

A Tehuantepec Beauty

Watson

A Department Store

Little Buddies

Another Plantation Belle

*Machete*³¹⁵

“IT HAPPENED IN MEXICO”

By

CHARLES MERRIAM



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To
MY MOTHER

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Machete

By CHARLES MERRIAM

CHAPTER I

INSIDE THE FRONT DOOR OF MEXICO

“WELL,” drawled Redner, “it’s about time to ankle along if we want to spear that drink before we eat.” Raising his head he yawned indolently and gazed out over the harbor.

The long wailing notes of a melancholy bugle call floated faintly across the placid water. A file of white-clad sailors marshaled on the after-deck of a trim grey gunboat and stood stiffly at attention while the red, white and green ensign of Mexico fluttered slowly down from its flagstaff for an honorable rest. A cannon boomed. Ships’ riding lights twinkled in the softening purple. Another bugle wailed from the grim walls of San Juan de Ulua; another red, white and green ensign descended from its tall staff. The shadows lengthened. The azure sky leaned closer, like a benediction.

“Well?” drawled Redner again, questioning. Getting up from the bench he stretched the cramps from his body by lifting his arms above his head.

“We got to step on it if we want that drink.” There was anticipation in his tone.

Far away back of the city, giant mountains stretched a jagged outline against the glow of the setting sun. The time-softened tints of old Vera Cruz grew softer.

“Well?” questioned Redner once more, somewhat petulantly.

I rose reluctantly.

“Damned if it don’t sort of get you,” he conciliated, sensing my attitude. “But wait! This is just the front door.” He waved his hand in an encompassing gesture. “You’ll get over this *pronto* after you get down in the bush.”

As we walked shoreward from the end of the long government pier the lighthouse which rises above the Immigration Building started flashing. From the doorway of a *cantina* floated the rhythmic tinkle of a guitar and the music of a clear-voiced singer. A few stars glimmered faintly. A gentle breeze purred. It was cool. The pungent odors of tropics and seaport and evening filled the air.

“Yes,” my acquaintance agreed, glancing about appreciatively, “There’s sure something about it. I wouldn’t have stayed for more than twenty years if there wasn’t. But,” he paused emphatically, “there’s a damn big lot you can’t see from here!”

When we reached the central Plaza a conventional throng was gathering in the sidewalk cafes. Street lights blinked faintly in the half-light of early night. My first day in Mexico was over. I had arrived in the morning with a Spanish-English dictionary and a letter entitling me to a job on the Isthmus of Tehu-

antepec. On the steamship *Monterrey* coming down from New York I had met Redner.

"This your first trip, isn't it?" he inquired soon after we sat down to our initial meal. It needed no second glance to convince an old timer that I was a newcomer to the country.

"I'll sort of help you through the customs and get you started," he volunteered kindly, when I assured him that I had never been to Mexico before. He seemed familiar with all parts of the country, so I asked him if he had ever been to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

"Went all over it some years ago," he replied. "Wonderful jungle mud-hole, most of it. Full of fever and snakes. But the thing I remember best about it was the big breasts of the women I saw bathing along the streams, and the little ones on the cows."

True to his word he helped me through the customs and after the ordeal I realized what a kindness he had shown me.

When we reached the cafe, an extremely polite waiter seated us and we became part of a throng of idlers enjoying before-dinner cocktails. Flocks of blackbirds settled into the trees of the Plaza, quarreling as noisily as delegates to a peace preservation convention. The velvety night fell. I sipped my cocktail reverently. To do otherwise would have been a desecration. It was a fragrant masterpiece compounded of the fresh juices of ripe fruits and fine old rum. My acquaintance drained his glass in the

rather hurried, rather pleased manner of one having satisfied a long cherished desire.

I felt supremely contented and at peace with the world. An old ambition had been gratified. I was in Mexico. From the time when as a small boy I had heard my father discussing with another soldier the magnificent courage of a Mexican army officer, I had wanted to go to Mexico. It had impressed me as a land teeming with strange and sinister possibilities. I had pictured small bands of rurales battling to the death with sweeping, yelling bands of big-hatted bandits. Swiftly dashing ponies. Fierce black eyes. Flashing teeth. The whine of bullets. Its spell was upon me, even before I approached its shores.

When I spoke to my brother who headed a company owning a small sugar plantation on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec about going, he grumbled defensively. "What the hell use would you be in the tropics? You don't know anything about agriculture. You wouldn't be any good around a sugar factory. You don't know . . ." But in the end he capitulated. Purely in self-defense he agreed that I was to go to Tehuantepec to act as nurse to a team of mules or wipe the grease from dirty tractors, or perform any other task which would require for its accomplishment more of physical effort than of understanding.

So at last I was in Mexico. The waiter hurried with another cocktail. The hum of conversation in Spanish made a quiet, entrancing melody. Across the Plaza the hallowed bulk of the ancient Cathedral caught the glow of the street lamps. Occasionally the bells

tolled. The day before a jealous youth had shot and killed his sweetheart there as she knelt at prayer. A continuous procession of bootblacks, lottery ticket vendors and beggars moved past our table. Some exhibited cruel sores and festering monstrosities in an effort to elicit larger donations.

“I hate to turn the bums down flat!” commented my acquaintance, flipping a coin at a particularly ragged mendicant. “Some of them are rotting with syphilis. Others have valid reasons for being hard up, but it certainly don’t help the appetite none to look at their putrid sores.” I had no wish to disagree with him.

A military band filed into the bandstand which occupied the center of the square as our dinner was being brought in. The few remaining tables quickly filled. An overdressed chubby woman appeared with her tall bald-headed husband. The Trainors had been fellow passengers on the boat, and as there were no unoccupied tables I motioned to them to join us. Mrs. Trainor smiled an acceptance and led the way.

“Whew, it’s hot!” she complained, slumping down in a chair and fanning herself with the menu. “I don’t think I’d need any diet if I lived here. I think I’ve shrunk some already.” She brightened, trying with her hands to discover some slack in her dress. Her husband sat meekly beside her and occupied himself by gazing longingly at a pretty dark-skinned girl.

“John!” commanded his wife, darkly.

He shifted his gaze and smiled sheepishly, like a boy detected in disobedience.

"He thinks because he's something of a chanticleer that he's still a youth's companion," Mrs. Trainor explained derisively.

"Well, anyway, Ma," he beamed a little uncertainly, "they ain't murdered no monkeys for me yet."

The lady's appearance changed to that of a small red thunder-cloud and she grumbled something to her napkin. But her husband continued to beam and talk, and evidently make the best of a rare opportunity.

The band burst into a gay march and the sidewalks quickly filled with promenaders. A bent brown man with a scrubby white-streaked beard passed. He failed to smile as he acknowledged the cheerful greeting accorded him by my acquaintance. His sunken deep-set eyes hardly shifted from their fixed look forward. Smiling, for him, seemed something impossible.

"There's a native of Tehuantepec," said Redner after he went by. "Don Guillermo was born in San Juan Evangelista. One night as we sat here at this same table he told me his story. His father was a Syrian who ran a little store down at San Juan. He was the only son, so a particular effort was made to give him an education. When he finished the local school he was sent to Mexico City to complete his studies. He was a strong-bodied, dreamy boy with imagination enough to do his own thinking and force of character enough to express his own ideas. He

made friends in college with a youth from the north who had been to the States and seen the condition of laboring men there. Of course, he could not believe all his friend's stories of laborers who owned houses and wore shoes and sent their children to school. Such things were just impossible. His friend had let his enthusiasm interfere with his veracity. He was not dishonest and it was easy to forgive him his exaggeration. When he returned home after college he used to amuse groups of peons by telling them the things he had heard. The peons used to laugh, but it started them talking and a few of them thinking. The . . . ”

“Don't they have any public schools?” interrupted Mrs. Trainor.

“They have a few now, but before the revolution the only real public schools were in the larger cities,” answered Redner.

“The *Presidente Municipal* of San Juan,” he continued, “did not like the boy or his stories. The boy was stubborn and the stories put bad notions in the heads of the lazy peons. It was certainly evil and unnecessary—such idle talk—in the land of the good Don Porfirio. It might make the peons want to own land themselves and learn to read and write. Then they would no longer be peons. The *Presidente* did not forget.

One of the rich *hacienda* owners of Yucatan sent an agent to Tehuantepec to collect peons for his *hacienda*. The agent offered the good *Presidente* a generous price for every laborer he could secure for

Yucatan. The *Presidente* cleared his jail and loaded the jailbirds on box cars under the guard of soldiers. He had other soldiers to arrest on trumped-up charges every man about town who was in any way offensive to his administration. Among the latter was Guillermo. He had these poor wretches packed into the box cars with the jailbirds. Then he turned the whole lot over to the agent and collected his commission”

“But certainly in a republic” I started to interrupt.

“Republic!” he laughed. “Republic! Why, the only Republic was in the story books. All candidates for every public office were picked by the governors of the states and the governors were appointed in Mexico City. If a group of people wanted a certain man to become a candidate for office and the governor did not like him he just didn’t become a candidate. If he did, something happened to him. The people kissed the hand that socked them and liked it—they had to.”

“But if enough people wanted a change they certainly could get it by making their wishes known,” I suggested.

“Yes, by taking up arms to enforce their ideas—by revolution,” he answered.

“Was that their only way?” I asked.

“That was their only way,” he answered. “After the agent had collected his commission he gave the *Presidente* a fine banquet to show his appreciation,” Redner continued. “Guillermo’s father offered all he

possessed in an effort to secure the release of his son. Ordinarily the *Presidente* would have accepted the bribe, but Guillermo and his stories were dangerous, and the *Presidente* was a patriot. The laborers were sent away to Yucatan under the heavy guard of soldiers. It was a year before Guillermo returned, a broken, fever-stricken wreck. The soldiers guarding the *Presidente* smirked when they saw him. Slowly his mother and sisters nursed him back to health and when he was strong once more he left for another town. There were other *haciendas* needing laborers. Deep down in his soul there burned a fierce resentment. Possibly it was his foreign blood. When the revolution broke he was one of the first to join and he led a small band of Rebels in the capture of San Juan. As leader of the band he had the pleasure of personally killing his old enemy the *Presidente*. The government sent a powerful force and drove Don Guillermo and his followers from the town. These soldiers murdered the old Syrian, his father, and burned his store and confiscated his goods. It was a year before Guillermo could return. When he finally got back he found nothing left but the fire-blackened walls of his father's store and an old Indian woman mumbling in a corner. She did not seem to remember very well. Guillermo had a hard time convincing her that he was her son. He took her back to the camp of Revolutionists, but the rough life was too much for her and she soon died. It was a long time before he learned definitely what had become of his sisters. One had died while giving birth to the child of the

brave captain she was forced to live with. The soldiers had tired of the other. She was a prostitute in Cordoba." Redner paused.

"Well," sniffed Mrs. Trainor, "there were laws in the country and I think that all this revolution could have been avoided, if people who had real grievances had taken their troubles to the law in the first place."

"That's a hot one," laughed Redner mirthlessly. "There was no law in those days but the will of the aristocracy."

It was getting late. The stars seemed very near in the soft night. George, the English-speaking West-Indian negro who was to help me to the train shuffled up to remind me to be ready to leave the hotel by eight. I thanked Redner for his kindness and bade my acquaintances good-bye. Across the Plaza the deep-toned bell clanged, commanding, just as it did in the days, long, long, ago before its counterpart in a strange young city far to the north summoned together a small band of enthusiasts imbued with the idea that all men are created equal. The venerable palm trees of the square, nodding in the silent evening breeze, whispered weird tales of bleeding, whip-cut captives, trembling in their fright and anguish; of gentle soft-eyed maidens outraged by leering brutes in crested armor; of hordes of fair-skinned soldiers who died like flies from fever; the thunder of great guns; the crash of huge exploding shells; the horror of conquest; the wails of a strick-

en people. Shouted curses! Blasphemy! Torture! And death!

The deep-toned Cathedral bell tolled solemnly. The city slept.

CHAPTER II

FROM MULE CHAPERON TO "DOCTOR"

I HAD just finished breakfast when George arrived at the business end of a small hand-cart. Upon this, with the assistance of the hotel porter, he loaded my belongings for transport to the railroad station.

"I hates to work with these heathens," he volunteered, pausing a moment to mop a very moist forehead. "I has personality, and a Christian man don't get no chance to show his personality among infidels."

My train did not leave till nine, but it was well that I had adopted George's suggestion and allowed a generous half-hour to procure my transportation. A solid mass of peons, with their babies and other belongings were packed about the ticket window and purchasing a ticket was a slow and distinctly odorous proceeding. When finally seated in the railroad coach it lacked but a few minutes till starting time.

Turning to George who stood expectantly by, I inquired the amount of my debt. He rolled his eyes to heaven and went through spasms of mental arithmetic, ultimately arriving at a figure which seemed unreasonably large for the service rendered. I paid him with a feeling that I was being badly imposed upon. But he looked disdainfully at the money, carefully counted it and stuffed it into his pocket. Turning half aside he gazed sorrowfully out

of the car window, spit on the floor, and as he started to leave grumbled disgustedly, "For an American gentleman, Boss, you spends mighty little money." I learned later that he had grossly overcharged me.

A new superintendent was also on the way to the Plantation.

"My name's Sutton," he volunteered amiably, as soon as he was sure of my identity.

"What part of the game do you play?" he asked after introductions were concluded.

"I don't know. I never saw a sugar plantation in my life," I answered.

"What!" he burst out, "You mean to say you never saw a sugar plantation!"

"No," I assured him.

"Whew!" he gasped. "Are you an engineer or have you had training in any special subject—or," he added with a smile, "has your brother just played a joke on you?"

"I know something about civil engineering, or I can run a tractor or chaperon a team of mules," I answered, a little less enthusiastically.

"Buddie," he looked at me woefully, "you sure cut yourself a piece of cake—a piece of chocolate cake."

I began to feel that running a tractor in the jungle had its drawbacks.

The train jolted slowly along over a very uneven roadbed. The whistle would screech and the brakes grind and the train would bump to a stop in the midst

of a jungle clearing cluttered with sordid huts, made from the leaves of palm trees.

Barefooted people, scrawny pigs and undersized poultry roamed freely in and out of the huts. Horses and cattle, too big to enter freely, stood around outside in the shade of trees and fought swarms of insects. Many of the huts looked as if they might be on fire. There was cooking going on inside and the huts had no chimneys. The heat was intense and damp and sticky.

“How you like it?” asked Sutton as we stopped at a particularly doleful looking village.

“I guess I’ll get used to it all right.”

“I’ll say, and how!” he mused. “But I bet you wish many times that you were a sugar daddy back on Broadway, instead of a sugar man down here in this part of the world.”

The train was due in Santa Lucrecia at eight-thirty, but it was after eleven when we reached there. The only electric lights in the town were a few dim ones around the depot. Numbers of natives, men, women, children and dogs lay sleeping around the station platform. Mosquitoes swarmed. The dogs scratched themselves, but the humans reposed untroubled. A short way down the track a small crowd was shouting and stamping in time to the weird, jumpy music of a *fandango*. At one end of the station a few dim lights constituted a restaurant, where an English lady, her husband, and the handsome young Mexican Army officer who commanded our train guard, joined Sutton and me for coffee.

“How different from Bagdad!” commented the lady, glancing wistfully at the misty outlines of the not far distant jungle.

“So you miss those desert nights with the tom-toms and everything?” volunteered Sutton.

The lady sighed.

“I was with the troops who opposed your General Pershing, but those times are long over now,” contributed the immaculate young soldier pleasantly, in very broken English.

Two rather pretty girls, easily distinguishable on account of their modish attire and correctly bobbed hair, passed, going in the direction of the *fandango*. The young officer smiled pleasantly, acknowledging their dignified salutation.

“Two of your society girls?” I was prompted to inquire, impressed by their smart appearance and quiet demeanor.

“No. Two of our most prominent prostitutes,” he replied quite frankly.

Near us a barefooted youth started singing a wailing native song in a clear, strong voice, accompanying himself on a guitar in that entrancing manner which is entirely the art of the native Mexican. A well-formed girl stood proudly by his side, her wealth of raven hair reflecting the dim glow from the few lights like polished metal. As he drew near the end of his song, she patted him affectionately on the shoulder.

“My, the music and the incomprehensible something of this wilderness! The effect is like a strong drug that deadens the civilized instincts!” the English lady commented. “As you droll Americans would say, one feels like a lucky dog” her lips parted wonderingly—“but with all your American latitude I fail to understand how you can properly designate a woman a lucky dog.”

Near midnight, the chief and I retired to an empty coal shed, which somehow had been misnamed a hotel, to reach which it was necessary to pass over a narrow foot bridge that trembled as we walked. The building itself was perched on stilts over a swamp which adjoined the railroad grade. The rooms were windowless stalls with partitions that did not reach the roof. The slightest sound echoed throughout the entire structure. We passed a fairly comfortable night. None of the guests snored.

Next morning we noticed that the front of the building was spattered with marks made by buckshot where a former candidate for mayor had been removed from the list of aspirants. It was still very early as we walked to the river landing. The company launch waited there to take us down the *Coatzacoalcos* to the plantation. On the way we passed a few tiny villages with groups of women in front, washing clothing and bathing. After the Broadway revues they seemed prudish.

Finally a tall chimney came into view ahead, rising up out of the jungle, and fields of waving sugarcane appeared on the river bank. The launch drew to

the shore and we climbed out at the plantation landing. A light flat car, drawn by the wiry mount of a barefooted corsair, conveyed us over the plantation narrow-gage to a small group of white-washed buildings which were the living quarters of the white employees. Back of the living quarters frowned the unprepossessing corrugated iron bulk of the sugar factory with its tall smokestack and a surrounding of low shed-like buildings which were the shops and storehouses. A few nondescript thatched huts clustered about the shops.

In the distance stretched the green, undulating expanse of the cane fields. A few barefooted slatternly women, with large wooden tubs balanced on top of their heads stumbled along single file, moving in the direction of the huts. A bone-thin dog scratched incessantly in the scant shade of a low bush. The air swarmed with tiny, black, voracious flies which left stinging red welts where they bit. As the flat car came to a stop a small tired-looking mule, tethered near, raised its head and, moving its ears forward, regarded us intently.

“Bless her dear intelligent soul, she recognizes her new nursie!” laughed the superintendent. “And does she appreciate you?” he continued. “Say! Look at her eyes! Ain’t they shining like a bathroom in a first-class hotel? Does she appreciate you?” he paused dramatically, “And how!”

“Well,” he continued, a little sarcastically, after his mirth had subsided, “Home at last. Yonder’s the

chateau. Say!" he turned and looked directly at me, "No kidding! How'd you like it?"

"Looks like a nice quiet place," I answered.

"And how!" he agreed with his favorite expression. "Nice and quiet! Quiet and nice and the snakes and the silent jungle, and above the smiling sky . . ." he droned. "Well, I would leave Cuba and you would come away from Broadway. See the world! Travel! It's broadening! Think what it means to be able to say, 'I've been there!'" He looked at me ruefully. "Way down upon the Old Plantation" he started singing in a throaty voice.

Tehuantepec did not seem to impress him very favorably.

In the morning I started work with a gang of undersized peons excavating the foundation for a new cooling tank. Rickets, a lank ebony 'British Object'—for so he described himself—was attached as interpreter. For some years the Plantation had been closed down due to a succession of revolutions. Now every effort was being made to get it into condition to grind the coming crop. When I asked Rickets how he liked the country he grew thoughtful.

"The country's all right but the people, O-o-o-h!" He sounded discouraged, like a stalled locomotive letting off steam. "They're just murdering, thieving devils what can't speak the truth, for it ain't in em!" He slowly mopped the sweat from his face with an untidy bandanna and regarded me with an uncertain expression. "Why, Boss," he continued, "there ain't

but few of 'em married and they live in adultery, producing children just as rapid as possible."

My second morning a tall youth appeared, dragging a yoke of small oxen behind him. The Chief had sent the boy and his unwilling little animals to help with the excavation. Each of the poor little creatures had several inflamed looking lumps on his neck from which drops of blood occasionally oozed. They seemed so tiny compared with northern work animals and the inflamed lumps looked so painful that I was prompted to ask the interpreter what caused them.

"*Marahuils*," answered Rickets, keeping on with his shoveling.

"*Marahuils*?" I questioned. The name meant nothing to me.

"Yes," he mopped with the untidy bandanna, "They just come in from the bush and the driver ain't had time to clean 'em yet."

It seemed that *Marahuils* were a form of burrowing parasite, common on the Isthmus, and that all animals were subject to their infection. The natives removed them by placing a few drops of strong tobacco juice in the entrance to their burrow and covering the entire inflammation with the white adhesive gum formed by the partially dried sap of an indigenous tree. This procedure killed the parasite and made its removal a fairly simple matter. However, if any part of the parasite were left in the wound, an infection started which sometimes became serious. Not infrequently humans became infected, always

with painful and often with grave results. There were spots of dried blood on the flanks of the little animals, which I soon perceived to be caused by the driver with a wire-pointed goad. I had Rickets explain that in any work I had charge of wire-pointed goads would be entirely dispensed with. The youth looked puzzled.

“What will we do if the oxen get lazy and let their tongues hang out?” he asked through the interpreter.

“We’ll just tether the worthless things in the shade and get them out of the way,” I replied. He smiled and understood. Down in his heart he was fond of animals.

I had a short, thick, laughing peon named Felix, help with the oxen and scraper. When the team got stuck, which was not infrequently, Felix would seize the loaded scraper and with a dexterous jerk lift it free from any impediment. I have not seen many men who could lift more weight with their shoulders.

I noticed one of the men limping as he went about his work. Upon investigation I found that one of his great toes was bound up in the frayed and unclean remains of the leaf of some jungle plant.

“Just a little cut,” he answered when I had the interpreter—who now styled himself my secretary— inquire the nature of his trouble. It needed no practiced eye, however, to understand that he was suffering from a painful infection.

“Why doesn’t he go to a doctor and get fixed up?” I asked Rickets.

“Doctor?” he questioned, surprised. “Why, Boss, the nearest regular doctor is in Port of Mexico a hundred miles away, and a man earning less than two pesos a day has no time or money to go there just to have a little cut fixed.”

I knew there was a small drug store in Santa Lucrecia, operated by a Japanese with some medical experience, but even this would be more than the man could afford. He was a good man, one of my best, but his condition made him almost valueless as a workman. There was nothing very serious the matter with him and I felt that some simple way of relieving the inflammation and a clean bandage would go a long way toward once more making him effective. With this in mind, I had Rickets ask him to let me try and fix his foot.

“It’s nothing,” he replied with a blank look and went on struggling to get about.

“These people don’t like outsiders giving them medicine or fooling with their cuts,” Rickets advised pointedly. The next day the man was worse. His foot was much more swollen and he was suffering much more pain. He couldn’t work. It was almost impossible for him to move from one place to another. Though he was nothing but a hindrance in his present condition I did not have the heart to send him home, and cause him to lose his small wages.

“I feel sure that a little attention will save that fellow lots of suffering,” I suggested to Rickets.

“Well, you see it’s like this, Boss,” he replied, “These people have lived in the bush for so long, with no medicine but the jungle leaves and no doctors but the older people of their villages, that they just don’t trust no outsider.”

The man’s pain was making him desperate, and if one is desperate, what matters custom or tradition or prejudice? When Rickets repeated my suggestion to him, he reluctantly agreed to come to my house during lunch hour and see what I could do to help him. When the noon bell rang, he limped painfully along after me and when we reached my house I opened the door and motioned for him to enter. He hesitated and politely took off his hat. Evidently he was not used to being asked to enter the homes of white men.

“Come in,” I invited in English, taking his arm in a reassuring manner. Timorously he entered and accepted my best chair and spit on the floor. I felt that my efforts to make him feel at home had been successful. Opening a large elephant ear which formed the covering to his lunch, he started eating. I was sure he felt at ease. I removed the worn-out pus-covered leaf that partially concealed his wound and exposed a painful infection. Next I washed the affected area with warm water and soap and then, preparing a basin of cold salt water, had him soak his foot while he ate his lunch. I knew that salt was something of a sterilizer and I believed that cold water would tend to lessen the inflammation. I

dressed the wound with a little vaseline and bound it up in a clean bandage.

That afternoon he limped very little and at his own request the treatment was repeated before he went home for the night. Next day he was much better and a new bond of friendship existed between us.

A week later a factory mechanic cut his hand and came to me to fix it. Unconsciously I was acquiring a reputation. When I entered the dining room for dinner, Sutton rubbed his eyes as if to clear his vision.

“It can’t be! No, it ain’t! Gosh, it can’t be!” he exclaimed, rubbing his eyes again. “It is! Yes, it’s him,” he looked at me searchingly, “Yes, it’s him!” he repeated emphatically. Rising, he bowed with aggravated formality. “Good evening, doctor,” he greeted. “At first sight I confused you with one of our mule drivers—my eyes are none too good and you do look like someone we imported for that purpose.” Turning to the half dozen men who lounged at the dinner table he cleared his throat in mock nervousness, “Gentlemen” he started, as if he were about to make a speech, “it is my honor and pleasure to introduce to you the only amateur physician in captivity. Let’s give the doc a great big hand!”

And in lieu of a regularly constituted physician, I became recognized as such by the people of the plantation.

CHAPTER III

ESTABLISHED AS "MEDICO" TO THE BUSH MONKEYS

THOUGH I was being asked with increasing frequency to render trivial medical assistance, my first real adventure as an amateur physician happened after I had been at the plantation about a month. In the middle of an afternoon made listless by a withering sun, a grime-covered mechanic's helper named Augustine, came to where I was working. His left hand was bound up in a blood-soaked handkerchief and he was holding it across his chest. Speaking in a quiet voice he told me that he had cut his hand and asked if I could fix it. From his unruffled manner I concluded that his injury was nothing more serious than a painful cut and readily agreed to do my best to help him. When we arrived at my house I removed the gory bandanna. The disclosure made me shiver. The powerful breakspring of a plantation locomotive had snapped back and severed his index-finger as cleanly as an axe could have done it. Only a stump, spurting small jets of blood, remained. The realization of my own responsibility was completely disconcerting. I had known of a strong effective man being transformed into a helpless cripple by a bad infection. Augustine held up his hand and smiled—smiled trustfully at me. Regretfully I recalled the day that I had helped the man with the infected foot. I remembered that I had once heard a doctor describe a



The Hospital

The "Doctor"

*The Steward
and Secretary*

*The Ambulance,
and a good one, too*

tourniquet and say that if it was applied between the wound and the heart it would stop bleeding.

With some cord I improvised a tourniquet and applied it to what remained of the finger. The bleeding stopped. I drew up a chair for Augustine and sent a passing workman for Bill Gray. Bill was the assistant engineer and my immediate boss. With Bill's help and a bottle of alcohol I arrested the hemorrhage and dressed the stump. When I applied dabs of cotton saturated in raw alcohol to stop the bleeding, Augustine gritted his teeth. His fine eyes blazed, but he kept on smiling. The sight of blood made Bill feel faint but he helped until everything was finished. Then he went home and collapsed. I watched Augustine closely, taking his temperature several times a day. No infection occurred. Two months after the accident he returned to work with what remained of his finger healed and sound. I never felt disgusted afterward when during one of his frequent visits he spit on my floor. I shall always remember him and I hope that sometimes when he looks at the stump of his finger he will be reminded pleasantly of me. My success in taking care of Augustine established my reputation and I soon found my entire time from the close of the work day till supper, taken up with medical aid. I sent to Mexico City for a large order of drugs.

Among my patients was a middle-aged peon, who had recently arrived at the plantation. He was an inveterate conversationalist. Words gushed from his mouth in a continuous succession of sounds which

affected me something like a fourth of July celebration, they so resembled exploding fire-crackers. Other than their enlivening effect they conveyed no intelligence, as I never could understand a thing he said. One day he would hold his head and moan. The next day it would be his knee or his hand. He seemed to be suffering from a wandering pain. From a casual visitor he became a regular pest. One afternoon upon returning from work, I found a particularly large gathering awaiting my ministrations. As I entered my yard the pest rushed up, pressing close and preventing me from giving attention to men I felt I could benefit. This time he held his stomach tenderly and moaned. I tried to convey the idea that I had exhausted my small information in an effort to help him. He regarded me with woeful eyes and kept on moaning piteously.

“*Ai Dios*” he wailed, “*Ai Dios.*” He simply refused to be placated by words. In desperation I led him within my house, poured out half a large tumbler of sticky castor oil, and gave it to him to drink. He raised the shining glass to his lips and drank as if he enjoyed it. Bowing low he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, muttered an appreciation and left. I looked thankfully at his receding figure shuffling down the path. I did not expect to see him again—not ever again. I was surprised therefore, next afternoon when I returned from work, to see him sitting in his accustomed place on my steps. Seated next him was a strange peon. The two were talking in a low-toned serious manner. Back of them

sat a grave-eyed woman and two children. All were dressed in clean, fresh clothing and the children had been scrubbed until they literally shone. Something indefinable suggested a moment of supreme importance. My patient rose and thoughtfully adjusted his *machete*. I wondered if it was a local custom to get dressed up to commit murder. With manifest dignity he approached, removed his *sombrero*, bowed and exclaimed in the first understandable Spanish I had ever heard him pronounce.

“Sir, I thank you; you are a great doctor; for the first time in years I am well; entirely, gloriously well.” Further words failed and he grew tearful. The occasion seemed too solemn to defile with mere adjectives. He clasped me in his arms. I felt that he might be going to kiss me and I was weak and powerless to resist. He vowed that he would never leave the plantation so long as I remained.

“Sir,” he explained, “this lady is my wife; this gentleman my best friend and these, my two little children. Won’t you, out of the kindness of your great heart, give each one of them some of your wonderful medicine?” It was a pleasure to comply generously. True to his word, he remained at the plantation while I was there, my faithful friend to the end.

Of such fabrics are reputations sometimes formed.

The noon bell had just rung. I looked at my watch and found that the chief’s chronometer had gained ten minutes during the night. The day before it had lost. He must have oiled it in the evening

for when freshly lubricated the machinery of his cigar store product functioned better and we worked shorter hours. My clothing was saturated. Sweat trickled down my arms and dripped from the ends of my fingers. A tiny stream cascaded in drops from my nose. The morning had been particularly hot and busy. I was on the point of starting for my house when a desolate peon approached. His clothes were mere ribbons, partially held together by scattered patches. The straw *sombrero* he held in his hands, respectfully, was tattered beyond any real usefulness.

“Could the kind *Señor Doctor* spare the few minutes necessary to visit my house?” he requested. His little daughter was very sick. For eight days she had suffered with fever. For months she had not been well. He led the way to his palm-thatched hut, which was as clean as such a structure could possibly be. The few household implements were shining and in ordered arrangement on a neat shelf over the earth-topped cooking-table. The earthen floor had been swept clean, the makeshift table freshly scrubbed. In a corner on a straw sleeping mat lay a child of about seven, partially covered by a well-worn sheet. She was pitifully gaunt. Every bone in her emaciated little body seemed visible. She paid no heed whatever when I spoke. Her sunken eyes appeared to vision beyond earthly things. She burned with a high fever and her pulse fluttered and was irregular. A feeling of helplessness—utter and entire helplessness and total dejection overcame me. What could I, with no training and very limited experience

hope to do that would keep life in a little body that was almost completely wasted? With the first glance I made up my mind to send the child to the doctor in Port of Mexico. This seemed the only thing I could do, though I felt she would never survive the hundred miles of blistering sun. I turned to tell the parents. There was something soft, ardent, hopeful in the look of the mother. The father was eager. Somehow that half-baffled quality which seems to belong to the peon make-up was absent. They looked at me appealingly—hopefully. This poor barefooted mother and father believed that because I had patched up a few cuts I could save their desperately sick child from death. They trusted in me. I realized that under the circumstances if I sent the child to the doctor and she died on the way, in the view of these primitive people I would be guilty of something unforgivable. The seriousness of the situation struck me. I looked at the child again in a despairing effort to discover some suggestion of a way to help her. With all her gauntness her little abdomen was so distended that it looked like part of a small balloon. I recalled that once at a theatre with a friend and his wife I had witnessed a moving picture of some South Sea Island natives. During the course of the picture my friend's wife had exclaimed:

“How pitiful! All those babies are infected with intestinal parasites.”

“How can you tell?” I had inquired.

“Look at their abdomens. See how swollen and distended they are,” she had replied.

After a year in Tehuantepec I concluded that though she was not a biologist she certainly had ideas. Explaining that I would be back later with medicine, I left to find a bottle of vermifuge, if such a thing existed on the plantation. Just what I would do in case I could not find the proper medicine indicated by my cursory diagnosis I was too nervous even to worry about. A complete canvass failed to reveal anything of the sort on the place.

“Why don’t you try the drug store in Santa Lucrecia?” suggested Bill when I went to him with the problem. Bill never failed with a helpful suggestion. Late that evening the launch captain hurried to bring me two bottles of medicine he had purchased for me in Santa Lucrecia. The child was still alive when I reached the hut. The only illumination was from a spluttering, smoky, oil torch which caused ominous dark figures to dance weird dances on the floor and walls. From the trees the voices of night birds called solemn messages, as I administered the medicine, in a desperate attempt to save a precious life. I did not sleep well that night. The fear that I might not have guessed correctly proved very troubling. At daylight when I went to see her she was sleeping and the indications were that I had chosen the correct medicine. I realized that in her weakened condition the usual measures of combating a fever would be impossible so I made poultices of bread, milk and chopped onions and applied them to the soles of her feet.

I understood that the soles of the feet contained more pores than any other equal area of the human

body and I knew bread and milk poultices would absorb inflammation. My mother had often put them on my chest when I had a cold as a child. Next day she had less fever. In a few days with the same treatment she had none. I gave her three tablespoons full of boiled milk every hour during the day, till her temperature was once more normal, and then added a very soft boiled egg in the morning and another in the middle of the day. After the first week I included a small bowl of broth at noon and later a few slices of buttered toast. Within two weeks she was sitting up and smiling and enjoying a light diet. I gave her small though regular doses of quinine from the time she sat up, for about two weeks. I wanted to make sure of eliminating the fever. In a month she was playing about happily, still quite thin but gaining steadily. To every appearance she was entirely well. When a spark of animation first lighted her dull, hopeless eyes—when she smiled—the hut in the jungle seemed hallowed—hallowed and glorious, with a glory only dimly comprehensible.

CHAPTER IV

A BLACK COLOSSUS OF THE BUSH

"Doc!" I rolled over, turning my back to the door. It was Sunday morning and day was just breaking. The past week had been scorching and I had no intention of being wrenched from bed the one morning it was possible to sleep.

"Doc!" This time louder.

"What the . . ." I started, disgruntled, turning and rubbing my eyes. I did not finish. Mere words paled, for there framed in the open doorway, revealed by the weird half-light of early dawn stood a black colossus, a creature from a bygone age. His open shirt exposed the great muscular neck of a superman. Giant's arms hung from his huge sloping shoulders, ending in massive iron fists. Faded trousers, rolled half way to his knees, uncovered thick ankles and wide stubby feet. I blinked and rubbed my eyes again. I wondered if I could be dreaming. Perceiving my dilemma he laughed silently, as if realizing his omnipotence, and leered, baring two rows of solid tobacco-stained teeth.

"What the . . . what do you want?" I grumbled.

Slowly he doffed his battered hat. The low receding forehead suggested a degenerate. Great muscles rippled as he moved.

"Doc," he informed, in the slow soft drawl of the West-Indian negro, "I'm Watson"—he seemed to

take it for granted that I should know who Watson was—"and I got a hurting corn. I can't wear no shoes, it's that bad."

As a boy I had been interested in chiropody. I had wanted to be a chiropodist. The vision of a white coated man skillfully wielding a shining excavator while allaying the apprehension of a timorous patient with soothing conversation had twinkled in my imagination like a happy light. But my mother—horrors, my sister—horrors of horrors! The remembrance of a certain occasion when I was approaching years of discretion still affects me as hearing the *Semper Fidelis* affects a retired marine. No. Mother would positively not have her son a chiropodist. I have never fully understood her pronounced dislike to this means of earning a living.

Though I was sleepy—very sleepy, the prospect and the strange paleolithic visitor proved too alluring.

I got up, unlatched the screen and asked my early morning caller to come in.

The giant negro entered. He moved to a chair, seated himself without an invitation and spit on the floor. I was beginning to imagine that this last action constituted a sort of necessary salutation, locally. Huge, lithe, powerful, his every move indicated that perfect co-ordination between mind and muscle which is essentially part of a jungle animal.

I explained that I was not a doctor and had no instruments and very little information to work with.

"That's all right, Doc," he consoled easily, "any-

one who can save the life of an almost dead kid can whittle corns for me.”

A safety razor blade, some iodine and a pair of hair tweezers served the purpose and I commenced. While I worked he talked.

“This the first time you been in the bush, Doc?” he drawled. He evidently took my reply for granted for he did not pause. “I been here fourteen years. Come here from Jamaica. I’m British and Britain is the biggest nation in this old world.” There was no denying his pride in his country. “I know every foot of land around here, I do. In the De la Huerta revolution I was a captain in the Rebel army, I was, and I got papers to prove it. If my side had only won,” he looked greedily through the doorway. “If my side had only won,” he repeated, “I’d have made a pile of money, Doc—a whole pile of money.” His eyes grew large with the memory.

“It was me,” he tapped his breast significantly, “me, who tricked the Federals into the ambush down by Port of Mexico when the Rebels held the town. Of course my general got the credit, but it was me who figured it out.” His head raised perceptibly, as if conscious of his intellectual superiority. “We got word that about three hundred *Yaquis* was coming up near Vera Cruz to take the port and all the supplies we had collected there. From their location we knew there was only one way they could come, and that was down the beach. We knew they had spies watching every move we made, so we just let on as if we knew nothing and went about our business.

“After dark we got about twenty of our most trusted men and had them leave by various routes in twos and threes so the spies would not be so apt to notice. When we were all together we went to a place on the beach about four or five miles out that the General and me had agreed was the best place and dug trenches along the top of a low sand hill which run along with the beach.

“The next morning the General took our gunboat and a few men and started up the river as if he was going to collect supplies. This looked all nice and natural to the spies. We had it fixed for a messenger to come running into town a little after noon, when everyone could see him, and for me to start double-timing up the railroad with all the men. This would give the idea that I had got orders to move out and meet the enemy which was coming by train. Outside of town we met the General who had left the gunboat in the river. Taking a hidden bush trail we marched across to our trenches. Just as we got nicely settled they come into view loafing along down the beach taking it easy and all unconcerned, figuring on getting to the Port and into position about dusk. They had an old gas boat with a little cannon on the front of it, along with them, swinging down outside the line of breakers, which they figured on bombarding the town with. We let their advance guard pass. They felt mighty strong, having more than twice the number of men we did and were not taking all the precautions they could. When their main body got

even with us the General give the order to fire and our men opened up.”

His eyes glimmered reminiscently and he threw back his head and laughed.

“Lord, they was surprised. If you could have seen the look on their faces. My God, it was funny, Doc, seeing them standing there wondering while we shot them all to pieces. I and another fellow were shooting at the boat. They couldn’t fire the cannon because as fast as they stood men up to work it we knocked them down. Some tried getting into the water and swimming out to the boat but the sharks got them, if we missed. Their officers tried getting them together to charge us but we busted up their formations quicker than they could get them started. Lord, the blood and the squawks of them that was hit and not dead yet!

“It was getting dark. The few of them left were running up the beach and scattering in the bush. The gas boat was speeding out to sea. We could have got those that were running up the beach, but we didn’t want to get our crowd all separated. The sand was littered with dead and wounded. We didn’t have any place to keep wounded prisoners, or medicine or time to take care of them, so the General turned our bunch loose with their *machetes*. The thuds of the *machetes* as they struck and the squawks!” he leered fiendishly and laughed. “My God! It looked like a Saturday meat-killing, only there was much more to it. As we were collecting the rifles and ammunition that were strewn about, a wounded man we thought was dead,

shot and killed our General. What we did to him—say! What life he had sure cost him lots of suffering. He died too quick, but we didn't quit just because he was dead. We killed over two hundred and fifty of them. Less than fifty got away and we did not take prisoners. All we lost including our General was a dozen." He gazed reminiscently at nothing. "No, sir," he said emphatically, "they can't never get the best of a real smart man, not these bush monkeys."

He smiled arrogantly and continued.

"One of them got mad at me for taking his woman. He said something to me about it so I caught hold of him and beat him just as you would a mean child. My Lord, he was mad, but he didn't want no more beating, so he quit talking. That night he left town. A fellow says to me, 'Some time that monkey's going to come back and kill you. These people never forget!' About six months after I learned he was hanging around a little place a few miles away. I was living in a palm house. When night time come I made the woman sleep next to the wall and I slept in the center on the floor. I tied my dog to a stake along side me. A few nights later the dog waked me up growling. I made him keep quiet and lay there listening. Pretty soon I heard a noise outside the wall where the woman was sleeping. I got up and sneaked around the corner of the house. There I saw him bendin' over trying to hear me breathing. He had his *machete* in his hand, intending to stick it through the thatch wall and cut my throat as soon as he spotted me. I made a jump and landed on top of him. Hold-

ing his *machete* arm by the wrist, with one hand, I choked him with the other and beat the wind out of him with my knee. Pretty soon he give up and let go of the *machete*. I give him a punch in the side of the head and he lay there like a log.

“At first I thought I would twist his head off the same as you do a chicken’s, but the *machete* lying on the ground give me another idea. I picked him up and stood him on his feet and split his god-damned head clean down to the nose with his own *machete*.”

The giant’s eyes glittered malignantly.

“As he was laying there dying, I says to him, ‘That’s what you get for fooling with Watson!’ and I give him another chop in the neck for luck.” He paused and guffawed mirthlessly. “I still got the *machete*. He had sharpened it up like a razor to get me with.”

He laughed again.

“No, sir! They don’t do no fooling with Watson. Lots of them hate me. Maybe sometime some of them will get me. When they do, if they will only stand in front and come close enough, I will get two of them—two more of them.” He leered again and bared his yellow fangs. “Yes, sir!” he said with emphasis, “two more of them!”

Thus I came to know Watson, to learn, first hand, the details of a tropical slaying party, and to chisel a corn from the toe of a stone-age man with the business part of a modern safety-razor.

CHAPTER V

“DIOS! WHAT FOOLISHNESS IS MARRIAGE”

I WAS about to start for work when Watson arrived. His wide feet were covered by well-worn shoes, full of small perforating cuts. He walked easily, so I concluded that my efforts of the day before had been successful.

“Feeling fine, Doc. No more pain,” he smiled easily in greeting. By his side walked one of our soldier guards who appeared like a dwarf in comparison with his huge bulk.

“This poor boy’s a friend of mine, so I brought him along to have you fix him up,” he explained with something of condescension in his manner.

“*Ai Dios*,” moaned the soldier, looking at me anticipatively and holding one hand pressed against the side of his face, which was swollen.

“Yes,” continued the giant, “there ain’t no use suffering when there’s some one around who can fix you up proper.” I began to be impressed with the idea that there are times when reputation can be something besides a reward.

“What’s the matter with him?” I asked.

“He’s got a toothache,” replied the negro, evidently surprised that I did not know the trouble at a glance. “All he wants you to do is to pull the tooth.”

Having had a tragic experience with part of a tooth which refused to be pulled, the request caused creepy

sensations to race up and down my spine. I felt fortunate that I had no forceps and could therefore refuse for a most valid reason.

"There ain't nothing to pulling a tooth," the giant negro protested. "All you have to do is grab hold with something and give a jerk. Wouldn't be nothing for you, with what you know."

"But I have no forceps," I explained again.

The negro's brow wrinkled. Then a lighter expression came.

"The carpenter'll lend you a pair," he suggested.

But the thought made me wince and I flatly refused to bother the carpenter.

Just inside the door on my table lay a small pair of artery forceps which I had placed there for convenience in case of emergency.

"How about those?" intimated the negro, pointing to the artery forceps.

"Those are for stopping bleeding and not for pulling teeth," I told him.

"*Ai Nombre de Dios*" moaned the soldier. He was evidently suffering a lot, so I offered to give him some toothache drops to ease his pain.

"Give me the damn things and I'll pull his tooth," drawled Watson roughly. There was something of cruel pleasure at the opportunity of causing a fellow human being pain in the way he spoke.

"No, you won't!" I answered firmly, the vision of a man being hacked to death before me.

"*Ai Nombre de Dios, doctor Mio*, won't you hurry and do something?" pleaded the soldier.

"Go ahead, Doc, let me pull his tooth," tormented Watson.

"Nothing doing," I answered. "These toothache drops will ease . . ."

"Please, please, *doctor mio*, lend me the pincers and I will pull the tooth myself!" the soldier interrupted me.

I readily acceded to this, as I expected that with his first pull at the sore tooth he would promptly change his mind and I could induce him to go to the dentist in Port of Mexico.

I handed him the forceps and he took a careful, firm grip upon the offending member and jerked. The little forceps slipped. He calmly cleared his mouth of the accumulated blood and took another grip. This time the tooth came. Smiling, he asked me for a glass of water.

I have had a profound respect for the physical courage of Mexican soldiers ever since. The giant negro laughed ironically.

"Hell, Doc! It wouldn't have been nothing for a man to do that knows as much as you do," he assured me.

As the queer pair left my house, Sutton passed on his way to work.

"Who's the black mastiff?" he asked when I met him a short time later.

He's sort of a local cosmopolitan who answers to the name of Watson," I replied, telling him the story the negro had told me the day before.

"He sure looks the part. I bet mothers hereabouts

tell their naughty children that Watson's going to get them if they aren't good," he commented.

The next morning at dawn, an old woman arrived to have a tooth pulled. Argument was of no avail. I helped the soldier, why wouldn't I do as much for an old peon woman?

"*Ai*, Don Carlos," she groaned, wiggling a very loose tooth at me.

"I can't bite my *tortillas*! I can't chew any food! All I can eat is just soup, and I hate soup! *Madre Santo Maria*! You don't know the pain this causes me. In the name of all the good saints, won't you please pull the tooth and make the remaining years of a poor old woman worth living?"

The tooth was very loose. I think I could easily have made the extraction with my fingers. First securing the old woman's promise that she would not tell any of her friends—I did not wish to add dentistry to my other duties—I swabbed the gum with alcohol, took a firm grip with the artery forceps, shut my eyes and gave a mighty jerk. She informed me that there was almost no pain. I was glad that one of us did not suffer.

When I returned at noon there were five people waiting, each one of whom wished me to pull a tooth. My morning visitor had lost no time in telling all her friends. I had a terrible struggle persuading them that I was not a dentist.

That afternoon Concha called, asking that I extract a perfectly sound tooth. News travels quickly in the jungle.

“Please, Don Carlos, please, it is such a simple thing I ask,” she pleaded, when I flatly refused. She wished the sound tooth removed so that a new shiny gold one could be put in its place. Gold teeth are still the rage in Tehuantepec. An official of the railroad had all his uppers and lowers—all visible—made of fourteen carat with a cute twinkly little diamond set in the middle of the uppers. He was more than a popular official—he was a soul-stirring standard, and Concha was ambitious. When I refused a second time she became dejected and looked rather darkly at me. I realized that no amount of explaining could fully make her understand my point of view, and I hated to offend her. She was one of our most popular and prominent dowagers and her opinions carried weight. Though she had never been married she was the mother of seven children, each by a different father. There were the bloods of several different races represented in her brood, so we christened her “League of Nations”—much to her amusement. Her oldest child was Juana, a pretty girl of about seventeen. She used to bring Juana after medicine upon the slightest excuse, sometimes even going so far as to disregard entirely the accepted rules of proper conduct, and send her alone. Now she sat looking disappointedly through the open window.

“You have such lovely white teeth, so much more beautiful than any gold that was ever mined, Concha,” I began in an effort at conciliation. Her

glance shifted and she smiled. Concha was no different from women all over the world.

"Who cooks for you, Don Carlos?" she asked, changing the subject. The question was a strange one, as I felt sure she knew that I took my meals with the rest of the white men at the company boarding house.

"Why, the Chinaman Louis, of course. You know I take my meals at the company boarding house."

"You can't sleep with that old white-haired buzzard!" she laughed. "Why don't you keep house and have some one cook for you here?" She glanced quizzically at me. "Why don't you have Juana cook for you?" I assured her that I was perfectly satisfied and had no intention of keeping house. She seemed puzzled; then she laughed.

"Who is it?" she questioned. "Every man has to have a woman and being a *medico* you are certainly not foolish enough to take a chance with any of those in Santa Lucrecia." She looked thoughtfully at me. "Juana is a good girl," she suggested without shifting her eyes. "I have kept her so because I want her to have a good man and good men want clean women. She could marry. Several men want to marry her, Don Carlos. But she is a peon girl and I would rather have her live with one of the type who would not marry her than spend her life in thankless drudgery with one of the type that would. Marriage is only a form. If a man and woman are happy together they will live together in happiness. If they are unhappy why complicate the situation with laws that force

them to continue in unhappiness?" She rubbed her eyes with her toil-gnarled hands as if to enable her to vision through the veil of years.

"*Dios!* What foolishness is marriage!" she exclaimed. "What women want is love—love and kindness and tenderness and not to be treated like brutes. You North Americans treat your women better. Juana's father was a countryman of yours," she said, reverently. "*Ai mi corazon*, what a *caballero!* He was kind and generous and thoughtful. When I was just a young girl he bought me from my mother. We were very happy together and when Juana was born he was very pleased. He got the fever and had to go back to your country but he sent me money every month till Juana could read and write. He got married and could not come back to Tehuantepec, so I got another man. If he ever came back here and wanted me, I would go to him. If he didn't, I would leave. I love him too much ever to cause him unhappiness. I bore him a child and bearing a child for the man she loves is the greatest happiness that comes to an honest woman." Her eyes were dark with mysterious shadows. "*Ai mi corazon*," she sighed. "We Mexicans are not so rich as people of other races, but we know how to live and how to die, too, Don Carlos!"

This was my first introduction to a custom which is prevalent among the poorer natives of Tehuantepec. It's not an entirely strange custom to other parts of the world—this placing of a loved daughter's future where she will have material advantage and kindness, only in other places it is perhaps a little less

crude. But the fundamental animations remain the same.

Later, one glorious night when the soft flood-light of a round tropical moon had transformed the plantation into a fairy-land, she brought Juana to where I stood enjoying a fresh chicken *garnacha* and a bottle of cool beer, while watching the peons dance in the moonlight. Juana was all dolled up in a long dark, lace-bordered skirt and a flaming crimson waist, with bright yellow embroidery that is the festive dress of the Zapotecan woman. A fresh white hyacinth was tucked behind one ear, its fragrance entirely consumed by the odor of synthetic perfume.

“Aren’t you going to dance?” she asked. She was much amused when I told her that I was far too fat.

“*Ai Don Carlos*, you are too lazy, not too fat!” she laughed. “See! Don Jose is much fatter than you and he dances every night.

“What a break, being the Doc gets you!” exclaimed Sutton, who was standing near. “And to think that when they even tease, you have the guts to turn them down. Boy! And how! What’s the matter? Don’t you have no appreciation for it?” And he went off to dance with Juana.

The head of the band—who was also the school-master—invited me to do a Charleston—a true American dance. He seemed to think that my reason for not taking an active part was the lack of my native dances. He assured me that his organization would render special music, but among my accomplishments the Charleston was not included.

“Wait till you hear the music!” he persisted enthusiastically, turning to the other two musicians of the orchestra. He held up his hand for attention and sounded a careful preliminary toot on his mouth organ. The cracked accordion groaned a note which was evidently a key. The guitar player strummed a harmonious chord. Suddenly he lowered his hand and the band started playing. The leader looked at me proudly, over the top of his harmonica. Something about the tune seemed familiar. Finally I recognized the popular strains of “Yes, We Have no Bananas!” The music master motioned for me to commence.

I felt actually sorry that I could only nod in a negative manner. Instead, a particularly supple girl was finally induced to give a sinuous, twisting exhibition, very unlike the graceful native dance. This produced prolonged applause and the girl courteously danced again.

“Ain’t so bad, girlie, ain’t so bad. Just keep the left knee from being too volatile. I’ll use my influence with a friend all right,” Sutton sparkled, enthusiastically.

“I say! You might call that a naval engagement, what?” commented an assistant engineer, recently arrived from England.

Across the space used for dancing a group laughed at the ribald jests of Watson. Underneath his bulging biceps gleamed the butt of a pistol suspended by a shoulder holster.

“That’s a brave guy all right, that mastiff,” Sut-

ton sneered. "If he made his way by the way he's made he ought to be president or heavyweight champ or something, but as it is he's just a damn noisy coon, for besides being black, he's yellow. If not, why the rod?"

"It might be because he's such a good target himself or because he likes nice things," I ventured.

"S-u-r-e," he strung the word out significantly, "and I'm an oyster!"

I remained late at the party discussing who won the World War and drinking beer with the new assistant. When he asked me to sing the North American folk-song which depicts the transportation system and features that fearless old bounder, "Casey Jones," I thought it time to leave.

More beer would have been superfluous.

There is something indescribably fascinating about the full moon glowing over the jungle, something fascinating and vast, something redolent of languor and mystery, and I stood at my door admiring the beauty and listening to the calls of the night birds. As I lingered, engrossed, Juana strode silently from around the corner of my house—alone.

"Good evening, Don Carlos, are you lonesome?" she greeted. When I assured her that I was not lonesome she giggled. "How much happier you would be if you had a woman!"

"But I'm perfectly happy, Juana," I started.

"Your heart is half frozen, like your country!" she interrupted disgustedly. Later I learned that her mother had insisted upon her coming.



Dona Maria

The Field Foreman

A Young Patriot

Two Girl Friends

The ethics of the Southern Mexican are very hard for a foreigner to understand. They have a most profound love for their children and respect for their race. They are very proud of their country. Yet marriage is not considered necessary to full respectability, at least by the poorer natives. An English couple, recently arrived, employed a respectable young native girl as a domestic. She proved very faithful and extremely intelligent. They grew very attached to her and planned on taking her to England when they returned there for their vacation. When informed of their plans she became very enthusiastic. As time approached for their departure they became convinced that their protégée was going to become a mother. After discussing their conviction, they decided to question the girl.

"Yes," she replied frankly, entirely unconfused by their question.

"But, my dear girl, why didn't you tell us you were married? We had no idea that you even contemplated such a thing."

"I am not married!" she exclaimed, surprised by the fervor of her friends.

"What! Not married?" gasped the English lady. "You poor child! Tell us who the man is so we can take it up with the authorities and see that this great wrong is righted."

"I don't know who he is."

"Horrors! You mean to say that you don't know who he is? Oh! I never was so shocked in all my life. I believed you were so decent. Why, I would . . ."

“I am decent—very decent!” the girl interrupted indignantly. “But as you know I went home to spend many Saturday nights. Often some of our relatives and friends came to visit. We are poor people, our house is very small, and at night we all sleep together on the floor, so how can I know?”

Yet a married woman, or a woman living with a man, who deviates from the strictest fidelity to her mate, quickly forfeits her good name and the respect of her friends.

CHAPTER VI

GIRLS, SMUGGLERS AND LIQUOR IN PORT OF MEXICO

SWARMS of flying ants, an overcast sky and intense heat indicated that the rainy season was about to commence. As the rains transformed the fields into impassable bogs we decided to discontinue our hurried preparations and put off grinding till the dry season. We cut our force to the smallest number of men with which it was possible to complete the work by next harvest time. Our Chief's contract closed and he left for the States. Bill was made chief engineer and immediately started checking over the work of his predecessor. He wanted to be sure that everything was just as it should be.

The rains started. Gently at first, then a regular daily deluge which roared and pounded on the corrugated iron roofs like a freight train going through a tunnel. Sometimes three or four inches fell in twenty-four hours. The river quickly became a raging torrent and the country a mosquito-infested quagmire. Snakes and tarantulas, flooded from their accustomed haunts, became more numerous upon the paths and I saw my first Cola-de-hueso and the Central American edition of the terrible Fer-de-lance, locally known as Sordo.

One man was bitten in the arm by a venomous insect—we never knew to which variety it belonged for

the man was sleeping at the time. His arm swelled and he developed a high fever and suffered intense pain. He grew weak and his pulse became very irregular. A pronounced lump developed under his arm at the point where it joined his body. I saved his life by opening his arm at the spot where he was bitten and making long shallow lances above and below the incision. I kept these all open and covered his arm from the wrist to the shoulder with heavy cotton dressing, wet with a strong solution of permanganate of potash, which I changed every three hours. In a few days he showed practically no temperature, and his pulse became more regular. The incisions developed a thin watery discharge which had to be pressed out thoroughly to clear. This I did twice a day, at the same time cleaning out the wounds thoroughly by syringing with permanganate of potash solution. In a week his fever was entirely gone, the swelling and the lump under his arm partially subsided and he seemed past any crisis. He suffered some pain for a month and for longer than that the discharge continued. This slowly abated, the wounds closed and the full use of his arm returned. The discharge had no odor. Therefore I do not think that the venom was of the type which putrefies human tissue.

Watson, who had been employed in the fields, came to pay me a farewell call. His big pistol hung securely underneath his great left arm.

“Why do you carry the artillery under your arm and not in your clothes bag?” I asked.

“To have it handy in case I need it, Doc,” he an-

swered, nodding his head meaningly. "You never can tell about these bush monkeys, and it's much better to let them know that you got a gun mighty handy." Watson believed in preparedness.

"Good-bye, Doc," he said. "I'll be back soon as the rains quit, and if I get sick I'll be back before that—providing I ain't got no toothache!" he laughed. This was his standard joke and he enjoyed it very much. "That's all right, Doc," he consoled. "You can take care of me anytime—anytime—even if it is a toothache." He eyed me so curiously that I wondered if it was entirely confidence in my ability to heal which prompted his endorsement.

With so few of our workmen left, there were proportionately fewer sick people and I enjoyed a welcome relief from much of the extra work in the steaming afternoons.

Upon my return from work one afternoon I found no one wanting medical attention so I went at once to my shower to enjoy a cooling bath and to rub my tick bites with alcohol. Any white man in the Tehuantepec jungle is sure to accumulate armies of the torturers, though they trouble the natives very little. The afternoon was scorching. My body throbbed and itched from the ticks and I had no desire for company. From my bath room I heard some one come upon my porch and try the screen. When I looked through the bath-room's open door, there was a stranger standing at the front doorway.

Realizing that his presence was known, he smiled. "Are you too busy to fix a small cut?" he questioned,

in answer to my greeting. His left wrist was bound in a gory bandanna which dropped blood. He would not enter till I insisted, saying that he did not want to get blood on the clean floor. He was one of our fuel contractor's men and had walked three miles from the wood camp to reach the plantation. When I unwrapped it blood spurted from a gaping wound. In his effort to cut a flying bee in two with a sharp *machete* he had half severed his wrist. The wound was between the articular surfaces of the bones of the wrist and the forearm and had severed the ulnar artery. We had nothing to sew up the cut with. Our supply of such materials had been used up and we were waiting for a fresh consignment from Mexico City. The man was dangerously hurt. Something had to be done without delay. Once I had seen a stockman save a horse from bleeding to death by searing a wound with a red hot iron. The memory was anything but comforting. My nostrils seemed again to be filled with the stench of burning flesh. Again, in memory, I heard the agonized screams of a terrified, tortured animal. Once more I visioned a heavy-featured, sun-blackened man dry his eyes with the back of one grimy hand while stroking the trembling neck with the other, and I seemed to hear him as he murmured in a strained, unnatural voice.

“It was hard, Whitie, old boy, god-damned hard! But Christ! I just couldn't let you die!”

The tight tourniquet was causing pain. The man was complaining and weakening. He had lost a lot of blood and there was no time to lose. For a moment

I considered the treatment I had seen administered to the horse, but only for a moment. The thought was nauseating. He was a man—a fellow human being—and I could not bring myself to suggest such a course—even to save his life. Something else had to be thought of. I remembered hearing that cobwebs spread across the opening of a wound would cause the blood to coagulate and thereby stop bleeding. There were plenty of cobwebs but they all looked so dirty and the thought that a dangerous infection might cause a stiff wrist—a great handicap to a laboring man—made their use very questionable. The daily rain had ceased and the later afternoon sun was streaming through my open window. It occurred to me that if I could just get something clean to dry across the mouth of the wound, in the sun, that I could arrest the hemorrhage and save an infection. Controlling the bleeding with the tourniquet, which I eased from time to time, I applied wisps of sterile cotton, till after a two-hour struggle, I succeeded—with the aid of the last of the sun—in drying a sufficient number of them across the mouth of the wound to stop the bleeding. I covered the dried surface and the whole wrist with a thick cotton dressing, bandaged tightly, and bound the forearm and hand firmly to a splint. I did not wish to take any chances of the hand moving and breaking open the dried cotton. When I finished I gave my patient a stiff drink of pure rum with two eggs broken in it. This seemed to compensate for some of the suffering for he smiled and asked for another. I did not dis-

appoint him. That night I bound his arm firmly to his chest, so that he would not roll on it in his sleep, gave him some aspirin and put him to bed in a house near mine with a friend to act as nurse. I set my alarm for midnight and when it waked me I went to see how he was getting on. Both he and his nurse were sound asleep and no hemorrhage had occurred. At three I visited him again. He was still sleeping—so was his nurse. At five he arrived at my house, looking fresh and rested and saying that he was out of pain.

“*Ai mi, doctor,*” he smiled gratefully, “it was quite a large cut after all! But I am a brave man, *Señor*, and have fought in many battles and am not dismayed by the sight of a little blood.”

He showed no temperature and his pulse was regular so I warned him against moving or bumping his arm and allowed him to go visit some of his friends till noon. I was eating lunch when he rushed into the boarding house. His arm was unstrapped from the splint and bleeding full force and he showed the effects of having drunk a little too much liquor.

“*Ai doctor mio!*” he moaned excitedly. “I was in the *tienda* enjoying a very small drink with some friends. To prove to some scoffers—some *muy malo sin verguenzas*—that I could still bend my wrist, I took off the bandage, and perceive, the cut broke open.”

This time I worked all afternoon before I entirely stopped the bleeding. Near midnight the hemorrhage started again and I spent the rest of the night dry-

ing the dabs of cotton with the heat of an oil flame. My patient suggested that I sew up the wound with a needle and thread, showing me the unlovely scar made by a gunshot wound in his hip that had been treated in this manner. The scar showed signs of a bad infection and he admitted that he had been very sick and had suffered much pain at the time, so I gave up this form of aid.

In the morning, though the bleeding was once more checked, the man was quite weak from loss of blood so I decided to take him to Dr. Sparks at Port of Mexico, rather than take any additional chances.

“What do you want to save the bastard’s life for? Let him do something useful and die. We need fertilizer, and he’s too dumb for any other use!” Sutton complained when I asked him to have lunch ready and to take us to Santa Lucrecia. Sutton had been a top sergeant during the war.

When we arrived at Port of Mexico, we went directly to the doctor’s office where the kindly, efficient physician performed an operation—at which he allowed me to assist—tying off the severed arteries and strapping the arm to a splint. When the operation was finished I took the man to a hotel, as Dr. Sparks thought it better than to take him to the uncomfortable shed-like affair which served as a municipal hospital. I was very tired, and after seeing that my charge was comfortable for the night I turned in to sleep myself. I intended to take the morning train for Santa Lucrecia, but I found that my patient had suffered all night so I decided to remain till he was

out of pain and more contented. Later in the morning the doctor called, made a complete examination and assured us that the pain was nothing more than the usual consequence of the operation. The kind, confident way Dr. Sparks spoke did as much to ease the suffering as the medicine he gave the patient, and before noon the man was asleep.

I took luncheon at a little cafe on the street floor of the hotel.

There were a number of English-speaking people there, lunching and watching the antics of a small boy as he pumped out tunes on an ancient player piano. Recognizing me as a fellow national, alone, the manager of an American oil company introduced himself and kindly invited me to join the commanding officer of the local troops and himself. Both my new acquaintances proved very agreeable. The army officer had been educated in the States and spoke excellent English.

That afternoon I had tea with Doctor and Mrs. Sparks, in their delightful home overlooking the entrance to the harbor. English people are never too busy for their tea and no custom among Anglo-Saxons has more to do with preserving them as Anglo-Saxons in the out of the way places of the world. To an Englishman away from home, tea is an important duty, and it should be done.

The sick man was much more comfortable when I visited him.

“*Amigo mio,*” he smiled, rather weakly, to be sure, “am I not a brave man—a very brave and most in-

telligent man? Had I been a fool and remained at the fuel camp I would most probably have been dead by now—no, *Señor doctor?*”

“You are indeed a brave man,” I agreed honestly, which seemed to please him very much. I did not have the heart to tell him what I thought of his intelligence.

I met the oil company manager and the colonel for dinner. After dinner the three of us went to the Cabaret Bohemia. There are no family parties ever held at the Cabaret Bohemia. It could never be classified as respectable. It is an unpretentious, whitewashed shed fronting on Port of Mexico's street of prostitutes, the *Calle Ferrocarril*. About the edges of its long front room are lines of tables. In one corner stands a large *Marimba*. The center of the rough board floor is reserved for dancing. A door at the back leads to the quarters of the women. At ten o'clock we arrived. The place was crowded. Had it not been that such a prominent personage as the commander of the local troops was one of us we would never have secured seats. As it was, room in a choice location was immediately made for us and an attendant brought table and chairs. In the small place reserved for dancing, a boisterous, perspiring crush milled around in time to the hollow-sounding music. The hot night air was filled with the odor of sweating bodies and synthetic perfume and the fumes of strong tobacco and stronger liquor. An unpainted, motherly old creature with snow-white hair was introduced as the proprietress.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," she assured me with a captivating business smile. "Anything we can do to make your stay in Port of Mexico pleasant, please command. We have some very nice girls—some particularly pretty girls," she suggested pointedly—too pointedly.

A group of affable young Americans sat near. They might easily have been mistaken for college men, except that their conversation and actions were loud and vulgar, their clothing too modish and they were spending prodigious sums of money. It required no second glance to connect them in some capacity with liquor smuggling. They were true to type. It seemed that these men had recently arrived with a small schooner flying the French flag.

They had loaded a cargo of liquor for some port in the French West Indies, cleared, and gone to sea. A few days later they had returned. A storm at sea had forced them to seek the shelter of the port. A Mexican customs guard, who had been stationed on board when they arrived, noticed a number of small cans stowed in the captain's cabin. When he inquired what they contained and why they had not been listed in the manifest, he was offered a bribe to overlook them. He accepted the bribe and the ship was about to continue the interrupted voyage when a higher official decided to check the report of his subordinate. This officer was informed that the cans contained grease for the engine and were therefore not included in the official list. Opening a can, under protest, he found it to contain a white powder which proved to

be cocaine. All the cans contained the same. The captain and crew were arrested. Immediately money from somewhere appeared for their bonds.

Landing narcotics from Oriental ships at Salina Cruz and smuggling them across the Isthmus to Port of Mexico was quite a business. A few cans formed a distinct addition to the cargo of bootleg vessels. They paid handsomely, if landed, and were easy to dump overboard in an emergency. It was a simple matter to load them. Most of the officials were so susceptible to the influence of money—the local manifestation of that fine Italian hand which keeps officers of the law away from certain streets at understood times in the big cities north of the Rio Grande.

The few that were not so susceptible occasionally caused complications that had to be straightened out higher up. An effort to frustrate this traffic, as well as to prevent the clearance of liquor ships known to be smugglers, caused the dangerous wounding of a United States official in Port of Mexico. The American bootleggers resented his interference with their business and hired a Mexican assassin to murder him.

The proprietress brought two girls to our table. One was an American who had come down from St. Louis with a bootlegger and then been deserted. The other was a tall, dark, handsome girl with the erect carriage and gracious air of one schooled in proper social usage. She spoke English slowly, continually groping for the correct word, and with a pronounced

accent. She also spoke French, German, Spanish and Russian—her native tongue.

“You are American?” She smiled coldly. There was nothing tender or ardent about her.

“Guilty,” I answered.

“Guilty? Guilty?” she questioned. “What is guilty? Are you not an American?”

“I’m an American all right,” I answered. “Guilty is just an American way of saying yes.”

“Oh,” she exclaimed softly. “Guilty! Guilty! Yes! Yes!” She repeated the words several times. “I like Americans,” she continued. “They always pay a woman without haggling—so different from Frenchmen and other Europeans. I like American women, too. There were some in school with me in Paris.”

A strange look came into her eyes for a fleeting second, then she smiled again. “Pleasant girls they were—these Americans—kind and friendly but lacking in originality. Some time I’m going to America. I think I should enjoy it there. I know a nice sort of man in Buenos Ayres—a Pole—who wanted to take me to America when things got dull in the Argentine. Possibly I was foolish not to have gone with him, but there is good money for a woman here in Port of Mexico. It’s a nice place too—except that it is so hot and there are no amusements.”

Another girl, all hands and feet and vivaciousness, with a wealth of red hair was introduced. She was as easily distinguishable from the rest of her sisters as a blonde Eskimo from a crowd of native Greenlanders. Mexicans with hair like flames are uncom-

mon. The sharp angles of her child's body were not yet fully rounded into the curves of a woman.

"Hello, Sailor! Going home with me?" she laughed, pronouncing the words slowly. This constituted her entire knowledge of English, of which she seemed very proud.

Across the strip of sand which served as a street, rambled an irregular line of nondescript shanties—Peso casas—fifty cent houses—the dregs of the cess-pool. The sand gleamed white in the glare from the cabaret lights. From among the shanties a single disconsolate palm tree rose, its melancholy branches drooping sadly. Inside was the sweating crush and the hollow-sounding music. My train went at five, so at once we left.

A detail of soldiers, doing guard duty in the street, stood stiffly at attention, as we passed. The colonel saluted.

The injured man was sleeping soundly, and so was the peon I had engaged to act as nurse. I felt no reluctance at leaving.

CHAPTER VII

TEQUILA FLOWS AT A ZAPOTECAN FUNERAL

FOR two weeks a cold rain-laden wind had moaned out of the north, banishing the usual mosquitoes and transforming the footpaths into ribbons of mud-holes. The peons shivered in their thin cotton garments. The foreigners donned heavy clothing and drank hot rum toddies in the morning, afternoon and evening. The tornado-like velocity of the wind forced the rain underneath the doors and through the cracks around the windows of the wooden houses, and changed the palm shacks into wet, comfortless dens which reeked with the stench of shivering, huddled humans and stale cooking. Articles in closets acquired a musty odor and grew fur coats of green mildew. Regiments of black army ants invaded the dwellings. Malaria victims suffered tortures. Sickness increased. From dawn till dark the peons sloshed around in wet clothing and without shoes. At night they slept in their flimsy shacks with no more protection from the frigid wind than the openwork walls and a thin, damp cotton shawl.

The hardiest northern men I know of would soon succumb to such treatment, but the peons smiled. They gloried in the fact that they were able to stand it. It had been their lot for centuries, unchanged since their advent. I kept open house. Every afternoon streams of peons came for a long glass of hot

lemonade and rum before going home to their uncomfortable hovels. I gathered up the worn clothing about the plantation and distributed it among those that had no dry garments to sleep in. To those that were ill I gave medicine. In this way I prevented a lot of serious sickness and kept our small force on the job.

One particularly lugubrious evening, just as I was finishing supper, the field foreman rushed into the dining-room.

“Two men have just been shot, Don Carlos!” he cried excitedly. Friends were bringing the wounded men to my house, so the foreman and I hurried over to cover a table with clean sheets and make such other preparations as were possible to care for them.

“*Malo, Don Carlos. Madre de Dios, muy malo!*” exclaimed the foreman darkly. “Is the revolution not over? Isn’t it?” he looked at me questioningly. I was about to answer that I understood that it was, when with a shrug of his shoulders he answered his own question. “*Quien sabe?*” He paused for a moment as if to give vent to his feelings through silence. “A number of men—all simple peons, Don Carlos—were on their way from the company store to their homes, picking their way along slowly in the darkness and rain, when suddenly some one stepped from the brush which borders the path and shot two of them,” he explained. “*Muy malo, Don Carlos, muy malo!*” he sighed sadly. “Must we poor Mexicans never get done with killing each other? It seems not.” His tone was serious. “It has always been so.”

“Who did the shooting?” I asked.

“*Quien sabe?*” he replied with a blank look.

Soon the few peons arrived, bearing one of the wounded men in a blanket. We laid the bloody, mud-covered man on my table. He groaned pitifully in his agony. He had been shot in the back. A careful examination indicated only one wound so I determined that the bullet still remained in his body. Blood was gushing from the wound, so as quickly as possible I cleaned the surrounding surface with weak iodine solution and inserted a cotton plug saturated with strong iodine directly into the bullethole. This stopped the bleeding. I then covered the surface about the wound with a large cotton dressing, wet with permanganate of potash solution. It seemed to me that if any infection was starting, medicine strong enough to counteract the effect of snake poison might prove an efficient deterrent. My patient believed the bullet to be located under one of his lower ribs and implored me to take it out.

“Please doctor, *mio*, please,” he pleaded, “the pain will be nothing.” But when I explained that there was an internal hemorrhage and that an incision might provide a quick and easy means for him to bleed to death he grew thoughtful, and ceased to implore.

“Am I going to live, Senor?” he asked. He was very cool. I could only assure him that I would do everything in my power to save his life. This seemed to comfort him.

Soon more men arrived bearing the second victim

on an improvised stretcher. This man did not groan; he was dead. The bullet had passed directly through his body near his heart, cutting a large artery. The body was bathed in its own blood.

I watched my patient very carefully. I wanted to be aware of the first indication of infection so that I could take such measures as were possible to combat it. He showed no temperature and his pulse continued regular, therefore I felt reasonably sure that the internal bleeding was not causing any complications. In an hour I removed the cotton plug. The strong iodine had acted as a caustic and stopped the bleeding. He felt more comfortable and asked for water, so I gave him a spoonful every five minutes for half an hour. As he manifested no indications of his intestines having been perforated, I gave him a spoonful of rum. Near midnight he grew weak and I gave him an eggnog with plenty of rum. This braced him and he slept for a short time. When he waked I asked him if he knew who shot him.

“No, *Senor*, I have no idea,” he answered. “I have no great enemies and I can’t understand why anyone should wish to shoot me.” He grew quiet and his eyes glittered, “If you ever find out let me know, *Señor*—if I live—and if I die, tell my brother.”

Even in his weakened condition his expression was not nice to contemplate.

Shortly after daylight we started him for Port of Mexico where he could get efficient attention, though he wanted to remain at the plantation. In Santa Lu-

crecia, the government authorities kept him lying on the platform of the railroad station for over twenty-four hours, while they officially questioned some of his companions. How he survived this has always been a mystery to me.

Less than a month after, a most appreciative letter reached me with the information that he was out of all pain and would soon be entirely well. The doctors had located the bullet and removed it. An investigation commission came down from Santa Lucrecia to continue at the plantation their search for the murderer. Several theories as to who perpetrated the crime were investigated. Finally they concluded that it was just a case of mistaken identity—the murderer had made an unfortunate mistake in the dark.

We had a very pleasant dinner with the members of the commission. They were most agreeable gentlemen, and, like all government officials in Mexico, each one was armed. Their chairman, an unusually small man, had little beady eyes and a long pointed moustache which drooped, giving him something of the appearance of a diminutive walrus. In keeping with his position, the pistol he carried was particularly large and ornate. During the course of the dinner he unlimbered his artillery and playfully shot at the ceiling, squealing with delight at the effect his little joke produced. Undoubtedly he adored humor. Another member became slightly confused as to the exact identity of his napkin. For some reason he seemed to think it was a handkerchief. In the morn-

ing they returned to Santa Lucrecia. The matter was quickly forgotten. The victims were only peons.

The holiday season was drawing near and a committee was appointed to decorate the sugar warehouse in preparation for a grand celebration which was planned for New Year's Eve. The committee met and swept the warehouse out and placed long benches, improvised from boards and beer bottle cases, along the walls. To add a final touch to their efforts they strung streamers of gaudy tissue paper from the center of the ceiling to the sides. The place looked festive and clean.

The last day of the year dawned dimly. The wind howled and rattled the windows. The rain fell in sheets. Toward evening the rain ceased, but the force of the wind doubled.

In the late afternoon the usual orchestra, augmented by several guitars and a flute that squealed like a porker in the death agony, held a final rehearsal. A bombardment of exploding skyrockets told the plantation that the monster celebration was about to commence. I felt no apprehension. Everything was too wet to burn. A large washtub of bottled beer and ice was deposited in a corner, behind the refreshment table. A few cases of rum and *tequila* were stowed underneath. By eight the party was in full swing. A crowd of gaily dressed people, uncomfortable in their unaccustomed shoes, scraped over the rough cement floor in time to the discordant music.

An hour before midnight a group of youths arrived bearing a straw-stuffed dummy on a stretcher.

It was a resigned looking sham with disordered hair and flowing beard both made from white cotton waste. The stub of an old pipe protruded from its mouth. The music stopped and the dancers gathered around.

“*Buenas noches, Señor doctor,*” greeted the leader, bowing low before me with aggravated formality. “*Señor doctor,*” he continued in a loud voice that all assembled could hear, “we have brought to you an old man—a very old man—who is extremely sick. We expect that he might be dying and we implore you to take his temperature and count his pulse and do all that you can to prolong his life as he has been a very good friend to most of us.” Again bowing low, he handed me a large burlesque of a temperature thermometer and make-believe alarm clock.

The assembled people clapped and shouted while I went through the form of making a complete physical examination, and reported that the old man was very low. The group of youths burst into mock tears while one of them produced a towel and carefully wiped the thermometer. This produced wild hilarity. Another gave me a few clay marbles, painted a flaming red, to represent pills, one of which I forced between the counterfeit lips. In fifteen minutes I repeated the procedure. As midnight neared the dancing again ceased and the guests gathered around the dummy and called humorous suggestions to me for prolonging its life. One of the youths made up to represent an old woman, knelt by its side, drying his eyes with a large bandanna from which he wrung

water. This stunt easily made him the center of the fun making. He had difficulty in kneeling. Underneath his makeup was a *machete*.

Promptly at twelve I pronounced the dummy dead and amid ribald shouts the youths hustled the figure from the room. There was much fevered embracing and shaking hands and many vows of eternal friendship. Outside a *crescendo* of exploding skyrockets reached its height. It was much like a similar celebration at home, only with the same alcoholic freedom more Americans would have been drunk. By one the party had resolved itself into an endurance contest between the few couples who still scraped wearily over the rough floor. I left for my house as there was nothing more to see.

I had just gotten into my cold bed and covered myself with its damp clothes when the stone mason came to the door.

“Don Carlos!” he called excitedly, “Felix is dead! I found the body in an outbuilding back of my house upon my return from the celebration.”

The thought was confusing. Felix the kindly, loyal, lazy fellow who used to laugh and lift the loaded dirt-scraper when it got stuck and stopped the bulls, and then when my back was turned, slip off to the shade. Felix the strong man. It was hard to understand. I knew he had been sick with the grippe for a week. I had been to see him every day. But for two days he had not been home when I called. The storekeeper told me he was drunk. Nothing could keep him sober long if he had the money to buy

liquor. Getting out of bed, I pulled on my clammy clothes and followed the mason. We found his body lying face downward on the soggy floor of a flimsy outbuilding.

At the mason's suggestion we lifted the lifeless form out of the mud and carried it inside his house. There was no wound on the body and nothing to indicate that my late friend had met with foul play. For two days he had been roaming around the plantation drunk. At night he had turned in to sleep at any convenient shelter, lying down on the cold, damp ground with no covering but his thin wet clothing. Taking into consideration his condition, I concluded that pneumonia had caused his death.

The mason tied the feet together while I bound the hands across the great chest. The mason's wife washed the mud from the kindly face and smoothed back the matted hair. When we had finished we planted four candles about the body in the outline of a Christian cross. There was nothing more that could be done until daylight so I suggested that as we were not sure what caused the death, the mason take his family to the home of some friend for the night.

"Why should we leave?" he questioned. "Felix is dead and the dead can do no harm. Likewise no one would care to bother the dead."

"But the risk of infection," I suggested. "We are not sure what killed Felix and your whole family might become infected with the same disease."

“*Ai*. That is true, *Señor*,” he pondered. “You are so very careful of us. But we are all so well and strong—*muy fuerte, Señor*.” He pounded his chest with his clenched fist and smiled. Nothing I could say would induce him to leave. His two children were sleeping in one bed. His wife and he retired in another and I returned to my house. I hoped the light from the spluttering candles would not keep any of them awake.

At daylight I hunted up Bill and the two of us tried to find some mechanics to make a coffin, but it was a holiday and none could be found. At eight I went to the mason’s. The body still lay in the center of the floor and fresh candles had been put in place around it. A wolfish dog sniffed significantly. A fussy old hen hopped about, clucking to her brood. The tiny chicks had great difficulty scrambling to the top of the corpse. The mason’s two children played a noisy game of ball at the side of the room. The mason and four men sat at a table drinking *tequila*.

“Come in, Don Carlos,” he welcomed, seeing me standing at the door. “Another seat, boy,” he ordered brusquely, addressing his son. The boy disappeared through the door, to return promptly, struggling with a cracker box. The mason filled the one glass on the table to the brim with *tequila*.

“Out of respect for our departed friend,” he said, pushing the glass across the table to a place in front of me. I sipped the *tequila* and passed it on to the man next me. Custom decreed that we must all drink

from the same glass to show that we were all equal in our friendship for Felix. After the glass had gone entirely around and had been drained the men arose. Stretching a straw *petate* out on the floor they placed the corpse within it and sewed it up, and then slung it between two poles. Four of them picked up the bundle and started for the cemetery. The fifth man and I followed, carrying the tools. As the cortege started several women commenced firing skyrockets. By the same token the birth of Felix had most probably been heralded. In places the mud was knee-deep and very slippery. The body bearers were all slightly under the influence of liquor—one was drunk. As we were negotiating a particularly difficult stretch of trail the drunken man stumbled and dropped his corner of the corpse. The force of the fall caused the head of the dead man to protrude from the *petate*. I helped the fallen man to his feet but he reeled and fell again.

“*Caramba!*” exclaimed the mason, “*Levantarse! Arriba!* Get up! Do you wish to be a disgrace at the funeral of your friend, and you an official too?” But the man was beyond continuing. He struggled to a sitting posture at the side of the path and held his head in his hands. “*Caramba!*” exclaimed the mason again, perplexed. “*Hombre! Sin verguenza!* Get up! But the man didn’t move. The mason rolled his eyes and whistled softly.

“Couldn’t I help?” I suggested.

“*Si,*” he agreed slowly, “though you are not a

Mexican you were a friend of Felix, so I suppose it would be all right." I picked up the end of the pole and the procession once more started. The head of the dead man swung back and forth as we walked. It was something of a struggle to keep it from dragging in the mud. Once I thought the body would slip from the *petate* entirely.

Noon arrived before we finished digging the grave. There were frequent interruptions, as we had brought a bottle of *tequila* with us. I wanted to go for the Spanish bookkeeper to have him read some simple Christian service, but the mason and the others wished no service.

The men took off their hats and without further ceremony dumped the corpse into the narrow excavation. The man stood at the head of the grave and chanted something in the ancient *Zapotecan* language.

"It was better so," he explained, "Felix was of Tehuantepec—a Zapotecan." As they were filling the grave I dropped in a small bouquet of wild flowers. There was no objection. They seemed to appreciate this tribute from a friend of another race. The flowers were of Tehuantepec. The mortal remains of my friend were fast disappearing beneath the descending clods of earth. As I gazed a shovelful obliterated the face—kindly even in death. It was the last I should ever see of Felix. When the grave was filled one of the men stuck the lighted stub of a candle in the fresh mound of earth. Another tied two sticks together in the form of a Christian cross and firmly

planted it at the head. On the surface foreign symbols. Down underneath, covered by his native soil, reposed the body of a *Zapotecan* whose soul had gone to his fathers. I am sure his spirit was welcome. There was still some *tequila*. Before we left it was finished.

CHAPTER VIII

“BUT SENORITA, I AM NOT A DOCTOR”—
“MUY COMICO”

THE NORTHER had blown itself out. The daily rain was becoming less; the temperature was rising and the mosquitoes had returned. One night the sky stayed clear and the moon rose. A group of peons sang in the moonlight until after midnight. The rainy season was drawing to a close. All hands were very busy completing the final arrangements to commence grinding as soon as the ground became sufficiently dry. Bill fired up one of the locomotives and took it over the yard track to test the roadbed and switches. Though the ground looked fairly dry he found it still too soft for safety.

“Well, anyway, Pills, it won’t be long now,” he called gleefully to me. Like the rest of us he was anxious for the grinding to commence. Almost every day hands for the harvest were arriving. One of the newly arrived workmen came to see me. He was a tall, handsome boy with an absolutely captivating smile.

“*Buenos dias, Señor,*” he greeted nervously from my doorway. He seemed so uncertain that I rose and opened the screen for him.

“I am sick, *Señor,* and the foreman told me that you would give me medicine,” he said when he was seated. Truly he was sick. He had a high fever, a very sore throat and an irregular pulse so I rubbed

his chest and throat with liniment and put more liniment into a basin of boiling water and had him inhale the healing fumes.

Then I put him to bed and gave him a hot lemonade, with plenty of rum, and a large dose of aspirin and quinine. In the morning he was worse. When I examined his throat, in addition to the inflammation I noticed two distinct cream-colored patches, one on each side of the center. He was in a great deal of pain and talking was difficult. I had listened to my mother describe the struggle she went through when my oldest brother suffered from diphtheria and I felt the newcomer had it. We had no diphtheria anti-toxin and I knew there was none in Santa Lucrecia. I swabbed his throat every four hours with a weak solution of iodine and made him as comfortable as possible. This was the treatment that had saved my brother and I knew of nothing else to do. I told him he was very sick. He nodded assent. Talking was too painful. After a while he struggled to ask to be sent to his home. Though I felt guilty of subjecting the countryside to a grave danger I did not have the heart to refuse. The fact that I was not absolutely sure he was infected with diphtheria in a measure consoled me.

“*Muchas gracias, Señor,*” he smiled with an effort when I gave my consent to his leaving. He was unusually polite. I arranged for one of his friends to accompany him on the morning launch. When I reached my house at noon he was seated on the porch holding his head in his hands.

"I thought you'd gone?" I asked, surprised.

"It's no use, *Señor*, I am going to die," he struggled to reply.

He was very weak but he showed no emotion. I did all I could do encourage him and persuaded him to return home and go to bed.

Shortly after two, a man came running to tell me that someone was dying in one of the houses back of the sugarmill. It was in this location that the newcomer lived.

"Hurry! Hurry, *Señor*, or you will be too late to be of any help!" he cried. Gathering up my few instruments I ran up the path after my informer. I felt no doubt that the dying man was my latest patient. From my mother I had learned that the great danger to my brother when he was sick with diphtheria was in his strangling to death. From a newspaper account of the development of various antitoxins I had learned that in diphtheria a terrible toxin developed which caused a total prostration of the heart and death. Among my instruments was a small metal tube which I had boiled and scrubbed and then soaked in alcohol till I felt that it was thoroughly clean. I had determined that if I found my patient not responding to the simple treatment I was capable of giving and therefore choking, to open his throat just above his breastplate, pick out his windpipe and allow him to breathe through the metal tube. I thought that if he could breathe there might be a chance for him to overcome any toxins which might have developed. A difficult

job for an amateur but worth attempting, if a life might be saved.

When we reached the cluster of huts a group of people was gathered in the central path. In their midst, lying on the ground, was my patient.

His tongue protruded from his mouth, which was stretched wide open. His staring eyes looked as if they were about to burst from his head. He was beyond the need of any human help. He was dead. He had risen from his bed gasping, delirious, tottered from his shack, fallen down in the path and died. As I looked at the poor boy lying dead in the dirt I understood why so many physicians become grey-headed before their time. I kept close watch of every one who had come in contact with him and took all the precautions I could think of that might prevent the spread of this dreadful malady. Fortunately, we had no more cases.

Watson was among our old hands who returned. "Glad to see you again, Doc," he greeted familiarly. "Glad you're still able to care for the sick and ain't one yourself." The big revolver still hung securely under his great left arm.

"Still lug the heavy artillery," I remarked.

"That's my traveling companion," he grinned. "Having it sure's kept me out of a heap of trouble. Around here I guess I'm all right without it—except at dances—some of the bush monkeys were in Port of Mexico during the revolution and when they get to having a good time they get courageous—too courageous—that's the trouble. They ain't got no bal-

ance." I felt relieved when he finally started down the path that led to the peon quarters.

As I stood gratefully watching the receding bulk of the giant negro, I noticed a small procession coming up the path. Watson waved his huge hand in greeting and stepped respectfully out of the way. I was surprised at his politeness. It was not until this action attracted my attention that I noticed the important figure of Don Mauricio followed by two women. Don Mauricio was one of the landed aristocracy. On his own land he grew cane which he sold to the plantation. The type he represented was more common in Mexico before the revolution than at present. He was intelligent and agreeable and well informed and most considerate of my very poor Spanish. He often came to call and I always enjoyed his visits. Through the window I saw them turn in at my gate. Without delaying for the usual formality they filed through the door and Don Mauricio presented his wife and daughter. The few peons awaiting my attentions rose respectfully and quietly left.

"Good afternoon," greeted the young lady in halting English, smiling at my surprise. She had just returned from two years at a boarding school in Vera Cruz. Don Mauricio smiled too. He was proud of his daughter. She seemed properly garbed for a formal reception and her shoes were covered by a pair of modish galoshes, left open at the front. Her mother promptly accepted the chair I offered. She seldom wore shoes and when she did they hurt. She had come with her daughter only out of deference to

the position of the family. Don Mauricio had brought the young lady to consult me regarding her health.

"I occasionally have attacks of pain here," the girl smiled, indicating her side. "I have one now. Several doctors in Vera Cruz have diagnosed my trouble as appendicitis . . ."

"But *Senorita*, I am not a doctor," I hastened to interrupt, very much aghast.

She smiled politely. "Each one of the doctors I consulted recommended an operation," she kept on completely ignoring my interruption.

"But *Senorita* . . ." I protested again.

She hesitated a moment and smiled bewitchingly. "I do not care to be operated upon, so I had father bring me to you to be cured." Her lips curved into a provocative half moon and she waited expectantly.

Cured! Whew!

"But Don Mauricio," I implored, turning to him in desperation, "please understand that I am not a doctor and that I know next to nothing about appendicitis. Appendicitis is serious—very serious—and must be taken care of by experts."

"*Si*," he shrugged with a blank look.

"But I do not wish to be taken care of by experts and operated upon!" protested the girl emphatically.

I painted a gruesome picture of the dangers of neglecting such a trouble. I described the horror of an emergency attack way off in the jungle without facilities or a surgeon to bring relief. I felt qualified to sympathize, having carried my appendix home in a bottle to a horrified family. My visitors understood

very little of what I was endeavoring in my nervousness and very poor Spanish to explain. They were profoundly impressed. Don Mauricio looked worried, but the young lady continued to smile.

“But Don Carlos, I do not wish to be taken care of by experts and operated upon,” she repeated firmly with a most entrancing glance. Even in the jungle we have our moments.

I explained that the little things I had done for the peons were things that anyone could have done. The young lady continued to look at me firmly and smile. I had known hard-headed men of affairs to be influenced by the remarks of a street corner fakir and I realized that the talk of the peons had created an opinion of my powers to heal that was far beyond the truth.

“But Don Mauricio,” I started.

“But I don’t wish to be operated on!” interrupted the girl vehemently. Her expression was grave. She looked as if she might be on the point of tears.

I had heard that a spoonful of olive oil taken before breakfast would help to relieve the pain of appendicitis but that once the condition was developed, olive oil was about as useful as an equal amount of water. The Senorita looked at me hopefully. Her large brown eyes regarded me wonderingly through their long lashes.

“You might try a spoonful of oil every morning. This might temporarily relieve the pain but it will never cure the condition,” I explained. The girl brightened.

“Yes! Yes! Don Carlos, olive oil before breakfast. Do I have to take it every morning?” she asked, very interested. Don Mauricio rose and stood beside his daughter’s chair and looked encouragingly at me.

“Yes, Don Carlos, yes?” she said expectantly. I realized that it was up to me.

“And you might remain in bed during the morning for about two weeks, and while lying down have cloths which have been saturated in cold and hot water alternately, placed upon your side every fifteen minutes,” I suggested, my courage mounting. I knew this would increase the circulation locally.

“Yes, Don Carlos,” she repeated enthusiastically.

“And if you don’t feel well in a week, please go back to the doctor in Vera Cruz.” The young lady frowned.

Before they departed I admonished her to eat only easily digested foods and very little of these.

In a week I was invited to visit her in her home. She was in no more pain and feeling very happy. “*Ai*, Don Carlos, you are very much of a joker, *muy comico*,” she laughed, “you pretty nearly scared me into being operated upon. *Ai!* You *Americanos!*”

“But being out of pain does not signify that you are over the trouble,” I explained. For a moment a grave look crossed her face like a cloud crossing a summer day. Then she smiled again “*Ai*, you *Americanos!*” she said. So far as I know she is still intact. Nothing could ever change her opinion that I had cured her.

After this I was called upon for advice and treat-

ment in troubles the very nature of which proved most confusing. My patients would accept no explanation of my lack of information. I invented some marvelous treatments. The large amount of success surprised me as much as it delighted those benefited. I became convinced that confidence has a lot to do with cure.

CHAPTER IX

LABOR WAR WITH LOUSY PEONS

THE mud was almost dry. The river had once more become a respectable stream. Bill and Mr. Lang, the factory superintendent, were working night and day completing the final details for grinding. Six hundred wild looking men had arrived from the highlands of Oaxaca to cut our cane. The quiet old plantation suddenly became a beehive of activity, for the harvest was to start in two days.

The cane cutters were different from the people of Tehuantepec. They were smaller and not so generally intelligent, and unlike our own people, their bodies were filthy and their manner of living foul—foul even beyond conception of a North American. The women were worse than the men. They seldom ever bathed and never changed or washed their clothes. Disease was rife among them. Many suffered from chronic ulcers which they had treated by covering with thick poultices of fresh cow dung. The results were sometimes atrocious. The only medicine most of them had ever known had been brewed from the leaves of their native plants. Pills, powders and ointments were strange and they regarded them with suspicion. They invariably went through painful and breath-taking contortions when taking pills, stuffing them down their throats with the end of a finger.

We quartered the Oaxacas away from our own

people. To have put them in the same part of the plantation would have precipitated a local civil war. Their ideas and mutual understanding were at least as far apart as those of Maine and Virginia before Jefferson Davis became a president. Here was a mild illustration of the great problem of the Mexican Government. The co-ordination under a single government of many scattered peoples, each with a different standard and psychology and many with different languages. In conformation with the law we had engaged a physician for the harvest and changed my house into a dispensary and quarters for the doctor, who was scheduled to arrive with the starting of the crop. I was to help him till he got his work organized, then I was to take charge of the welfare work and act as assistant to the field foreman. The Oaxacas were completely under the domination of a labor contractor, by the name of Casandra, who brought them to the plantation. When they arrived Casandra counted his charges as a drover would his sheep and then hunted up Sutton.

“Only two men short, *Señor Superintendente*,” he smiled in greeting, but when the chief timekeeper turned in his labor lists at the end of the day there were fourteen men less than the contractor had agreed to hire. As Casandra had demanded and received his fee for the full six hundred, minus the two absentees he had acknowledged, Sutton went to him with our lists. He found him in the store drinking with two Oaxacas and Watson.

“Your timekeepers just made a mistake, *Señor*

Sutton," he shrugged a little unsteadily. This apparently ended the matter, for with a "they are here and will turn up, *Señor*," he refused to count the cane cutters again.

"Something tells me we are stuck," grumbled the superintendent.

After supper Watson brought Casandra to see me.

"Meet an old friend of mine. Him and me was in the revolution together and I'll vouch for him. He's all right," he drawled, with a queer expression.

"It's a pleasure and an honor to meet you," bowed Casandra. He was a tall, thin man with mirthless eyes and a straight mouth and evidence of much foreign blood.

"I'll be glad to do anything I can for the comfort and well-being of your people," I declared. That seemed to please him, for he smiled and bowed.

"That's the spirit, Doc," drawled Watson, so enthusiastically that I wondered just what had caused his change of heart.

"It is indeed a pleasure and an honor to meet one of the plantation executives who so kindly assures me of his desire to co-operate," Casandra smiled.

"That's my job, *Senor*, looking out for the people and keeping them comfortable and well and on the job," I explained.

As if to test the sincerity of my assertion, he was back at the dispensary within half an hour bringing a few of his Oaxacas with him.

"*Buenas noches, Señor doctor*," he greeted pleasantly. "Will you be so kind as to fix up these poor

sick men?" From his tone and manner he seemed to have a real affection for the peons. Some hesitated to take the medicine I handed them. Casandra's demeanor changed abruptly. "Take that!" he growled. The men took their medicine without more delay. There was no doubt as to who was boss.

In the morning Casandra called on Sutton with a request for money to adjust some professed differences of the Oaxacas.

"The working conditions were misrepresented in your contract, *Señor Superintendente*, and the cane cutters are very dissatisfied—very, very dissatisfied,"—he smiled knowingly, "but I can fix up everything promptly with a small amount of money—a very small amount, for such a big plantation, *Señor*." He looked at Sutton eagerly. But the superintendent refused to acknowledge that anything had been misrepresented or to atone for any imagined grievances with money.

"*Bueno!* You be pleased; I can not be responsible if they do not stay," he shrugged, disappointed.

"What's the matter with the damn mongrels? Sutton stormed when we met at lunch.

"Search me!" I answered.

"They understood everything, the rotters—everything—just what to expect in all its details, and seemed glad to get the jobs, and now with the crop about to start they pull this boner."

"Sure they understood everything and everything was all right and still is. The cane cutters aren't complaining. None of them have come to you with any

kicks. It's their boss. What he wants is a little private graft," volunteered Bill.

"Graft? But he made his own contract. We paid him his price and he's already collected all we owe him and more, for a dozen of his men haven't shown up."

"Yes, Mr. Superintendent," agreed Bill complacently, "but he wants more pay, more than his contract calls for—the man's ambitious, give him credit—and he's willing to stir up a nasty mess to carry his point."

"Well, the cane cutters are here. They're getting extra good wages and everything's been done to make them comfortable that we possibly can do, so let their boss kick all he wants to—let him kick and see if I care!" Sutton scowled.

"Certainly—let him kick—what the hell's the difference?" Bill paused and lit a cigarette. "If he'll just kick to himself or us, but he won't. We are supposed to start cutting cane day after tomorrow and by tomorrow, if not before, he's going to come to you with a worried look and tell you he's very much afraid the cutters are going to leave." Bill had had experience in Mexico.

"But the contract. That's . . ."

"The contract's pure bologna—just pure bologna," interrupted Bill. "The contract only holds the company. There's nothing the plantation can do to make the men stay here and cut cane if they want to leave. Go to law about it. Take it up with the authorities in Santa Lucrecia. Take any course you want to and you'll find I'm right. The contractor's in the clear.

He's brought the men here. And why should they stay, if they don't want to?"

"But certainly, if the plantation is paying good wages and the men are satisfied, they aren't going to quit just because some grafter tells them to?" I objected.

"That's where you're wrong. If it was in their own country and they knew us, there wouldn't be any trouble. It would take more than the jabber of one man to coax them away from good jobs. Here it's different. They're foreigners, they're away from home. One man induced them to come. He's their leader and they'll do just what he tells them. If there are any hold-outs, Casandra can easily figure out enough that's not satisfactory to satisfy the most skeptic among them. And believe me, he knows it."

"But if I dig up the extra coin, I bet the cutters won't get any of it," Sutton hesitated.

"Certainly they won't. I doubt whether any of them outside of the few Casandra is bribing to stand with him know anything of the whole matter. If they knew, he'd have to kick in and he don't want to kick in. He wants all the money. It's a way they have in this country."

"Well, it's just graft—just pure graft, and I'm not going to stand for it. I'm going to tell these birds how this grafter is trying to bunk them. Then they won't leave us flat."

"Yes, they will," Bill argued. "He'll tell them that you're lying. That he was trying to get the money for them, and they'll believe him. You're a foreign-

er—a Yankee—a cruel oppressor of the North—a tool of Wall Street—a few have heard the words but none of them know what they mean. But that don't matter—you're some sort of an instrument of torture—that's enough. He'll wave his hands and shout 'Viva Oaxaca!' ” Bill rose and gave a vivid illustration, “ ‘Long live liberty! Long live the Republic! Ain't it glorious?’ ” he laughed. “In half an hour he could have them ready to commit murder and not one would have an idea of what it's all about. These birds have been playing follow the leader for so many centuries that they've forgotten how to do anything strictly on their own hook, if they ever knew. Look at the revolutions. The poor dumb-bells don't know what they're fighting for half the time. They just follow some leader and fight because they like fighting and he gives them a peso a day and tells them who to fight.” Bill paused and resumed his seat.

“Well,” said Sutton stubbornly, “I've got just so much money to run this crop and I'll be damned if I use any of it for graft.”

“Yes! And I'm thinking you'll be damned if you don't,” Bill nodded knowingly. “That is,” and his eyes twinkled, “unless you discover some other way of getting rid of *Señor Casandra*. He's the fly that's spoiling the ointment. Without him in the picture there'll be no trouble, and I'll bet on it.”

Just as Bill had predicted, the middle of the next afternoon Casandra came bowing to the superintendent with a long face and worried look.

"*Ai, Señor,*" he sighed, "I don't see how I can do anything to keep the cutters from leaving. They are so dissatisfied, *Señor!* So very dissatisfied, *Señor.*"

"Let the damn louts go!" Sutton challenged, his anger getting the better of his judgment.

"As you choose, *Señor,*" Casandra shrugged with a hurt look.

That evening there were very few Oaxacas about the factory clearing. It was rumored that they were in their own village holding a meeting to formulate a list of demands which were to be presented to the superintendent in the morning.

"Look out! That fellow's starting something which might prove hard to fix," warned Bill when we met in the dining room.

When I went up to my house after supper Watson was waiting there with Casandra. "Hello, Doc," he greeted. Then, without pausing for me to reply, he started. "You know that countryman of yours, that superintendent, he isn't smart . . ."

"So you're in on this too!" I interrupted in surprise. I had thought his connection with Casandra was only as a friend.

"Sure! I'm the bodyguard. You didn't think a smart man like me was damn fool enough to sweat in the cane fields for small change when there's money to be made, did you?" he answered.

"You're smart all right—too damn smart! I'm surprised to learn that you're not too smart to be a thief."

"Now here!" he glared, "Don't start throwing

names around. I don't like them. All Casandra wants is a little extra money. He's worked hard getting these men down here and he's not making much. If that countryman of yours was any good he'd make some money for himself and the rest of us."

"You mean if he wasn't any good," I interrupted.

"That's all right—you'll see. We got things started; we had a meeting this evening," he leered.

"It's just stealing, Watson—just pure stealing and the superintendent's absolutely right."

"Stealing, hell! This plantation's rich. They sure can afford to pay a little something extra to have their crop go off nice and smooth. Why, it's money in their pockets. Just figure what it'll cost if they have to delay to get a new crew?"

"But this man, this friend of yours, Watson, signed a contract. A mighty fair and liberal contract, too, knowing exactly what he was doing. Now why isn't he man enough to live up to it?"

"But *Señor doctor*, I am not making enough money—not near enough money," Casandra protested.

"Then why didn't you ask for more in the beginning?" I asked.

"*Ai*," he shrugged shrewdly, "I might have lost the business. There are other labor contractors, you know."

"You got the wrong idea of the way business goes down here, Doc," drawled Watson, in a softer tone. "Now, Doc, if you'll help us . . ." he suggested.

"Not me, Watson!"

“Well, please yourself! Please yourself! But after you think it over, if you change your mind, we won’t forget you.”

The news of the meeting of the Oaxacas had spread around the plantation like wild fire. The sergeant commanding our soldier guard had ordered his men under arms. Just as I was starting to prepare for bed, Felipe came in. Felipe, like a number of our old employees, had lived on the plantation for years and regarded it as his home.

“*Ai*, Don Carlos,” he wailed, “These Oaxacas—these *sin verguenzas!* Fools! Pigs! Monkeys!” Felipe was very exasperated. “They would take the bread out of our mouths, for no honest reason whatever. And what are we to do, *Señor?* What, I ask you, should we people of Tehuantepec do?” he rolled his eyes expressively and drew an index finger across his throat in a rapid and most sanguine manner “What should we do? I ask you again, what should we do?” Then, without pausing he answered his own question, “*Quien sabe?*” he held his hands in front of him, palms outward.

Outside the sound of a commotion abruptly terminated our discussion. I went to the screen. A small crowd of excited men was coming down the path. From fragments of their conversation I gathered that someone had been wounded. In a moment they reached the door. In their midst was Casandra, limp and bleeding. He had been in the *tienda* drinking and boasting and had entered into an argument with one of our old hands. The argument had terminated

in a fight and now he had a bad cut in the side of his neck and a left forearm that had been laid open to the bone.

“I should have killed that damned monkey! I would have, too, if there hadn’t been so many soldiers around with their rifles!” Watson grumbled. He stood as a bodyguard should, faithfully by the side of his employer. He looked at me venomously. “You fellows sure got to come across now, because I’m going to run this thing!” he said roughly.

I cleared the crowd that had gathered from the room and at once started cleansing the wounds and sewing them up.

Casandra was limp and groaning as much from the effects of over indulgence in liquor as from the effects of his wounds.

“Is he going to get all right?” Watson demanded.

“I don’t know—I guess so,” I answered. He was not dangerously hurt.

“He’d better, if you think much of your skin. He’s got lots of friends.”

Sutton and Bill came in as I worked. Both of them were armed.

“What do you let this smoke stay here for?” demanded Sutton.

“He’s the bodyguard,” I answered.

“Yes, and I’m going to stay right here and see that everything goes right,” Watson declared.

“I’ll be damned if you would if I was doing the sewing!” said the superintendent.

“Got a gun on yourself?” Undismayed, the ne-

gro grinned at Sutton and changed the subject.

“And I know how to use it too.”

“You might,” Watson drawled. “You might even have a chance. Who knows? But if you do, you’ll most probably have to draw it mighty quick, if you expect it to help you much. Now with me, I generally carry mine loose in the holster—it’s handier—I can get it quicker.”

Suiting the action to the words he suddenly grasped the butt of his revolver with his left hand and drew it from its holster with one motion of his huge fist.

“Put that gun away!” Sutton ordered.

“Don’t lose your head, Mr. Superintendent. I was just showing how easy it is—if you know how.” He laughed meaningly, returning the revolver to its holster. “You see,” he continued after his mirth had subsided, “I always carry mine under my left arm so I can have my right free to work with a *machete*. Mighty handy in a crowd. I’ve found it so a couple of times, but I can shoot with my right hand too.” He raised his head and yawned lazily. “Yes, it’s a good idea to be able to shoot with both hands,” he reflected. Lifting up his mighty arms he made a pillow of his hands by interlocking the fingers behind his neck, upon which he rested his head. His great muscles rippled.

The Superintendent turned and looked at Cassandra. “What do you keep this bastard alive for? Why don’t you finish cutting his lousy throat? he snapped.

“I thought my job was saving life,” I said.

"You're some life saver all right, all right," he smirked. "The only thing you lack is the hole in your middle, and if this skunk lives he'll probably put one there just to show you how he appreciates what you've done for him. Let him croak. Do the world a favor." Sutton was troubled.

"He's out of the way for a time anyway—what's the use worrying?" I ventured.

"Yes, for a while," he agreed. "But when he gets well, then what? If we happen to be in the middle of the crop, what then?"

"That's sort of sensible." Watson interrupted suavely. "It would be better to fix things up now than to wait till later."

"Say!" Sutton was livid. He glared savagely at the giant, strange lights snapping in his eyes. "Total this up on your calculator and don't subtract nothing, see—nothing. If you think we're damn fools enough to let a few crooks—just a few lousy, yellow crooks, buffalo us, and thereby spread the dope that they can stick up the place at their pleasure, you're wet as McGinty and he's still at the bottom of the sea. Get it? Wet as McGinty. Why," he spread his hands broadly, "if we stood for such a crazy thing we'd be coughing up graft forever—or at least as long as we stayed in business—might just as well give the place back to the monkeys. But let this penetrate, enter, sink in," he pounded a palm with a fist for emphasis, "we're not, see? And that ain't all—besides five soldiers we've got ten men armed with rifles circulating around just to see that nothing starts. And every one

of them hates your guts because they know you're trying to stop the crop and hurt their jobs. Get it! Hates your guts!"

"You're smart," leered the negro with an effort at bravado. "But you wouldn't have had the soldiers if my men hadn't been moved. Just the same, you won't start cutting this cane so soon as you figure, unless you get some sense before it's too late."

"Maybe," mused Sutton meaningly, "maybe!" Then turning to me, he said, "Patch the son-of-a-bitch up, Pills—don't keep the boys waiting too long. There's a lot of guys sharpening up their *machetes* to get him good, just as soon as you turn him loose. No one is going to keep men from working down here. This ain't Chicago." And waving his hand with a mocking gesture he and Bill strode though the open doorway into the quiet starlit night.

"Smart fellow, your superintendent, but he's got a lot to learn!" sneered the giant as they left. "He's sure got a lot to learn!" he mumbled.

"Keep quiet if you want to stay here. I'm trying to get this man to sleep," I ordered.

"Oh, I'm staying all right, all right. You don't get no chance to hurt my boss." He raised his head and looked directly at me.

"What do you mean?" I snapped, with an effort at self-control, for his implication was obvious.

"Hold yourself! Hold yourself! The hot weather must be going to your head. I didn't mean to insult," he drawled. "But anyhow, don't think you can fool me," he added.

“I’m not trying to fool you. And now if you want to stick around, keep quiet.”

The negro grumbled something. Tilting his chair back against the wall he lit a black cigarette and blew smoke at the ceiling. Having finished putting the dressing in place I drew a chair up next the table and sat by the side of my patient. After a while Casandra slept. It was near midnight and everything was quiet. To illuminate my work I had placed a lamp on a chair next the table on which my patient lay. Turning the lamp down I put it on the floor.

“Too must light for sound sleeping,” I explained softly.

“You’re right,” whispered Watson.

After a while I lifted off some cotton I had placed on Casandra’s neck for an absorption pad and looked at the stitches. The bleeding had stopped.

“Want to see some good stitching—some real classical surgery?” I asked in a low voice.

“Yes,” answered the negro.

“Then be very quiet and come here.”

The giant rose and moved silently to the opposite side of the table.

“Look,” I said, “there’s no more bleeding.”

The giant leaned close in order to see in the dim light and the butt of his big revolver, loose in its holster, was not six inches from my hand. Suddenly a wild idea took possession of me. What if I should fail? The thought was numbing.

“You have to look close in order to see,” I said as steadily as I could, though I felt sure my voice

must be trembling. I pointed with my left index finger to the wound to attract his full attention. The negro leaned a little closer and when he did I suddenly grasped the butt of his revolver and lifted it easily from its holster.

“What you doing?” Watson gasped, straightening up as if struck.

“Getting all set to drill you the first false move you make,” I said as firmly as I could.

“Why, hell, Doc, you and I is friends, if you only knew it,” he exclaimed, surprised. Watson had nerve.

“Sure we’re friends as long as you do exactly what I tell you,” I answered.

“But Doc . . . ” He protested.

“Keep quiet—absolutely quiet. That’s order number one.” He stopped talking.

Having the negro walk in front of me with his hands above his head, I took him to Sutton’s house which was just in back of mine.

“What’s up?” called the superintendent from his bed when I kicked at his door.

“I’ve got a present for you,” I answered.

When his flash light revealed the negro standing with his hands above his head and me covering him with the revolver he burst into a surprised laugh.

“Come in—do come in,” he invited. “But now that we’ve got the bastard, what are we going to do with him?”

“Why, Bill’s idea—get rid of him. With him out of the way and the other thief sick, there won’t be any trouble makers to lead our cane cutters away.”

“Pills!” He looked gravely at me. “Not having you chaperone the livestock is the mules’ disappointment!” He pulled on his clothes and hurried off to find Bill.

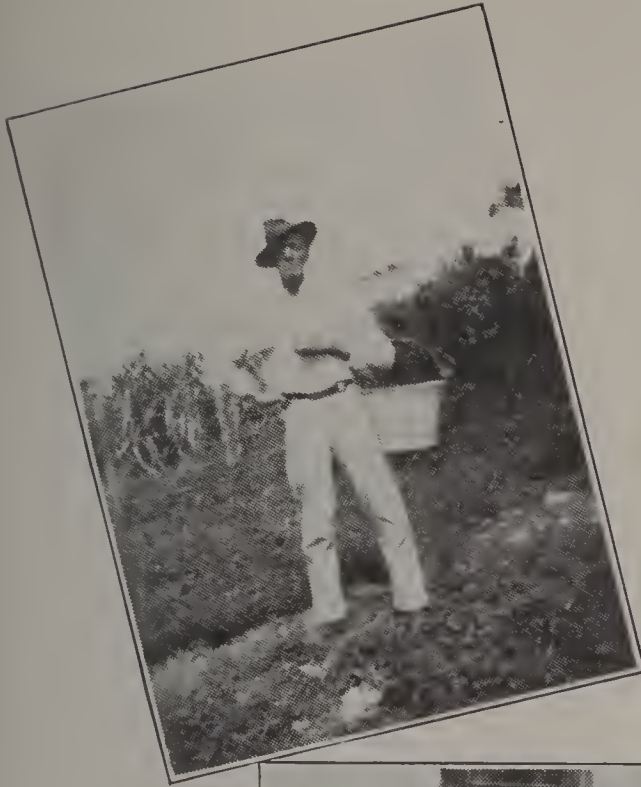
When the two of them returned we held a conference at which it was decided to send Watson down the river in a *cayuco* with two of our most trusted men to act as guards. When they got near the coast they were to release him and return his *machete*. It is impossible to penetrate the jungle without a *machete*.

It was just before dawn that the *cayuco* started from the river landing. Watson was seated amidship with his feet securely chained together. The chief engineer suggested that the chain might have a lot to do with keeping the *cayuco* from tipping over. One of the guards was armed with the giant’s big revolver.

“So long, Smoky—we’ll miss you, big boy—and how we’ll miss you!” called Sutton happily as the *cayuco* started into the current. “Lots of luck—I hope they hang a wreath on your door before Christmas.”

The negro turned the upper part of his body so that he was facing the shore. “You’re smart all right, but you got a lot to learn, and some of these days you’ll find out!” he rasped.

“Sure, raincloud—come back and open a school—bring a lot of friends with you—a lot of good friends—we’ll be expecting you,” the superintendent bantered.



*A Patient who was never sick,
but loved to talk*

A Small Patient Arrives

The Plantation School

The Plantation Belle

Santiago and His Friend

The *cayuco* moved away from the shore, a sinister shadow receding silently in the gloom.

“By God, you’ll learn!” came a snarl from the darkness. A mighty fist rose and shook threateningly. “You’ll learn, god damn you!” The tone was half a moan, half a desperate savage wail. The *cayuco* slid into the current and became part of the dark.

At daylight a few of the cane cutters came to visit Casandra, and finding him resting comfortably, stood about the factory clearing, talking in an aimless manner. As Bill had prophesied, there was very little trouble in straightening out the grievance which they had been led to imagine existed and by afternoon they were going happily about making preparations to start cutting cane in the morning. To celebrate the commencement of harvest we arranged to hold a big *fiesta* that night. Bill raised steam in several of the boilers and when darkness fell he started the electrical generating machine and turned on the electric lights. The place glowed like Broadway. Just before dawn the cane cutters left for the fields amid salvos of exploding skyrockets. They sang a gay song of their native highlands as they marched along the trail, strung out like a ragamuffin army. There was not a grumbler among them.

Shortly after daylight the launch arrived with my successor. Sutton, Bill and I formed a reception committee and escorted the doctor to his dispensary and residence. Casandra still reposed on the table as comfortable as we could make him. The doctor was amused when we explained his presence, and im-

mediately started going over my work to see if there was anything more that could be done for him.

“What are we going to do with this fellow when he gets well?” asked Sutton.

“Don’t worry—he’ll be good—he’s too intelligent not to,” ventured the chief engineer emphatically. Casandra stared unconcernedly at the ceiling.

He seemed to have lost lots of interest since his bodyguard had left. “If he starts anything again I’ll do some more promoting,” added Bill coyly.

“What?” gasped the superintendent so earnestly that the doctor looked up from his work.

“Sure,” he nodded, “I’m sorry he got cut up—I didn’t intend to have that happen. But when I told a few of the old men just what caused all the trouble they were mighty sore. They’ve worked hard to get the place started—we all have.”

“Well, Chief,” Sutton’s eyes sparkled, “you might not come from Berumda but you know your onions—you certainly know your onions,” he smiled enthusiastically, “you and Tex Rickard!”

CHAPTER X

FIESTA NIGHTS AND FLASHING MACHETES

AT TEN the foreman rushed a man to the dispensary who had been bitten by a *sordo*. The doctor hurriedly applied a tourniquet to keep as much of the venom from entering the blood stream as possible. He opened the man's hand at the point where he had been bitten and injected permanganate of potash solution into and about the wound. Then he had him lie down and gave him a big drink of rum. His hand was swollen and painful next day, but in two weeks he was able to return to work.

The cane cutters killed eight *sordos* the first day of harvest. Three of them were just under seven feet in length. I have only known one man to die from a *sordo* bite. He refused to be injected with permanganate solution. He lived for twenty-two hours after being bitten.

There is a small brown snake with bright yellow spots—so it was described to me—which the natives call the "Hand of Death." This is conceded to be the most dangerous reptile on the Isthmus. Fortunately, it is very uncommon. I have never seen one.

The foreman of a woods party, clearing land for cane planting, had one of his men bitten by one of these snakes. There was no permanganate of potash in their camp and it was too far to the plantation to get him there in time to be of any help. The fore-

man had a man apply a tourniquet while he opened the man's arm at the location of the bite and squeezed out all the blood and poison he could. Then he sucked the wound clean and had the man lie down and keep perfectly still. In about twenty minutes a little blood began to seep from the corner of his mouth. In about half an hour he developed a slight nosebleed. Shortly after blood began to gush from his nose and mouth. In about an hour blood began to seep from his ears and some of his pores. Half an hour later he died, a horrible sight, lying in a pool of his own blood. The venom of the "Hand of Death" stimulates the heart action to such an extent that the forced blood breaks through sound membranes and causes death from hemorrhage.

There are other serpents on Tehuantepec whose venom acts in the same manner, though none of them is nearly so dangerous. Among this classification is a snake locally known as "Bone Tail." I took care of a man bitten by a "Bone Tail." He did not reach the dispensary till fifteen minutes after he was bitten.

"I have just been bitten by a 'Bone Tail,' " he greeted calmly. "I know it was a 'Bone Tail,' *Señor*, because I killed the snake." He was entirely composed. The fact that he was facing a rather sudden death seemed not to worry him. His conscience must have been clear. I immediately applied a tourniquet, opened his foot at the location of the bite and injected permanganate solution. In the morning his foot was swollen and painful but his pulse was nor-

mal. In two weeks he was back at work none the worse for his experience.

At eleven the first train of loaded cane cars pulled into the mill yard amid salvos of exploding skyrockets. The train presented a fantastic appearance. The crew had decorated the cars and locomotive with long streamers of bright colored tissue paper which fluttered tantalizingly in the warm wind. The factory hands stood about and cheered. The locomotive driver tied his engine's whistle open. The fireman clanged the bell as if his very life depended on it. Some one pulled the whistle cord in the factory and the mill whistle screamed like a soul in torment. The din was deafening. There was much excitement. The crop was started. All afternoon trains kept arriving and by dark the yard was full. Promptly at eight Bill opened the throttle of the giant engine which supplied power for the factory machinery and the great rollers started turning over. A crew of men with a winch and long cable drew the loaded cars from the yard up to an automatic unloading device which rapidly emptied them and dumped the cane stalks out upon a mechanical conveyor. The conveyor drew the stalks up to the rolls in a steady stream where they passed between various sets of rollers which crushed out the sweet juice. The juice was pumped into tanks at the top of the mill from where it passed to evaporating vats by force of gravity, and on through various manufacturing processes to at last flow into storage bins clean, white, granulated sugar.

The hot spring wind roared out of the south. Tiny

black gnats swarmed. There was no more rain. The sun blistered. The land baked. The wind lifted the tin roof from a small warehouse and dropped it on some workmen. Two of them were killed. The rush of harvesting continued night and day. The cutters toiled in the heat and wind, cutting the cane stalks and trimming off the tops with one continuous motion of their *machetes*. The loaders gathered up the stalks in bundles and trotted to the waiting cars.

Sutton seemed perpetually at work. Dawn found him in the fields coaxing some of the cutters, cursing others, but hurrying all. The afternoons he spent in his office checking over endless details. In the evenings he wrote letters and totaled the various reports till far into the night. He never seemed to tire. Cassandra, who had accepted our hospitality while his wounds were healing, came to me one morning as I was leaving the dispensary for rounds.

"*Beunas dias, Señor,*" he smiled a little uncertainly. "My wounds are healed." As if to illustrate, he moved his head from side to side with quick jerky movements.

"I'm glad you're well again," I said as pleasantly as I could, for personally I felt no animosity toward him. My demeanor seemed to give him assurance for he moved closer.

"*Señor,*" he started apologetically, "I am sorry for the trouble I caused. I am not dishonest, but we of Mexico have different ways of doing things from you North Americans." He paused and looked at me expectantly.

"*Si*, I understand," I said.

"I like it here," he smiled wistfully. "Would you use your influence with the *Señor Superintendente* to help me secure a position with the plantation.?"

I was somewhat surprised, but the man's earnestness impressed me, so I agreed to take the matter up with Sutton and see what could be done.

"*Muchas gracias, Señor.* You have been very kind to me here," he bowed, in a manner which left no doubt as to his sincerity.

"What's the trouble—is the heat getting you, or are you just naturally going nuts?" muttered Sutton when I approached him on the subject as he gulped a hurried lunch.

"No, I really mean it. I think the man will work out all right if you will give him a chance."

"Give him hell!" grumbled the superintendent derisively.

"But Sutton . . ."

"Say!" he interrupted, "I wouldn't have that slimy skunk work here for anything. He makes me nervous. I'll be looking under the bed before I go to sleep if he sticks around much longer. Say good-bye to him. Tell him to go hunt up his smoky behemouth and start a revolution or something so he can rob a bank honorably. We work here, and what money we get we earn."

"O. K., Mr. Superintendent, I'll tell him," I answered.

That evening Sutton came to the dispensary where

I was helping the doctor finish up a hard day's work.

"Is the skunk here yet?" he asked.

"If you mean Casandra, yes," I answered. I had seen him during the afternoon.

"There's lots of skunks here—everytime I pass the Oaxaca village I wish I had a gas mask—but he is the *skunk*," he smiled.

"He's leaving in the morning. I delivered your ultimatum."

"You know, Pills," he cut in, "I was thinking the matter over this afternoon. You might be right. He might have turned honest." He looked at me questioningly. "Do you really think so?"

"Sure. He might see that it's better business to be square or possibly he may be telling the truth, in which case the whole trouble was caused by different ways of doing things," I answered.

"There's something in what you say, all right," said Sutton thoughtfully. "We can make good use of him as a labor agent and save the place money by getting him on a flat salary, if you think he'll not try to start a war or something."

"Of course we'll have to watch him and be very careful," I suggested.

"I had a talk with Bill this afternoon and Bill agrees with you. Bill says he'll give him a job in the factory, where he can keep his eye on him. Then if we find he's turned square, we'll offer him the other proposition. What do you say?" He looked at me questioningly.

"O. K. with me," I said.

“O. K. then; I’ll look him up and spread the glad tidings—but watch out for snags,” he warned.

So Casandra joined our working force.

“I’ll make good, all right,” he assured me, when next I saw him. And he did. Later we trusted him with many important details and I never heard a question as to his dependability. He proved a great diplomat and his council was always sought in straightening out any friction that came up among our laborers.

While we were harvesting there was constant dangers of cane fires. Day and night the fields were patrolled by fire guards composed of our most trusted men. Each carried a businesslike carbine in addition to the usual *machete*. They were much respected. In their presence smokers carefully covered the stubs of their cigarettes with earth. Due to their effectiveness we had no serious fires.

The last night of the harvest the workmen celebrated with another *fiesta*. In the morning the dead body of a man was found behind the sugarmill. There were two stab wounds in the body. The man had been murdered. The natives believe that each participant in a killing is equally guilty who inflicts a wound and can therefore be trusted to keep a secret. Therefore we felt sure that two people had committed the deed.

Next day one of the murderers was arrested in Santa Lucrecia. He readily confessed to his part in the crime and gave as his reason that the murdered man had paid too much attention to his woman. The

authorities put him in jail. Within a week some friends bribed the jailer to let him escape. It developed that this was the seventh murder he had taken part in. Homicide had become a habit. It was rumored that after his escape he went to Chiapas and joined a band of outlaws where he could indulge in his hobby to his heart's content.

I had been in the jungle fifteen months and a vacation was due, so bidding my friends good-bye, I started for the States and New York.

"Say hello for me, and tell them to have the police band start practicing. Next year I'll be coming north," said Sutton in parting.

"Why not now?" I inquired.

"Not this year," he shook his head. "Im going down and give Guatemala the once over. I believe in traveling and seeing things."

My launch left for Santa Lucrecia at daylight but it was not too early for the entire three members of the orchestra to join the group at the landing that had come to bid me good-bye. It was a gloomy leave-taking. The band played a doleful farewell as the boat started. I looked back at the well-known chimney thrusting its tall bulk out of the jungle tangle and the friends standing silently on the shore, and realized I had been very happy at the plantation.

At Vera Cruz I boarded the steamship *Mexico* for the voyage to New York. I thought at first that I should take the train north, but the hot dusty ride from Santa Lucrecia changed my mind. There's no dust at sea and there is a comfortable berth to stretch

out full length in and snooze any time day or night. And scudding puffs of soft white muslin, which are clouds. And fragrant breezes and wide inviting decks to walk upon. There's the sea itself, deep and blue and mysterious. Our ship called at Progreso, Yucatan, to pick up passengers and cargo. It was the ship physician's first trip into the tropics and he could not speak any Spanish so he invited me to accompany him to shore to act as interpreter while he examined the oncoming passengers.

"Let's get a drink before we start the grind," he invited, as we were passing up the street on the way to the steamship company's office.

"Thanks," I answered. It was a hot, humid morning and I didn't need much coaxing.

"You know," smiled the doctor as we leaned comfortably against the polished bar, "I like the freedom of this part of the world. Good booze—all you want of it—it's delicious, this freedom—lots of time to do anything you want in."

"It's nice, all right," I agreed honestly.

"It's fine—it's glorious—it's wonderful!" he gestured, growing more emphatic. "It's marvelous listening to the polished glasses clinking on this shining bar and the waves breaking on the outer bar." The bartender filled two more long glasses and set them down in front of us. "It's inspiring, god damn if it isn't!" he sighed. He certainly enjoyed freedom. After an hour of freedom I had a struggle to get him to leave and come to the office where a long line

of passengers was waiting impatiently for the official health examination.

“What’s the matter? Are you downhearted?” he protested, when I reminded him that it was long past the time the health examination was expected to start. It was a greater struggle to keep him awake and get through with the official business. Finally, the business finished, I had to hunt up the assistant purser, a bright youth with laughing Irish eyes, who helped load him on the tender when it came time to go off to the ship. As we struggled with our staggering burden past some gentle people of Yucatan, the purser crimsoned. His uniform represented more to him than a suit of working clothes. For the next two days the doctor remained locked in his stateroom. Fortunately no one was sick—not even sea sick.

I decided to spend part of my vacation taking the summer course in bacteriology at Columbia University. This was the only course of medical training which was open during the summer session. I had become interested in practical medicine and this afforded an opportunity to increase my information. Dr. McKinley, in charge of the course, was a most interesting and capable man who made every effort to help me secure the sort of information that would be of most benefit to me in the work I was interested in. It was at Dr. McKinley’s suggestion that I met Dr. Allen O. Whipple, of the Presbyterian Hospital. It is only necessary to meet Dr. Whipple to understand why the world of medicine has acknowledged him one of its leaders. He is a fine doctor—hundreds

of people know that—but he is a finer man. He arranged for me to spend part of every afternoon in the accident ward of the hospital and put me under the direct charge of Dr. Wilber and Dr. Sloan, two graduates of Harvard Medical School. These two gentlemen, by their patient and never failing kindness and interest taught me something of minor surgery. Their efforts, indirectly, helped to alleviate lots of human suffering.

CHAPTER XI

HORRORS! GUADALUPE! ANOTHER AZTEC IS BORN

“DON CARLOS!” implored a voice. The inky gloom which precedes dawn blotted out all sight of the person who called from my door.

“Don Carlos!” The tone was pitiful; the words a supplication. The beam of my flashlight revealed a wrinkled peon woman standing outside my screen. Tears coursed down her honest old face.

“Don Carlos!” There was tragedy in the way she spoke, tragedy and longing.

“*Si, Dona Maria,*” I answered. I knew her well.

“Hurry, Don Carlos—hurry, please—my Guadalupe is sick—*Ai, Señor,* she is very sick,” she pleaded appealingly.

I remembered Guadalupe. I had met her one noon as I rushed through the peon village on my way to a belated lunch.

“*Venga aqui,* please, Don Carlos,” Dona Maria had called from her doorway as I hastened past.

“What do you want?” I had grumbled. The day was particularly hot and I was tired and irritable.

“For a minute, please—only a minute,” she had smiled soothingly.

I had been on the point of telling her, as I was already late, that if her business was of not much importance I would rather call after lunch, when I checked myself. Somebody might be sick.

"Just a moment," she appealed. Her face was wreathed in smiles. Clearly no one could be ill.

"Well!" I paused. Her smile and natural graciousness had entirely banished my bad humor.

"I want you to meet my child—my Guadalupe," she had enlightened me. Her natural erectness seemed to be accentuated. She was proud of Guadalupe.

"Gosh!" I had thought to myself, my irritability returning at the apparently uncalled for delay.

She had turned and nodded to someone inside the hut. In response a girl had appeared. She was tall and slender and graceful. Her body was well proportioned and supple—she was strong with the pliant strength of a willow. Her jet black hair hung from her head in two long tidy braids. About her neck was a chain of gold pieces, evenly matched as to size. Her head was stooped. She was very shy. When I advanced she held out a firm brown hand.

"I'm glad to meet you," I had greeted. Her mother looked amused.

"Don Carlos is not a cannibal—he does not eat people," she had reproved. The girl obediently raised her head. She looked like a painting—a beautiful, flowerlike, painting from the pages of an elaborate history of early Mexico. Her picturesque native dress was scrupulously clean and fitted her well. In spite of her sinewy strength she was gentle. Her large black eyes were fathomless and fascinating and kind. She had smiled timorously as her self-assurance gained. She was beautiful. Now she was sick.

“Hurry, Don Carlos!”

I yawned. I didn't intend to dally, but yesterday I had returned from my vacation and it was hard to realize that I was once more back at work. I quickly drew on some clothing over my pajamas. There was no time to waste.

“Hurry, Don Carlos, hurry,” she repeated breathlessly, when I paused to gather up some medicines and a small kit of instruments. Dona Marie was worried and very excited.

The heavy mists of early morning hung over the land like a shroud as we trotted down the path that led to the peon quarters. As we neared her hut spots of light showed through its palm-thatched walls and the hum of conversation became audible. When we entered a few women stood aside respectfully—hopefully. They loved Guadalupe. In the center of the floor, the flickering light of a smoky oil torch revealed the figure of a young girl, lying nude upon a straw sleeping mat. In her countenance was reflected a sublimeness which makes of agony a holy thing. Guadalupe was about to become a mother. Her baby was already partially born. It was one of those cases which practitioners of obstetrics call inversion. In such cases special instruments are necessary and we had no obstetrical instruments on the plantation. My knowledge of such matters has never progressed beyond a practical idea of a few rudimentary details and I realized that my best efforts would be impotent. There was nothing I could do alone, so I sent for a native midwife. Together we struggled for

the best part of an hour without accomplishing anything. The girl's pulse was fluttering. She was sinking. Something had to be done quickly. The midwife rose to her feet. She was a tall woman with a firm chin and steady eyes. She looked worried and determined.

"Guadalupe's sick, Don Carlos," she murmured softly but her glance never faltered. She clasped her thin brown hands nervously in front of her. There was life in those hands—life or death. I understood my own inability.

"She certainly is," I agreed sincerely, with an effort at calmness.

"Something," she paused and her jaw set decidedly—"something must be done." Her brow wrinkled. "Something must be done," she repeated absently. She was thinking.

"Yes," I concurred, as cheerfully as I could though the blood in my veins seemed turned to lead. I felt hopeless.

"Keep her heart action up," she commanded. There was a new note in her voice. She looked more determined.

Obediently I administered a simple heart stimulant. There was nothing more I could do.

The midwife gathered the women present into a circle about the girl. With a concerted effort they threw her body into the air, catching it with a rough jerk just before it crashed to the floor. My eyes were blinded with visions and horror. An icy languor chilled my vitals and held me motionless. Something

about the situation recalled the legends of ancient Mexico, long, long before the coming of the *conquistadores*, when the prettiest girls were clothed in dainty garments of trailing feathers and led to the brink of sacred wells, there to leap willingly and unafraid to a death in the consecrated waters. There to die gladly in an effort to appease the displeasure of some god of their people. There to perish bravely for an ideal. Some half dozen times the women repeated this operation. Finally the infant's body was torn free from that of its mother. With a *machete* heated red hot, the midwife severed the umbilical cord.

The nauseating odor of burning human flesh filled the air. The fire daggers of sunrise stabbed through the bloodstained morning mists. Another Aztec was born. I led a slim youth who whimpered, from the shack. It proved a very hard matter to see the mother of his child suffer so. Not a groan, not a protest had escaped the girl but her big wondering eyes filled when they saw the tiny discolored body lying on the clean remnant of a wornout shirt. The new-born was dead.

"Guadalupe," I stuttered in a clumsy attempt to sympathize "Guadalupe . . ."

"*Ai*, Don Carlos, it was nothing," she interrupted weakly. "Nothing—the pain—if my beautiful boy had only lived!" She turned her head and regarded me with her great gentle eyes. They were full of sorrow and tears.

"Guadalupe," I started again in a further attempt

at comfort. "You were named for a Saint—a great Saint—and I know that from her place in Heaven, Saint Guadalupe is standing now with outstretched arms to welcome there the soul of your little son." The great kind eyes searched me. Consolation was futile. I felt as if I might have desecrated the Lord's Prayer.

"*Ai si*, Don Carlos, Saint Guadalupe was a great Saint. The Patron Saint of all Mexico," she sobbed brokenly.

For an hour we worked with our meager equipment to stop a hemorrhage. No gleaming hospital room; no white-clad thoughtful nurses; no array of polished instruments; no well-informed physicians. The rancid fumes of hardwood smoke and the dusty little hut. Some of the women washed the little body and when it was clean laid it on the bottom of an overturned cracker box. Dona Maria placed four candles about the improvised bier and wrapped the tiny corpse in a fresh white cloth. Guadalupe wept. Her heart was broken. Her first-born was dead.

"*Ai si*—Saint Guadalupe was a great Saint," she sobbed. The little hut seemed like a cathedral.

Outside a few skyrocketed sized heavenward to explode with loud bangs and proclaim to the universe that an unwonted event had transpired. Inside the women prepared food for the mourners who would soon begin arriving. The midwife came with a cup of steaming coffee to where I sat numbed by the experience. There were deep lines under her eyes. She looked tired. It had been an ordeal for her too.

"This will refresh you," she said, handing me the coffee. I thanked her and sipped the scalding brew. It *was* refreshing.

"To you Americans such a method of surgery undoubtedly seems harsh—even brutal," she ventured. I nodded in mute agreement. I felt too done to talk.

"It's an old method of procedure—*muy antiguo*," she explained. "It has been taught to the women of the Zapotecs for many, many years. There are other methods that are more humane—less painful—when there is plenty of time. This is for use only in extreme emergency—to save a life. It is hard—you might say cruel. It has failed to save the lives of many women, but it is better to attempt than to let a woman die—a good woman."

I agreed with a firm conviction that if I had been Guadalupe I should rather have died. Knowing what I faced, I should have begged to die. I wondered how many women of my own race could or would have endured such an ordeal—even with the prospect it afforded of saving their lives or of being the means of giving life to a child.

The slim youth came with some bottles of *aguardiente* and, picking up a home-made guitar, seated himself on the floor and started a melancholy crooning of some verses from the Bible. Mourners started to gather. I realized that I could be of no more service for the time being, so I gave Dona Maria the few coins I had in my pocket to help with the funeral and started for my house.

Late in the afternoon I went to see how Guadalupe was getting on. The hut was full of mourners who with the assistance of a plentiful supply of *aguardiente* had transformed the occasion into something akin to a celebration. How the suffering girl could possibly endure the drunken laughter and the ribald conversation I couldn't understand. The tiny body still rested on the cracker box, only now it was partly covered by indiscriminately placed flowers.

"*Si,*" muttered Guadalupe bravely, when I inquired if she felt any better. I think she tried to smile. The drawn lips quivered. The great gentle eyes were red—red with sorrow.

CHAPTER XII

SURGICAL OPERATIONS AND MYSTIC RITES

“WHAT’S sunk you, Pills? You look blue as a prize sapphire!” It was Sutton who spoke. I had just returned from a visit to Guadalupe and I felt entirely distraught.

“I’m glad she’s doing better,” he ventured kindly, when I explained. He had been back from his vacation for two weeks when I returned. He was waiting on the platform in Santa Lucrecia when I got off the train.

“Hello! How’s every little thing?” he greeted cheerfully. There was so much to talk about that he had come in from the plantation to meet me.

“Hot Dog! How that baby can hoof! How she can make her feet cut up,” he had exclaimed warmly, when I told him I had seen a play in which one of his favorite dancers was a star. “How she can hoof,” he had repeated meditatively. Broadway was far, far away.

“I suppose you had a great time in Guatemala?” I had asked.

“Not so hot—not so hot,” he had replied. “It’s a nice little burg, sort of quiet and historic and comfortable. But the women wear short sleeves and don’t shave under their arms. It ain’t got that big-city touch.”

Sutton stood before me and smiled. “It’s too bad,

Pills—just too bad—she’s a nice little kid and it’s hard to think of her suffering so.” His smile wavered and he looked earnest.

“Let me know if I can do anything to help,” he volunteered. He was earnest and thoughtful and always ready to help those under his charge in any constructive way. It was late in the afternoon so the two of us continued on our way to the *tienda* for a chat and highball before supper. As we passed my house a young woman who was waiting for me approached.

“My husband is very sick, *Señor*,” she informed me expectantly.

Sutton looked disgusted. He wanted to talk about Broadway.

“Being the Pills gets you a break that’s sure a fracture,” he complained as he continued toward the *tienda* for a lonesome highball.

Her husband *was* sick. He was very thin. His eyes were sunken and listless and his breathing labored. He was dying of chronic dysentery. Dysentery is common in the tropics. During my vacation I had studied something of the disease and had learned that in its various manifestations it is caused by microbes of the same general classification. Upon my return to Vera Cruz I spent some time going over different medicines with the secretary of a large drug store. I found a product of Germany which purported to destroy the microbes of dysentery and thereby, by eliminating the cause, cure the malady. I purchased enough of the medicine to give it a fair

test. With this medicine I treated my patient and in less than two weeks every symptom of the disease had been eradicated. The man developed a ravenous appetite. I had a struggle keeping him from making himself sick again from over-eating. His strength quickly returned and he went back to work.

I ordered a plentiful supply of the medicine. Dysentery was no longer a terror at the plantation. I had known something of the suffering our American soldiers underwent from this disease during the Spanish war. Had the malady been understood at that time and a proper method for combating it been developed, untold suffering and the lives of many brave men would have been saved for future usefulness. Then the resources of a great nation were only partially effective. Now—thirty years after—six weeks of well directed study and a modern medicine had entirely transformed a scourge. Such is the progress of science.

Within two days after my return the news had penetrated to the most remote hut. The mother of one of our plow-boys trudged in from her outlying shack to tell me that her son was sick.

“It’s fine to have you back, Don Carlos,” she welcomed, placing her arm affectionately around my shoulders. She was a most demonstrative old woman. “*Ai*, Don Carlos, my poor son is very sick,” she moaned. “For five days he hasn’t eaten, *pobre niño*.” She held up her hand and carefully counted on her fingers the number of days he had been unable to eat. “For five days no food,” she groaned. She was

very worried. "*Ai!* And for all that time he has suffered with a very sore throat and burned with a high fever. *Ai mi niño!* It is terrible—terrible!" She regarded me wistfully. The vision of a poor boy lying dead in a path flashed before me and I recalled the youth who had died of diphtheria. The thought was most discomfoting.

Together we hurried to her hut. Miguel, the plow boy, was very weak. He appeared to have a very bad cold. I made a very careful examination of his throat but found no sign of patches so concluded that he was suffering from some other ailment. Not knowing just what the matter was, I treated him for grip, intending to observe the results. The next morning he indicated a slight improvement so I felt I was pursuing the proper course. He continued to improve and when I visited him a few days later I found him propped up in bed with a Zapotecan medicine woman taking steps to prevent the return of his sickness. Though I had understood that the Zapotecs, like most primitive people, believe in the supernatural power of charms and mystic rites, this was the first time that I was actually to witness any of their cabalistic ceremonies. I knew the priestess. She had often been to me for medicine. She was unusually intelligent, and impressed me as being extremely sincere. She believed in the power of plants and medicines as well as the power of charms and mystic rites to heal and prevent disease. The hereditary customs of the Zapotecs constitute their principal beliefs and it is no harder to understand why faith in an

ancient custom should prove of benefit to them than it is to understand why the sound of a well-known hymn should be of comfort and cheer to us of North America.

"Enter, Señor," welcomed the priestess, when I appeared in the doorway. There was nothing in her manner to indicate that she considered my presence an intrusion.

"*Ai si*, Don Carlos! Come in," called Miguel.

"I would be very glad to come later," I suggested.

"No; come right in; your being here does not interfere," assured the priestess. She evidently accepted my arrival as a matter of course. She was holding two bottles of different colored liquids, one in either hand. Wetting her index finger from the contents of one bottle, she sketched a weird design on the youth's forehead and chest at the same time crooning a slow chant in the ancient Zapotecan tongue. This completed, she filled her mouth from the other bottle and sprayed his head, throat and chest. Alternately she repeated both procedures several times. This constituted the entire ceremony so far as I was ever able to learn. The sincerity of the participants was impressive. The boy believed that something was being done to help him. Undoubtedly he was helped. His recovery was rapid.

A middle-aged woman, the sister of one of our foremen, came to the dispensary, complaining of a severe pain in her ankle. I carefully examined the offending member and found no swelling and nothing to indicate the presence of any inflammation. Her

ankle functioned perfectly and she walked without pain or inconvenience.

“I can’t find anything wrong, Senora,” I reported after the examination. She was apparently very disappointed.

“*Ai*, Don Carlos, but if nothing is wrong why do I suffer so?” she asked, perplexed.

“You walk without inconvenience and you have no pain when I move your ankle,” I explained.

“You don’t understand,” she brightened. “It is at night, *Señor*, that I suffer—always at night—after I go to sleep.” She regarded me seriously.

Every morning she arrived punctiliously at daylight with a heart-rending description of the tortures she had endured during the night. I soon exhausted my small information in an ineffectual effort to bring her relief and became convinced that if there was anything the matter, nothing I could possibly do would help her.

“Why don’t you go to the doctor in Port of Mexico?” I suggested.

“I do not wish to go to the doctor in Port of Mexico,” she informed with emphasis.

“But Senora . . . ”

“I do not wish to go to the doctor in Port of Mexico,” she repeated, interrupting in a tone and manner that left no doubt.

“I’ve done everything I can,” I explained. She contemplated the ceiling thoughtfully.

“Everything?” she questioned, shifting her gaze to me.

"Everything." I answered.

"*Bueno.*" She chewed her thumb and meditated. She looked depressed.

"Isn't there some operation that might bring me relief?" she suggested.

Sunrise! The songs of the birds! Cold showers! The tantalizing aroma of freshly boiled coffee! That's what those words meant to me. I was desperate.

"Yes, *Senora*, there is indeed a most painful and intricate operation which might prove successful," I explained slowly, trying hard to reflect the gravity of the situation in my demeanor.

"*Ai!*" she sighed. There was relief in her tone—relief and actual delight. "Could you not perform it right away?" she asked—eagerly. The gory prospect didn't frighten her.

I spread out my few instruments on a fresh towel with as much dignity as I could assume and carefully scrubbed her ankle with some warm water that had been plentifully perfumed with a strong-smelling disinfectant. She was much impressed and noted every detail.

"*Ai, mi doctor,*" she sighed reverently—approvingly.

I painted a portion of the scrubbed surface with iodine and sprayed it liberally with ethyl chloride.

"Please turn your head away, this is painful, *Senora*—terribly painful and very gruesome," I directed.

Picking up a small scalpel I made a long scratch,

just deep enough to draw a little blood. I took care to drop several small wads of blood-covered cotton conveniently on the floor and affixed a large and important-looking bandage.

“It was not very painful, Don Carlos,” she beamed thankfully when I finished. Her face was wreathed in smiles.

“It is you, Senora—you—your bravery—by your quietness and pluck you made my work very easy and I certainly hope the operation is going to be successful.”

She smiled gratefully. She looked at the bandage and the blood-covered cotton dabs. She was very pleased. I had two men carry her home in a chair and allowed her very little food. That afternoon I went to see her. She was reclining in the midst of a group of interested, sympathetic friends, describing in detail the horrors of her operation.

“Oh, *Señora!*” I gasped, feigning a hurt surprise, “You—you receiving visitors the same day that you have undergone this serious operation? Please tell your friends to kindly leave and call again in a few days. You must not overtax your strength.” The solicitations of the visitors were very much increased. The lady beamed wanly as they left. The next morning I changed her bandage. She was radiant.

“*Ai mi*, Don Carlos,” she glowed, “I had no pain—absolutely no pain, *Señor*, during all the night.” She waved her hands grandly. “No pain during all the night! *Ai*, it is wonderful—wonderful, *doctor mio*, to sleep soundly throughout all the night once

again." She was most appreciative. In a few days I took her a pair of crutches that Bill had the carpenter make, and sent word to her friends that she was once more able to receive visitors. Her marvelous operation constituted the principal topic of local conversation. In a week I removed her last bandage. She treasured her long, red scratch. She was entirely cured and very grateful.

"You Americans are the greatest surgeons in all the world," she assured me warmly. I thanked her in the name of American surgeons. I have always contended that she needed that operation.

Soon we were to harvest another crop. Casandra was expected to arrive any day with our old friends, the Oaxacas, who were again to cut our cane for us. A graduate of a well-known American medical college was coming to take charge of our dispensary, and though I enjoyed taking care of the people there were so many other details to take my attention that I welcomed the relief from this part of my work. The doctor arrived the day before the cane cutters. I spent the best part of a week familiarizing him with his new duties. He did not relish the isolation and complained bitterly when I told him that our white employees were not permitted to live with native women.

"What the hell difference does it make?" he grumbled.

"Ask Sutton, he's the head man," I admonished, but he never went near the superintendent. Sutton had a reputation for directness. I learned that this

doctor had induced a native to pay him forty pesos—a small fortune for a laborer receiving less than two pesos a day—to purchase a special medicine that the plantation did not provide. Upon investigation the medicine proved to be nothing but a tube of sterile water, of which we had a large supply. He resigned shortly after, leaving us in the midst of the crop without any physician. The day before he was scheduled to leave he sent for me early in the morning with the request that I hurry to the dispensary. Late the night before a man had decided to repose on the railroad track after imbibing too much *aguardiente* for his own good. In the early morning a locomotive pushing in front a long train of empty cane cars to the fields, ran over him, completely severing one of his legs. Just as I arrived at the dispensary some friends were carrying him in on an old piece of corrugated iron roofing. The mangled remains of his severed leg rested beside him on the improvised stretcher. He was not a young man. Mercifully, he died while we were operating.

Sutton hailed me as I passed his office on my way from the dispensary to my quarters. “Hey! Can you come in a minute?” he called. When I entered I found him seated at his desk thoughtfully studying a telegram which had just come down from Santa Lucrecia. “We’re up against it for a doc,” he informed me seriously.

“What’s up?” I asked.

“The bird I figured on just wires that he won’t be able to come,” he answered.

"That makes it nice. You better . . ."

"Say!" he interrupted, "how about you taking the job?"

"Me?" I questioned, dismayed at the prospect.

"That's what I said." He looked as unyielding as a block of granite.

"Why, Sutton, I'm not a doctor," I answered.

"I know that. But we'll send the serious cases—the stuff that gets too much for you down to Port of Mexico." He paused and drummed softly on his desk with a pencil. "Well! What do you say? Will you take it?" he asked.

The thought awed me. I, an untrained amateur of meager experience, accepting full responsibility for the medical care of some two thousand people.

"Well?" questioned the superintendent.

"But Sutton . . ." I started.

"Will you take the job?" he interrupted. Sutton didn't like to be "butted".

"All right, I'll take it," I answered with a feeling of confusion for I understood its full significance.

"That settles that," he said complacently, crumpling up the telegram and dropping it into the wastebasket.

In the evening a delegation of plantation employees came to assure me of their satisfaction at my having taken the position. The superintendent went to Santa Lucrecia and returned with the required permission of the chief political official for me to practice medicine within the limits of his territory. This was required by law during the harvest. Bill

changed the dispensary into a hospital with a ward, a reception room and a treatment room and built six cots for the use of my more seriously sick patients. I engaged the daughter of our transportation foreman to act as secretary and keep a careful record of our work, and a very bright youth to act as nurse and assistant. By keeping the hospital always open for treatments I made it unnecessary for any of our workmen to lose time from their work to have a dressing changed or any minor service rendered. Our treatments soon averaged forty a day. One day we took care of seventy-five patients.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BUSH PREFERRED TO "TOO MANY LAWS AND TOO MUCH AMERICAN PROSPERITY"

"HELLO, Doc!" I looked up. There was a tall, gaunt man standing in the doorway.

"Hello, yourself!" I greeted. Without more of an invitation he opened the screen and entered.

"Whew! It's hot!" He seated himself, and taking off his battered straw *sombrero*, used it as a fan. His hair was thin and fast becoming grey.

"What I mean, it's god-damned hot!" he exclaimed, mopping a very moist forehead. His skin was so blackened by long exposure to the tropical sun that it was with difficulty he could be distinguished as an American of the north. The whites of his sunken eyes were yellow.

"It's sure hot," I agreed, truthfully. My clothing was soggy with perspiration.

"I'll say! It's unusual, even for this furnace." He produced two powerful-looking home-made cigars. "Have a drag," he offered. Rising, he came to where I sat and handed me one. "That's good stuff," he explained convincingly. "I know! I raised it down on my place." He fished a box of matches from his pocket and lit one. His scrawny hand shook. He was infected with malaria. "You'll like that tobacco. It's sun ripened and the cigar was made by an expert in a sanitary daylight factory." He smiled sardonically. Every month or so he turned up at the plantation to

procure a small package of quinine and a few bottles of *aguardiente*. The first time I saw him Sutton brought him into the dispensary.

“Meet Mr. Walters,” said Sutton.

“Walters will do, and I’m glad to know you,” he grinned, extending his hand. He had come to the plantation to purchase some medicine.

“Let him have anything we’ve got,” Sutton had directed.

“Thanks, Mr. Superintendent.” He seemed surprised at Sutton’s cordiality.

“That’s all right, Walters.” Sutton had smiled. “We’re neighbors and hail from the same country. Always glad to do anything we can for one of our own countrymen.” He lived a few miles down the river with a Tehuana woman and a brood of half-caste children. I had determined at the time that he was infected with malaria and had suggested that he take a course of fever injections.

“Not for me, Doc. No one fills me up with queer dope,” he had protested firmly. “What I want is a little quinine—just a few dimes worth of quinine.” So I had weighed out the amount of quinine he asked for.

I glanced across the room at my visitor. His home-made clothing was clean and the worn gymnasium pumps which covered his feet had been freshly scrubbed. He leaned back in his chair and puffed his strong cigar contentedly. Perceiving my attention, he indicated the cigar.

“How do you like it?” he questioned.

"It's good tobacco," I agreed truthfully. The cigar was good.

"What do you think of starting that course of fever injections today," I suggested. He looked dreadfully thin and his hands shook so pitifully.

"None of that strange dope for me," he protested again. "I'll be all right with a little quinine." He smiled reassuringly. His condition never seemed to impair the buoyance of his spirit.

"If you're so determined not to take the injections, why don't you go north for a time and get over the fever?" I advised.

"North?" He looked at me questioningly.

"Sure." I nodded.

"North?" he questioned again. His tone was derisive. Taking the cigar from between his teeth he laughed bitterly. "I suppose you mean back to the States?" He paused for me to agree. "I had a job and a high school education and a wife back in the town that I was born in. I got better than a fair salary. My wife and I had grown up together. I thought she was the finest girl in the world and no one knew her better than I did. She was beautiful and a good housekeeper. We were happy—very happy for a year or so after we were married. Then she began to develop social aspirations. She became very friendly with some of our nice people." He smirked, "Of course, they were nice people. They had money and lived in big houses." He raised his head and laughed mirthlessly. There was deep repugnance in the gesture. I made no comment. In a moment he continued. "The money I

earned ceased to satisfy her and she became ashamed of the job I held. She thought she was clever—plenty hot—sizzling—but she wasn't. She was just easy. The flattery and bootleg hooch of our prominent people. The leaders in our town's activities. The actuating, living examples of what Americans should be. My God!" He laughed insanely.

Intense disgust radiated from his every fiber. "She forgot every quiet decent thing she ever knew." He spit the words out viciously. "The little home we owned grew inadequate. Good name and honorable reputation became secondary. Material progress and social advancement became paramount. She was very American, and being entirely satisfied with making good in a modest sort of way isn't considered ambitious in the States. Life got to be a continuous jangle." He paused and his thin lips twisted into a dry malevolent grin. "Our home got to be a battleground, only we didn't take any rest between battles like soldiers do." Strange nervous lights showed in his eyes.

"Don't you think your wife's desire in cultivating the friendship of substantial people was really an effort to help you?" I ventured.

"Hell, no!" He sounded like the hissing of a snake. "I don't think that deep down underneath her rotten soul, where thoughts commence, that she ever considered anything but her own selfish desires, damn her. She was the spirit of the age in the States." His tone had risen till he was shrieking. "Damn her! Damn her putrid soul!"

"That's a pretty tough picture of the poor old

States. A mighty hard idea for an American to have," I interrupted. His expression darkened instantly.

"I'm an American—a native born American," he rasped harshly. "Both my parents were native born Americans. Everything about me is American, and what I say is true—true, god damn it, true. Believe me, I know it's true." He banged his knee with his thin fist. "This idea of money, power—more money and more power—no respect for law—no veneration for constituted authority—little consideration for the sanctity of homes—bootleg hooch—cocaine—United States—my country!" He held his head back and laughed insanely, "my country!" The words rattled emptily in his fever-parched throat, "my country—my own country!" He paused dramatically as if to give expression to his outraged feelings.

"Don't you think that because you've had an unhappy experience—evidently a most unhappy experience—that you're just a little bitter and biased?" I interjected in an effort to calm him.

For a moment he maintained a thoughtful silence. "Just a little biased?" I repeated. He gazed at the floor intently. "I'm an American myself and I know something about Americans and I'm willing to bet that ninety-five out of every hundred have mighty high ideals which they struggle to live up to," I kept on.

"I'm bitter all right—god damned bitter—maybe I'm biased. I'm an American, and damned proud of it—maybe I just got a rotten deal." He shifted his

glance to me. "But money stands for too much there—money and power."

"Money and power—material success in one form or another stand for just as much or more in most of the other countries of the world," I ventured. For a time he stared intently in front of him.

"Well?" he questioned. He was calmer.

"Yes," I answered.

"Finally my wife left our home and eloped with a lawyer." Clearly he felt that he must confide his troubles in some one. "He was so used to breaking the laws on the statute books, in a way that they could be broken with immunity to him, that I guess he figured a few laws of the Bible in addition didn't matter much. He was making lots of money persuading juries that gangsters and crooks were the results of a complex social system and that their acts were excusable. He was rich and a member of an honorable profession. My wife was progressing. I heard afterward that they got married. I guess they found it more convenient. I drifted from one place to another. One morning I woke up in Port of Mexico. I had very little money, no job and a splitting headache. The oil company wanted men for their field camps, so as soon as I got entirely sober I got a job and left for the jungle. It was lonesome way off in the woods. I wasn't used to it—the heat and the isolation. Most of the men had women. Finally I bought one. After a while she had a child. It was my first child; my wife had always been too busy. The oil company was going to reduce their force so I decided to give the

girl a hundred pesos, shake hands and start for the north, but that little boy. He was the cutest kid. Whenever I came near him he used to laugh and hold out his little arms, and he looked just like my baby pictures. His mother was a good woman. She had always been everything that a woman could do to me, but it was him—that little kid that made me realize how mighty contented I was.

“When my job closed with the oil company we moved up here on a little patch of land. My woman takes care of the chickens and pigs, does the washing and cooking and helps with the corn. When she wants a few *pesos*, she sells some bananas or a pig. One of her fellow townsmen tried to induce her to take her kids and leave. She chased him off the place with a *machete*. An exploring aeroplane from the oil company flew low over the place. The roar of its motor and its dark-flitting shadow terrified the woman and her kids. I guess the explorers didn’t see anything they wanted. They never came back, thank God. No,” he reflected, “I don’t want ever to go back to the States. There’s too many laws there—too damn many laws and too many crooks who are trained in the law to find some worn-out statute which can be twisted into an excuse for breaking the law if they are paid enough money. I’m happy here. If I ever get enough coin ahead I’m going to marry my woman . . .”

“It’s a good country,” I interrupted. I had finished weighing out the quinine he asked for.

“You said something, Doc—you certainly said

something," he agreed. "Not too many laws, nor too much prosperity. A man's a man here just because he happens to be born a man. You don't need to be nothing else."

"How much?" he inquired, producing a few coins as I handed him the quinine. He always had a little cash. As he walked down the path that led to the plantation his ill-fitting home-made clothes flapped grotesquely about his skinny figure.

CHAPTER XIV

“CARAMBA! WHAT A LAND FOR A CABALLERO” WAS MEXICO

“WELL, anyway, you prescribe the pills,” conciliated Bill.

“Yes,” droned Sutton in agreement, “you give the pills that cure the pains.”

“But I’m no doctor,” I protested.

“True—absolutely true. Neither does every sailor wear a sailor hat,” the superintendent ventured.

“To be a doctor . . .” I started.

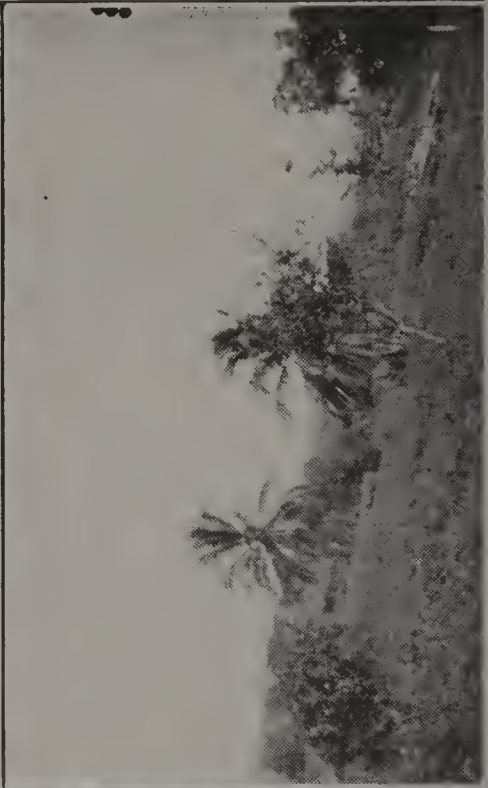
“To be a racehorse,” mimicked Sutton, interrupting, “you can’t be anything else — it’s impossible, but a mule will carry more.” He eyed me humorously. “You missed learning a lot about nature when you gave up being a livestock chaperon—you certainly did,” he smiled.

“I’m glad to meet you, doctor or no doctor,” interjected Don David heartily. Sutton and Bill had brought Don David and Don Gaspar to spend the evening.

“You’re going to have company this evening,” informed Sutton when I met him at supper. “Yes,” he nodded emphatically when I asked him to be more explicit. “The Chief and I are bringing the new cleaning contractor to call.” His lips twisted into a wry grin. “You might ask the locomotive drivers not to run over anyone. We want to pass a pleasant evening without interruptions. And have the store boy



*A Group of Patients
Tehuantepec Landscape*



*A Plantation Locomotive
Pay Day*



bring up plenty of beer, and have it cold, see! Cold—what I mean—cold. I'm sick of drinking warm beer."

Shortly before eight they arrived.

"*Ai mi, doctor,*" greeted Don Gaspar, clasping me in an affectionate *abrazo*, "I want you to meet *mi querido amigo*, Don David. A Mexican who was born in England!"

"I *guess* you're right," said Don David pleasantly, "my heart is Mexican all right." Don David, our new contractor, had come from England with his father when he was just a little boy. Before the revolution he had been rich. He had married the daughter of a proud old family, a member of the cultured aristocracy which flourished during the regime of Porfirio Diaz. The natives were very fond of him and happy to be connected with any of his enterprises.

Don Gaspar was a small man whose handkerchief always had wide lace borders and a pronounced odor of synthetic perfume. He had merry, flashing eyes and a bristling mustache and an air. His family were land owners but the revolution had so impoverished them that the dictates of necessity had forced him to seek employment with us. He had never bothered with things commercial before and, finding just the place for one of his experience in our small organization, had been something of a problem. We called him the "man of a hundred virgins," which pleased him very much.

"*Si, Señor,* my friend is a Mexican who through the dictates of fate was born in England," he in-

sisted when Don David hesitated. His merry eyes flashed. Don Gaspar was serious.

“Aw—you overdo it—he’s just a Limey gone wrong,” joked Sutton.

“No, *Señor*, he’s Mexican.” Gaspar truly believed his definition was correct.

“Before the revolution life and property were as safe here as any place in the world.” Don David was reflective. “Robbers were shot at the scene of their crime. Criminals were unpopular and crime unsafe. Every possible impetus to the progress of the rich was afforded by the government, but the peons and Indians, by far the majority of the population, were entirely overlooked in the scheme of things, except so far as to provide laborers for the rich. They were drafted together by the petty political chiefs and sold into virtual slavery. Soldiers with fixed bayonets and loaded rifles drove them to their unwilling tasks. Those that protested were shot. I have seen men rotting with scurvy, and so weak they could hardly stand forced to labor till they fell. I have helped to bury a few who could not endure the agony. Then when the iron grip of Don Porfirio was relaxed by age, came the revolution. All the pent-up fury of years of cruel subjugation, of slaughter and abuse. All the intuitive savagery and lust of a primitive people gone suddenly mad with an unaccustomed freedom were loosed over night. Leaders rose. Before a month they were ousted—or dead. There was no law. No life was safe. Property had no value.”

“I should think it would have been a good time to leave,” interrupted Bill.

“I did think of going to some other country, but it seemed like quitting. Everything I owned I had made here. My wife and children had been born here. It was my country, and one of English blood does not relish leaving what he loves simply because things look black.” Don David’s eyes softened. “It was my country,” he reflected.

“It must have been a pretty tough time,” persisted Bill.

“It was, particularly if you were foreign born. All people of foreign birth lived in constant terror of their lives. I was shot at several times. Fortunately I was never hit. A bullet passed through my pillow one night while I was sleeping. It was war—cruel civil war among blood-hungry primitive people. It was hell. I was captured and held prisoner five days by bandits while they ransacked my home and robbed me of the last visible evidence of a considerable fortune—ten thousand *pesos* in gold which I had hidden there to send my wife and children out of the country to safety. I had to appeal to a friend for funds to get them to the City of Mexico where they sought shelter in the home of relatives. For months I never went near my house after dark. I hid around in the snake-infested brush like a hunted animal. The worst of it was there seemed no solution. No force seemed strong enough to restore peace and re-establish the government. Many hoped that the United States

would intervene and guarantee the protection of life and property.

“Then the World War started and I went into the British secret service and off to Central America on a successful hunt for one of the wireless stations which were furnishing military information to the German ships in the Pacific. When I returned there was nothing left. My dead father’s work and mine had been swept away—entirely swept away. But a leader had risen—a great leader—strong enough to once more make law visible and re-establish government. In the new order of things the Indians and peons were not forgotten and educational institutions were being established to teach them something of their own responsibilities.” Don David paused.

“Do you think they will ever be able to establish and maintain peacefully a permanent government?” I inquired.

“Why not? Before the coming of the Spanish they had developed a very efficient government. It’s only natural to suppose that they can do the same thing again,” he answered.

“But the constant internal strife?” I questioned.

“Since the coming of the Spaniards the people of Mexico have had a continuous struggle against oppression in one form or another. This has been the reason for the constant strife. If they had not rebelled against cruelty and oppression they would have been hopeless. This constant turmoil proved their mettle. The masses of the people will be benefited by the new order of things and there will be no more

successful revolutions. They will not support any effort to disrupt what is helping them. As soon as they fully understand, there will be no more dissension—no more serious quarrels. It took organization and high development to construct those visible evidences of an ancient civilization which cover the country, and organization meant government. Some day Mexico will be very prosperous, because the foundation for great prosperity is here.”

“My country is a rich land—a very rich land,” concurred Don Gaspar warmly, pleased. “But will it—*mi distinguido amigo*—will it succeed as well with the peons having so much to say about the management of things they don’t understand as it did when they had nothing?”

“I think so,” smiled Don David.

“It was a wonderful place to live, in those glorious old days,” Don Gaspar reflected wistfully. “A wonderful place,” he repeated.

“It was a wonderful place for the rich all right,” agreed Don David. “It’s going to be a wonderful place for the rich and poor, for Mexico is coming into its own,” he mused.

“*Ai*, those old days—those wonderful old days,” sighed Don Gaspar. “*Caramba*, what a land for a *caballero* was my country! Mexico was truly a gentleman’s land in those glorious old days.” His voice broke. He looked as if he might be moved to tears by the memory. “When as a young *caballero* I lived on my own *hacienda*,” his tone was half a moan, “I always invited the young peon girls who were going

to be married to visit my house. They were beautiful girls, some of them. I made them gifts and apportioned patches of land for their prospective husbands to cultivate, and built them houses. *Ai*, they loved me, those simple children!" His eyes roved yearningly. "*Caramba!* Life was truly worth living."

"Don't you think that you as well as the peons would have been better off and happier if the peons had been helped to have more self-respect?" I asked.

"They respected themselves," he replied. "You Americans don't understand. You are a great people but you lack that finer sensibility. To you life means nothing but work and rest. The peons are primitive."

"But certainly under present conditions that grant the peons more voice in their own government the foundation is laid for a more prosperous and progressive country," I suggested.

"Progress! Progress! That's all you Americans think of. That's what you measure everything by—progress—material progress!" He gestured disdainfully. "Progress! Nothing else counts with you but progress—progress and money. You absolutely lack the finer perception. You spend your days in drudgery. For what?" He waved his hands appealingly. "For what?" he demanded again. "Progress and money!" He turned his hands palms outward and looked at me intently. "*Ai*, Don Carlos, you Americans are a great people but you lack that finer perception. You marry, but you have no respect for your wives. How could you? You don't understand women. You work all day and return to your homes in the

evening tired out. Your wives do not work so hard. You quarrel. There is no happiness. Soon you are divorced."

"But in Mexico the lower classes have always worked hard," I interrupted.

"The lower classes are not fine people," he answered.

"To us Mexicans of the upper class," he continued, "life means more than a bank account. We don't work so hard. We have our women and learn to understand them. After we marry we keep our mistresses, purely out of respect for our wives. We have few divorces and much happiness."

"But the children of your mistresses?" I questioned.

"They are acts of God, Don Carlos—purely acts of God."

Don Gaspar was a gentleman of the old school—the very old school!

CHAPTER XV

SKYROCKETS, TEQUILA AND MOURNFUL MUSIC AND A BIG TOE IS BURIED

“IT IS when I work that I suffer, *Señor!*” Aurelio looked at me appealingly. “Only when I work.” His loose lips parted expectantly, “*Ai, Señor,* when I labor in the sun.” He rolled his eyes sadly, very sadly, as if the recollection caused him pain. “I suffer tortures,” he sighed.

I looked at the tall, lean field-hand. His skin was clear and his eyes sparkled with vibrant health. He had come to the hospital three days before complaining of numerous indefinite ills. Since his arrival I had made repeated attempts to find something tangible the matter with him and had just reached the conclusion that he was absolutely well.

“If I could only live here and be taken care of,” he suggested hopefully when I hesitated. He evidently liked the hospital. There was plenty of food and no work.

“But the hospital is for sick men—only for sick men, and you are perfectly well,” I explained.

“*Si, Señor,* for sick men,” he agreed with a troubled look. “But though I am well now, I will get sick as soon as I leave.” After three days of delightful leisure the prospect of toiling again in the scorching fields was not inviting. Aurelio enjoyed leisure.

"No," I nodded, "you're not sick." His loose lips closed firmly. He looked determined.

"I am sick and I need to live in the hospital!" he snapped stubbornly.

"No, Aurelio, you're not sick," I repeated.

"I am sick," he insisted doggedly. A slight tinge of color showed under his brown. Like most bluffers he resented being found out.

"Well," I said, "at least I can't find anything the matter with you, so we'll have to send you to the doctor in Port of Mexico for his opinion."

"But I don't want to go to the doctor in Port of Mexico! I'm sick and I want to stay here in the hospital."

"Sick! Sick!" smirked a voice from the doorway, interrupting. "You sick, Aurelio? You're not sick! You're just lazy—worthless!" The tone was reproving. "To give you medicine is like clothing a pig in silk—just wasting good material."

I glanced up hurriedly. There was a serious-looking man with greying hair standing in the doorway. I had been so absorbed in talking that I had not noticed his entrance. Aurelio's eyes roved around nervously, as if seeking a way of escape.

"You are lazy, Aurelio—lazy and worthless. I know you too well. And you try to play sick so that you won't have to work." The man in the doorway glanced uncompromisingly at the now crestfallen field-hand.

"I am sick," persisted Aurelio with a sheepish look at me.

“Poof!” The man in the doorway shrugged his shoulders significantly. “Go back to work, Aurelio—be honest enough to go back to work, or quit, and give Don Carlos time to attend the sick.” His manner was not unkind.

“But when I work in the sun . . .” Aurelio began.

“Be honest, *muchacho*,” interrupted the man in the doorway reprovingly. He gazed steadily at the field-hand.

“*Bueno!*” Aurelio moved his hands in a sullen gesture and started for the door. The newcomer moved aside to let him pass. “*Bueno!*” Aurelio had no wish to argue. The newcomer was evidently a man of authority.

“I am Señor Don Ignacio Urritia, foreman of the fuel camp,” smiled the newcomer, introducing himself when the field-hand had gone. I smiled too. He had saved an uncomfortable situation. “I came to ask that you go to my camp at once. One of my men—one of my best men cut his foot with an axe two days ago and though we have done our best to help him our efforts have been futile and he is no better.”

From Don Ignacio’s description, I concluded that the injury was serious so I asked that the man be brought to the hospital because I could do so much more to help him with the better facilities at hand.

Early in the afternoon a few men arrived, bearing my patient in an old hammock which was slung on a long pole. The man groaned piteously. He was suffering intense pain. Behind the litter trudged an old

woman with a large bundle balanced on top of her head and a young woman carrying a baby—the injured man's mother and wife.

"It's a bad cut—a very bad cut," explained Don Ignacio, solemnly. The man's axe had slipped while he was hewing a hardwood log and half severed a great toe, shattering the bone just back of the middle joint. The extremity of the toe was cold and lifeless. Circulation had been destroyed. The wound was putrifying. The stench of rotting flesh was nauseating. There was great danger of infection or worse—gangrene. It required no expert to understand that an immediate amputation was necessary. I had never seen an amputation performed and my knowledge of the proper procedure was limited to a brief study in an ancient volume on surgery. The realization, under the circumstances, that such an operation was imperative and that I would have to perform it was not very comforting. An eerie vision of a poor man maimed and lamed for life through the bungling of an amateur haunted me.

"Yes, Don Ignacio, it's a bad cut," I agreed, after concluding my examination. I felt like a lightweight bookkeeper about to enter a boxing ring to do battle with the heavyweight champion. You have to know your stuff to do an amputation.

"It's a bad cut," I stammered with an effort to be calm.

"*Si*," agreed the foreman. His composure was encouraging.

"There is only one thing to do and that is to cut the toe off—entirely off," I explained.

"Entirely off?" He was very serious.

"Entirely off," I assured him. "For if . . ."

"Don Carlos!" the elder woman gasped. Her eyes were large and dark and gentle and in them lurked a note of terror. "Don Carlos!" A tear coursed wearily down her wrinkled old cheek. "Is there not some other way?" she asked brokenly. Mothers the world over are like that. The younger woman was mute. She did not wish her man to suffer.

"No, *Señora*," I nodded my head in the negative. "If the toe is not amputated at once the infection may spread and then it might become necessary for him to lose his foot—his whole foot—in order to save his life."

She sobered and became grave. "Will it make him lame?" she asked.

"Not if the operation is successful," I assured her.

"I think it's best, then," she agreed with an evident effort. Her mouth trembled. The younger woman stood silently by accepting the pronouncement as her own.

"Cut it off—anything—but get me out of this agony!" pleaded the wounded man when I explained the necessary procedure to him.

I thoroughly sterilized my few instruments and prepared the field of operation by cleaning it with a luke-warm antiseptic solution of moderate strength, and then painting it with a weak solution of iodine.

Then I prepared and applied a tourniquet to the base of the toe to control the bleeding.

Next I injected four full ampules of novocain. I wanted to prevent all the suffering I could. The apprehension at having an amputation performed by a rank amateur I could do nothing to allay. When the novocain had been allowed sufficient time to deaden the pain I made an encircling incision in the living flesh down to the bone, tying off the blood vessels with catgut as I came to them. I was careful to make the incision in the live flesh so that all the mortifying tissue would be removed. In this way I kept ahead of the gangrene. I did not have to cut the bone in two. This had been done for me by the man himself with his axe.

When the incision was complete I smoothed the shattered bone level with the flesh with a pair of bone clippers. Poor surgery and very amateurish. When I had finished I dressed the stump with a mild palliative and astringent ointment, held in place with cotton and a firm bandage. During the operation my patient had been absolutely quiet.

“How do you feel, old boy?” I asked as soon as I was through.

“All right,” he answered huskily. “It doesn’t hurt now but please hurry and get it over with. I’ve been through hell, Don Carlos—hell!”

“It’s all done. The operation’s finished,” I assured him, very glad that the novocain had proved effective.

“Finished?” he questioned. “Finished?” There was relief and delight in his tone.

“*Si*, my Juan,” smiled his mother soothingly. Her composure had once more returned. His wife stood mutely by. She was evidently his silent partner.

“Glory be,” he sighed, relieved. “It was terrible, Don Carlos, terrible—the pain.”

I made him as comfortable as possible and arranged to have his best friend act as a special nurse. I was standing by his bedside superintending the arrangements for his comfort when his mother laid her hand questioningly on my arm.

“*Si, Señora*,” I acknowledged.

“I wonder where it is?” she questioned timorously. “Where what is? *Señora*?” Her question mystified me.

“The toe, Don Carlos, the toe. I have looked all over, and I can’t find it. I can’t find it anywhere.” There was pain in the way she spoke—pain and a certain sort of terror. She waved her hands in a gesture which included all the hospital.

“The toe?” I asked, aghast.

“*Si*,” she answered gravely. Certainly I failed to understand the importance of a severed member.

“Why, *Señora*, the toe has been thrown away by the steward,” I informed her.

“Oh, that is bad—very bad, Don Carlos!” She moaned. She was very agitated. “That is bad—bad to throw away without burial a part severed from a human body.” She bit the end of her thumb in agitation.

“Bad—Bad!” she meditated. “It is worse than bad, it is atrocious—frightful.”

She fixed me with a determined glance. “We must find it,” she concluded.

“But, *Señora*, it will be destroyed in the incinerator with the rest of our cleanings,” I explained as gently as I could.

“Destroyed! Destroyed!” The thought horrified her. “Oh, no,” she protested, “that must never be. We must find it and bury it as becomes a part which is severed from the body of a believer in Christ—a true Christian, Don Carlos.”

“I’m sorry—very sorry, *Señora*, but I didn’t understand,” I explained honestly, impressed by her earnestness.

“I know you didn’t,” she smiled. I felt very gratified that my explanation was accepted, as from her demeanor I concluded that in my ignorance I had violated a cherished custom.

With the steward’s help I rummaged through the cleanings until I found the gruesome thing. I carefully wrapped it up in clean tissue paper and presented it to the old woman.

“*Muchas gracias!*” she murmured fervently. From her sincerity I concluded that she believed she had been spared a disgrace. In the morning the toe was carefully placed in an empty cigar box, covered with flowers, and given a formal funeral with skyrocket and *tequila* and mournful music. I learned that this is an old custom among the Zapotecs.

After I had made my patient as comfortable as possible, I got him to sleep with the assistance of aspirin. This was the only sedative I had. The latter part of the night he suffered a great deal and aspirin had no effect. Shortly after daylight I changed his dressing. The wound looked to be in good condition. He had less pain after this and ate a piece of buttered toast and drank a little warm milk. He showed very little temperature and his general condition seemed good.

After a week he was suffering very little and sleeping well. Within two weeks he was sitting up for an hour every afternoon in a rocking chair I brought from my house, with his foot resting comfortably on a pillow. Though he could not read or write he was very interested in the illustrations in some old magazines. A picture of a huge American battleship impressed him most. His eyes grew wide as he examined it. He carefully cut it out and secreted it beneath his pillow. I think this gave the United States a better standing with him.

In five weeks he was hobbling about on crutches and his wound was almost entirely closed. I sent him home to finish his convalescence with his family. When next I saw him some two months after the operation he was walking without any artificial assistance and not limping to any perceptible degree. Life has many compensations.

CHAPTER XVI

A NEGRO OF "TALENTS" RUINED BY SAVAGE LOVE

DURING Don Ignacio's absence at the fuel camp where he had gone to bring the injured woodcutter to the hospital, Ring hobbled in, using a pole to help him. One of his ankles was swollen and slightly sprained.

"Lord, let your mercy rest upon me," he moaned, twisting his face into a horrible grimace. He made one gulp of the large drink of *aguardiente* I gave him for a bracer.

"Oh, what a misery—what a misery!" he groaned. Apparently he was suffering the extreme of agony. "Do you think it will ever get well?" he asked anxiously. I carefully examined his injury and assured him that I thought he would be perfectly all right within a few days and put on a white supporting bandage which appeared in startling contrast to his flat black foot.

"This is better—much better, doctor," he sighed with satisfaction, settling himself comfortably in the cot which the steward had just prepared. My assistant appeared with a large basin of water and a fresh suit of pajamas so I left Ring in his care while I went to make preparations to receive the woodcutter. As I passed Ring's cot after having completed the amputation he hailed me.

“Did you cut that fellow’s toe clean off?” he inquired in an awed sort of way.

“Yes,” I answered, qualifying my reply by explaining that most of the amputation had been done by the man himself with his untrustworthy axe.

“E-m-m-m-m-h! Poor heathen! P-o-o-r *heath-en!* E-m-m-m-m-h!”

“Did it hurt him?” His wide eyes stared wonderingly.

“It must have. Such an operation couldn’t help but hurt, but he was very brave,” I answered.

“E-m-m-m-m-h! Poor heathen! Poor, ungodly heathen!” he exclaimed. He placed the end of a fat, black home-made cigar in his mouth, the fumes of which revived memories of a horseshoeing shop, and drew a long, luxurious, ruminative puff. “Poor ungodly heathen!” he exclaimed once more. Then, as if to banish an unsavory memory, he withdrew the cigar and flicked the ashes daintily on the floor.

“You know, doctor,” he ventured, “this is the coolest spot on the plantation. I ain’t never sweat in here yet.”

“I’m glad you’re comfortable,” I agreed honestly.

“It’s cool and comfortable here, doctor—certainly cool and comfortable,” he choraled. “But these horrors—these continual horrors—sick men, suffering men! Having to witness these things corrodes my nerves—actually corrodes my nerves!”

“That’s part of a hospital,” I explained.

“Yes,” he agreed sadly, “it’s part of a hospital—it’s part of the justice of God. The Lord works in

wondrous ways to punish his erring children. It's the justice of God, I realize, but it's hard to see fellow human beings suffer so."

Ring had arrived the first week of the crop, bearing his worldly possessions wrapped up in an old shirt. Upon his arrival he went directly to the engineer.

"Say, Boss, can you use a first-class man—a man of parts and education?" he had inquired. As if to illustrate, he rummaged within the old shirt and produced a frayed Bible, carefully covered with newspapers. He was not a young man. His kinky hair was streaked with grey. He was too old to fire the boilers and as he knew nothing of mechanics Bill gave him a job sweeping out about the cane conveyor.

"Ain't you got something more in keeping with my talents?" he protested, when Bill showed him his work. Ring didn't like his job.

"What the hell do you want, the presidency of the company or something?" Bill replied gruffly.

"Oh, no, Mr. Engineer. Please don't become offended. I just thought there might be something more in keeping with my talents. You see, I'm not a common man," he confided.

"No?" Bill was apologetic. "My mistake. It's my poor eyes and rotten lack of understanding. To me you look like a damn common man—and so, if you want to work, start in. Possibly if you prove you know anything, I might recommend you for a better job if an opening comes up."

Ring had regretfully picked up a broom and

joined our organization. Bill tried for a week to coax his new hand to work consistently.

One afternoon, while making his rounds, he found piles of trash and cane stalks blocking the work of his conveyor crew.

“Where is the man who should keep this clean?” he snapped at the chief loader.

The chief loader shook his head. “*Quien sabe, Señor,*” he replied. Bill was thoroughly disgusted. He was on his way to the shop to assign another laborer to his cleaning job when he chanced to discover a wide, black foot protruding from beneath a wrecked cane car. There was something familiar about the foot which induced him to give it a vigorous prod. In response, Ring crawled from beneath the car, blinking in the strong sunlight.

“What’s the matter, have you quit or just gone on a picnic?” Bill demanded roughly.

“Before God, Mr. Engineer, I had such misery in my stomach that by rights I shouldn’t have come to work!” he wailed.

“Your suffering didn’t seem to interfere with your sleeping. This ain’t a Pullman; it’s a cane car and you’re supposed to be at work.”

“But, Mr. Engineer, I got such a misery!” He looked at Bill appealingly.

“All right, go over to the hospital and get fixed up and when you fully recover they might be able to use you in the fields,” Bill directed.

“Oh, sir, how inhuman!” Ring moaned. He did not fancy the blistering fields. Our field-hands

worked by contract and got paid for only what they produced. But Bill was disgusted—and adamant.

“Go over to the hospital and get fixed up and then see the field foreman,” he ordered, and in compliance Ring had come to me. From the first he had liked the hospital.

“You take good care of these men, Doctor,” he commented pointedly, glancing through the open door of the ward. The place looked clean and comfortable and the strong odor of iodoform and disinfectant didn’t seem to constitute a disagreeable feature. After having given him some simple remedy for indigestion I had returned him to work with the feeling that it would not be long till I should see him again. I was not surprised, therefore, when he limped in with a swollen ankle which I have always believed he deliberately caused. I started for the treatment room. Ring stretched luxuriously. “This is certainly the coolest spot on the plantation,” he yawned.

“It’s necessary to keep a hospital as pleasant as possible,” I answered, pausing.

“Do you mind if I have my belongings brought here?” he asked, and when I consented he explained his request by commenting, “I don’t like to leave my property in the hovel I dwell in. You never can trust these heathen.”

A few mornings later when I changed his dressing for the day I noticed that the swelling which affected his ankle had entirely subsided.

“You’re all right again, Ring—all ready for work

once more. Tomorrow report to your foreman," I directed. Though he had given no indication of suffering while I was freely moving his ankle and applying his fresh dressing, at my pronouncement he twisted his face into a horrible grimace and commenced moaning.

"Oh, Doctor," he protested, "I can't step—I can't bear my weight and here you are driving me, a sick and incapacitated creature, out into the scorching heat to toil!"

"If you were sick, Ring, I'd be glad to let you stay here. But there's not a thing the matter with you—not a single excuse to keep you here," I answered.

"How can you be so cruel as to say I'm not sick—a helpless, destitute man?" he moaned. "A kind North American gentleman like you!"

"This is a hospital—a place for sick men, only for sick men—and you are not sick," I explained.

In the middle of the afternoon I was very busy. The steward hurried from the ward to ask that I come there at once. One of the patients was suffering great pain. It was Ring.

"Oh, Lord, ease this unworthy sinner's misery!" he moaned as I was trying to discover something which might have caused him pain.

"Please, doctor, could I have just one drink of *aguardiente* to brace me in this hour of suffering?" he implored between moans. I gave him a full half tumbler over which he smacked his lips in satisfaction.

There was nothing—absolutely nothing the matter with him. The liquid fire evidently consoled him somewhat, for he grew calmer and while I was replacing his bandage he asked, “What ever brought a Christian gentleman like you down to this heathen land?” My attention was taken up with what I was doing and I did not answer, but my lack of politeness made no difference in his desire for conversation.

“I don’t know what ever possessed me to come here,” he continued. “I came to Puerto Barrios in Guatemala from Jamaica years ago. Jamaica has too many people. I prospered in Guatemala. I owned my own business there. That is,” with a sly look, “I just the same as owned it. A fine lady, a native of France, who operated a luxurious hotel became attached to me.” He paused reflectively. “She was a fine lady, Doctor, a beautiful lady. She always wore lovely clothes—gay and attractive—which fitted her perfectly and revealed most delightfully those charming bulges and curves which are part of a beautiful lady. It was an elegant place,” he ruminated. “We had excellent music and dancing there every night. Our patrons were among the elite of the city—real gentlemen. I was very popular. I did the directing and we employed natives to do the rough work. I was extremely happy.

“Then it became necessary for my lady to make a trip to France to bring two friends of hers to serve the tables. We found it impossible to train the uncouth natives in any of the more skilled tasks. During her absence I was placed in full charge of the

business. She was away a long time—three or four months I should say, and before her return I became very lonesome,” he sighed.

“There was a woman of the town—an evil native creature—who, understanding how lonesome I was, took advantage of my condition and made love to me—violent love, Doctor—violent love, of which only a savage is capable. Ah, such a savage!” He gasped at the memory of the violent love. “She just wasn’t human—she just wasn’t human, that savage!” He gasped again. “She—that heathen—that wicked woman, preyed upon my condition until she induced me to live at her house.”

“Lord!” He brushed his eyes with his hand as if to banish the vision. “My lady returned with two beautiful girls. It was a great pleasure to see her again and she was extremely glad to meet me—the French are so very emotional. She unfortunately learned that I had been living at the house of the wicked woman and she became very angry. Sudden, violent anger—that’s an unlovely trait of the Gallic character,” he mused. “I pleaded with her but she was most unreasonable and refused to employ me longer.”

“After I stopped making money, the wicked woman cast me aside. The vile creature actually laughed in my face. I was forced upon the streets, there to roam like a beast. I didn’t even have proper food. In desperation I left Guatemala and came to Port of Mexico, earning my passage on a filthy little coasting schooner by stowing cargo with a lot of half-

naked heathens. Oh, the humiliation of it, Doctor! My proud spirit burned, sir—actually burned with shame and remorse—I, who had owned my own business.” He paused. “I, who had owned my own business,” he pondered sadly. “I came here to this plantation, hoping to secure a position more in keeping with the abilities of a man of parts and education, but alas, I am unappreciated and my lot is even harder. Were it not for this book, this golden book”—he held up the frayed Bible—“there would be nothing to comfort me, nothing to console. Fate is cruel, Doctor.” He looked ruefully at me. “Fate is cruel!” he repeated.

“You got a tough break,” I sympathized, “but tomorrow when you get back to work you’ll have so much to do that you won’t have time to worry about your troubles.”

“Do I have to go back?” he begged.

“I can’t keep a perfectly well man here,” I told him.

“Can’t you intercede with the engineer to give me back my former position?” he asked. “It’s much beneath my capabilities, but it’s far better than having to compete with a horde of ill-smelling villains for a few pennies a day.”

“The engineer’s pretty hard-boiled. Why don’t you see him yourself?” I advised. For a moment he pondered. Then he turned to me hopefully.

“Couldn’t you make room for me here?” he asked. I assured him that between the steward, the secretary and myself, there was no necessity for additional

help. As I gathered up my medicines preparatory to starting back for the treatment room he started humming the words to a mournful tune which I recognized as that ancient lay which seems to bring comfort to negroes wherever English is spoken, "Not my father or my mother, but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer."

He had gone by the time I reached the hospital in the morning. The steward came to me with a worried look and reported that we were one bottle of *aguardiente* short.

It was several weeks later one afternoon, that I noticed a well-dressed negro sauntering nonchalantly toward the hospital. His general bearing reflected superb self-confidence. From the breast pocket of his well-fitting white linen coat floated a generous portion of a purple silk handkerchief. He twirled a well-polished walking stick. It required a second glance to convince me that it was Ring.

"Good afternoon, Doctor," he bowed, tipping his hat with an elegant flourish. "I just dropped in to tell you good-bye and see if by any possible chance you would care to dispose of one of your volumes on medicine. I will pay a generous amount of cash," he suggested when I hesitated, producing a pocket-book which he opened to exhibit no mean number of large gold coins. "I am leaving in the morning for Belize."

"Well!" I floundered. The abrupt change in his attitude and condition was somewhat confusing.

"When I learned that there was no opening for one of my capabilities," he smiled, "I informed my

daughter of my unhappy plight, and a few days ago I received a letter with the necessary funds for me to join her." He produced a well-filled stamped leather cigar case.

"Will you join me?" he offered. I withdrew a cigar. It was a carefully made, expensive product encircled by an attractive, rather gaudy band.

"My daughter and her mother have been keeping house for a gentleman in Belize," he continued when we had finished lighting our cigars. "He was of your profession, Doctor, being possessed of one of the largest apothecary shops in the city. Two years ago he died, leaving his entire business to my child. For years I haven't seen her. Her mother and I had trouble when she was just a little girl." He paused apologetically. "You see, we were not exactly married," he explained. "She sent me this photograph and, though I had not seen her since she was quite a girl, I recognized her immediately." From his inside pocket he drew the photograph of an enormous negress. "That's my daughter!" he said proudly. "Her mother is getting old and they require capable assistance in the management of their affairs." His chest expanded with pride. He was very disappointed when I assured him that there was nothing in my very limited medical library that I could possibly afford to part with.

"Good-bye and may good fortune always favor you," he bowed warmly in parting. With a buoyant air he strode gaily down the path, his bright new shoes squeaking merrily. I wondered, as I watched

him, what sort of a famous specialist would have arrived in Belize, had I found it possible to part with one of my medical books.



Our Soldier Guards

Loading Sugar

One of the Cane Fields

A Girl of Tehuantepec

CHAPTER XVII

THE PLAGUE AND STEAMING JUNGLE GET OUR LOVED SANTIAGO

“MAKE an extra effort to get him well quick. See what I mean, quick? In a hurry, get me?” Bill paused and mopped his forehead with a grimy handkerchief. “It’s a fact, Pills,” he continued, “he’s a key man in my department and it’s mighty hard to get along without him.” Bill had just arrived with Santiago, our head blacksmith. There was a bath towel wrapped around the blacksmith’s neck and his voice was very husky.

“I’m not sick!” laughed Santiago, reprovingly. “I’m not sick—just got a little cold or something, but the chief insists on my coming to the hospital till my singing voice returns,” he smiled at Bill.

“You are sick, damn it!” insisted Bill. “Why, for almost two weeks you’ve been getting hoarser and hoarser until now you sound like a crow with the pip in spite of all the leaves and brews and junk you have been taking. Something’s the matter and you’ve got to lay off for a few days and get over it, see!” Bill glared kindly at the blacksmith. Then he laughed. Santiago laughed too. The muscles which seamed his mighty arms and shoulders rippled in humorous sympathy beneath his brown, healthy skin.

“Me sick!” he exclaimed. “Bunk, *Señor Ingeniero*, bunk!” He waved his great work-gnarled hands expressively. “Bunk!” he repeated, firmly. Lifting his

huge right arm he flexed the biceps meaningly. "Me sick?" he demanded, laughing. "I certainly feel all right."

I knew Santiago well. He was an excellent mechanic, a close student of the affairs of his country and a periodical drunkard. Every day he faithfully read the newspapers that came to us from the City of Mexico and then thoroughly discussed the news. He never forgot the information thus gained. His fund of general knowledge was surprising.

"Me sick?" he questioned once more with a significant shrug of his heavy shoulders. "Me sick?" he snapped his fingers humorously. "Poof!" He unwound the bathtowel and carefully removed the leaves of some jungle plant with which his neck was plastered. "I'm not sick, Don Carlos, just a little hoarse, just a little hoarse or something," he assured.

I examined his throat thoroughly and found very little irritation and no sign of a diphtheria patch. The result of my examination was very satisfying.

"What do you make of it?" Bill demanded anxiously. He was very fond of Santiago.

"He doesn't look very bad to me," I replied.

"What's wrong?" he questioned again.

"Search me!" I answered. "It might be because he's been working in front of a hot fire or smoking too much, but I think that a few days rest and a little care will make a difference in the way he talks, even if he does feel all right." He had no temperature or pain so I painted his throat with iodine, gave him

a gargle and sent him home with instructions to keep to his house and get a good rest.

A few days later I went to see him. My treatment had done him no good. He was not feeling so well and my thermometer indicated that he had a little temperature. I examined his throat very carefully. There was still scarcely any irritation evident, but his condition worried me, so I suggested that he come to the hospital where I could take better care of him.

"I'm not sick, Don Carlos," he smiled reassuringly when I mentioned his coming to the hospital. His husky voice was pleasant, undisturbed, with just the hint of a laugh in it.

"But you admit that you don't feel so well and you show a little temperature," I countered. He relit a black cigarette he had been smoking when I entered.

"Yes," he admitted between carefully measured puffs. He was thoughtful.

"And this smoking when your throat's in this condition . . ." I began.

"It's no help," he interrupted, "it's no help." He took a last puff and threw the remainder away. When we arrived at the hospital I had the steward prepare a cot while I gave Santiago an alcohol rub and swabbed his throat with iodine. At the end of the week he still ran a little temperature so I sent him to Port of Mexico for diagnosis and to have a treatment prescribed. In a few days he returned with a simple treatment recommended and the assurance that there was nothing alarming the matter with him.

I carefully followed the recommended treatment but another week passed and he was not a bit improved.

“What the hell we going to do to get this fellow well?” Bill demanded as he dropped in every day. There was always a trace of anxiety in his tone.

“The thing to do is to follow the recommended treatment as carefully as we can for a long enough time to give it a fair trial, and then if Santiago is no better, to send him to another man to examine and make other recommendations,” I suggested.

Bill was thoughtful. Santiago was silent. He was beginning to realize that he was sick. Another week passed and he was not any better. His temperature ran a little higher and a scarcely perceptible tinge of color appeared under the brown of each cheek. He looked a little thinner and his weight was a few pounds less. The tones of his voice were very thick. He seemed a little discouraged. His eyes were far apart—not too far apart—and expressive without being weak. They seemed graver. There is something infinitely dreadful in witnessing a very strong man slowly deprived of his strength, particularly if there is nothing that can be done to help him. The lines in his face were growing deeper. The weeks of illness were sapping his spirit.

“Something’s wrong—radically wrong—with Santiago,” I retold Bill. I was convinced that he was suffering from something more serious than a sore throat.

“I know there is.” Bill was depressed. “What can

we do, Pills?" His tone was appealing. His eyes were desolate—Santiago was his friend.

"There's a native physician down at Minatitlan who has the reputation of being very competent. We might send him there," I suggested. We both went to the hospital to talk the matter over with Santiago.

"I think it's a good plan for me to have another looking over," he agreed when we spoke to him. He smiled cheerfully. In a week he returned with a small box containing six ampules of a medicine, one of which I was to inject every day, and the assurance that there was nothing much the matter with him.

Another week dragged by. The ampules were all used up. He still ran a slight temperature and seemed to be getting worse. It was becoming difficult for him to speak understandingly. His voice was thicker. My knowledge of tuberculosis is very fragmentary but I began to suspect that Santiago was infected with this disease. Upon my own responsibility I changed his diet, giving him a greater proportion of fattening foods and had him spend part of each day lying on his cot in the sun.

"It's fine to be here at the hospital—fine," he choked one morning after the steward and I had got him comfortable in the sun. His wide, intelligent eyes were calm but there were deep, tired lines under them.

"I'm glad you're happy," I answered, uncertainly.

"It's fine," he continued wistfully, "but I miss my wife and children so." His voice trailed hopelessly. Suddenly he turned. His expressive eyes searched

me. "Couldn't I go home?" he asked. I was on the point of urging him to remain at the hospital when it occurred to me that anything that could be done to keep up his spirits would be of benefit to him.

"Certainly," I assured him, "if you will be happier there."

"It's my home, Don Carlos," he struggled softly. There was a wealth of explanation in his words.

I went to see him every day. He was slowly getting worse. Though I was not sure what affected him, from the nature of his sickness I concluded that the hot, damp climate of the plantation was a hindrance to his recovery. I therefore started making such arrangements as were necessary to send him and his family to Rincon Antonio. Rincon is one of the highest points on Tehuantepec. The climate is relatively cool and dry and there are several physicians. When I first spoke of my plan Santiago was elated.

"It will be better for me in a cooler, dryer place," he agreed warmly. When I brought him the funds to cover his transportation and his first month's maintenance he smiled happily, then he became thoughtful.

"I am a citizen of one of the world's richest countries. I have been industrious and efficient. Within the limits of my capabilities I have been successful, yet when I am sick it is necessary for me to depend upon my friends," he mused.

"Sickness is a misfortune and misfortune comes to most of us in one form or another," I hastened to intrude, for the circumstances seemed to depress him.

He looked at the small stack of money doubtfully. "Certainly it is nothing but a pleasure for your friends to do what they can in this emergency," I tried to comfort him.

"But why should it be necessary for one who has worked hard and been honorable to depend on his friends?" He gestured expressively. "My land is rich, Don Carlos, rich!"

"I know you have worked hard and been honorable, but sickness . . ."

"In your country there are great fraternities," he interrupted, "great fraternities, Don Carlos, to which honorable laboring men can belong, who care for their members who are sick or incapacitated. They represent well-directed co-ordinated effort. Here there are no such institutions. We of Mexico are behind, Don Carlos—behind! We play too much." He nodded his head ruefully. "We Mexicans are intelligent people, but we play too much. We have produced some of the world's outstanding leaders. We do not lack tradition. Our civilization is one of the oldest in history. We do not lack courage. No Mexican worthy of the name is afraid to die." He paused emphatically. "What we need are constructive leaders—leaders who will be too big to be bound by wornout ideals—leaders who will forget personal ambition and ancient hates and help us fight to live! Our land is littered with churches. We require a few honest religious leaders. Sometime another Diaz will be born, whose acts will be tempered with kindness; kindness and real love for his people. Then Mexicans

will realize. Then Mexico will be a happy country.”

He held out his pale, brown hands. They were still the knotted hands of a laborer. “They’ve done a lot of work,” he said. He raised his head proudly. There was something vast, inspiring in the gesture. Something courageous. Something which defied the outgrown traditions of an ancient race. “They’ve done a lot of work—honest work.” He turned. “Some day!” he smiled proudly.

I was busy at the hospital next morning when *Senora* Santiago rushed in.

“*Sangre! Don Carlos. Sangre! Mucho Sangre!*” she gasped. She was very excited. Her husband was bleeding to death.

He sat on a rough little home-made stool vomiting blood into an untidy pail. He was very weak. A neighbor stood by supporting him. In a sweeping gesture he indicated his wife, his children and the little hut—their home. He nodded his head in a mute, hopeless manner and raised one hand as if to feed himself. His glance was steady. There was no fear in the brave, brown eyes, but there was sorrow in the gesture—sorrow and pity. Santiago understood. His wife was crying now, softly and hopelessly, her excitement past.

I worked for an hour to check the hemorrhage. He slept for a time—exhausted.

When he woke I tried to comfort him, telling him that we were holding the launch ready and that men would carry him there as soon as he was able to be moved. He looked at me gratefully. He tried to

smile. He moved his head in a negative manner and feebly grasped my hand. His lips trembled. I believe he wanted to thank me. At five he had another hemorrhage. He tried to speak—there was so much to say—but the only sound was a prolonged death rattle from a windpipe choked with blood. The brave, brown eyes never faltered. Santiago was worthy of his race. Gradually the great chest ceased its spasmodic heaving. The great tired hands relaxed. The firm mouth slowly opened. At six he died. Died bravely in a mud-floored hut, like generations of his ancestors before him who had roamed unfettered down the ages through the steaming jungles or on the burning plains of old Tehuantepec.

Bees droned through the drowsy afternoon. From a tall palm softly floated the sweet song of a bird bidding farewell to the setting sun. A fitting requiem. A woman wept. Two children stared at the silent figure. They didn't seem to realize that their father was dead. He had been sick less than three months. The great plague destroys rapidly in the jungle.

Bill worked half the night helping the carpenters make a coffin. We felt sure that Santiago would have wanted a coffin. He nursed such ancient prejudices.

CHAPTER XVIII

A DAUGHTER OF THE SAGE BRUSH GIVES A LIFE TO THE JUNGLE

THE sun blazed. The jungle steamed. Dank, musty odors filled the air. I glanced through the open doorway of the drug store down Santa Lucrecia's principal street which was also the railroad right-of-way. A tired locomotive came to rest. It was noon. I had just concluded a discussion of tropical medicine with the Japanese apothecary. I rose and shook hands with my friend.

"*Adios, doctor mio,*" he bowed. His Spanish had a pronounced Japanese accent.

"*Adios, doctor mio!*" We were both most careless of the title. My Spanish strongly savors of United States. We still managed to understand most of what each other said. Every month I came to Santa Lucrecia to exchange ideas. My friend's training and experience was something akin to my own. So far no medical journal has bothered for a digest of any of the information thus gained. The meetings were very helpful, however.

It was still an hour before the launch left for the plantation, so I started for the railroad station cafe to while away the time struggling with a Spanish newspaper and an over-seasoned lunch. I had not proceeded far when some one called my name. Turning, I was surprised to see Will Perry emerging from a doorway.

“Hello, Don Carlos!” he greeted warmly. Some months before Will had given up his position as superintendent of a neighboring plantation, taken his three children and gone to the States.

“This is no country to bring up kids in!” he had explained when he left. I wondered at the time if the complicated time-clock life would be endurable after the freedom of Tehuantepec. Will had been seventeen years in the jungle, but the year before his wife had died and the jungle had suddenly become lonely—intolerably lonely.

“Hello,” he greeted again. His unexpected appearance affected me something like the sight of a ghost and I stood speechless.

“It’s me myself in person!” he laughed, sensing my surprise.

“Well, Will!” I finally spluttered.

“It’s me!” he smiled, “it’s me; you ain’t making no mistake!” He beamed wholeheartedly. “This is the first time the sight of me ever panicked anyone,” he laughed.

“I knew . . . ” I began—

“‘I knew you’d be back!’ ” he mimicked, interrupting. Turning, he looked out over the steaming jungle. “It seems like home,” he ventured. There was something ardent in his tone.

“But the States?” I questioned.

“The States?” He removed his hat and mopped his forehead meditatively. “The States are all right,” he continued, “it’s the damn natives that I don’t

like!" He gazed at me blankly. "I could never get used to the natives."

Will had been in the jungle a long time. A tiny donkey smothered under an overload of coal oil cans filled with river water struggled past in the heat. Behind him a child swaggered, cursing. The municipal water system. A short distance away a few repulsive buzzards fought over a scrap of filth. A ragged peon snored in the shade of a piled jumble of packing boxes. A scrawny dog lolled, perpetually scratching at hordes of invisible tormenters. Will cast an appraising eye about.

"It's nice to be back," he yawned. A flock of parrots cawed overhead. He slowly inhaled the smoke of a black cigarette and gazed at nothing.

"It's nice to be back!" he commented again. This time his tone was emphatic.

"There's something about it," I agreed.

"Yes, there's something about it—there's sure something about it!" he repeated slowly.

"I suppose you left the children at school in the north?" I questioned.

"No," he smiled peculiarly, "I brought them back with me." He looked at me half apologetically. "It ain't such a bad place for youngsters who are healthy and understand." The life and traditions of the jungle were part of their blood.

"Will," spoke a voice. We both turned. A young American girl stood before us. She was tall and supple and pretty. Her clothing revived memories of

Park Avenue in summer. She had a firm, frank, sweet expression and clear, kindly eyes.

“Introduce me, Will!” she commanded. Her voice was musical with that drawl which is peculiar to the American Southwest.

There was something indefinable about her presence—something indefinable and pulse-quickenning. Will blushed.

“Introduce me!” she commanded again.

“Meet Mrs. Perry,” spluttered Will shyly.

“What?” I questioned.

“Yes,” he nodded.

“I’m glad to meet you—real glad to meet you. Will’s told me all about you and still I’m glad to meet you.” She smiled. It required more than the mere fact of being on a honeymoon to confuse her.

“That’s broadminded — very broadminded and kind, to know all about a person and still be glad to meet them,” I managed to say. “But, Mrs. Perry, I’m not a doctor—please understand that I’m not a doctor and know very little about medicine.”

“Just the same,” her eyes were undismayed, “doctor or no doctor, having one of your own kind near who can help when you are sick is a big help down here in the woods.”

“You’re right,” Will’s tone was positive.

“You’re lavish, Will—too lavish,” I said. “Don’t put too much dependence on what I can do and you won’t be disappointed.”

“All right, Carlos,” he started, puffing his cigarette. “All right!” He filled his lungs with fragrant

smoke and exhaled comfortably. "Be your age!" he admonished kindly, glancing at me. I couldn't change his opinion.

"When Will asked me to marry him and come down here to live the thought was sort of terrifying." Mrs. Perry evidently found a certain comfort in making something of a *confidante* of a fellow national. "It wasn't the lonesomeness. I was born and brought up on a sage brush ranch and there isn't any place more lonesome." She rubbed her eyes reminiscently. "Even a lighthouse isn't so lonesome," she vowed. "If my father hadn't been successful and owned a Ford I couldn't have gone to high school. We lived twenty miles from the county seat. Just the same, the prospect of life way down here in the bush was sort of terrifying. I guess it was the snakes and the poison weeds and the alligators." She paused.

"We were married and started down," she explained simply. "When we got down here into the jungle it reminded me of a time I once dived from a high spring-board into deep water. I remember going down and down and the water getting greener and greener till finally the light looked like streaks through the green. It seemed like a strange world with God's sunlight far away. A little fish looked like a hobgoblin. I was sure happy when I came to the surface. As we kept getting deeper into the jungle the denser became the green till it seemed to shut out the sun. The untidy villages with their barefooted people looked like beings and places in another world. The foreign language left me numb. The

rancid stench of hardwood smoke made me hold my breath. But I'm learning to know the people and a fascination is taking the place of the strangeness. There's variety in the jungle. It's different from the wide, silent prairies."

"There's certainly variety in the jungle," I agreed.

"It's changeable and interesting," she smiled. "It doesn't give you time to get lonesome. I know I'm going to like it, for I'll have plenty to do. I'm going to have a school for Will's three little boys." She glanced at her husband. "Then I'll have Will himself." Will colored beautifully. A scrawny, mud-covered mother pig followed by four untidy little ones wandered past. "Aren't they cute?" she laughed. Mrs. Will had no time to get lonesome.

"Good-bye, Don Carlos! We're going to send for you if any of us get sick!" she advised in parting.

"Right as usual," chimed in Will.

"You're brave, all right—you certainly are brave," I warned.

But I was not entirely surprised when some months later a man came to my door in the middle of the night and handed me a note from Will Perry. The note informed that Mrs. Perry was very sick and asked that I come at once. Hurriedly getting into some clothes I gathered up my instruments and followed the man to the river. The round Tehuantepec moon rose, flooding the jungle with a weird, misty luminance and turning the river into a broad ribbon of moving silver. The night was glorious. At the river we joined another man who was waiting in a

cayuco. I sat in the middle of the narrow dug-out while the two men poled it against the shimmering flood. The men kept close to the shore. A short distance away the water was too deep for the poles. They did not talk. They were worried. Will's wife had been very kind to them. Occasionally the call of a night bird broke the silence. The shadows cast by the overhanging branches sketched fantastic designs on the changing lustrous background of the water. Invisible creeping things moved and hissed in the deep shadows on the bank. The men hurried. In two hours we covered the six miles that separated us from Will's.

"I'm glad you're here—I'm sure glad you're here!" welcomed Will when I stepped ashore at the landing. There was relief in his tone. He seized my arm in a hurried, nervous, hopeful manner, as a drowning man seizes a plank. Mrs. Perry was expecting soon to become a mother and had reached the stage where any slight contingency might cause an abortion with the sacrifice of her dear one and the possible loss of her life.

"But, Will, I know so little of what to do in such an emergency!" I faltered. I felt impotent, helpless. He grasped my arm tighter.

His youngest child sat on the edge of the bed smoothing the troubled forehead. The room was clean and cool and feminine. In a corner out of the way but immediately available stood a table upon which were arranged some dainty hand-made garments and a small basket with a soft white lining. Mrs. Perry

extended her hand. The danger and the suffering and the great lonely jungle hadn't broken her spirit.

"It was nice of you to come," she smiled. Covered wagons! Screeching, blood-mad savages! Courage! The courage that transformed a continent! An abounding faith in God! That's what that smile meant. Her face was softened by suffering and apprehension. Her steady eyes were wide with dread, but her smile was glorious. The realization of my own helplessness was numbing.

"But I know so little of what to do," I stuttered.

"Just to see one of our own people is a help," she smiled. Her smile was stimulating. It takes a real woman to face such a situation and smile. I was proud of being an American. She looked at Will. Their eyes met in a fathomless hallowed communion. Will's expression grew more tender. Twentieth century luxury had not entirely obliterated that indefinable, glorious something in the character of a people which acknowledges no trials. I had helped barefooted mothers bring forth their young on the packed earth floors of jungle huts. Such affairs were generally simple. Nature had not been weakened by civilization.

All the rest of the night we stood by her bedside doing only simple things. We knew of nothing else to do. The dull smoky light of dawn sifted past the silent jungle sentinels. The mists were slowly dissipated. The pains were gone. The crisis past. There was ample time to reach Port of Mexico and the

things made necessary by civilization. Outside the birds were gay. Their songs were hymns—hymns of thanksgiving.

CHAPTER XIX

A MACHETE FLASH IN THE MOONLIGHT

“THE damn half-black blighter!” Pumps muttered malignantly as he gazed at the receding figure of our master mechanic. “The damn half-black blighter!” Pumps’ face was flushed with anger.

“That’s a pretty hard statement,” I cautioned. “In some parts of the States a man would have to be absolutely sure to make such an accusation and even then it wouldn’t be safe.”

“There you go, always coughing up the States! We aren’t in the States, thank God, and I never expect to be.” His lips closed bitterly. “The nigger’s brat!” Pumps was very angry.

“But, Pumps . . .” I protested.

“Thank the Lord I came from a country where to be considered a gentleman you have to be born something besides the brat of a nigger whelp!” Pumps was almost screaming. He didn’t hear my protest.

“You’re letting your temper get away with your judgment,” I warned.

“The States and your damned democracy!” His narrow eyes glittered. “Your damned democracy which gives precedence to some mechanical slight-of-hand and fails to recognize those things which developed peoples call civilization!” His lips twisted malevolently. “Bosh!” He spit out the word.

Pumps had arrived during the first of the crop with a roll of diplomas and a broad English accent to act as our master mechanic. Since his arrival Bill had struggled hopelessly to find one duty of a master-mechanic that he could do more than talk about. Bill was a noted optimist, but the week before he had been forced to make his locomotive repair man his master-mechanic and to put his master-mechanic to doing the one thing mechanical that he knew he could do properly—pack the valves of pumps. Like the job, the nickname was appropriate. The erstwhile master-mechanic fitted snugly into both, but he failed to realize that the frank acceptance of job and name would form a solid foundation to build upon for the future.

“The common blighter!” he muttered. Pumps believed in the divine right of kings. Without so much as a gracious nod he turned abruptly and strode off toward the boarding house.

The object of his displeasure had drifted in at the first of the harvest. He was a tall, dusky youth with heavy shoulders and big arms and black hair which curled crisply.

“What can you do?” Bill inquired when he asked for a job.

“I’ve had a little railroad experience,” he informed, modestly. Bill looked at his big arms and put him to work firing a locomotive. One day out on a run the injector on his locomotive broke down. The giant negro who managed the throttle sweated and cursed unavailingly in the heat. The water in the

boiler was falling to the danger point. The engine-driver paused to consider. "Knock that fire out of her, Kid," he ordered his fireman. The fireman started to obey.

"Say, Boss, if you don't mind, I can fix that injector," he volunteered.

"The hell you can?" questioned the driver.

"Yes, sir, I can," he answered in a convincing tone.

"Hop to it and make it snappy!" commanded the driver, glancing hurriedly at the water gauge. A long train of loaded cars was strung out behind them waiting. Obediently the fireman quickly made the necessary repairs and the driver started his train. When they checked in at the yards the driver told Bill.

"Kid," inquired Bill, "you must know something about engines?"

"I know a little," he admitted modestly. Not much of a hand to boost himself. "I worked in a round-house back in the States and I do know a little about them." Bill looked at the grimy, half-naked youth standing respectfully in front of him. He was serious and quiet-mannered.

"How much do you know?" he asked.

"Not very much," smiled the fireman.

"Can you make light repairs?" questioned Bill.

"Yes," answered the youth thoughtfully. Bill took him off the locomotive and put him in the shop helping the locomotive repair man. We needed mechanics too badly to waste one as a fireman.

One Saturday night the repair man got drunk and stayed drunk all week. Bill put his helper in charge

of the work. As a result our locomotives were in better condition than before.

“Why do you put that blooming numbskull in charge of work that requires a mechanic?” Pumps complained to Bill. From the first he had taken a violent dislike to the youth.

“Bologna!” replied Bill. “He knows his job all right—he knows his engines like a chorus girl knows her curves!” Bill knew a mechanic.

“He’s a numbskull—a damn insolent nigger and a numbskull!” Pumps protested.

“He knows his job all right, and you better not let him hear you call him a nigger.” Bill was firm and careful.

“He’s a nigger!” grumbled Pumps.

“How do you know?” snapped Bill. He didn’t like the insinuation.

“He’s too damn dark to be anything else.”

“Be your age,” said Bill. “His people might have come from Spain or North Dakota.”

“He’s a nigger—a damn insolent nigger!” Pumps insisted.

“Get wise to yourself before he hears you,” Bill warned. “Whatever else he is, he’s a mechanic and that’s the main thing.”

Pumps never lost an opportunity to vent his displeasure on his subordinate. When his own lack of ability forced Bill to reverse their positions his antipathy knew no bounds.

“If I didn’t need the money I’d leave the rotten place immediately, contract or no contract,” he

stormed. "The damn nigger and the swine who happens to be chief!" He was careful, however, to do his storming safely out of the hearing of Bill or his successor.

From the time Bill made the change he had no more difficulty with the shop. Each day's work was carefully outlined and each workman knew just what he was expected to do.

"If I'd only made this discovery at the first!" he sighed. It was the end of a busy week and Bill, Sutton and I had met in the *tienda* for a glass of cool beer and a few minutes chat before turning in for the night.

"If I'd only made this discovery at the first of the crop!" he repeated. "Why, damn it, the Kid's a find. He don't just know his nuts and bolts, he's capable—what I mean—capable. He'll make a fine assistant some day."

"Or chief," suggested Sutton, smiling.

"Or chief," agreed Bill. Bill was enthusiastic.

"What is he, a coon or something?" asked the superintendent.

"I don't know; he might be, but he's a mechanic all right," vowed the chief engineer. As we talked the steward hurried in.

"There's been a fight, Don Carlos," he panted. He had run all the way from the hospital. "A man's been cut, badly cut, *Señor*—it will be necessary for you to come at once!" When we reached the hospital the master-mechanic was standing in the middle of the reception room. A handkerchief was bound tightly

around his left arm where it joined his body, forming a tourniquet. His arm hung useless at his side with blood dripping in a steady stream from the ends of his helpless fingers.

"Can you fix me up, Don Carlos?" he asked. In spite of his swarthy color he looked ashen, but his voice was cool. Ripping off part of his shirt I twisted on a tourniquet and after I had the bleeding under control I injected some novocaine and washed out the wound. It was a gruesome cut exposing the bone. He turned his head and looked at the wound.

"It's a bad slice—a damn bad slice," he commented.

"A little higher and he'd got me in the neck and then the chances are you couldn't have done much to help." I located the severed blood vessels and tied them off with cat-gut and then dressed the wound with a mild astringent ointment held in place with a firm bandage. After I had finished applying the dressing I put my patient to bed in a hospital cot.

"Who you been fighting with?" asked Sutton who had stood by helping while I dressed the wound.

"Some one got me mixed in the dark, Mr. Superintendent," he explained, avoiding a direct answer.

"Got you mixed in the dark?" Sutton was insistent. The mechanic nodded.

"I was on my way home from a dance when some one stepped from behind a tree which bordered the path and socked me with a *machete*," he explained.

"Have you an idea who it was?" I asked.

"No," he shook his head convincingly.

“E-m-m-m!” Sutton meditated. “Got a dame?” he asked.

“No,” the mechanic’s eyes were steady.

“No?” The superintendent looked incredulous.

“No.” The tone was convincing.

Sutton mused. “Some dame, or I’m the ashes of romance!” he volunteered, glancing at the wounded man. The youth shook his head.

In the morning Bill hurried into the hospital.

“How’s my mechanic?” he greeted. His eyes were wide with excitement.

“He’s getting on all right—as well as could be expected,” I assured him. I had just come from changing the master-mechanic’s dressing.

“Say,” Bill said eagerly, “I bet there’s some connection between this and Pumps!”

“Pumps?” I asked.

“Yeah, Pumps,” he answered. “The Limey didn’t show up for work this morning and I heard that he and the kid had a scrap at a dance last night.” Together we went to the master-mechanic’s cot. The youth was reticent.

“Spill it—loosen up,” commanded Bill.

“It was nothing, Mr. Engineer, nothing. Just a personal matter between Pumps and me,” he answered.

“Nothing?—But you did have a scrap?” Bill persisted.

“Yes,” admitted the youth, “but it didn’t have anything to do with my being cut up.”

“You’re sure?” Bill looked at him intently.

"I'm sure." The tone was convincing. "Though I know Pumps is no friend of mine, I don't think he had anything to do with my being cut. White men don't do things that way." He shook his head knowingly. "Some poor misguided fool just got me mixed up in the dark."

"But you and Pumps had a fight?" Bill insisted.

"Yes," the youth admitted again. "I met Pumps at a dance. He'd been drinking too much and was talking pretty loud. I heard him arguing with Carmen, the market girl. He was trying to induce Carmen to live with him. Carmen was laughing and telling him she didn't like him enough. I was dancing when I heard Pumps cursing in mixed Spanish and English. He had entirely lost his temper and was calling Carmen every vile name he could think of. Some of the men were gathering around. I knew what that meant. In an effort to keep peace I took hold of his arm and tried to drag him outside. He jerked away. 'I know what I'm doing, you god-damned black mongrel!' he yelled. That made my blood boil. I heard he called me 'nigger' behind my back. 'That's a rotten name, Limey. Don't ever call me that again!' I warned, and started to walk away. I didn't want any trouble.

"I guess because I turned he got the idea that he could say anything he wanted to. 'Go to hell, you nigger bastard!' he screamed after me. That made me mad clear through. I'm mighty proud of my mother's race. My mother's a Tehuana, though she was born in the States. I turned. There he stood

screaming like a crazy man trembling with fury. 'You rotten nigger bastard!' he yelled.

"The next thing I remember some men were holding me while others were carrying Pumps outside. I had lost my head as well as my temper and knocked Pumps down and out. I'm like my dad. I can't stand anything like that. He's a mighty good dad; he's had lots of scraps over my mother and her people.

"I was so upset that I couldn't dance any more so I sat down and talked to some of the men for a couple of hours to clear my head and temper." He looked at Bill appealingly. "That's all there was to it," he said.

"But you got cut," Bill persisted.

"On my way home some one sliced me and then beat it in the dark. I didn't see who it was, but I don't think it was the Limey. That's not quite a white man's way." The youth's voice was steady. He was expressing his convictions.

Bill and I couldn't find Pumps anywhere on the plantation. His room was strewn with scraps of paper and worn-out clothing. He had packed hurriedly and left. The launch captain told us that he had hired a *cayuco* and started for Santa Lucrecia shortly after midnight. Later we learned from the station agent in Santa Lucrecia that one of our white employees who had a very black eye had bought a ticket for Vera Cruz. It was the last we ever heard of Pumps. We never found who attacked our master-mechanic. The superintendent said he was too busy to bother with making much of an investigation.

“Let them fight. It’s the one way to keep peace on the place,” he ventured. “So after all the chatter, the master-mechanic’s nothing but a half-native gone United States!” he commented. “Laugh that off—try and laugh it off! I sure thought he was a nigger or a Hindu or something, he’s so sort of quiet and mysterious.”

Don Isidro, the judge who made an official investigation at the direction of the *Presidente Municipal*, drew his own *machete* and stood beside the big tree in the position the assailant had occupied. Two or three times he struck at an imaginary victim coming up the path. Then he smiled and shook his head.

“No native would have missed his neck,” he vowed. Don Isidro is something of a Sherlock Holmes.

CHAPTER XX

MEXICAN MENDOZA, VICTIM OF HIS OWN RACKET

IT WAS Sunday, and on Sundays the river landing became an animated market place. Business was brisk. Saturday was payday.

A long line of *cayucos*, loaded with fresh fruits and various other products, straggled along the shore. A fat porker, firmly roped to a post squealed shrilly. Chickens lay gasping in the heat, their feet bound together with strands of palm fiber. Traveling stores, with strings of gay merchandise suspended between poles or piled attractively on the ground, advertised their wares as the latest from New York and Paris. A pretty Indian girl sold cool drinks from behind a rough table. After serving each customer she wriggled the glass in a pail of river water. Her customers were numerous. The rinsing water had a peculiar color. A wrinkled old woman squatted among a litter of earthenware globes and haggled noisily over prices. Under a scanty awning a roaming dentist extracted teeth for a peso per tooth, injecting pain-deadening fluid into the gums of each patient with the same hypodermic needle which he never bothered to sterilize. A crafty, slant-eyed Chinaman sold oriental goods which somehow looked as if they might have originated in Massachusetts. A gay throng of big-hatted, brightly-arrayed peons milled incessantly around and drove wonderful bargains.

I had finished my work rather early for Sunday, mounted my horse and ridden to the market. Loafing behind a strip of faded velvet upon which was displayed a small stock of cheap hardware, was a tall athletic-looking German. His tawny, close-cut hair, formed a striking contrast to the dark sun-tan of his skin. At my approach he snapped rigidly erect, clicked his heels together in true military fashion and smiled rather stiffly.

"I understand, sir, that you are the doctor here," he greeted in halting English that contained a pronounced Teutonic accent. I acknowledged that I was functioning as such, but denied being a doctor.

"The people speak highly of your skill, sir," he persisted. Always the "sir." No easy familiarity about his conversation. An ugly scar ran across one side of his face. He was a German of the upper class. The scar was a prized trophy of student dueling days.

"The people speak highly of your skill, sir," he repeated pointedly when I failed to notice his first comment. I thanked him.

"Can you do anything for *savanone*?" he questioned, occupying my attention. *Savanone* is a local name for a dermatological affection. I assured him that I had frequently treated *savanone* successfully.

"I suffer with *savanone*, sir," he informed, regarding me expectantly.

"Yeah?" I answered.

"Yes, sir." There was something savoring of a military formality in the way he spoke: "I should like to call during your office hours, sir," he persisted.

Office hours! The expression was so unusual that it was amusing.

“Come ahead!” I invited informally.

When I reached the hospital in the morning he was waiting there. He had a very mild case and agreed to remain at the plantation two weeks during which time I was to attempt to cure him.

“I have been to numerous native doctors, sir, but none of them have benefited me,” he informed. “Quite natural,” he kept on, “none of them could. The primitive dunces lack the ability. It is impossible for intellects so little above the savage to grasp even the principles of the more intricate sciences.”

I had a profound respect for the learning of the better native doctors. One of them—a very generous one—had taught me all I knew about *savanone* in a few minutes.

“All I know of your trouble and its treatment has been taught me by a native physician,” I informed him. He smiled tolerantly. Under my treatment he started to improve quickly.

“Emph! The bunglers don’t even know how to apply the science they have been taught,” he grunted in defense of his idea when he noticed his improvement. He regarded me searchingly. I believe he doubted the source of my information.

“Mexico presents a peculiar picture,” he ventured. “The struggle of an incapable, undeveloped people to erect a lasting State.

“But Mexico developed one of the world’s foremost civilizations in ancient times and has produced

some of the world's acknowledged leaders in modern times," I reminded him.

"Yes," he condescended, "their ancient state was a monarchy—an absolute monarchy—ruled over by a succession of geniuses. That's their one chance now, sir—the creation of another monarchy."

"But they don't seem to want a monarchy. They are evidently trying to get away from anything that even savors of a monarchy. Undoubtedly they are happier governing themselves even if they do make mistakes," I suggested.

"Happier?" he sniffed. "How can people be happier knowing that their affairs are directed by a rabble of incapable bunglers?"

"In a republic the people do their own directing," I mentioned.

"Sometimes," he smiled. "Other times they think they do, but in a hereditary monarchy they know that their affairs are directed by experts whose business for generations has been to rule."

My patient was from an ancient aristocratic family who had been ruined during the war. He hated France whom he blamed for causing the conflagration.

"Some day, sir," he said, wagging his head knowingly, "some day when it will not serve the interests of the rest of the world to come to her rescue, France will pay. She will have to fight alone." As if to illustrate he broke a match that he was holding in two and dropped the ends on the floor. "Pooh!" His tone was calm, but there was deep hate in his manner.

"She will forever be crushed." He glanced ominously through the open door.

"When I first landed in Mexico," he started again, shifting his glance, in an evident effort to change the topic of conversation, "I went to work for a fellow countryman who operated a freight launch on the river Usumacinta in Tabasco. There are no roads there and the river is the only highway. I worked for my friend till I learned the language, then I opened a little store in a small village in the interior. Mine was the only store there. The country was in revolution and all the other merchants had left. The only law of the region was the will of its dominant chieftain, an affable cut-throat named Mendoza. He was a likable sort of fellow—something of a Robin Hood—helping the poor with the things he stole from those who were better off. There were no rich in the country. Naturally he was very popular among the lower classes. There was no questioning the strength of his position. He crushed any opposition to his will in a most ruthless manner. His men captured a man who had revealed one of his hiding places. Mendoza had the prisoner brought before him. While his men held the struggling wretch Mendoza cut the flesh from the soles of his feet. Then he had his men stand the captive on what remained. The wretch fell down. The agony was too great. Mendoza had his men lift the screaming thing erect. With a long cattle whip he flogged him into taking a step. Once more he fell, all the time begging to be killed. Mendoza only laughed. Finally when his victim was so weak that

he could no longer be made to stand, Mendoza flogged him to death with the cattle whip. He refused to let the body be buried. What the vultures did not devour rotted where it lay. No one else cared to divulge any information about Mendoza. He had a man hung in front of his house who objected to his taking his wife. He shot and killed one of his men who disputed his authority. His word was supreme. In contrast to his misdeeds he was always willing to help those whom he knew to be in need."

"Mendoza was an unlimited monarch, a tyrant," I interrupted.

"Emph!" he complained, "he was a thief—a damned thief who was clever enough to make himself chief of a region." His eyes were hard and bright. He didn't like being interrupted. I was about to express myself upon chiefs who maintained their positions by cruel force when he continued.

"Within a week after I opened my store I met Mendoza. He rode into town at the head of a small band of his men and came in and introduced himself. He was a jovial, pleasant-mannered scoundrel and welcomed me to Tabasco and assured me of his desire to help me in any way he could. 'We need a good merchant,' he said. Before he left he invited me to drink. In a few days he returned. There were a few peons in at the time making penny purchases. Mendoza rolled his eyes as he contemplated. 'Business is good, no?' he questioned. Then before I had opportunity to explain that the only purchases were for pennies he added expressively, 'Under my pro-

tection.' Soon the customers left, awed by the chief's presence. 'I'm glad that you prosper,' he mentioned. I started again to tell him how small the purchases were but he intruded, 'We Mexicans are poor merchants. We do better as soldiers or farmers. I shall see that you have no competition.'

"There was nothing for me to do but thank him for his interest and invite him to drink. I heated some coffee and we had lunch. 'It is not fitting that a merchant should cook his own meals,' he commented. That afternoon he came in and asked me to lend him a hundred pesos. I had little more than half that amount. 'Fifty, then,' he smiled when I disclosed the total of my cash. He bought several articles, paying for them out of the money he had just extorted.

"Next morning one of his men arrived, dragging after him a little Indian girl who could not have been more than fifteen. The man took off his hat and bowed respectfully. 'General Mendoza sent this girl to cook for you,' he explained. I can see her now, poor little thing, so scared that she trembled and could hardly talk. I thanked the man for his trouble and gave him a drink. When he had gone I gave the child a few coppers to take to her mother and a little paper of white sugar for herself. Then I sent her home. What did I want with a baby?"

"Mendoza came a few days later. 'You don't like our Mexican girls, no?' he asked. He seemed a little annoyed. I suppose he considered that I was most unappreciative. I told him that I liked Mexican girls

but that I had a sweetheart back in Germany. This seemed to pacify him for he sighed and said that he had been in love many times himself. A month later my countryman arrived with his freight launch and some merchandise for me. It took every bit of cash I had to pay for my goods. While I was unpacking my new wares Mendoza entered my store. 'Buenos dias, amigo' he greeted warmly. I stopped my work and asked him to have a drink. 'Business is good—very good, no?' he commented, glancing at my newly arrived goods. I explained that the new goods were merely renewals to keep up my stock. He smiled incredulously, 'I need two hundred pesos, amigo,' he informed, 'two hundred pesos.' He seemed to think that he was asking for very little. 'But, amigo, I have sent out all my money to pay for my new goods,' I explained. 'No?' He questioned slowly. 'All right, my friend.' He regarded me darkly, 'All right, my friend.' He shrugged significantly and without further comment left. I felt worried. I realized that I had unfortunately created a powerful enemy. There was nothing I could do. My little business couldn't survive the continual demands for money. Something in his manner made me apprehensive. When night came, instead of sleeping in the little room at the back of my store which I used for a living and bed room, I made a dummy out of my extra clothes and put it in my cot. Then I stretched a sleeping mat under the counter for myself. I was tired and went to sleep quickly. About midnight an explosion that sounded like the roar of a great gun

shook the shack to its foundation. The blast very nearly tumbled the counter down on top of me. The sound of some one running rapidly away from the back of the hut reached me. Then all was quiet. The townspeople had learned by experience to keep to their houses when there was shooting going on and Mendoza was about. The explosion had waked me from a sound sleep and I lay on my mat scarcely daring to breathe. There was not a sound. Even the night birds had ceased their calling. After a while I mustered up enough courage to crawl to the door leading to the back room and peer through. There was nothing I could make out in the darkness and I dared not light a match. For a long time I knelt at the doorway straining every nerve to detect some sound or movement. Finally I crept to the cot to investigate. The dummy was torn to pieces. Some one had stuck a large bore shotgun through the little window at the back of the shack and discharged both barrels into it from the range of a few feet. Pretty soon I heard someone moving outside. It was just before dawn and very dark but presently I made out the shape of a man's head framed in the little window. I took careful aim with my pistol and fired. The man yelped and fell. I heard him kick the side of the shack a few times, then everything was quiet once more. It was near dawn and I realized that if I wished to see another night I must get all the distance I possibly could between the village and myself before daylight. As quietly as I could I opened the front door and looked out. It was too dark to see

far but I determined that there was no one in the street. I crawled around to the back of the shack to investigate. There under the window was a dead man. My shot had killed him. I determined to go to my countryman and get him to take me down the river in his launch. I was very excited in the dark and in my excitement I could not make out who the dead man was. I was about to start for the launch when my curiosity overcame my better judgment and I picked up the body, slung it over my shoulder and ran to the launch. My countryman and I poled the boat into the current and when we got well away from the shore he started the engine. Dawn was just starting to break and after we got the boat to going well I went to the after deck where I had dumped the body. There, in the faint half-light lay all that remained of Mendoza with a bullet hole in the middle of his forehead."

My patient paused.

"You overthrew a monarchy," I ventured.

"I killed a thief—a smart thief who had subjugated a region to his will. Had he been in the States he would have been the head of what you call gangs." He smiled at the comparison.

"Life and property are safe in Tabasco now, aren't they?" I asked.

"Yes, now that the revolution is over," he admitted. He looked at me queerly. Rising, he withdrew his foot from a basin of antiseptic solution in which it was soaking and hobbled to his valise.

"Do you like souvenirs?" he questioned. I acknowl-

edged that I had no particular interest in such things. He unlocked the valise and removed some odds and ends of clothing that concealed something in the bottom. Drawing out a package he carefully unwrapped it.

“Meet *Señor* General Mendoza,” he smiled, holding out a human skull. In the center of the forehead was a small round hole. “I fed the flesh to the ants but the skull I keep myself.” His eyes glowed with pleasure.

CHAPTER XXI

OUR CHINESE COOK BELIEVES IN BARBARIC MYSTERY

FOR a week dilatory swarms of flying ants had been filtering into the houses and into the soup. Some rain fell every day. The air was close and muggy. Nights as well as days sizzled and steamed impartially. The rainy season was upon us.

“A-h-h-h-h!” Sutton yawned and slumped wearily on the bar. Little beads of sweat ran down his neck and lost themselves in the folds of his soggy shirt. Deep lines showed under his eyes. He looked tired—very tired and a little worried.

“Damn the louts!” The words were harsh. He moved his long glass of rum and soda slowly back and forth over the unplanned boards.

“Damn the louts!” he repeated bitterly. Since before daylight he had toiled in an unsuccessful endeavor to complete cutting the few acres of cane still standing in the fields.

“It’s just impossible—impossible!” he wailed. “We can’t finish by Monday because none of the cutters will work Sunday.” He stood slowly erect and stretched the kinks from his tired body. “Each bunch has a different excuse,” he complained. “The only lie they’ve missed firing at me is that they want to go to church!” He smiled sarcastically. “The lousy bums!” He was discouraged and disappointed and unduly vindictive.



Old Louis

*One of the Landed
Aristocracy*

*Concha and Juana
all dolled up*

Two Dolls

“‘Make each cutter a contractor!’” he mimicked in a loud voice. “‘Weigh each man’s cane. Pay him for only what he produces. Put him on a basis where the more he cuts the more money he makes. Provide an incentive. That’s the way to hurry the cane in!’ That’s what they said in the office.” He yawned, and his lips curled scornfully. “Hell! Try and get them to work if they’ve got the price of an extra drink—just try to do it!” He cocked his head on one side. “Ouch!” he grimaced, “ouch! Their flesh ain’t willing and their spirit’s weak. It can’t be done, Pills—it just can’t be done.” Splitting a match with his fingernail to form a tooth-pick he picked his teeth and pondered. “It can’t be done!” he vowed again. “A few more days of soaking rain and it’ll be cheaper to quit entirely.”

The rains were fast turning the fields into quagmires through which it was becoming impossible to haul cane. The two of us and Don Pedro, the Korean storekeeper, were alone in the *tienda*. The night was still and dark. The stars were entirely obscured by heavy mists. From the distant peon quarters drifted the faint tinkle of a guitar and the plaintive notes of a native love song.

“Hell!” Sutton was certainly tired and bitter. The tones of the distant singer’s voice were vivid and deep. Something from way down inside of him seemed in his music.

“Don’t you think we’ve expected too much?” I ventured.

"Expected too much! Expected too much?" he retorted, raising his voice.

"These people are sort of impractical, primitive . . ." I suggested.

"Bums!" He raised his glass wearily. "Just damn lazy ungrateful bums!" He sipped his rum thoughtfully. "Bums, ungrateful bums! The only difference between these proletarians and those that live in the woods is that these don't have tails." He drained his glass in a series of noisy gulps. "Bums!" he repeated emphatically, wiping his mouth with the back of one grimy hand. "More?" He looked at me questioningly. It was nearly eight o'clock and Don Pedro was closing the wooden window blinds for the night.

"Hey, Pedro!" He pointed to the two empty glasses with a tired hand. "Two more," he ordered.

"Why, I even tried to coax an extra day's work out of the lice by offering a bonus and prizes," he complained. "One more good day—just one more good day and we'll be through—finished—totaled up." He moved his glass back and forth and contemplated the small piece of ice which chilled it. "They ain't practical, Pills—they just ain't practical or appreciative."

We finished our drinks and started from the *tienda*, picking our way along the path with an electric flashlight.

"This is my last season in the lousy tropics," grumbled my companion. "I'm going to get a job in one of the beet factories up north where they wear under-

wear and wash their hands before they eat. Yes, sir! Next season I'll be quitting at six and stepping out in the evening with Mona Lisa to look at a picture show."

In the distance a dim spark moved in the darkness. Some one was coming down the path carrying a lantern.

"What's wrong now?" Sutton took it for granted that no one could be abroad in the sultry night without being a messenger of ill. "Did you ever know it to fail?" he fumed. "Wait till a man gets so tired that he can hardly drag himself along and then hunt him up to slip him some bum steer." The light was approaching rapidly. The bearer was running. "Did you ever know it to fail?" Sutton growled again. The spark grew into the light of a lantern and Old Louis, the Chinese cook, trotted up out of the night. It was hard to understand Louis at any time. Now it was almost impossible.

"Have a heart, Chink, and talk United States or Spanish or something!" Sutton spoke harshly.

"Your friend! Your friend!" the old Chinaman spluttered incoherently. He was very excited. Taking hold of my arm he attempted to drag me down the path.

"Quit jabbering and say something!" said Sutton.

"Your friend! Your friend!" The Chinaman's skinny hand clutched my arm desperately.

"Sure we're your friends. Have you gone nuts or are you just snowed up?" Sutton demanded gruffly.

“Your friend! Your friend!” There was something pitiful, something tragic in his voice and actions. The dim light of the lantern outlined objects weirdly. “Your friend . . . !”

“What the . . . ?” Sutton began.

“He sick!” As if to illustrate his wish, the old Chinaman started running down the path. Sutton and I fell into single file behind. Louis led the way to an old board shack next to the boarding house where he lived with his native wife and a numerous brood of children. As we drew near we could hear the hum of voices in excited conversation and the terrified, heart-broken shrieks of a woman. The tiny front room of the hovel was packed tight with neighbors who were crowded around a cot upon which lay Louis’ youngest son, apparently dead. Among the children of the plantation he was my particular favorite. As I could never pronounce his name, I always called him friend. Louis had meant to tell me that my friend was sick, very sick. The child’s eyes were glazed. He didn’t seem to be breathing.

Sutton glanced at the inert form. “Croaked?” he questioned. Then he cleared the room of neighbors while I endeavored to get the little boy’s pulse. It seemed minutes before I detected a flutter. Then I felt a slight vibration. I at once started, slowly drawing his little arms outward and upward and then bringing them down till they pressed against his chest, giving him artificial respiration. In this way I filled his lungs with air. I had his mother cover his feet with cloths that had been alternately soaked in

hot and cold water. This helped his circulation. Slowly his breathing became perceptible and more regular. As soon as possible I administered an emetic, which partially emptied his stomach. I thought he had been poisoned. He became conscious and complained of great pain in his abdomen. I gave him a large dose of castor oil.

“What’s the matter with him, Pills?” inquired the superintendent.

“Search me!”

“What?” Sutton was incredulous.

“I don’t know,” I answered truthfully.

“Whew!” Sutton wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of a soggy sleeve and regarded me quizzically. “Whew!” He ran his fingers through his damp hair. “Well, anyway, you know he has a pain in his bay window.” His lips curved into a broken relieved smile. He was fond of the little boy.

The child had eaten a fair supper and afterward, while playing around with the other children, had become violently ill. He might have had an emergency attack of appendicitis. I was never able to determine what affected him. Near eleven he fell into a sound sleep. Next morning he was much better so I tried a limited liquid diet, which he assimilated successfully. He was a very slight child and I did not want to place any unnecessary burden upon his small reserve strength.

“How’s little Lotus Flower?” Sutton asked when we met at a late breakfast. He looked much refreshed.

“He’s much better.”

“Better?” he smiled. “Better? I’m glad he’s doing so good. He’s a smart little kid.” He sopped an egg yolk dexterously with toast. “Slip me the dope, Pills—I ain’t trying to crab your stuff—go on, slip me the dope.” He leaned on the dining table, holding his knife and fork poised erect, expectantly.

“Ask me another.” I shook my head negatively.

“Go on, don’t be so damn medical! Tell me what’s the matter with the kid?”

“But I don’t know.”

“What?” he retorted. “He’s alive, ain’t he? Of course you know!”

“I don’t,” I insisted.

“H-o-o-o-o!” He exhaled audibly and gazed at the ceiling. “Of course you know,” he vowed again. “Don’t try shooting the old bologna about tightening up his brakes if his carburetor needed adjusting.” His expression was very depreciative. “That’s the venerable sausage, Pills—the venerable sausage!” There was venom in his look. “Sometimes I don’t believe you know what you know.” The superintendent was set in his ways.

The Chinese boy who waited table served breakfast alone. Old Louis was asleep. When I arrived for lunch the ancient Oriental greeted me at the door.

“How’s the little boy?” I asked. I had been too busy during the late forenoon to pay a second visit.

“He lives!” He spoke reverently.

“Yes I know, but . . . ?”

“He lives!” he repeated solemnly as if he had not noticed my speaking. “He was dead, but now he lives.”

“Have a heart!” I protested.

“He was dead, but now he lives!” He pronounced the words with deep reverence.

“Louis!” I spoke as bluntly as I could, “Louis—he wasn’t dead. He couldn’t have been dead. If he had been, nothing on earth . . .”

“He was dead, but now he lives!” His words were soft and clear like those of a minister pronouncing a benediction. The dim old eyes were spanning thousands of miles of blue ocean to the burial mounds of ancient China. “He will grow to be great to bless the memories of his honorable ancestors.” Nothing I could say ever altered his opinion.

CHAPTER XXII

TOO MANY TOASTS TO THE PATRON SAINT AND MUY CABALLERO IS DEAD

RAT-a-tat-tat-thump-thump! Rat-a-tat-tat-thump-thump! Dawn was just breaking and I lay half awake, rubbing my eyes and wondering what it was all about. Rat-a-tat-tat-thump-thump! Rat-a-tat-tat-thump-thump! The fact that it was the sound of an empty-toned drum, finally penetrated the veils of sleep and I became fully conscious. Rat-a-tat-tat-thump-thump! The sound was hollow, savage, compelling—appealing. There is something pulse-quickening about the beating of a drum; something pulse-quickening and barbarous and primitive. Battles have been won by its inspiration.

Rat-a-tat-tat-thump-thump! I got up and went to the window. Visibility is not good in the half light of early dawn but I made out an old woman going along the path with a bundle of firewood balanced on top of her head and the sentinel smoking indifferently in front of the soldiers' quarters. Rat-a-tat-tat-thump-thump! The sound came from the peon section. Obviously it heralded nothing of much importance. It was too near five to return to bed so I took an extra long time in the shower. The cane was all cut and ground. The crop was over. Sutton and Bill and most of the workmen had gone. The place was deserted, lonesome. Rat-a-tat-tat-thump-thump!

At infrequent intervals the sound of the drum continued. On my way to the hospital I met Felipe.

"*Buenos dias*, Felipe," I greeted. "What's the drum?"

He bowed cordially.

"The drum, Don Carlos?" he scratched his head wonderingly. "The drum?" My ignorance apparently startled him.

I nodded.

"The drum is to inform us that the patron saint of all Mexico is here represented by an image which is holy." He spoke reverently. Bending over, he cleaned the mud from his shoeless feet with a bit of wood.

"An image of the patron saint of all Mexico?" Traveling saints! The idea struck me as rather peculiar.

"*Si*. An image which is blessed." Felipe wondered at my lack of understanding. I continued to the hospital wondering. The few people needing my attention straggled in one at a time. The morning dragged. A distinct change from the rush of harvesting. Outside the palms sighed in a scorching zephyr and swarms of mosquitoes joined in a miserable boring chorus. Occasionally the distant drum throbbed.

Near noon a babble of excited voices reached me and from the window I glimpsed a small crowd of people coming toward the hospital, some of whom were bearing on their shoulders a wide board on which was stretched a man. Soon they entered. The man's eyes were half closed. He was in the extreme

of agony. He had just been shot. The bullet had torn its way into his abdomen and was lodged somewhere within his vitals. He was very low. A brief examination satisfied me that his chances to survive were very few. As I worked, a well-formed girl stood by the operating table with a round-faced infant bound to her back by a blue *rebozo*. Her face shone with a sort of pishah gleam. She was calm. She looked as if she might have stepped from the stained glass niche of a saint or a martyr.

“Will he live?” Her voice was low, appealing and contralto. Her look was tender, imploring, hopeful.

“I don’t know, *Senora*.” I didn’t like to make too rash a promise. “I’ll do all I can for him—all I possibly can.” Her expression changed. Dumbly, like a person in a dream she picked his toil-worn hand and absently stroked it.

“Am I going to live?” It was a struggle for the man to talk. He was very low. The girl turned suddenly. Her lips trembled.

“I’ll do everything I can for you—everything!” I promised.

“It doesn’t matter much, one life more or less—but it’s hard—it’s hard . . .” His words were low, indistinct. He was sinking. The girl turned away.

“I’m not afraid to die. I’m just sorry,” his voice was tired, drowsy. For a moment the black eyes glittered. “I am not afraid . . .” A little trickle of bloody froth seeped from the corner of his mouth. His suffering was terrible to watch. He tried to sit up. “I’m not afraid . . .” He babbled incoherently. The

blanch of death was upon him. It was an effort to understand. He was gasping.

Rat-a-tat-tat-thump-thump! The sound of the drum, barbarous, entrancing. An image which is blessed. The merciless heat. Beautiful maidens leaping to their death in sacred wells. The langour of a jungle noon. The heritage of an ancient race.

“Who shot your man?” I spoke as gently as I could.

“Chato.” She looked at the suffering man on the operating table. Behind her soft voice lay a deep reservoir of passion. Her eyes gleamed dangerously.

“Chato?” I was shocked, surprised. I knew Chato. He was one of our gang foremen, intelligent, mild-mannered and good-natured.

“*Si, Chato!*” Her words were convincing, bitter. At daylight an old woman and her son had arrived with an image of Saint Guadalupe in a box. They had come from a village on the other side of Santa Lucrecia and had traveled all night. They were tired so the girl offered them a place in her hut to sleep, but the old woman was anxious to exhibit her Holy Image and had her son beat the drum he carried to inform the people that the image of a saint was among them. The people of the plantation started gathering. They looked at the image and deposited small coins in a little dish at its feet. Ill fortune might result from lack of proper homage. Soon the little hut was crowded. The old woman sent her son for *tequila*.

Among the first to arrive was Chato. The old

woman was generous with the *tequila*. They drank many toasts to the patron saint. Some of them became a little drunk. The carpenter came with his guitar and the guests started dancing. Chato asked his friend's permission to dance with the girl. Chato was *muy caballero*. Certainly! The men shook hands. Chato was his good friend. When the dance was finished, Chato returned the girl to her husband. The men shook hands again. Chato bowed and thanked the girl for her courtesy. He was certainly *muy caballero*.

The old woman sent for more *tequila*. Chato got a little drunk and sang a gay song. The guests applauded warmly. He danced with the girl again and returned her to her husband and thanked her for her courtesy. Always a gentleman, Chato. Standing in the middle of the room he proposed a toast to the good virgin—a long toast with many linguistic flourishes. Men and women crossed themselves the way the *padres* had taught them. Before the end of the toast was reached Chato fell down. He had drunk too much *tequila*. Several of the men stepped forward to help him to his feet. Chato was furious. He would have everyone understand that he was a *caballero*—a gentleman. His good friend protested that he was a little drunk. His fury was a flame that scorched him. Chato drew his pistol and shot his friend.

In the middle of the afternoon my patient rose on one elbow and fell back dead. I led the girl away from the table.

"*Ai!*" she sighed. "*Ai, Don Carlos!*" She was crying now—hysterical.

"He was a brave man," I tried to comfort her.

"He was a brave man and a good man." Her words rattled hollowly. "A good man, Don Carlos!"

A cloud scudding rapidly across the sky cast a dark shadow and a drenching rain fell. The friends who had brought him stretched his body on the board and when the rain stopped, carried it off into the steaming afternoon. They went directly to his house and when they reached there they laid the body on the dirt floor. The girl placed four candles around it. The neighbors prepared food and brought *tequila*. Two women fired off skyrockets. The drum throbbed through the quiet afternoon, rhythmic, sensuous, barbarous. The blessed image of a saint was among us. Men paused and awkwardly crossed themselves with the sign of the Christian cross. The carpenter nailed a few boards together to form a coffin. The sinking sun flamed red behind the low, mist-shrouded mountains of *Chiapas*.

At daylight a few men on their way to work in the fields stopped at the cemetery long enough to drop the coffin they carried into a shallow grave. The girl with her round-faced baby held to her back by a blue *rebozo* looked on and wept. She was an eloquent figure, young and vital and crude. When the grave was filled one of the men planted two sticks tied together to form a Christian cross at its head. As the men continued on their way to work each one parted from the girl with a kindly word. For a long

time she gazed in lonely silence at the fresh mound of earth. Finally she turned, and picking her way between the puddles of rainwater, strode off into the brilliant morning.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE GLAMOROUS JUNGLE RECEDES THROUGH TEARS

"YOU'RE a little thin." Mother looked at me appraisingly. "Yes," she affirmed reflectively, "you're a little thin, and harder. The jungle has done you good." My physical state evidently pleased her. Mother has always been deeply concerned about the health of every one she knew, particularly her children. The harvest was over and the plantation closed and I had come to Vera Cruz to meet Mother and Tots, who had just arrived after a month's visit in the highlands of Mexico. Tots is my niece. Mother turned again from her rapt contemplation of the interesting life of the Plaza.

"Yes, son; you're certainly in good physical condition," she reaffirmed. If I have within me something of the instincts of a physician I inherit them from her. Tots and I left for a stroll about town and a visit to the ancient Cathedral. Mother rested. The trip from Mexico City had tired her.

"Not a skyscraper or a chain store!" marveled Tots as we strolled. "Not one of either. Just these beautiful old friendly buildings!" Inherently Tots is very American. It was May-day and at noon a grand parade of organized labor was to take place on the principal street. Long before the advertised time for the procession, the street started filling with an orderly crowd of eager spectators. A well-dressed

middle-aged man, noticing that our position to view the spectacle was not of the best, bowed courteously and gracefully moved from his place in front of us. He undoubtedly recognized us as foreigners—Americans. Even to one understanding the country, his graciousness was somewhat amazing. Not so very many years before an American fleet had bombarded the city. Though the parade was scheduled for noon it was almost one o'clock before the sound of music up the street indicated that the procession was on its way. Events take their own time in Vera Cruz.

Preceding the parade a few youths hurried down the street distributing handbills. As one passed me he unceremoniously thrust two flaming leaflets into my hand. One of them flayed the "Colossus of the North" for keeping marines in Nicaragua. The other blazed with a lurid denouncement of a mythical monster called Wall Street, which it blamed for the accumulated ills of humanity. Most of the spectators receiving the handbills read them amusedly. They were part of the show. Soon the marchers appeared, swinging along briskly behind an excellent band and a large silken Mexican Ensign. The spectators uncovered reverently as the National Ensign passed. The marchers carried a large flag of red and black, the colors of the National labor union, and numerous placards. Prominent among the placards was one assuring the murdered brothers in Chicago of the undying loyalty and eternal friendship of the laboring people of Mexico.

"Gee!" Tots exclaimed as the placard passed,

“something terrible must have happened in Chicago.” She gazed after the marchers. “Terrible!” she pondered, “terrible and gory!” She looked at me with a troubled expression, “Did you notice anything in the morning papers?” she asked. I hadn’t, so as soon as the parade was over we hurried to the nearest newsstand and purchased a complete list of late editions. We carefully scrutinized each newspaper but not a single reference to any shocking event having transpired in Chicago could we discover. Tots grew thoughtful.

“I wonder if it could possibly be just another ordinary gang slaying?” she ventured, somewhat relieved by the thought. At the Imperial we joined Mother for a delayed lunch. Our waiter wore a small bow of red and black ribbon, so I asked him what gory event the placard referred to.

“*Quien sabe?*” he smiled, shaking his head. “*Quien sabe, Señor*, but wasn’t it a beautiful placard?” He was a most genial waiter. Sitting near us were a group of American tourists.

“Why don’t you ask one of those people?” urged Tots, indicating the group.

“Do you think they’d know?” I questioned.

“They should. I recognized that Harvard accent,” she answered. But the bored individual I spoke to raised his languid eyebrows petulantly and sorrowfully shook his head. After luncheon I interviewed the hotel manager who seemed to know everything and everyone.

“Oh, that placard?” he smiled soberly. “That placard, *Señor*, referred to the terrible riots and murders which happened in your city of Chicago in the year 1894!” He appeared mildly surprised at my expression.

Evening crept silently in from the gulf. A few lights blinked. Magic filled the air—magic and sunset. The giant peaks standing guard over the valley of the ancients to the westward caught the rays of the sinking sun. Night came. The streets filled with people in fresh holiday attire. The military band played in the Plaza. Mother and Tots retired to pack. The music stopped. The crowd dwindled away. Somewhere a dog barked. The deep-throated bell of the ancient Cathedral boomed. It was midnight. I got up from my seat regretfully. It was my last night in Mexico.

I rose early next morning. In addition to the usual multitudinous duties to attend to in order to board the ship there were Tots' souvenirs. Tots has a penchant for souvenirs—a decided penchant. The morning was fresh and glorious with the fragrance of flowers from the Plaza. Patient little donkeys clattered up and down the streets bearing huge loads of fresh vegetables or cans of milk. Men swept the pavements with brooms made from bundles of green bushes attached to the ends of sticks. A heavy butcher's cart passed loaded with halves of beef. A succession of street vendors cried their wares.

Finally we were aboard the ship. Tots checked her souvenirs. Not one was missing. She sighed, relieved.

The hoarse voice of the ship's siren rent the air. The throng on the dock started waving frantic good-byes. The captain barked an order from the bridge. The lines that held us to the shore were cast off and the ship started gently forward, a ripple at her bow.

Slowly we moved out past the breakwater and into the gulf. The venerable time-mellowed buildings. The giant mountains. The great, mysterious, glamorous jungle stretching away to the south in endless green waves grew dim—quickly dim, but not from distance.

THE END

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