeded to leave for their homes. They left one by one at intervals of about five minutes. In my case an exception was made, and accompanied by an earnest medical student, I left.

Alone I should never have been able to find my way back.

The medico boy was charming. He explained to me the feuds and rivalries of the Cruz Roja and the Cruz Azul (the Red Cross and the Blue Cross). It appeared that the Red Cross was run by Government men, and for that reason was not admitting wounded rebels to its field hospitals—in fact there were no wounded rebels. The Federals always put them out of their misery! I was deeply pained, and suggested that this was not usual in civilized warfare.

The student was certain of it, and said that the Blue Cross, the rival amateur hospital—to which he belonged—attended to all poor Mexicans who were wounded, without any fine distinctions between the rebels and federals.

Later, when we had trouble in the city, the professional pride of the rival organizations was delightful. The Red Cross people would not recognize the Blue Cross, and stretcher-bearers of the one party stole the dead and wounded from the stretchers of the other; or both abandoned wounded men because the rival crowd had claimed them.

The assistants were mostly boy students and chemists, with a few ladies of mature years as nurses. I met one hero clinging to a lamp-post, being very sick indeed. The poor boy had just

seen his first victim—a man who had been sabred during a cavalry charge.

Their pride in their work was amazing: during the riots they chartered public cabs, and throwing over the hoods a sheet marked with the Blue Cross, paraded about the streets in the wake of the cavalry squadrons—ready and anxious for victims.

The city was full of news and rumours of news. Finally the events began to draw closer, the hotels filled with the refugees and the white people sent their families to the States. When the train to the health resort of Cuernavaca was shot upon, the rubber expert, Dr. Olson Seffer, killed, within twenty miles of Mexico City, things began to look rather blue for the foreign residents; and everywhere it was recognized that any invasion of Mexico by the U.S.A. would mean a massacre of foreigners throughout the Republic.

Good stories were plentiful, and everybody who had "come in" from the wilder parts of the country had hair-raising yarns of Indian risings and local disturbances, but the difficulty was to get the news through to the States. At first the postal service was fairly reliable, but as the railroads were destroyed by the rebels and mail-vans burnt, it was not long before all chances of stuff getting through vanished. The cables were frequently interrupted, and the Federal Telegraph Service only worked

through a short radius round the capital. Soon all that was left to us was the Vera Cruz cable and postal route.

I despatched any news by post till the officials hung out a notice, "Servicio interrompido" (Service interrupted), and then I foregathered in a saloon with other newspaper men and cursed the luck.

Later I ran into an Englishman who lived outside the city, about five miles away. He was bursting with news of an outrage on a hacienda next to his own dairy farm. I drew him into a neighbouring saloon, swore him to silence, and collected a letter from him authorizing his servants to give me a horse and saddle; then went off by electric tram to his farm.

The "mozos" (native servants) on the hacienda were very upset, and told me tales of squadrons of armed "revoltosos" riding by moonlight to outlying haciendas. I discounted this news, picked a decent horse, and soon reached the scene of the outrage.

Pickets of Rurales and cavalry were dotted about the fields, and the hacienda was full of officers and police examining scared Indians. On the doorstep hovered one or two Mexican pressmen, armed with notebooks and cameras; evidently journalists were not welcome.

I dismounted and gave my horse to a soldier to

hold. Going up to the door, I was stopped by an officer, who inquired my business. I explained that I wished to see the officer in command on urgent business. The lieutenant was unmoved; he wanted details, and I had to manufacture details at once. I told him that I was an Englishman from the neighbouring hacienda, and wished to be assured of efficient military protection for my property. To my annoyance he offered me a troop of men. I thanked him, but persisted that I must see the General, and insinuated that possibly there was dissatisfaction among my employés. This bait was swallowed, and I was passed in.

The living-room of the hacienda was full of officials, and the General was engaged, so I talked to a local "jefe politico," and drew from him the story. It appeared that the rancho belonged to a family consisting of a father, two sons, and a daughter. Aroused by the barking of the dogs at about two o'clock in the morning, the younger son had risen and looked out into the corral. He saw men moving, and challenged them; as there was no reply he grabbed up a carbine and fired into the shadows. The raiders directed a return fire at his window, and the youth fell riddled with bullets.

All secrecy was now thrown aside. The raiders, about twenty in number, broke in the door of the hacienda with the pole of a farm-waggon, and

rushed to loot it. From the tales of the servants it appeared that the old man and the son put up a fight, but were soon shot down, though it is certain that they wounded one or more of their assailants.

The daughter was still alive. The poor thing sat among the crowd of officials attended by a couple of old peon women. Crouched on the floor at the feet of her murdered father and brother, she had covered her head with a shawl, and rocked to and fro sobbing continually. The men talked in subdued whispers, and the woman's sobs came at regular intervals, always on the same high note, like a man in the delirium of fever. Outside in the courtyard the soldiers joked with one another, and the noise of a horse shaking himself in his saddle seemed to show how utterly bored everybody was.

According to Mexican law, bodies may not be moved until the authorities have viewed them, and upstairs in the little room over the gate lay the body of the youth who had fired on the rebels. He lay just as he had been left by them; they had taken his rifle and cartridges, and the little room was all in disorder, the only thing untouched being a little crucifix above the narrow bed. "Ay que povre!—si joven" ("Poor fellow!—and so young") said the sentry.

I collected the information, and telling the officer that as the General was so busy I would return later, I left the house. The journalists on the door-step besieged me. I regretted I could tell them nothing, and left for my friend's hacienda. As I returned his horse, up came an American correspondent. He inquired how things were, and I left him to find out.

Back to the city and the post-office, and just in time for the mail. "Good!" I told myself; "that furnishes some Sunday reading for the Middle-West—two columns at least."

CHAPTER XX

A DAY'S WORK

As I rode down the mountain trail into the crowded plaza I could see that the little Mexican town of Tamalpa was astir with unusual events. Here was history in the making, for the little adobe building with the proud inscription "Hotel Juarez," in sky-blue letters three feet high, on its whitewashed wall, was the headquarters of General Aamargo, Jefe del Battalion (Commander-in-Chief), of the Federal troops in the province of Michoacan.

Dismounting at the door, the dusty and travel-tired correspondent inquired of the ragged and be-chevroned sergeant for the whereabouts of the General. The sergeant became pompous and dignified, puffing out his chest after the manner of a grandee of Spain, and laying his hand on the hilt of his bayonet, explained that the General was now engaged.

Having been long in the country, I did not reply, but produced my cigar-case. The sentry's eyes brightened and his strained attitude relaxed as he accepted the bribe.

With a flowery expression of gratitude, he gave me his rifle to hold, and disappeared in search of a superior officer. I leant the weapon against the jamb of the door, and, slackening the girths of my saddle, tied my horse to the veranda rail and sat down to await the sentry's return.

The little market-square was ablaze with colour, the bright sashes and zerapes of the natives contrasting vividly with the drab-coloured uniforms of the barefooted soldiery. The men were lounging about in groups, or resting in the shadows of the houses, while their women-folk bargained with the local natives for fruit and eatables, raising a shrill hubbub over their bargaining. Jests were being bandied to and fro, and in a corner of the plaza a small group laughed over the attempts of a girl who was trying to blow a bugle. Occasionally a mounted orderly would ride in at a canter, his pony's heels raising clouds of dust, and threatening the safety of the little semi-nude children who played amongst the stalls and stoned the thieving pariah dogs.

Mexico was in revolt, and this was war-time—not manœuvres, I thought, as I mentally contrasted the scene with the disciplined regimental camps that I had seen on Salisbury Plain.

A touch on my shoulder brought my thoughts back from far-away England, and I found the sentry

and a lieutenant at my elbow. Briefly I explained my mission and produced my credentials.

"The señor has come to see the fighting?" said the lieutenant. "I am afraid that there will not be any, for the rebels are already losing heart—but to-morrow we commence a flanking movement!" He smiled with the self-conscious importance of a musical comedy major-general. "I"—he added, "am on the staff!"

The sentry led away the tired horse while I followed the lieutenant into the temporary head-quarters, and was introduced to the little gathering. They were charming in their welcome. In a corner was a cane chair, in which reclined a fat little man in uniform. The occupant of the chair was snoring, and had spread a paper over his face to keep off the flies; by his side rested a pair of dirty riding-boots, and I noted that he wore socks of a distinctive black-and-white tartan, and that the left sock needed darning.

"That is General Aamargo," whispered the lieutenant.

Food was brought, and soon, refreshed, I began to inquire for information. The dirty plates were taken away, and on the table one of the officers spread a much-stained map. Weighting this down at the corners with their glasses, the little group drew round, while the senior officer—a colonel of engineers

—demonstrated the plan of operations, tracing a toothpick along the faded lines. The General turned uneasily in his chair, and, after a moment's hesitation, resumed his snoring.

"We are here—and there—and there lie our outposts. The rebels, such as they are, have been encountered at so-and-so—a little 'affair of the outposts,' you know—a skirmish. To-morrow we commence a flanking action, and join General Navarrez's column at Morelia, sweeping the country clear," said the colonel, thrusting out his hands to illustrate the utterness of the proposed sweeping movement.

After making a few notes, I was soon deep in a discussion on the virtues of English saddlery, when the General woke up, and I had to be formally presented.

The General was delighted. "The señor was on an American paper?"

"Yes, and would report the engagement fully."

"Ah! excellent!"

After a moment of silence and deep thought he went on: "I have no portrait of myself here, but"—and he brightened visibly—"perhaps the señor has a camera?"

Amidst universal rejoicings the señor admitted that he had, and departed to fetch it from his saddlebag. On his return, he found the staff posed for-

mally and rigidly in full sunlight on the veranda. The group was duly taken. Faithlessly the correspondent promised them all copies and noted down their addresses.

The sun was now high, and the heat of the day was beginning to make itself felt, when an orderly arrived with despatches.

They contained astonishing news! General Navarrez had "suffered a reverse," and there would be no flanking movement: in fact, General Aamargo was to retire, at once on the pueblo of Santa Lucrecia, or his complete force might be cut off.

An excited discussion was at once held, and orderlies were despatched to bring in all absent officers. In the plaza sounded strident bugle-calls, and the different companies formed up, while harassed sergeants and subalterns hunted the missing men out of the drinking-shops.

Slowly and noisily the parade formed up, men finding their places and then falling out again to buy oranges or cigarettes from the market women. Hastily the camp-followers gathered their bundles and their children, and above all the hubbub rose the strident voices of the native women. All the inhabitants turned out to watch, and at last the column, with its little units of cavalry and mounted police, was ready to leave.

The staff was already mounted, and the General

in person had appeared on parade; no one paid any attention to him, and at last the advance guard of dusty cavalry moved off, followed by a section of mules carrying a venomous-looking but obsolete Nordenfeldt machine gun, whose twinkling gun-metal reflected the flashing rays of the sun.

Slowly the procession left the town, and commenced to climb the dusty mountain trail that formed the road.

About half-way down the column, I rode alongside a straggling casual company of infantry, and talked with a sergeant.

The latter was a cheery soul. He related how he had been forced to take up a military career as an alternative to going to gaol over the matter of some slight bickering, which left two of his neighbours stone dead in a drinking-bar. We criticized the General, his staff, his own officers, old Don Porfirio (the President), and lastly, on learning that the correspondent was English, not American, the sergeant became communicative. He disliked the Americans. His views were peculiar, but are not unusual in the Republic of Mexico, where education is rare. He held that Mexico was the biggest and most important State in the world; and that next to Mexicans came the Chinese and Japanese, with whose help the Mexican nation (assisted by the sergeant) would capture Spain and kill Alfonso

Trece, and would also seize Paris, a town where he had heard there were many beautiful women. It would be quite easy, for, after all, these places were only two or three days' march across the Rio Grande.

In a sun-parched valley of the foot-hills, some few miles from the mountain pass, the column halted, checked by those in front, who were already lying down by the roadside. Immediately the men fell out and proceeded to rest. The subaltern and myself, more curious than the men, rode forward to inquire from the company in front why we were halted. "The road in front is blocked," said the officer; "I expect it is the mules."

As he spoke we heard murmurs up the road, and a mounted orderly appeared, cantering through the troops, and running the gauntlet of a continual fire of jests and shouted questions. When he saw the officers, he reined up and hastily inquired if they were the general staff. Before replying, the senior officer, a colonel of infantry, read the despatch, then replacing it in its envelope bade the orderly proceed with it to the General with all haste.

"The pass is held by the rebels," said the colonel.

Gravely the officers discussed the situation. Here was a column of some fifteen hundred infantry, an odd handful of cavalry, and three mountain guns

straggling all along some fifteen miles of mountain trail, between the township of Tamalpa and a mountain pass held by the rebels, and the town they had just left was threatened by a big column of mounted rebels, numbering, so said the spies' reports, between two and three thousand men.

It was a cavalryman who first voiced the question: "There are no streams?" "No," said the colonel solemnly, looking at an infantryman with a bandaged arm; "nothing but dust—and blood."

News of the presence of the enemy now reached the men; it flew like wild-fire down the road, from company to company, and the strength of the enemy gained as the news passed from mouth to mouth. "I wish they would hurry up," said the subaltern, and fidgeted with his sword knot.

Down the trail rose the sound of hoofs, and a mounted officer appeared urging his foam-covered horse. "The guns are coming up," he shouted, and rode on to the front.

Up the road came the guns, their drivers fit to burst with pride, and the artillery officers glowing with the joy of their mission.

The men cheered the teams as they passed, and the bobbing little field-pieces in their canvas jackets looked as if they, too, were aware of the need for hurry.

"Lucky beggars!" said the infantry officers.

"So long!" said I; "I am going to see the fun."

"Send us news," they shouted, and enviously watched me disappear into the dust cloud.

Somewhere ahead the fitful rattle of musketry-fire could be heard. It seemed brief and disorganized, occasionally swelling from a persistent intermittent rattle to a steady noise like hail upon a greenhouse roof. At one point a temporary field hospital had been established, and there lay a few men on litters, and my eye was caught by a miniature boiler that emitted steam furiously, and I suddenly remembered being shown over a big London hospital, and having seen these same boilers before. How out of place they seemed here; the very appearance of them demanded the presence of trimly dressed hospital nurses.

Below the crest of the rise was the firing-line, spread out on each side of the road in fan-shaped lines of skirmishers, and the cauldron of the hills echoed and re-echoed to the sharp double report of the Mausers. One gun team had come to grief—three horses down and two men killed. The enemy had bagged them as they came over the rise. The survivors were cutting them clear, and soon were under cover, placing the gun next to its brothers.

Somewhere on the left flank a harsh rattle announced that the Nordenfeldt was again in going

FEDERAL AMBULANCE WORK IN THE FIELD

order, and it continued to crash at intervals, until another jamb disabled it.

The guns joined the chorus, and puffs of yellowish smoke began to appear over the opposite hill-side. There was nothing much to see, only an occasional puff of white smoke, showing that some rebel was using an old black-powder rifle, being the only sign, the scrub and boulders completely hiding the enemy.

The day dragged on until the skirmishers were within 200 yards or less of the enemy's lines, and an attempt was made to rush their position by a handful of Federal troops led by two mounted officers. The attack failed, and the remnant of the little drab-coloured force beat a hasty retreat; one of the horses, now riderless, threw up its head and tore madly along the firing-line in its death-gallop.

The reserves were brought up and concentrated behind the ridge, and slowly the engagement went on. Both sides were husbanding their ammunition, and the battery was almost silent, only sending an occasional shell now and then.

Cartridges and water were both scarce, and wounded men filtered back from the firing-line to be attended to, their places being taken by fresh men from the reserves.

Riding back over the rise, I was met by an excited field officer. "Go over to the right flank," he said;

"our cavalry are massing for the turning movement."

In a little valley the cavalry stood by their horses and joked and chatted over the battle. I joined the general staff, and was rewarded by being told the news: "A scout has come in from General Navarrez, who is making a forced march to attack the rebels and clear the pass for us—we expect him before nightfall; meantime we are going to attack this flank as soon as a feint attack is delivered on the left."

The time dragged on, and the shadows of the hills began to creep across the valley before the sound of heavy firing announced the commencement of the feint. The guns added their covering fire to the general din, and at last the cavalry moved forward to the attack.

Tying up my horse, I climbed with one or two officers of the infantry to a crag whence a view of the movement could be obtained. The cavalry, in close formation, rode on unchecked, their scouts not more than a hundred yards ahead of the main body. A scattered shot or two was the only response from the enemy's pickets, who could be seen retreating towards the centre of their position. The cavalry line began to wheel to the left, when the scouts on the advanced flank suddenly fired and turned to ride back to the troops. With the speed of thought, a

line of riflemen appeared as if out of the ground, and opened fire at close range on the grouped cavalry. The enemy had been concealed in a dry river-bed, and had held their fire. The Federals were trapped.

Individual sections charged, but were shot to pieces; those that reached the firing-line being stopped by the ravine, on the farther side of which were the rebel infantry. The others seeing what had happened, and with their ranks already in disorder, beat a hasty retreat, and, covered by a dust cloud, the disorganized rout swept over the ridge and spread panic through the reserves before they could be re-formed. The attack had cost them a third of their men, and had failed to turn the position.

Infantry were speedily rushed forward to prevent the advance of the enemy, but it was soon apparent that they were abandoning their line of defence; it was, however, too strongly covered to attack while the retreat was in progress.

The noise of battle died down, and an hour later the Federal outposts were in touch with Navarrez's cavalry; the enemy had retreated to the hills, and at last the pass was clear.

That night the column reached Santa Lucrecia, and the correspondent made his way to the head-quarters of the G.O.C.

"A splendid action," said the General; "an heroic triumph of the Federal arms; over twice our strength of rebels defeated—yes, in every way a victory."

There must have been at least a thousand rebels present, mused the correspondent, as he went to the telegraph office. "H'm—well, I suppose it is a victory!"

CHAPTER XXI

BIVOUAC

THE squadron halted for the night. We were far out among the hills, and hoped to get in touch with the enemy at any minute; men and horses were covered with fine white dust of the trail, and all were tired. We had a hard day's ride and were feeling saddle-cramped, so when we reached the bivouac ground it was a relief that we had no tiresome ceremonial of tent-erecting and camp duty to commence. The men dismounted and sat by their horses smoking cigarettes till their mounts were cooler, and they could take the saddles off.

Over the ragged peaks of the sierras half the red disk of the setting sun was visible, and from the rocky sky-line spread the blood-red streamers of a Mexican sunset. The heat of the day still radiated from the ground, but the evening air was cool and refreshing. The sinking sun threw the long blue shades of the mountain across the valley, and exaggerated the grotesque shadows of the resting horses. The figure of a mounted outpost stood out on the crest of a foot-hill black against

the crimson sky. We had no tents, no commissariat, and little drinking water. The horses were luckier, for they were being watered from a muddy pond that lay below us on the hill-side, further down which lay a whitewashed hacienda and its little village of dove-coloured huts nestling against its walls. The officers' mess was short of food, so I contributed a tin of devilled ham and a bottle of Sunnybrook whisky, and joined two private soldiers who were going on a foraging expedition. We set off on foot towards the village, whence the noise of poultry and the bleating of goats gave rich promise of satisfying food. The first robber, who answered to the honoured name of Benito Juarez, produced a fathom or two of thin line and fashioned it into a lasso. When we reached the outskirts of the village a flock of turkeys guarded by a small boy appeared. The second robber and the hungry journalist engaged the boy in conversation, standing between him and the turkeys. A muffled squawk and a fluttering reached us, and we knew that Benito had secured his bird. Conscience-stricken, I gave the boy a packet of cigarettes, and we proceeded.

The village store and a few stalls soon yielded ample supplies of tinned foods, fruit, etc. I was foolish enough to pay for mine, but my companions disbursed no money over their transactions. Leav-

ing the inhabitants to their lamentations, we returned heavily laden to the camp, Benito dragging the corpse of the turkey out of its hiding-place on the way back.

It was a lovely supper, and afterwards we sat round the camp-fire—not a big fire such as the white man builds, but a little glowing charcoal fire of Indian construction. Possibly it was not so picturesque, but, anyway, it was warm. The sentries whistled at intervals, and the men sat in little groups, while the ungroomed horses chafed at their pickets.

In the dark the men's cigarette ends glowed incessantly, and finally each man wrapped his head in his overcoat and turned in on the ground. There was a false alarm during the night, and the continual interruptions of changing guard and chasing off strange dogs disturbed our slumber. Somewhere in the dark two coyotes sung their hideous love-songs, and the camp dogs howled challenges.

By daybreak we were mounted and off, my servant, Luis, blue with cold and disliking moving without breakfast, grumbling as he packed my saddle-bags. Luis was a luxury, but I wanted him to carry in news if I should stay with the squadron. Far ahead of us rode the scouts; finally one came up to the captain with a badly

scared peon in convoy. The squadron halted, and a whisper ran down the ragged ranks that some rebels were at a little village of Santa Lucrecia, about half an hour's ride distant. A grey-clad Rurale detached himself from his unit and informed the captain that he knew the country.

We moved off again, and the young lieutenant gave me the "general idea" of the attack. We were to outflank the village, while our machine-gun covered the only road down which the enemy could retreat. It would be a "cinch." He used the American slang word and laughed joyously. Under cover of a hill we halted and divided our forces. I elected to go with the lieutenant and his flanking party, as I thought we should be first in the village, and there were hopes of loot. Led by the Rurale, we turned aside from the trail, and, with the horses picking their way cautiously along the stony hill-side, went to take up our position. The main body were to fire first, but we hoped for a complete surprise.

The hacienda was a small one, and the village only consisted of a few dozen adobe huts set round a small square of open ground. They nestled against the yellow parched valley, and a few dust-laden trees surrounded the houses. Near a well was a group of horses guarded by two men in scarlet blankets. The clear air and the

REBEL CAVALRY

bright glare of the morning sun made the group stand out like objects in a panorama, while the crowing of cocks in the village sounded so distinctly that one listened instinctively for human voices. Our route was longer than we anticipated, and before we had reached our station a few dropping shots announced that the enemy were on the alert and had discovered the main body. We came out into a field of magueys, and saw the village about half a mile away. High up on the hill-side, where the trail debouched, the main body were deploying like ants among the scrub and boulders; the little groups of horses, held by a mounted man, were plainly discernible, and soon seemed absorbed by the hill-side, as they took advantage of the cover. The rebels were hurriedly taking up positions of defence and replying to the fire from the hills with hasty shots.

The peppering continued, and we remained unnoticed. Half our little force was dismounted, and the other half held in reserve for cavalry pursuit. Not having a rifle I remained mounted, and watched our men creep from cover to cover. They had been ordered not to fire, and had covered half the distance before they were noticed by the rebels, who immediately opened fire.

Our side of the village began to shoot out little cotton-woolly puffs of smoke, and an occasional

bullet would whine overhead, or plop through the maguey leaves with the rip of tearing calico. The firing on the hill-side was getting louder and more frequent, and the village bell started an excited clanging. We moved up and met two men carrying a wounded cavalryman. He had been shot through the body, and only lived a few minutes more.

The lieutenant gazed at the hill-side.

"We are to rush the village when they fire the Maxim," he said. We brought up our mounted reserve—men and horses chafing under the restraint. All our attention was centred on the attack. Surely the captain would give the signal soon! Only two hundred yards of flat country before we reached the village; down wind came the smell of dust and the sour smell of smokeless powder, and we could see the enemy among the buildings. The church bell still clanged furiously, and the screams of the women reached us. There was a lull in the firing, and the noise of cocks crowing in the village came to our ears like the sudden shock of a chime striking in a crowded city.

Then far up the hill-side came the stabbing staccato bark of the Maxim.

We went in with a rush, and our line of skirmishers rose under our hoofs to race back to the held horses in order to join us. I saw the

skirmishing line of the main body break cover and rush for the houses; and then, in clouds of dust and with the stones cast up by the horses in front stinging our faces, we charged on.

Our horses jumped the rough hedges of the little gardens outside the village, and, midst a confused noise of cracking canes, shots, shouts, and curses, we raced into the little square. The man riding next to me swerved straight across my front, and both of us came down together. I was thrown clear over his horse and crawled to the shelter of a house wall, unhurt but badly shaken. I could not see the other man, but I hoped that he was damaged—I was so wild at his clumsiness. The square was thick with dust, and whirling figures could be seen; the shooting had ceased, and after a confused moment or so, a trumpet sounded the recall furiously.

The rebels went out at one end of the village as we came in at the other, and most of the mounted men followed them. Upon the hill-side the angry Maxim chattered as they fired belt after belt at the flying rebels.

I bumped into the lieutenant, who was the centre of a group of screaming villagers. Slowly the confusion died down, the remainder of the main body drew up, and the men slowly came back to re-form. There was little looting, a few prisoners were taken, and an occasional shot or two announced an

"execution." The headmen of the village were summoned and tied up. I wrote a hasty account of the skirmish; found my servant Luis (who had stolen four hens, which I confiscated) and sent him off to my agent in Mexico City. He was glad to go.

An hour later we had re-formed, leaving the prisoners to go back under escort to the city, and were on the march again.

There would be a feast that night! Every saddle was hung with bundles of edible loot, and live chickens hung head downwards from the carbine buckets. It had been a great and decisive victory. Back in the village the women sobbed in the houses, while dead children lay out amongst the down-trodden corn.

CHAPTER XXII

A "SCRAP" BEFORE BREAKFAST

At half-past six one morning my horse was brought round by the groom, and I came sleepily down the steps of my lodging to take an early ride. As I put my foot in the stirrup Gonzalez clattered round the corner and pulled up short.

"Hullo! Where are you off to at this time of the morning?" said he.

I told him I was just off for a ride, with no particular object in view.

"Well, come along with me. I am going out with a troop to the hills round El Desierto. The rebels have been reported there, but I expect it is only a few bandits robbing outlying ranches; anyway, come along for the trip; it's a lovely ride."

I jumped at the opportunity, and accepted his invitation. "Wait half a minute while I get my camera," I said, and I bolted into the house and hastily buckled on my war-paint, camera, revolver, water-bottle, and field-glasses, put some chocolate and a tin of tobacco in my pockets, and rejoined him.

We rode along together to the citadel, where he was going to pick up his troop.

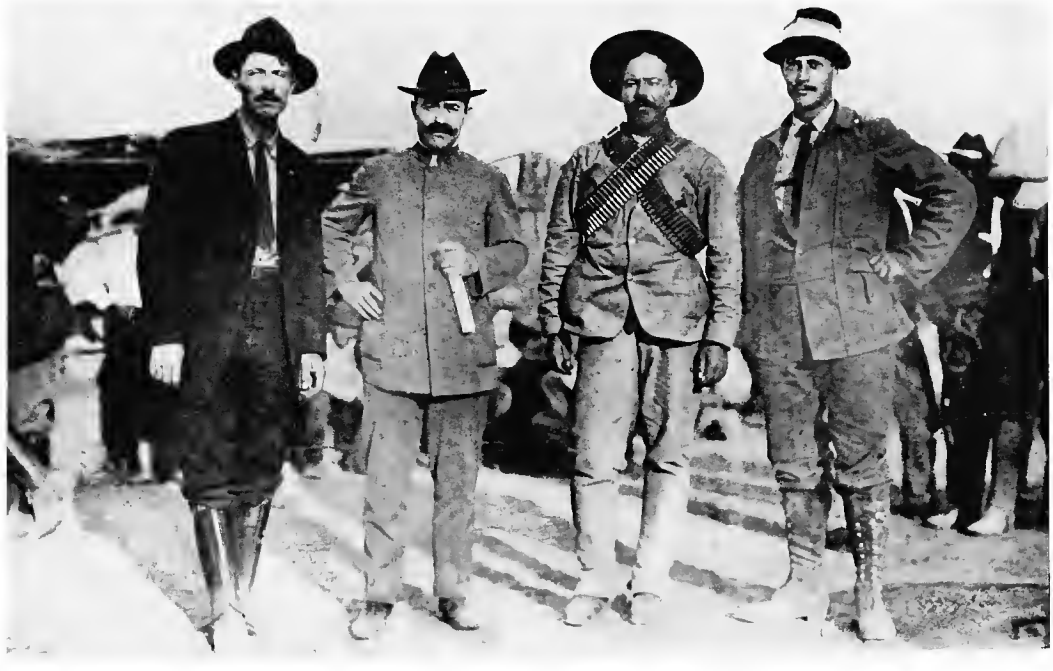
Gonzalez was a nice boy, a lieutenant in the Presidential Guard. He was very pleased with his first command on "active service," and as he rode through the gates of the citadel into the barrack square, the sunlight glittered on the silver lace and buttons of his uniform, making a vivid contrast with the ragged little troop of regular cavalry that formed his command.

The troop numbered thirty men and a sergeant; there was also a corporal, but he was of no importance.

The men were dressed in dirty grey uniforms, and wore the cheese-cutter caps of the American Civil War period. They were all born horsemen, and sat their rough little horses with the unmistakable air of men who had practically lived in the saddle. Their arms consisted of a Mauser carbine and a plain cavalry sabre, both of which were shockingly ill-kept; in fact, all the accoutrements were old and dirty.

Discipline in the Mexican Army is an airy phantasy; smartness unheard of. I have frequently seen troops on ceremonial duty smoking cigarettes or leaving the ranks to purchase oranges while their comrades presented arms.

Gonzalez flushed a little when he examined his command. He had been used to the Presidential



REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS IN CHIHUAHUA

Guard, who did look clean on parade, although they were absolutely useless as a fighting force.

The sergeant explained that they had no ammunition—or rather, only about six cartridges among the bunch. Inquiries elicited the fact that it had been "lost," or, in other words, the men had sold it at two cents a cartridge in order to buy cigarettes.

While fresh ammunition was being served out and counted, Gonzalez explained to me that it did not matter, as we were only going to make a reconnaissance. We sat on our horses and talked, while the lieutenant's orderly, whose duties combined those of servant and bugler—and who was also drawn from the Presidential Guard—confided to me his views concerning the regular cavalry and army in general. He was very bitter, as he would have to clean the lieutenant's uniform after the trip. As we waited an elderly staff officer approached and questioned my presence. Gonzalez explained that I was an English journalist, but rather better known as a gentleman rider of race-horses. The staff officer still insisted that I was an undesirable alien. However, I gave him a cigar, the address of the English tailor who had cut my riding-breeches, and my promise not to cable undesirable news should we see any fighting.

After about half an hour's delay we set off, Gonzalez and myself riding ahead, the orderly, smoking

a big cigar, following us, and the sergeant bringing up the rear of the troop in order to see that no one got lost. Noisily and impressively we clattered through the streets of the City of Mexico, meeting other troops here and there.

We passed a perfunctory kind of salute and exchanged a few inquiries as to news of the rebels; then with a cross-fire of coarse jests the troops would move on again, the soldiers cheerfully insulting every respectable woman we passed.

I entertained the sergeant, the orderly, and lieutenant Gonzalez with an account of fox-hunting as practised in England, while they in return told me long tales of military love affairs. Slowly we left the outskirts of the city and began to climb the foothills of the mountains. Trees now began to get more scarce, and the wide fields of magueys were replaced by desolate stretches of withered grass bearing a heavy crop of stones and boulders. Soon the made road, with rough hedges on either side, ran out into a winding track where the white dust lay inches deep and rose in clouds beneath our horses' feet.

Occasionally we would meet little caravans of Indians driving in their donkeys laden with bundles of country produce, or crates of native pottery. They gave the soldiery a wide berth, and if questioned, were invariably sullen and scared, return-

ing the invariable answer, "Quien sabe?" (Who knows?) to all inquiries.

Rounding a bend in the trail, we came across two corpses laid across the road. A sharp command from the lieutenant halted the troop, and we urged our frightened horses nearer the bodies. From what was left we could see that they had been Rurales, two of the crack mounted police corps, but they had been stripped of everything of value, mutilated in the true Indian manner, and the desecrated corpses laid across the trail for all to view.

They lay there in the sunlight, their faces and skin olive-grey in colour, a heavy blue growth of beard on jowl and cheek. Their feet and hands had been severed, the feet lay by the stumps of the arms, while the legs terminated in a grotesque hand turned palm upwards to the sky. The bodies had been ripped up, and the ghastly heads were earless. We could not find the ears, they had probably been kept as mementoes by the rebels. On a stunted pepper-tree by the side of the trail sat two black vultures, and above us in the brazen sky more black dots hovered and swung in hungry circles.

The sergeant and three of the men carried the bodies a few paces and tipped them into a dry stream-bed. It was evidently here that the ambush had taken place, for among the stones and débris shone the bright metal of an empty cartridge-case.

A few big stones and a caving in of the banks completed a hasty burial.

The sergeant wiped his hands on a tuft of grass, lit another cigarette, and the troop cantered on.

Lieutenant Gonzalez was impressed by the advertisement the rebels had left, and was visibly paler. The men took it rather as a joke, and discussed its anatomical features among themselves. I felt that the sunlight was indecent, and that the whole dusty landscape was one outrageous jest at the expense of our little column.

We halted and held a council of war in which the sergeant and the orderly led a chorus of assent from the troop. It was decided to send out two men ahead as scouts or advance guard. The sergeant sent off the sullen corporal, and our leading trooper humorist, who was the life and soul of the party and stank like a distillery.

I urged that flanking parties and a rearguard should also be sent out; but my seed fell on stony ground, because the men did not like being separated. However, my repeated suggestion that the carbines should be loaded was acted on, and the casual commando resumed its march.

The dusty trail was covered with tracks, and at one point I drew Gonzalez's attention to a point where a number of horsemen had crossed the trail.

I am afraid he thought me very officious, and dis-

regarded my suggestion that these trails were not more than an hour or two old, but in a few moments he recovered his temper, and telling the orderly to drop back, he mentioned in strict confidence that he did not quite know what to do if they should come across some rebels. Could I, who had seen this kind of thing in Morocco, tell him ?

I said that I would give advice if necessary. But as I knew that everybody would be giving advice, I prayed fervently that we should meet no trouble.

This I did not tell the lieutenant.

The trail was getting steeper. Mountains that before had seemed masses of blue haze were becoming clear, and the green colour of the pine forests was discernible; here and there wisps of white cloud hung round the peaks, and low sheets of mist floated below us in the valley. Far below we could see the spires and chimneys of the City of Mexico, and beyond it the blue glint of the lakes and the Viga Canal.

Ahead of us, about two hundred yards, the figures of the scouts showed on the crest of the hill. Gradually the distance between us lessened, and in a short time the scouts were not more than thirty yards ahead. They were getting lonesome.

Gonzalez noticed it, asking the sergeant to spur forward and advise the men to get on ahead. Amiably the sergeant went forward and proceeded to

borrow a cigarette from them while he communicated the order.

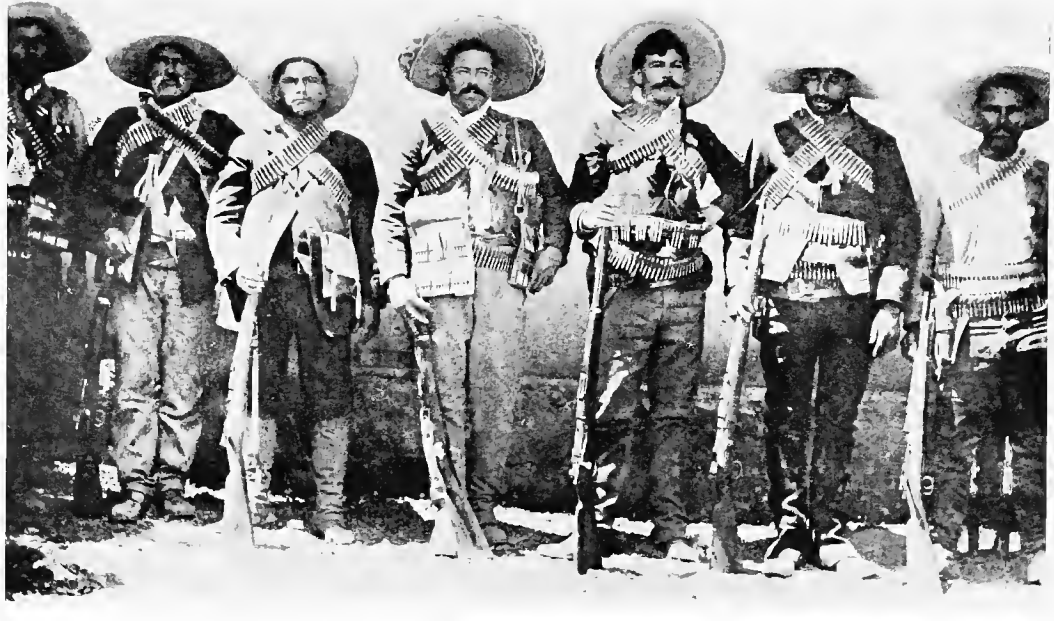
We had now reached the bottom of a little valley between the hills, and the trail crossed one or two dried-up watercourses, usually called "barrancas." In front of us stretched the wooded hill-side, though we were still in open country, and the only bush was along the banks of the "barrancas."

Somewhere in the fringe of wood a rifle cracked, and as the echoes still rattled among the hills, our valiant scouts came tearing in. They returned to the troop with their horses at full gallop and raising clouds of dust. All the other horses pranced and curveted, while the men cursed them and jagged the savage Mexican bits in their mouths. An aimless chorus of instruction and curses rose, above which the sergeant could be heard shouting, "Son los rebeldes! los rebeldes!" (The rebels! the rebels!)

The rebels, seeing that their ambush had failed because of that nervous accidental shot, opened fire.

From the fringe of the wood and along the line of a "barranca" rose little woolly puffs of smoke, and the air round us seemed full of things that buzzed and whirred.

A horse screamed shrilly, plunged forward for a pace, and then sat down on his quarters like a dog. The rider jumped clear of the saddle, and stared at his



TYPICAL REBELS

mount. He jagged the bit, but the horse would not rise. A bullet struck up the dust by his feet, and he seemed to realize all of a sudden what was happening. With a shrill whimper he unslung his carbine and took cover in the ditch.

The troops stood paralyzed, bunched together, staring at the mountain-side, their faces tense with astonishment. I had dismounted.

"Put the horses in the 'barranca'!" I shouted to him, and tried to tell him to make the men take cover; but my Spanish gave out, and all I could say was, "Abajo" (lower), and patted at the ground with my hand.

The "barranca" afforded slight cover for the horses, but standing them close in under the bank, we only lost one more. The men lay along the edge and fired casually. At the bottom of the "barranca" lay two dead men and two seriously wounded. Out on the trail the sergeant lay face down in the dust; his cigarette still smouldered, sending a little column of grey smoke up into the stagnant air.

An occasional bullet struck the edges of the trench and ricochetted over us with a high musical note. At last the enemies' fire seemed to slacken, and I crawled to where Gonzalez was looking out at the hill-side. His face was pinched and drawn, and he seemed to be years older. (This skirmish had made him into a soldier, and the men were behav-

ing well.) As I crawled up he passed his tongue over his dry, dust-caked lips, and whispered that the rebels seemed to be over a hundred rifles strong. Through our field-glasses we gazed at the woods. I knew the rebels were closing down under cover of the bush as their fire had dropped by sections, as some unseen messenger reached them. The shots that continued came from the same places, and were evidently a covering fire.

With an empty cartridge-case I sketched our position in the dust, and pointed out our open defenceless flank towards which the enemy were moving.

Gonzalez looked regretful, but he nodded, and together we slid down the bank into the "barranca."

Quickly the horse-holders led out the horses from cover; the wounded men were handed up, and the rifles and bandoliers of the dead tied to the saddles. The men were alert and steady; all trace of their slackness had been sloughed off. I remembered the Rurales on the road and shuddered. There were no spare horses to carry corpses.

The little party on the bank kept up a covering fire, and with a rush the remains of the troop left cover and galloped up the hill.

The rebel fire broke out fiercely, and the crest of the hill, behind which was cover and the road

to safety, seemed miles away. Bent low over our saddles, and casting glances back at that deadly wood, we galloped and soon were over.

The wounded and their escort streamed down the dusty trail, while the orderly and I waited below the crest for the covering party and the lieutenant to rejoin us.

We could see them in the little "barranca" getting mounted and ready for a burst for cover. One had been hit and had to be helped into his saddle. Up the trail they came, through the hail of fire, the white dust cloud drifting behind them. Together we all galloped down from the crest, and soon were safe under cover behind a spur of mountain. The echoes died down and the vultures came streaming in from the mountains.

We reached the citadel, and rode in to report.

It was past two o'clock in the afternoon, and I suddenly realized that I had not breakfasted.

"There are no rebels," said the Censor of Military News, "only exaggerated reports of bandits in the mountains!"

CHAPTER XXIII

UNDER FIRE ON THE RAILROAD

At the time of which I write the rebels had surrounded the State of Mexico, and all communications to the north were interrupted. All train service was disconnected, and the capital was more or less isolated. It is true that one cable line was open, but this was controlled by the Federal authorities. Wild rumours were current in the city. Only one thing seemed certain, and that was that the cordon of rebels were actually drawn up round the city and were only awaiting the arrival of reinforcements from the south.

Once reinforced the city was at their mercy, and they could force the resignation of General Diaz.

It was at this juncture that I had to leave.

My passage was booked, and my heavy luggage was already at the port of Vera Cruz.

Going round to a friend of mine at the railway terminus, I asked him how matters stood, and he explained that there were three wrecks on the line, and no train had run for three days, but they were going to try and run one that afternoon.

We went down into the almost empty station and watched the soldiers removing a cartful of wounded and dead Federals, from a train which had arrived just previously.

Barefooted orderlies from the military hospital ran around with stretchers, whilst women camp-followers cooked food or waged war with the gaunt dogs that tried to investigate their bundles. All around was most insanitary confusion. Flies settled on the dead and on the food, and people with typhoid drank out of the same bottles as the wounded. Two rival volunteer nursing associations —the "Red Cross" and the "Blue Cross"—who hated one another with true Indian hatred, conspired vigorously against each other, while the wounded still lay in rows in the sun. Near by two American locomotive engineers laughed with thorough appreciation over an American paper with headlines referring joyously to "Comic Opera Revolution" in Mexico, and brilliantly irresponsible comments on the situation.

My friend introduced me to the engineer who was to take out the afternoon train. He seemed despondent, but cheered up over a drink, and gave a highly coloured account of a car full of dead colonels and generals he had found. The rebels were fond of mutilation. He explained in most sulphurous phrases what he would do if they interfered with

his engine, and gave an entertaining account of an Indian who tried to steal a brass cock off a boiler full of steam. Altogether he exerted quite a cheering influence.

I went back to collect my small belongings, and after stowing a few tins of food in my hand-bag in case of a train wreck occurring miles from anywhere, I went down to the depot again. I found the train made up and the engine waiting with a full head of steam, while extra supplies of wood (they are wood burners) were piled on the tender. The Pullman coach was next to the engine, then came an ordinary coach (third class) for the natives; another similar coach containing forty Federal soldiers brought up the rear.

I stood on the platform and talked over the situation with the other Pullman passengers and the conductor. My fellow passengers consisted of an American mining engineer, who was dressed in the khaki of his profession; a German merchant of half-Mexican parentage; and two other Mexicans of the upper classes. The Pullman conductor was an American, and the porter an American negro. As we absorbed a final cocktail, the mining engineer hopefully remarked that he trusted he would have a stomach left by the time we reached Vera Cruz—if we ever did.

The porter began to ring the bell, and we got

aboard and settled down in the little smoking compartment to enjoy the ride. That is to say, to watch for signs of trouble.

We had travelled about thirty kilometres when we stopped at a little station. We got out to stretch our legs, and consulted the telegraph clerk regarding the situation.

"There are no rebels in the vicinity. True, my wires are cut, but that might be anybody. It is not my business to repair them." And, "Have any of the señores a spare packet of cigarettes?" said he.

We went on, feeling relieved.

About half an hour later I was sitting in the Pullman with the porter when a window on my right was suddenly smashed by a bullet. There was immediate uproar, and we found that a party of men, about seventy yards off, were racing towards the track, firing as they came. Several bullets hit the coach, and we felt the jump as the engineer threw open the engine-throttle and let her go at full speed ahead. I was still looking out of the window when the coach began to rock. It was obvious that we were off the line, and as I felt the wheels bumping over the ties I made for the centre alley-way between the seats and sat down on the floor. The coach nearly tipped over, but there was a crash as the steam-brake came on and we settled down; the noise stopped and the shrill scream of escaping steam was

heard. The conductor began to curse. "Those —— rebels have ditched us!" he said.

I went out on the rear platform of the Pullman. The third-class passengers—all Mexicans—were still screaming, and the soldiers were jumping out of the windows of their coach. The Pullman and the third-class coach were off the rail entirely, but the hind bogie of the soldiers' car and the express waggon remained on the lines. The engine and tender were on their sides in the ditch.

A sergeant ran to the edge of the track and shouted an order. As he spoke the rebels opened fire, and he fell over before his sentence was finished, the words tailing off into a murmur as he died. Speedily the soldiers tumbled out of the train and took cover on the opposite side. A burst of firing broke out behind them, and we became aware that we were ambushed on both sides. Bullets were striking the coaches and knocking up little spurts of dust on the track. Above the general uproar you could hear them beating on the engine and tender.

We passengers at once took cover in the Pullman. The soldiers crept under the carriages and began to fire from behind the wheels. About twenty men, under a young lieutenant, rushed for a borrow pit (a shallow depression from which earth had been dug to raise the track), the walls of which afforded some slight cover.

LOCO AND WRECKED FREIGHT CARS IN THE HANDS OF REBELS

We gathered at the smoke-room and lavatory end of the Pullman, the nickelled basins seeming to give a pleasing suggestion of armour plate, and there we sat on the floor. As we could see nothing, and the firing came in gusts, the inaction soon told on our nerves, so the mining man and myself crawled into the body of the coach. At the far end a Mexican lay on the floor, and as we came in he raised his head, and I could see that he was utterly panic-stricken. There were no windows left, and the dust-screens were torn; outside in the brilliant sunlight the rebels could be seen. Puffs of smoke rose here and there from the line, for some were using old-fashioned-black powder rifles; they deployed in a rough fan-shape, and the horses could be plainly seen, while one or two dead or wounded lay out in the open.

Although we were non-combatants and it was not our fight, the mining man and I both got into action with our carbines. I remember now that we did not say a word, but started mutually. I felt that it was all hopeless, and wished the end would come. I reloaded mechanically and fired fairly quickly, but soon got more careless about exposing myself as I aimed.

The nigger porter joined us, and I remember he looked very old and very dazed. Report after report came from underneath the carriage; down

the line somewhere a woman screamed incessantly, always on the same note; bullets came through the coach, and whenever one passed through the folded berths it twanged on the wire mattress, and pieces of the coverings flew out through the hole. The porter remarked, "Lordy, Lordy! who's agwine to pay for all dat?" He turned to me to say something, and I heard a noise like a melon being crushed—he fell towards me with his head blown in. I let him down gently to the floor, but he was killed instantly. Some of the floor was now messy, so I shifted to another window.

The enemy were getting closer, and the mining man touched me on the shoulder. "Chuck the carbine—it's the surrender act for us," he said.

I spun the carbine out of the window, hid my revolver under a seat, and joined the others in the smoking-room. The conductor had a shot arm, but no one else was hurt.

All sounds of firing had died down, and a native was waving a white rag on the platform of the third-class coach. A soldier got up, and throwing down his rifle, ran to meet the advancing rebels; he waved his hands in the air, but they closed in and shot him down with their revolvers.

They dashed up to the wreck reeling in their saddles, red-eyed with the passion of the fight, and shouting, "Muera los Federales?" "Viva Madero!"

and fired revolvers into the wreck at close range. Two of them dismounted and killed a wounded Federal, cutting him to pieces with machetes.

The main body reached us, and a mad scene of excitement took place. Men took rifles and bandoliers and looted the dead. Women screamed and tried to save their pots and pans, while the men laughed and shouted rough jests to one another. A group of them approached the Pullman, and levelling their rifles at us, told us to put up our hands; this we did—very quickly. We were told to leave the coach and stand along the side of the track. The Mexican passengers spoke up for us, pleading that we were inoffensive travellers and non-political, that we should not be molested. Finally a leader rode up and inquired who we were. I said that I was a journalist and an Englishman, and absolutely harmless, my one aim in life being to get to my own country as quickly as possible for the Coronation. A great discussion now took place, and it seemed as if we were due to make an exit; the only point in doubt being whether we should be shot at once or kept for amusement later. We hoped they would not delay. Finally they sobered down, and we were searched for arms or money. I had hidden some of my money inside my hat-band, the rest in my boots; but I had kept out a few small bills and some cash, which was enough to satisfy my

robber. He examined my watch, but finding it was a dollar Ingersoll, returned it. I then borrowed a cigarette from him, and crumbling it up, filled my pipe. My big English pipe then became an object of great interest and amusement, and was sampled by several rebels. They decided that it was an acquired taste, and returned it to me.

They were all very keen for news of the campaign, and I told them all the news and invented a good deal more. Just then it was discovered that the lieutenant was alive and able to walk. All his men were dead, and the wounded had all been killed. They proposed to string him up to a telegraph pole, but just as they got ready a sudden excitement brought the news that another train was coming. We were immediately put under guard again, and a body of rebels went off at a gallop to stop it. The train proved to be a repair train from the depot, and had no soldiers aboard, so it surrendered at once.

All interest now centred upon the bursting open of the safe in the express waggon. Dynamite was brought, and we all grouped round to see the show. All the boxes were thrown out on the track and opened by the rebels. They had an awfully good time, one wit parading in a lady's hat. Anything they could not use they spoilt.

The safe was duly burst, and it was found to

contain 4,000 dollars in Mexican money. At this there were universal rejoicings, and we were saved—indeed we became fast friends. The leader told us to get what was left of our personal belongings and to get on board the other train.

I got my hand-bag from the carriage, and found my revolver still safely hidden. This I slipped inside my shirt. My Kodak was not loaded, but I produced the instrument, and took a series of lovely groups, all work stopping in order that the heroes could pose properly. I swore to give them all prints, or rather to leave them at the General Post Office in Mexico City for them to claim when they entered the capital in triumph.

With much hand-shaking and expressions of regret for the "fortune of war," we got on board the relief train. Just as we were leaving, the conductor and I asked for permission to take the porter's body along. This was immediately granted, and so we all journeyed to Mexico City in the luggage van; and it wasn't till we were safely off that we found time to be nervous about what had happened.

CHAPTER XXIV

RIOTING IN THE CITY

MEXICO CITY was excited. A plot to seize the barracks of Tacubaya had been discovered, and the city prison of Belem was crowded with prisoners.

The police were much in evidence, and little patrols of mounted gendarmes were policing the squares and main roads. Business was at a standstill, and the suburbs were reported to be already in the hands of the rebels. The shops were open, but no trade was in progress; everybody gathered in the saloons and cafés and discussed the situation, while the newspaper boys reaped a rich harvest selling special editions.

"The President was going to resign." Diaz the iron man, the autocrat, the statesman, Diaz who had made Mexico, Diaz the tyrant, had been forced by the revolution to resign. He was going to the Chamber of Deputies in person, and was going to hand over the reins of government to De la Barra until Madero could be elected. Six months ago he was the most popular man in the Republic.

The Centennial celebrations had been held, Mexico had been free for a hundred years, and at peace for the last thirty, and it was Diaz who had kept that peace. The representatives of European nations paid him homage, and the newspapers screamed his praises. What had he done to be forced to resign? Nothing.

Fickle, untrustworthy Mexico had turned. A revolution had been started, and younger men wanted the jobs held by their elders. Local oppression by local authorities—in the name of the President—had fanned the flame, and now, after all, he had to go.

I was standing outside the Iturbide Hotel when the storm broke. A mob of men and boys carrying aloft a picture of Madero, and brandishing sticks and scraps of red, white, and green bunting—the national colours of Mexico—burst into the main street, and marched towards the central Cathedral Square, the "Zocalo." Everywhere the people rushed to swell the mob, and the news travelled from lip to lip: "Diaz has refused to resign; he says he will to-morrow"—"mañana" (to-morrow), the inevitable Spanish phrase of postponement.

The mob was furious and shouted itself hoarse, crying "Viva Madero!" Anxious shopkeepers flew to put up shutters, and the police gathered to oppose the rioters. On the asphalt roads gravel was

scattered so that the hoofs of the cavalry should not slip, and then the troops were called out.

All Mexico was in the streets, and everybody was waiting for the inevitable clash between the military and the mob. It came earlier than was expected, when the rioters in a freak of temper commenced to break the windows of the European shops. The police dispersed the mob time and time again, but it re-formed, and when the evening fell there were many different mobs, several thousand strong, parading the city, shouting "Viva Madero—death to Diaz!"

The lower elements had seized the public carriages, and these poor hacks, thickly clustered with Mexican hooligans, paraded round like floats in a procession. The drinking-shops and pulquerias had been closed by order of the Governor of the Federal District, but still many of the mob were drunk.

At about eight o'clock the Zocalo was full. This great square is the heart of Mexico City, as Trafalgar Square is the heart of London, and they are about equal in size. At each corner narrow streets—the important business streets of the city—lead into it. The centre is occupied by a bandstand and a little park. One side is taken up by the Cathedral, and the far side is the long façade of the National Palace, while the two sides nearest the business quarter are

arranged as covered ways, great pillared verandas resembling cloisters, beneath which are booths and shops. These are known as the "portales." The Zocalo is the centre for the great electric tram system, the rails of which were being relaid. The asphalt and stones had been dug up and were being used as missiles by the crowd, their intention being to break the windows of the National Palace, drawn up before which was a regiment of soldiers.

From a position in the portales I watched the scene. The frenzied crowd shouting and raging beneath the glare of the arc lamps, but still not as yet dangerous. The trams were unable to move, and a blockade had formed which the police were attempting to clear. A tram from the suburbs came in, and the mob rushed the platform and seized the controller handle from the driver.

A policeman went to his assistance, and a peon beat his hat down over his eyes. The policeman drew his pistol and shot down his assailant. On the firing of the shot the whole crowd stopped shouting, and silence reigned for a second; then from those nearest the policeman a scream of execration went up. He hesitated for a moment, then ran straight for cover beneath the portales, the crowd opening to let him pass; he reached Tardan's hat shop and bolted through the door;

the mob surged forward to follow him, but the iron curtains descended and covered both windows and doors. Hastily the shop-assistant screwed them into place and retreated into the shop. The fury of the mob knew no bounds. With the pieces of asphalt they bombarded the shops, wrecking all unprotected windows, then turned their attention to wrecking the arc lamps; in a minute the square was almost in darkness. The shout had died down to a low growl of fury, and occasional pistol-shots showed the presence of fire-arms.

A bugle-call rang out from the National Palace, and another side of the square filled with mounted gendarmes, their carbines unslung and ready for action. A hoarse command was given to clear the square, but the crowd commenced to stone the military, who without further delay opened fire on them. Women and men, unable to move in the crush, screamed in panic, and the whole body surged and fought to get out of the square.

A great cry went up from the trapped rioters, but the firing continued, and a machine-gun on the roof of the palace poured its leaden hail into the mass. The fire continued for about three minutes, till the square was empty but for the dead and wounded, and those who crouched for cover behind the pillars of the portales.

The mounted men chased the flying rioters and

the police took charge of the square. Everywhere lay dead and wounded, and the whole ground was littered with clubs and stones.

A tropical thunderstorm now broke, and in the pouring rain the ambulance parties collected the victims; the work lasted for about an hour and a half. By ten o'clock the Zocalo was clear, and the rioters all hidden in their homes. No truthful figures were ever published of the numbers killed and wounded, but in one "commissaria," or local police-station, I counted fifteen corpses, and the city hospital was full.

The rain-storm had saved the city, and the night passed without further bloodshed, though everybody was apprehensive of the morrow. The next morning I went for my usual morning ride, and found that the mobs were already forming. By seven o'clock it was evident that there was going to be more trouble.

I went to the cable office with my news, but found the line closed. I was, however, able to telegraph to the States by means of one of the Federal telegraphs. Within half an hour of the despatch of my message this line was also cut, and Mexico City was cut off from communication with the outside world.

The mobs were soon parading the streets and doing a good deal of damage. In many cases they

were led by women, the scenes recalling accounts of the French Revolution.

The remarkable way in which the better classes accepted the situation was notable—everybody was out in the street enjoying the fun. The ladies sat in the balconies in their best clothes and watched the crowds. Mexico City was enjoying the carnival with leaden bullets for confetti. At every street corner stood groups of men, watching the latest whim of the mob. This new game was the forcible seizure of the public tram service. They rushed the cars and clambered all over them, crowds sitting on the roof and clustering on the back platforms. As the lower-class Mexican does not understand electricity, there were several fatalities before all the trams were run into their depots.

A demonstration was held on the Paseo de la Reforma, and a policeman killed by the mob. Cavalry was rushed to the scene, and a charge took place. In the brilliant sunshine it was a remarkable scene. The air above the rioters was thick with stones and billets of wood; as the cavalry charged, the sunlight glittered on their flashing sabres, and within a minute the mob was running for its life, and only the wounded and dead remained.

The rival ambulance corps descended and col-

THE GUARD ON DUTY OUTSIDE PRESIDENT DIAZ'S HOUSE, CLOSING BOTH ENDS OF THE STREET

WRECKED FOREIGNERS SHOPS

lected their victims. They threw sheets emblazoned with the red cross or the blue cross over various public cabs, and used them to carry the victims to the hospitals.

Blood-thirsty encounters took place outside several of the principal hotels, and by midday Mexico City looked as if it had stood a siege. All shops were boarded up and heavily shuttered, great pieces of the broken plate-glass windows lay in the street, and all wheeled traffic had disappeared. Except for the police and the ambulances, there was not a single vehicle about.

At last the news came that the President had at last resigned, and the city gave itself over to rejoicings. A motor-car came in bearing some of the rebels' leaders, who tried to calm the mob and appealed to them to preserve order. These rebels were welcomed by the authorities, but soon rejoined their commands, as the situation was by no means secure.

General Diaz's house was situated in Cadena Street, and each end of this street was guarded by soldiers to prevent the mob attacking the house. All public buildings were guarded, and the citadel protected by a wire fence some eight feet high, covered by machine-guns. For two days the garrison had had no rest.

Night fell on a city where rejoicings were

being held at one corner of the street while fighting was in progress at the other.

In the suburbs the men who had formed the Government hastily prepared for flight. All cafés were closed, and in the barricaded streets the crowd cheered and paraded.

CHAPTER XXV

AN EXODUS

THE rioting in the city still continued, but it had changed to a less serious form of public activity, rather resembling the behaviour of an election crowd than the bloody fighting of the day before. The city was still isolated, and to make matters worse, my ship was due to leave Vera Cruz on the following day. My only chance of reaching England in time for the Coronation was to leave the city for Vera Cruz at once. From all accounts the trains were absolutely held up, and there could be no traffic till the lines were cleared, and the bridges that had been wrecked by the rebels built up again.

I was in despair, but arranged with a friend at the San Lazaro station to telephone me if any chance of getting through presented itself. My heavy baggage lay at Vera Cruz awaiting my arrival, but I had several small packages to carry upon the journey, so I packed and got everything ready for a hasty departure. Late in the afternoon I received a telephone message from the station,

to the effect that the line was clear, but there was no service for the public. There was, however, much excitement in the station, as they were preparing six special trains, two of them with armoured cars attached. I realized at once that the President was going to leave the city, and made up my mind to go if possible at the same time. The route that was clear was not the usual one direct to Vera Cruz via Puebla, but a roundabout way over the Interoceanic Company's system, so it was evident that the flight would be a secret one.

After getting my luggage together, I was confronted with a new difficulty: there were no public hacks—the streets of the city, usually crowded with vehicles, were absolutely empty, with the exception of one or two ambulance automobiles. The station was situated about a mile away at the other end of the city and amidst the lowest quarters, an unwise district to visit on foot at any time, but at this period of excitement decidedly risky for a foreigner. While in this dilemma a Mexican peon wheeling a handcart approached. I asked him if he would carry my luggage, and in spite of the offer of several dollars he refused.

After a long argument I overcame his fears by the appeal to his cupidity, and he consented to carry my kit.

Accompanied by a friend or two, we set out in procession for the station. Many evil looks were cast upon us, but we were not molested, and in about half an hour's time we reached our goal.

The San Lazaro depot was surrounded by soldiers and police, but I was allowed to enter with my friends, though the peon was kept outside.

Within the station were several trains, the locomotives standing by with a full head of steam. Attached to two of them were the black-and-white chequered armoured cars. They had been built in the city and equipped with machine-guns in the citadel, but had not yet been used against the rebels. Without further delay I boarded one of the special cars. The sentry on the rear platform stopped me, but I handed him my card with an air of complete assurance and passed by. He was perfectly contented, for in Mexico a journalist is allowed a great latitude. Piling my kit on a seat, I bade my friends farewell, and sat down, in fear and trembling, to await the arrival of someone in authority who would chuck me out. I heard the sentry present arms, and someone entered the carriage. To my great relief it was an officer of the Presidential Guard with whom I was acquainted. We greeted one another warmly, and before he could question my presence, I asked him for the

news. The strain of the past few days had told hardly upon him, and he nervously sketched out the tale of the preparations for flight. All was chaos, and no one knew whether Diaz was coming, or whether it was merely members of the household departing. As he spoke a prominent member of the late Government and his family entered I made myself useful carrying luggage, etc., and everybody seemed to take my presence for granted. A small escort of the Presidential Guard appeared, and from them we understood that our train was to leave shortly. Before we left, an armoured train pulled out of the station, followed by a special, containing a prominent member of a British firm who was to arrange all matters relative to the President's housing at Vera Cruz.

It was a weird scene, and the nervous tension was terrific. One could see the lights of the arc lamps reflected from the glittering uniforms, and the red glare of the engine's fire-boxes, which were continually being fed by the firemen, lit up the darkness, while the whole roof rang with the hiss of escaping steam, and little groups of men on the platforms spoke in subdued whispers.

Outside in the station yard one could hear the howling of the mob as they paraded the empty streets of the city.

It was past midnight, and just before we pulled

TROOPS GUARDING PRESIDENT DIAZ'S HOUSE IN CALLE CADENA

out a long grey motor-car, escorted by a few people in civilian attire, slid into the station, and Diaz—late President of the Republic—got in.

The night was cloudy, but later the moon gave a good deal of brilliance, lighting up the fantastic landscape with its faint ghostly light. The little stations flew by and the false dawn was lighting the sky before we came to a halt. Round a curve we could see the tail lights of the train before us, for they had halted while the soldiers ahead hastily repaired the wrecked track. Behind us, somewhere along the track, were following the other three special trains, containing the ex-President, his family, and his escort. Except for the hiss of escaping steam from the engine, and the noise of the conductor's boots as he walked along the rails, swinging a lantern, the night was absolutely silent; but to our strained nerves, every patch of bushes and the dark shadows of the "barrancas" seemed as if they might harbour an ambush of rebels. The train went on, and the skies gradually lightened with the coming of the dawn. Standing on the platform of the carriage, I watched the colours of the sunrise paint the snow-capped peak of Orizaba, which seemed to rise like an enchanted island from the sea of mist below. We halted at a little station and received the news that the rebels had attacked the train before us but had been beaten off, the

machine-guns in the armoured car taking a heavy toll of them.

The soldiers lined the windows of the cars and stood on the alert as we drew near the scene of the action. A shot or two rang out on the hill-sides and a body of mounted rebels, who were some distance away from the track, galloped madly to cut us off. A volley from our escort, fired while the train was in motion, made them wheel round and scatter, firing occasional and futile shots at us as we went by.

This same party of rebels attacked the train containing the President that was following us, and were defeated by the loss of over thirty men. Old General Hermandez and the ex-President himself taking part in the fight.

We saw several small troops of rebels, and one station was in their hands ; but we did not stop and were not molested, with the exception of one or two casual shots fired at the train on general principles. By eight o'clock we reached Vera Cruz, where the heat was unbearable and the change in the air-pressure, caused by our descent of 8,000 feet, almost deafened us.

The ex-Presidential train waited outside Vera Cruz, while Mr. Fred Adams, of the firm of Sir Weetman Pearson, made arrangements for the housing of the ex-President in a house next to the British Consulate, in the suburbs of Vera Cruz.

Vera Cruz—the rich city of the Holy Cross, as Drake termed it—lay bathed in heat. Under the portales of the plaza sat the residents, white-clad and cool, languid in the shadow. At one little marble-topped table two dust-begrimed officers of the Presidential Guard talked rapidly with some local officials. The Guard was usually so spick and span as to compare favourably with German officers, but to-day they were unshaven, dust-begrimed, and overheated, in their heavy uniforms of blue and silver. Yet they were deserving of great honour, for at great risk they had remained loyal to their President — Diaz — who was now going away into exile, leaving his adherents behind to stand or fall, according to the will of the incoming tyrant. To be a loyal officer of the Guard might mean much suffering in the future, but it was about the finest thing to be seen in Vera Cruz, for it is one thing to fight for a President, and it is another to be one of a small group assisting and guarding a shattered old man in the midst of hundreds of personal and political enemies, when no one knew what terror was about to happen.

Diaz was harboured in a house near the British Consulate, a house belonging to an English firm, and every Englishman felt that it was a good thing to be a Britisher when even ex-Presidents realized

the sanctuary and power that our flag affirmed. He had withstood the voice of the people. He had not listened to the murmurs of the younger generation. He had believed in the State that he had made, and he had believed in his people. It was all infinitely pitiful, but the old dog was beaten, and Liberty was again awake in the land. In Latin America Liberty is Licence, and even yet the shadow of his past kept the city of Vera Cruz quiet, though in the City of Mexico carillons rang from all the steeples, and the people celebrated the downfall of a tyrant, while a special train brought Don Francisco I. Madero nearer to his capital.

Newspaper-boys sold "special edition" after "special edition" and "Viva Madero!" flamed in electric lamps from over the public hall, yet the quiet groups of police kept the populace moving, and the platoons of soldiery at the corner of the streets leant on their loaded rifles and eyed the nervous crowd. Everybody feared an outbreak, and in the evening when the crowd commenced in orderly fashion to circulate round the plaza, and the old man whose duty it was at nightfall to fire off squibs in the branches of the trees in order to scare away the roosting birds lest they should defile the people circulating beneath, exploded his crackers, everyone started, and a

murmur went through the ranks of the waiting soldiery.

The cause of the alarm noted, a wave of laughter swept the crowd and the boulevardiers, who beneath the portales resumed their sipping of cocktails and eager discussions of events.

The night passed off quietly.

In the hotel where I was staying I found several friends awaiting the arrival of the boats; my ship, the *Morro Castle* (a Ward Line boat bound for Cuba and New York), was already in dock, but would not sail until the morrow. I got my luggage on board, and then returned to the hotel; my friends had hired a sailing-boat, and we left the harbour for a run to the Isla de Sacrificios, a coral island where the bodies of many heretic English sailors lie, and where once stood a temple where the Spaniards first found human sacrifice in progress.

The sea-breeze was refreshing, and the view of the city with its harbour, and the grim old prison of San Juan de Alloa, where political prisoners served life sentences in the unlighted cells beneath sea-level, backed by the Sierras and snow-capped Orizaba, seemed like a well-lighted panorama, and after life in the thin air of the city, each breath at sea-level seemed full, soothing, and soporific. That evening we gave ourselves a farewell supper, and although glad to be homeward-bound again,

I regretted leaving old Mexico, whose charm and lure is as old as the Conquest.

The *Morro Castle* steamed out into Campeche Bay, and I watched the coast-line grow faint in the tropic haze, and the white sails of the fishing-boats grow smaller and smaller, wondering what would be the fate of Mexico, yet glad of the restfulness of the sea trip after the anxious weeks. Well, I had had a busy time and now was glad to rest.

The boat seemed strangely quiet, few people appeared in the saloon, though most of the cabins were full. Off Yucatan the tender brought more passengers aboard, and after awhile we up-anchored and sailed for Cuba—Hispaniola of blessed memory. We had done with Mexico, and forthwith the ship became populous. From every cabin came refugees and their families, bound for New York, and that heaven of all Latin Americans and good journalists—Paris.

The passenger list was a mockery. Señor Pineda turned out to be Sr. Don, ex-Cabinet Minister, and they were all safe, free and upon the high seas. Everyone was very happy. It is a great thing to be on your way to Paris instead of off to prison, and the girls danced in the saloon, while mamma relaxed discipline and convention in the joy of their escape. In the smoke-room we discussed and intrigued to re-establish the Diaz régime, and great names in

politics and finance were bandied to and fro. The *Junta* in New York would welcome me, the English were friends of the educated people, not of "canâlla," like the Maderistas—and then came the explosion. Somebody discovered Maderist spies on board communicating by wireless the unfettered speech and aspiration of the refugees.

Grim was the search for the traitor, and everyone felt the chill of hesitation and doubt. Finally suspicion fell upon a quiet Licenciado, a Mexican barrister, and as Señora Estella, a little nut-brown Yucateca, told me that evening—they had evidence, "si" much evidence! and the Licenciado would be lucky if a "desgracia" (an accident) did not occur.

At Havana he left the ship, and never came on board again, although he left all his belongings. I hope that he merely missed the boat, but as the *Junta* had been using the wireless too, and Havana is a hot-bed of intrigue, it is possible that after all that "desgracia" must have occurred, and from the way that everybody was standing drinks to the damnation of Madero that evening—all without rhyme or reason—I sincerely believe that the *Junta* scored a trick in the narrow-streeted City of Havana.

We were a queer crowd, and few of the men—myself among them—could stand anybody passing behind us without a display of "nerves." I had not

realized it when the excitement was on, but the strain had told considerably, and I was by no means free from "nerves." Malaria and excitement play the devil with one's reserve of force. But the sea air was splendid, and I felt sorry as the lazy trip past the Florida coast drew to an end.

New York at last! Up the river and then the sky-scrapers, and the little green garden of Battery Point, through the Customs, across on a ferry, then smash into the whirl of Broadway once again—all Anglo-Saxon advertisements and speech—real hotels, real theatres, real food. Civilization once again, and all white faces in the streets. Mexico slipped back two centuries again, and once more I felt in touch with the centre of things, for New York is very like London.

The return is always good, and the returned traveller finds few greater joys on his travels than when, after long absence, he gets into touch again with familiar things. Yet New York, although familiar, was not my city; it was great; it was joyful; but it only whetted my appetite for London. Next day I sailed upon a White Star boat—homeward bound.

Since Madero has held the reins of government, a year has passed, and still the cables of the world vibrate to paragraphs of "insurgency in Mexico." Paris maintains Mexican securities, but peace does

not come. Armed bands of guerillas ravage the country, and liberty and anarchy are still confounded. Some day the American Flag will embrace all the territory from Panama to the Canadian line; that day cannot be long postponed.

Mexico has exchanged a soldier for a civilian, peace for war, and prosperity and reputation for insecurity and insurrection. The Presidency of Mexico is a perilous honour—may he who holds it hold it firm.

APPENDIX

SINCE the foregoing chapters were written Mexican politics have again attracted the notice of the civilized world, and Don Francisco Indalecio Madero, President of Mexico, has been murdered in the streets of his capital.

When I left the country in 1911, Madero, an untried man, a politician and reformer unused to ruling, was about to be elected President by popular acclamation. The rising that he had so successfully led was popular, and the people were sick of the tyranny and corruption of the Diaz-Scientifico group, the farce of re-election, and the lack of general political honesty.

Madero was an intellectual man and a man of wealth. Round him congregated the advanced thinkers of Mexico—the Socialists, Liberals, and all the firebrand politicians. Young Mexico, the generation that had grown up under Diaz, turned to Madero to free them from the bonds of tyranny. It was the opposite swing of the pendulum, and "Liberty" is a dangerous watch-word for a people that cannot differentiate between liberty and licence.

His government was better than was expected, and his attitude towards "reformers," who wished to steal the bulk of the public money, was stronger than they had anticipated. Unfortunately, the Mexicans had

discovered that the profession of revolution was more attractive than that of agriculture, and scattered bands of rebels turned bandit were responsible for much local fighting and disorganization. The aftermath of revolution produced the Orozco rebellion, and the Zapatistas, and countless minor risings.

Finance is necessary for any revolution, and it is a matter for speculation to what extent reputable firms in the States and Europe supplied the sinews of war to maintain a constant anti-Government movement, or, in plainer words, hired bandits to prevent the success of reforms which would have secured Mexico's national wealth to the Mexicans rather than to foreigners. Political corruption ended in political assassination, and Mexico again stands before the world self-convicted of incapacity for stable government, still unable to distinguish between Constitutional government and the doctrine of murder—the "higher expediency" of political assassination.

Madero made mistakes, but he believed in his own ideals. When Felix Diaz started a futile revolution in Vera Cruz—a revolution so badly arranged that it collapsed from the fact that the revolutionary chiefs had not sufficient foresight to issue some badge or distinguishing mark to their mercenaries, with the comic result that no one could distinguish between friend and foe—Madero spared his life. If Mr. Taft's nephew invaded Philadelphia, and proceeded to shoot useful citizens, the United States of America would, on capturing him, execute him with the minimum of delay and the maximum of publicity, and everyone would agree that it was a wise move. Madero spared Diaz.

Madero, the idealist, believed that for Mexico the era of political murder had passed, and in order to show the world that he believed in his ideals, spared the life of his captive.

In February, Felix Diaz, General Huerta, and General Bernardo Reyes bought over part of the army, and by a *coup d'état* seized the Citadel in Mexico City. Madero was caught unprepared. The country was peaceful and settling down, a new and free election was preparing, and popular confidence was firmly rooted in Madero. Mexico was settling into its stride and commerce beginning to revive. This group of men, whom popular opinion had expelled from power before as corrupt and tyrannous, now revived, and by a sudden purely criminal act—the seizing of the Citadel—plunges the whole of the Republic again into the throes of civil war.

For a parallel, imagine to yourself the minority of an unpopular party seizing the Tower some few weeks before a General Election, and then, by superior force of arms and general treachery, overthrowing the Government and assassinating the Cabinet.

The provincial Governments were not in sympathy with this "revolution." It was not really a revolution, but much more like some extraordinary anarchist crime. The Madero Government was popular and doing well, yet this little group of adventurers seized the governing power of the State, and after fierce fighting, in which foreigners were killed and foreign property damaged, the Legations under fire, and American women killed, seized by treachery the person of Madero, who, after a day's confinement, was killed

under circumstances that nobody who knows Mexico can possibly believe were, as the new Government say, "accidental."

"While being taken to prison, Madero's friends attempted a rescue, and by one of them he was accidentally shot." So runs General Huerta's "explanation" —the statement that he cabled to the *Daily Express*, "A full inquiry is to be made." And it was found that Madero, while seated in the motor, was shot in the back at close range, his clothes being singed by the burning powder.

So it runs—Madero and his brother dead, victims of their own clemency, for they were killed by people whom they spared. Madero's work lives on. Mexico has awakened to the need of reform, and the Diaz-Huerta peace policy, that leads off with assassination, is not reform, but reaction—the darkness of the Middle Ages. The old Diaz régime was marked by corruption, tyranny, and no intellectual or political development. Mexico was bond-slave to the group that drained her treasure for themselves, and here again we find the same group striving to re-establish themselves, and founding a "policy of peace" upon a campaign of murder. They, in their eagerness to grasp the spoils of office (there are already rumours of a new Mexican loan), have imperilled the very existence of Mexico as a Republic at all. The provincial Governors are loath to accept the domination of the new group, and the northern States of the Republic talk of secession from the Union, for they, being nearer civilization, resent the imposition of barbaric methods.

How long the United States will permit this condi-

tion of affairs, and how long they will hand out impartial approbation to any successful group of adventurers, who chance to seize the helm of their neighbouring Republic, is a matter for serious consideration. When the fighting was in progress they mobilized an Army Corps, but, in spite of the death of American citizens, the destruction of foreign property, and the bombardment of the Legations, they took no active steps to maintain order or their national prestige. The reasons for this are obvious: Latin-American republics look upon the U.S.A. with deep suspicion, and the occupation of Mexico would entail a boycott of American trade. Cuba and the Philippines were expensive lessons for Washington, and the U.S.A. realizes in full the difficulties of international police work. On the other hand, European expansion is checked by the Monroe doctrine, which forbids the acquisition of any land in the Western Hemisphere by a European Power; and whether this doctrine still holds good, *or whether the U.S.A. is sufficiently strong enough to enforce it* (owing to her small military establishment and general lack of armament), has never been tested. Brazil would afford Germany opportunities such as she needs; and Mexico, where there is something like £100,000,000 English capital, could be made into an American Egypt.

Mexico needs saving from the Mexicans; she cannot govern herself, and a Protectorate would afford her the opportunity to grow up, and at the same time safeguard foreign business interests and further the material and intellectual development of the country. One thing is certain, and that is that Washington should either

guarantee to preserve order, or announce that she no longer holds to the Monroe doctrine.

Mexican government is a tragic farce, and the foreign investor who has invested on the strength of the belief that the U.S.A. will hold to her obligations has a right to know what Washington's attitude is. At present it seems to be that the lives and property of foreigners may be endangered, and in some cases destroyed, without any steps being taken to enforce order.

Mexico is a great country, rich and teeming with possibilities, but the present condition of instability renders her development hopeless; until commercial security, coupled with political honesty, asserts itself nothing can be hoped for. Whether this is likely to occur in Mexican hands the events of the last three years seem to leave not only in doubt, but beyond the range of probability.

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