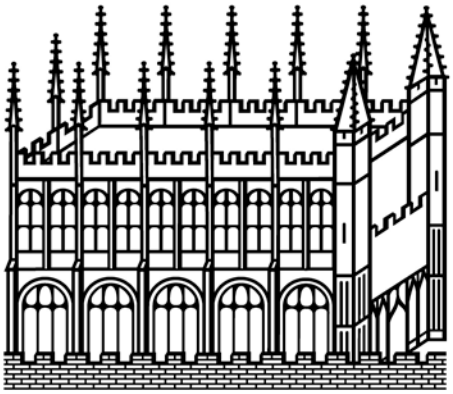

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GITANA

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

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GITANA

Novels by ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

GITANA
THE RAKE AND THE HUSSY
THE PAINTED MINX
THE SUN HAWK
THE DRUMS OF AULONE
THE MAN THEY HANGED
THE MYSTERY LADY
THE GIRL IN GOLDEN RAYS
AMERICA
THE HI-JACKERS
ERIS
THE TALKERS
THE FLAMING JEWEL
THE SLAYER OF SOULS
IN SECRET
THE LITTLE RED FOOT
THE CRIMSON TIDE
THE LAUGHING GIRL
THE RESTLESS SEX
BARBARIANS
THE DARK STAR
THE GIRL PHILIPPA
WHO GOES THERE!
ATHALIE
THE BUSINESS OF LIFE
THE GAY REBELLION
THE STREETS OF ASCALON
THE COMMON LAW
THE FIGHTING CHANCE
THE YOUNGER SET
THE DANGER MARK
THE FIRING LINE
JAPONETTE
QUICK ACTION
THE ADVENTURES OF A MODEST MAN
ANNE'S BRIDGE
THE HAPPY PARROT
THE ROGUE'S MOON
BETWEEN FRIENDS
THE BETTER MAN
POLICE!!!
SOME LADIES IN HASTE
THE TREE OF HEAVEN
THE TRACER OF LOST PERSONS
THE HIDDEN CHILDREN
THE MOONLIT WAY
CARDIGAN
THE RECKONING
THE MAID-AT-ARMS
AILSA PAIGE
SPECIAL MESSENGER
THE HAUNTS OF MEN
LORRAINE
MAIDS OF PARADISE
ASHES OF EMPIRE
THE RED REPUBLIC
BLUE-BIRD WEATHER
A YOUNG MAN IN A HURRY
THE GREEN MOUSE
IOLE
THE MYSTERY OF CHOICE
THE CAMBRIC MASK
THE MAKER OF MOONS
THE KING IN YELLOW
IN SEARCH OF THE UNKNOWN
THE CONSPIRATORS
A KING AND A FEW DUKES
IN THE QUARTER
OUTSIDERS

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GITANA

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
LONDON ✦ NEW YORK ✦ MCMXXXI

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I

A GOOD DOG

THIS damned war with Mexico, which is going to overload us with empire when already we are topheavy!

However, that's the business of Congress. Though from the time of its first establishment Congress has invariably and stupidly misled the Nation, misrepresented it, sacrificed it, and always has come to its senses too late. Too late for those who died of its blundering.

Are the United States already cracking in two? Will the South tumble one way into the Gulf, and the North the other way into the Great Lakes? Is that soft, black African streak to be our rotten line of cleavage? Is another war to follow this Mexican butchery, and our hands still wet with Mexican blood?

Whose blood next is to foul our fingers?

War? Did it really solve our problems with England? Or with those murderous, king-killing French! Or with the poor, cheated, swindled red devils we call "our Indians"?

War with Mexico was utterly unnecessary. Texas always had been able to look after herself, even before

we admitted her into our Republic. Mexico had to let her go. The episode was ended.

Why, then, did war begin?

I'll tell you: the instant you use the word "war" in conversation or in the newspapers you light a match. Talk is tinder. Windy words blow it to a blaze.

By and large we Americans are not war-like. We are too busy. Mexicans are not aggressive. They are too polite. Where did this war start? Somebody meant to have a war. Who? Somewhere, in the background of things, there exists eternally a Sinister Intelligence. It always wants war. It always gets what it wants. It always will.

This Sinister Intelligence deals with the plain people the way that a mischievous boy deals with a setting hen. The naughty boy takes the stupid bird between both hands and swings her to and fro until she is dizzy. Then he sets her down and draws a chalk line straight from the end of her silly beak, about twelve inches long. At the end of the line he writes the word, "fool."

The brainless bird looks at this line until she is cross-eyed. She cannot take her eyes from it; she can't even move her paralyzed head. She'll sit there ridiculously, indefinitely, until picked up and put back on her nest, where presently she comes to with a bewildered, interrogative cluck.

From the composite nose of the Plain People the Sinister Intelligence draws a chalk line, and, at the end of it, writes the word, "war."

And there sits the Public, looking down its common nose along the chalk line, stupefied, ridiculous, until the Sinister Intelligence sets it back on its composite nest, where presently it comes to with a bewildered cluck, squatting upon a china nest-egg labelled "debt."

War never solved anything except the proposition that it takes two fools to quarrel. War is the product of exhausted minds—of the intellectual argument that ends in "You're another!"

What discussion is patiently disentangling, war slashes in two. War never yet has unravelled any knot.

Is it unravelling this Mexican mess of ours? Is it going, some day, to solve our black slave problem?

Damn war! To hell with war! I have a right to say it, who am a soldier. My father was a soldier; his father was one. And his. And I realize, now, that no human problem ever has been solved by soldiers.

Who wanted this war with Mexico? Nobody that anybody ever heard of. Nobody in the United States. Nobody in Mexico. Nobody in Texas. Nobody wanted it; everybody was afraid of it; everybody talked about it. *That's* why it came.

When I say damn war, that doesn't mean that I am a non-resistant, a pacifist, a turner of the other cheek. Because I'll hit back if I can—even hit first if I can. But I'd rather hit that Sinister Intelligence which created my enemy for me and which craftily coaxed us together, face to face.

There is the real enemy—the Contriver of Wars! The Whisperer of the Word.

Well, the world is very old and very stupid—forgetting nothing, learning nothing. And maybe the Sinister Intelligence is as deathless as Satan. Quién sabe!

Take an ordinary man like myself. I was educated at West Point. When I had graduated, there chanced to be no room in the army for me, so I went into business in New York City, translating the Scriptures and hymnals into foreign languages for a parcel of thrifty Methodists. Languages come very easy to me. I travelled in the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America, drumming up trade in Methodist hymnals and Bibles.

We are a psalm-singing and newspaper-reading nation. Like others, I read the papers and carelessly noted the slow progress of human affairs on earth. I read that Texas, a Mexican department, had separated from Mexico, had become a republic, had hoisted a flag bearing a single star, had knocked at our door for admission as a state, had been admitted. Which naturally vexed Mexico; and her polite envoy left Washington, sadly, ceremoniously.

Somebody used the word "war." Then the newspapers used it every day. Then, month after month, year after year, but so gradually that everyday folk never realized what was happening, the little match-flame flickered up brighter, crept through chaff and

tinder, travelling, spreading until there came a sudden puff of smoke and a flash of fire. And the newspapers told us that the United States was on the brink of a war with Mexico. Which scared Mr. Buchanan, but Mr. Polk, President of the United States, looked on with his tongue in his cheek. It is said he wanted war. God knows.

I don't recollect exactly how it happened—some sanctimonious old gander in the Bible-publishing house, where I was employed in the department of foreign translations, said to me that the New York Regiment already was recruiting in Grand Street, and he thought I'd better go to the barracks and try to sell them a lot of Bibles.

I stopped at the recruiting office on my way uptown to my Bleecker Street boarding house. Probably, being a West Point graduate, it was instinctive with me to offer to enlist. After all, my country had fed and educated me. Ex-war-dogs ought to lick the hand that once fed them. And I had been a war-pup, as I say.

I drilled with a converted flintlock for a few weeks in my thick, blue, padded uniform, blue muffin cap, and heavy knapsack. I went about it like a decent man paying a debt. There never is anything else to do about a debt. My comrades were an ignorant, careless, senseless lot.

One evening, two regular officers—gentlemen—came from Governor's Island, inquiring for a linguist. My

company commander produced me and bragged about my "eddication." He was a cheap politician.

What was wanted of me by the two gentlemen of the regular army made no particular impression on me at the time—not even when I was sworn into the service of the United States with a captain's commission in the Military Intelligence Department.

It appeared, however, that I suited the Government in every particular. I was slim, dark, agile, and my dark hair had a slight tendency to curl. I spoke Spanish, French, Italian, German, and had, for pleasure, studied some of the Gypsy dialects, after reading George Borrow's *Bible in Spain*. But it was not until I was on shipboard, bound for Corpus Christi, that I began to realize what really was going to be required of me.

And, toward the end of December, 1845, reporting to General Taylor in Corpus Christi, I understood that I was, now, practically a superintendent of spies, and that my sole business was to gather information and forward it; and hang, if discovered within Mexican lines.

Well, a decent dog, as I say, licks the hand that feeds him, whether or not he likes the flavour. Besides, I did not hate war, then, because I knew nothing about it. My late father gloried in New Orleans; his father prattled of Yorktown. And *his*, of Sir William Johnson and Lake George. War, to me, was all stars and stripes, and Fourth of July fireworks, and the American

Commander-in-Chief was the friendly God of Battle himself.

It was devilish hot in Corpus Christi, except when a norther set in. Large spiders, scorpions, buffalo-gnats, and rattlesnakes roamed the camp. There was a mile of flimsy tents where one froze sometimes, and sometimes was parboiled in one's own sweat. The army had been here, vegetating, since last June.

Drinking water tasted brackish; there remained scarcely any fire-wood for camp fires; hospitals stank and were horribly crowded; discipline had become lax; the volunteers were devils. An idle army always sickens, morally and physically.

There were, under canvas when I arrived, the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, and 8th regiments of United States regular infantry; the 2nd United States dragoons; the 1st and 3rd regular artillery with two field batteries; some noisy volunteer artillery from New Orleans, and a sullen, insubordinate battalion of hell-cats called Texas Rangers. I'll say this for them: they never ran; they lived to kill, and died fighting.

General Taylor, the brave old gentleman who commanded us, knew little of the art of war. He was the sort of officer who despised "fuss and feathers." He looked like a country horse-trader. He was fearless, ignorant, and kind. These characteristics sent many a soldier to unnecessary death.

His two brilliantly-trained sons-in-law were prepared to save his reputation, however, and weave and

adjust suitable laurels to his brainless brow—Bliss, his Adjutant, and Jefferson Davis, Colonel of a Mississippi regiment—the latter the knightly ideal of a soldier and a gentleman.

As for me, I had a thin, ragged tent to myself, and a collection of assorted Mexican and American ruffians under me to serve as spies, messengers, and slouching emissaries whom I was obliged to trust, but who, mostly, could be bought and sold by anybody, and who, I suspected, were as dangerous to me as to the enemy upon whom they were hired to spy.

That, however, was my own funeral, as I had selected them. The spies I trusted more or less were Frank Hazlett and Gordon Bruce, privates in the Texas Rangers—cruel, hard, remorseless men, like the majority of the Rangers, who regarded all Mexicans as mere lobos and coyotes. There was Dan Sleeny, a drifting ranch hand; José Escobar, a muleteer known as Hozy; Emilio Bandara, interpreter, a half-breed Jacarilla Apache; a Mistec Indian named Calixto, my personal servant; and one Pio Pacheco, generally called "Peep," a deserter from some ferocious Presidiale battalion—lithe, brown, handsome as a golden snake—and I never understood, at first, why I trusted him at all.

These—Hazlett, Bruce, Bandara, Sleeny, Escobar, Calixto, and Pacheco—were on my pay-roll. Other ruffians—white frontier scum, beachcombing derelicts, rancheros, and peons—I employed intermittently. A sorry company, uncertain as leopards. This was our Department of Military Intelligence. But the gallant

old blockhead who commanded at Corpus Christi didn't seem to care whether he had any military intelligence at all; he left me to my own devices and resources, and let his bored and weary army sit in ignorance, idleness, and disease while he carelessly and affably waited to see what Mexico was going to do about it all.

One evening, late in February, Bliss, in blue and gold, and all over aguillettes, came clanking into my tent. I was reading the *Bible in Spain*. I loved it.

"For God's sake," said he, "haven't you any orders at all, Captain Maddox?"

"None, sir."

"Have you heard anything?"

"Yes, I've heard that their handsome General Arista is to reinforce the garrison of Matamoras. Torrejon's cavalry may be there."

"Is it certain?"

"I don't know. Nobody seems to care, either."

"I wonder if you could send one or two of your scoundrels into Matamoras. We don't know what's happening in that city. Their General Ampudia, also, may be there with a big force. Mejia certainly remains there commanding the forts."

"Very well, sir," said I.

He asked me to walk over to Headquarters with him. Captain Kirby Smith, 5th infantry, was there—a charming fellow.

The General, as always, proved affably conversational and good-natured.

"Why, yes," said he blandly, "go yourself, if you

like, Captain Maddox. I'm sure *I* don't know what may be going on in Matamoras. Suppose you just run over yourself and find out?"

It was plain enough that he didn't care how many Mexicans were in Matamoras.

The old gentleman never had known the emotion of fear. His suggestion that I, personally, undertake this highly dangerous mission meant nothing in particular to him. He'd as soon have done it himself. He'd saunter into hell out of good-natured curiosity.

I told him drily but respectfully that I'd go myself and learn what really was happening in Matamoras.

"So do," said he pleasantly.

Kirby Smith walked part way back to my tent with me.

"You'd better send in some of your Mexicans," he said. "Save yourself for more important work."

I felt like doing so. There was little satisfaction in risking one's neck for a casual old gentleman in a hickory shirt, who didn't care for information, or give a damn whether the enemy outnumbered him or not.

I'd already been in the city. But I looked over my plan of Matamoras again, for a few minutes, then sent an orderly to fetch Frank Hazlett and Pio Pacheco.

Frank arrived first and I told him to dress like a muleteer and go into Matamoras and find out what he could about General Torrejon's cavalry.

"I'm going in myself," I added, "with Peep. You can pick us up at that Baile Flamenco. If you miss us, come back and tell the General we've been hanged."

"Aw' right, Cap," he drawled.

"You've got money, Frank?"

"Yep, Cap."

"Let Bruce Gordon ride to the river with you and fetch back your horse to Palo Alto. All right, hit your trail."

As he slouched away, Peep came in gracefully, a dark young god in his rags, sombrero, and naked feet.

All his perfect teeth he showed to me with an agile bow which was partly a salute.

"We're going into Matamoras," I said. "José Escobar will ride to the river with us, fetch back our horses, and come again for us at the Palo Alto road. We pick up Frank Hazlett at the Baile Flamenco—perhaps."

He flashed his smile at me: "As your honour pleases."

He went lightly away to summon José, saddle our horses, and cram a few provisions into saddle-bags.

Stars were out and a stinging wind up when we rode out of camp. Alkali dust was flying; whiffs from latrine and mimosa in bloom alternated with sudden capricious gusts of sea-wind.

We met Frank Hazlett and Gordon Bruce on the road. It was a long, dusty journey. When in the chaparral we saw only deer and antelope and wild turkey, and once, in the mesquite, a painted Indian riding madly to get out of our way. Frank took a long shot at him.

The rural folk we encountered were simple, kindly,

courteous. They saluted us politely and bade us go with God.

We were dressed like them, looked like them; they took us for their own kind without further curiosity.

"Vaya con Dios!" they speeded us with grave politeness.

We saw no Mexican soldiers even at Point Isabel—Fronton de Santa Isabel, they called it, but there was no fort there—nothing at all excepting humble homes, a blaze of flowers, and gentle, kindly folk—muy santamente—and though Frank Hazlett swore at one of them and called him a pooch, the man was more hurt than offended.

"Mind your tongue," I said to the brutal Ranger, "you may need even a dog for a friend in this country."

He swallowed the rebuke sullenly, glowering in silence.

Peep, riding beside me, muttered "bobo."

"Where did you get that word?" I asked.

"A Gaja once called me that, Señor Captain."

"Are you a chal, then?"

"No, your honour. My mother was a busni."

"You are part Gypsy, then?"

"God knows, señor . . . Your honour seems to rakker Romanes."

"I speak Gypsy, yes."

"Your honour is a rye?"

"A rye, yes—not sangre—not a Gypsy: a Gorgio and no calo."

"Tan bonita! You locreo seño—I ask your hon-

our's pardon for neglecting the modo correcto—but to hear the Kalo jib from so grand a caballero—Jesu!"

One night, near, at last, to the river, and already in touch with ranchos and rancherías—flimsy huts and tiny hamlets—I told Frank Hazlett to strike the river south of us—at Santa Rosalia, get over as best he could, go in by Puertas Verdes, and keep a civil tongue in his head if he wished to avoid trouble.

He and Bruce gave me slovenly salutes and rode away on their jacos. They had the ignorant ferocity of tigers and I was afraid of what they might do in the city.

It was dawn and very hot when we came through Resaca de Guerrero to the river bank. José took our horses and turned back immediately into the chaparral, skirting the big swamp and pond to return by way of Los Tanques del Ramireno to await us in the woods near the pond southwest of Palo Alto.

Now, as the rising sun flashed out over chaparral, swamp, pond, and desert plain, it brightened the spires and towers and roofs of the pretty city across the river, where already a faint smoke-haze hung.

Country market-folk already were trooping toward town, passing us on their way to the ferry—brown-skinned, dusty, brilliant with blanket and handkerchief, basket laden, talkative, courteous.

We could see a few soldiers across the river, idling about. Fishermen were putting out; bells tinkled from convent and church; a mule train wandered out of the

city, taking the road to Reynosa. God knows it was a peaceful scene in this lovely oasis on the Rio Grande—gentle people just awakened by the glare of God's great lamp, going lazily and confidently about their homely tasks.

Washerwomen sauntering to the water's edge, children innocent of clothing, driving goats out of the chaparral; sellers of tortillas and enchiladas clustering at the ferry.

Children across the water were playing a game while devouring their breakfast tortillas, and their childish voices came clearly to us:

"Angel del oro Bendice á su marques a venido nino —" they sang, chasing one another about in their musical game of tag.

We could hear the cries of the street vendors—the dealers in charcoal, in butter, in tallow—all along the waterside. An Indian woman was calling in a lilting voice, "Gorditas de horno calientes, mi alma!— Corn cakes hot from the oven, my dear!" And the candy seller, "Caramelos de espelma! Bocadilla de coco!" These mingled with the cries of the tamale vendor and the seller of crayfish. Matamoras was awake. Even on our side of the river a boy sold candy. I bought some caramels.

"Yonder comes old Jesus with his skiff," said Peep to me.

We went down to the ferry and got into the great punt which the aged ferryman and his two grandsons poled in for us.

A GOOD DOG

He was old and ragged and burned nearly black by the sun; he took off his tattered hat to us with the grace of a prince.

"God bless you, Don Jesus," said I, "what is the news in Matamoras?"

He knew little and understood less. Soldiers came and went, and there were many generals in gold lace at mass.

"And what description of soldiers are these who come and go, Don Jesus?"

He knew little about soldiers. There were horsemen—lancers in scarlet bonnets, and other lancers in leather jackets. And the usual Presidiales, of whom everybody was afraid. As for the generals in their red and gold, only the Son of God himself could afford to clothe himself in such resplendent glory.

"And the gringo army—have you any news of it?"

He had none. He did not really believe there was any Yankee army, although a drunken ranchero told him he had seen it, and that it was so vast that the whole desert turned a blue colour when it marched.

A number of ragged young girls of the middle and lower classes were trooping down from the town to the river to bathe.

With chaste and guileless simplicity they dropped their single garments on the shore and, naked and brown in the early sunshine, took to the water with the leisurely grace of water-fowl.

Friends ashore, soldiers, fishermen, washerwomen,

exchanged jests and banter with them; smiles flashed, soft cries, laughter came to us across the water.

Peep called to them: "Tan chiquita! I shall take off my clothes and join you!"

"Metese á sacarlos!" they cried, "—go ahead and take them off!"

Their laughter rang. They splashed water toward us.

A girl came down to the shore, dropped her scarlet rags, unbound the scarlet handkerchief from her tawny locks, stood a moment without a trace of self-consciousness, her hands on her hips, looking at us.

She was as white as I am, and had blue eyes.

"Quién es?" I asked Peep.

"That white one? A Gypsy. They call her Silver Knees. You can see why."

"That girl a Gypsy?"

"Ei, Gitana, that niña. Her name, Encarnacion. Is it not true, Don Jesus?"

"God knows," said the old man.

Peep said: "She is a roving dancer. She has but one name and only one garment, and belongs to no parents. An alley rat and not of the Calle Mayor."

He called across the water to her: "God bless you, chibori, what are you doing there, naked before God's Mother?"

"Me lavo," she replied tranquilly, wading out into the water.

"Swim out to us, Silver Knees, and I'll give you a caramel!" said he.

"Very well," said she.

She swam over to our boat, grasped it, flung one dazzling white knee over the gunwale. Her tawny hair, thick and drenched, blinding her, she shook her head free of it, slid back into the water, her slim body gliding beside the boat like a long, silvery fish.

I held out a caramel; her scarlet mouth took it daintily from my fingers. The next instant she dived. After an alarmingly long while her brown head emerged among those of her sportive comrades.

"What is her history?" I asked Peep.

He shrugged: "Do gutter cats have histories? Some Presidiales, they say, found her long ago—after a fight with Navajos—or Apaches—or somebody. I suppose the Gitanos got hold of her later. But she is a true wildcat and belongs to nobody. God, how white are her legs and body!"

We landed and walked slowly toward the city of Matamoras where Peep strolled one way and I another, smoking our cigarrillos as though we had not a care in the world.

As I entered the Calle Mayor the whole street as far as I could see was filled with a slowly moving column of scarlet-bonneted lancers. Red pennons fluttered, lance-points glittered, the buildings echoed the trampling roar of a thousand horses, and a vast dust arose.

II

A GYPSY DANCE

BY nightfall I had collected memoranda sufficient in Matamoras to hang me without even a drumhead court martial.

West of the city was the Anacitas redoubt. I counted the guns and garrison. At Paso Real was another small fort. I noted its contents. A battery of bronze eight pounders and a breastwork connected them. Troops were still working on it. There appeared to be no other defensive works.

The Mexican soldiery which I listed were as follows:

A Battalion of Sappers
The 2nd Light Infantry
The 1st, 6th and 10th of the Line
The 7th Cavalry
A Battalion of the National Guard
Nine companies of rascally Presidiales
A Battalion of Tampico Marines
A Battalion of the Guarda Costa
A Battalion of Field Artillery of five four-gun batteries

I further learned that Generals Ampudia and Torrejon were marching in with reinforcements consisting

of the City of Mexico regiment of light cavalry, the 4th infantry of the line, the 8th regular cavalry, two flying batteries, and the battalions of Puebla, Morelia, and City of Mexico—about three thousand men, not including battalions of the towns of the North.

But what concerned me personally, and rather uncomfortably, was the presence near the city of the Battalion of San Patricio—St. Patrick's Battalion—which was, in fact, the Mexican equivalent of the celebrated French Foreign Legion.

It was commanded by an Irishman named Reilly, and it was composed of foreigners exclusively: Irish, English, Scotch, Germans, French, and renegade Americans.

And here lay the danger to me—the American legionaries, mostly, were deserters from our volunteers and regulars. A number had run away from our camp at Corpus Christi. Some had fled military punishment; some tired of the deadly monotony; some had love affairs in Matamoras; others were natural rovers, adventurers, irresponsible scoundrels of various types.

Anyway, for one reason or another, or for none at all, half a hundred of our rascals were serving the Mexican Government in St. Patrick's Battalion; and were now encamped outside the city on the Reynosa road. I did not desire to run across any of them in the streets or cafés of Matamoras, for there was every chance that some among them might recognize me in

my Mexican disguise. Their uniform was grey turned up with green.

The city of Matamoras reminded me of Saint Augustine in Florida, only it was much larger and there were handsome public buildings and churches. But most streets were narrow and winding. Everywhere one noticed obscure alleys and courts ending in some unlighted cul-de-sac or against some tall garden wall where, behind locked gates, roses rioted and orange bloom and jasmine smothered everything.

Peep had a girl named Lilias Quintana who sold images and toys of clay, baked and painted, in a shop where four cat-alleys met, called the Plazoleta Perdido. The girl, a mere child, was faithful to her lover, and here, under the pepper trees, we met that night, cleansed ourselves, put on clean white cotton shirts and drawers and straw sandals, and, taking brilliant serapes and big, brightly bound hats, went out to pick up further information at the Baile Flamenco, or Gypsy dance.

Lord, what a rat-hole we followed, through the brick walls of a thieves' restaurant and two cafés into a flimsy, candle-lit room made of boards, where was a deafening clamour of fiddles, guitars, flutes, and drums to an accompaniment of shouts, laughter, loud shuffle of sandals, and click of high wooden heels.

The atmosphere had become suffocating—cheap perfume, unwashed skins, sweat, garlic, tobacco smoke united to make a thick and indescribable odour. Everything stank, even the eau-de-cologne on handkerchiefs.

A GYPSY DANCE

Here whirled the scum of the city: Gypsies, soldiers, thieves, chaparral robbers, desert rats, prowlers of purlieu and prairie with their feral females—lithe brown girls, lemon-coloured girls, girls nearly black but not negroid, Indian girls. What was strangely noticeable among these girls—pretty, plain, or homely of face—was the beauty and delicacy of their arms and hands and feet, and the slender grace of their bodies—which is characteristic throughout all Mexico excepting only among those born in great cities.

Beer, pulque, pulque brandy slopped over tables and bar, and the alcohol stink added another odour to the general stench.

Peep was dancing with a Gitana in green skirt and orange shawl, who was very free with her language, her laughter, and her nervous, caressing fingers which hovered ever about his person. Probably she was trying to rob him—which he knew, and flashed his sophisticated and enchanting smile at her, fencing against her agile fingers with his own, both laughing like excited fools.

A Zincali girl, who whispered to me that she was only fourteen, sat on my knee and drank pulque, but could not discover where my money was, and finally didn't care any longer, so that the brandy supply continued.

It was easy to make her babble. She had a lover in the Hussars. That regiment remained in Mexico City. She had another lover in Orizava—a cuirassier—and *his* regiment was ordered to Mexico, too. That much information for a glass of pulque and a curd-cake.

"Two lovers," said she, "are better than one, my pretty rye!" And she sang close to my ear:

"Why should a woman doubt
That to have two lovers is right,
Since if one of her candles goes out
The other remains alight!"

The din in the stifling room increased. Two Gypsy girls, half naked, sashed and jacketed in rainbow rags, and jingling with necklaces and anklets of coins, danced a bolero Tzigane, furiously, amid shrill cries of appreciation, suddenly drowned in a roar of excitement where a fight started between a Presidiale and a Gypsy—but comrades intervened and got their knives away from them.

I gave a drink to a couple of soldiers who became maudlin and begged me to join their artillery regiment. And from them I learned much about the ammunition supply in the Matamoras forts.

But the racket, disorder, and stench of the place were becoming unendurable. There were continual fights; one girl stabbed another amid a horrid screaming; two desert rats cut across the face a marine, who bellowed like a bull and rushed after them bawling for his gun and spurting blood over everybody.

But the raucous music and the dancing never ceased; the packed floor was a mass of swaying dancers; beer splashed the bar, pulque drenched the tables and made pools on the floor under dancing feet.

Peep emerged panting and sweating from the revolting mass. He had a girl by the hand. They flung themselves down on the bench beside me.

I said to him in a low voice: "Be careful in your drinking."

The girl, a half-Indian, was singing-drunk. She had a lover in the lancers, but we could learn nothing from her until she had her brandy.

She was a big, handsome girl with a devil in her great black eyes. She jumped up upon a bench and gave a toast at the top of her lungs:

"To the lips and past the gums— Look out, belly, here she comes!"

And she drained her glass and hurled it across the bar.

"Now what do you want to know about my lover in the lancers!" she cried. "You Gajos look like a pair of spies to me!"

"For God's sake, get rid of her," I muttered to Peep, "she'll ruin us with her shouting."

However, nobody seemed to pay her any attention, and after passionately embracing Peep she produced castanets and whirled away in a crazy dance all by herself.

"Why didn't you talk to her in Romani?" I asked him.

"Yes," he said, "I should have. It's safer for us."

He stood up to watch her safely out of sight.

"Hey!" said he, "yonder comes the dancer, Silver

Knees. Wait till they see her, then you'll hear a shout."

The shout already drowned his voice:

"Del O Del baxt! God give you luck, Silver Knees!" rose the shrill cries as the dancers caught sight of her. "T'anes baxtalo! Sastipe!"

"Nais tuke prala!" replied the girl coolly.

"La Jota Aragonesa!" roared the crowd, demanding that she dance that dance for them.

An Indian girl cried out that she wished to dance it with her, but there came a shout of protest from every Gypsy.

"It's a Gaja dance!" insisted the Indian girl; but the Gypsies shouted: "Rom Romesa! Gajo Gajesa!"—Gypsy with Gypsy, Gentile with Gentile! "Dance for us, Silver Knees! You are a Gypsy!"

"I don't know if I am," she said, smiling, looking around her. "Tell me the truth!"

"Money is better than truth," cried the Gypsy girls, laughing and jingling their strings of coins. "Don't you want money, Silver Knees?"

"Ci mangav love—numai cacimus," said she with a shrug—"Not money—truth! However—where is my Gitana among the gachi, then?"

"Here she comes, hijita! Here she is, chibori, little queen! Here, little witch, chovi hanita!"

The music burst out into La Jota Aragonesa; the Gypsy girl, who had sat on my knees singing of two lovers, came gliding out to meet Silver Knees.

Then, together, they began to dance.

"Mother of God," muttered Peep in my ear, "how angelic white is this young hell-cat! Like a breezy river-reed she bends and sways in grace. So chaste she seems, O Jesus, that a caramel would not melt between her pure lips of a child!

"And you should see her gulp her pulque! Oh, Virgin intact, she seems as virginal as art Thou!—and no doubt has had a hundred paying lovers. . . . And look, compadre, at the blue of her eyes like wild iris in a bog!—colour of spring skies. They paint angels with such eyes—eyes like that gutter cat's!"

The dance stopped with a resonant twang of guitars; a shower of copper and silver coins fell around the two girls. With superb condescension they gathered them, counted them, heads together, divided them.

A slim, girlish-looking soldier—a drummer lad in sandals and sweat-stained green tunic piped with red—came up and bashfully asked Silver Knees for a waltz which the fiddles had begun to play.

"No," she said, "you are only a little boy. I am thirsty, and I know you haven't any money to buy pulque for me."

A shout of laughter arose around her, the discomfited soldier reddened, laughed, and turned to ask another girl to dance with him.

Peep called out: "Silver Knees, you shall drink your pulque with us!"

She looked across the floor, arched her eyebrows insolently; then, seeming to recognize us, came slowly toward us.

"Very well, I accept," said she calmly, sauntering up to where we awaited her.

She seated herself on my knee, considered me gravely out of her clear iris-tinted eyes:

"Have you another caramel for me, señor?" she inquired.

I had two or three in my pocket. She ate them leisurely, watching the dancing from her perch on my knee.

She sipped her pulque, then slid one satin-slippered foot to the floor and tapped time to the music with her toe.

"You wish to dance with me?" she asked absently.

We got up and danced until the music changed to a wild Gypsy air, then she returned to her seat on my knee and resumed her pulque.

"I wish I had some honey-cake with cheese," said she.

"You may have it," said I.

She looked around at me: "Tiene vuestra merced algun dinero?"

"Yes, I have enough money to buy you honey-cakes."

Peep fetched a platter full. The girl ate unhurriedly, excusing herself for taking another.

"I have not eaten today," she remarked.

"You've enough lovers, then," said Peep. "What is the matter?"

"I haven't any lovers."

"I know four soldiers who have been your lovers," he insisted.

"It's a lie," said she, reaching for another cake. "You're a laughing liar, anyway," she added, smiling at him, "—your pretty eyes are full of lies!"

Then, looking around at me: "This señor pleases me better. Is your honour rich?"

"Not very."

"Cuanto dinero?"

"Mother of God!" cried Peep, "do you think anybody is going to buy love of you, you lousy kitten?"

"I don't love for money, and I am not lousy," she said calmly. "You, pretty boy, are full of jolly lies. But *he*—" with a nod toward me, "looks as though the truth were in him." She added under her breath, and in the Gypsy language: "Ci mangav love—numai cacimus—I don't want money, only truth."

"Gitana san tu?—are you a Gypsy?" I asked in that tongue.

Silver Knees turned her head and stared at me, astounded.

"Ci janav," she said slowly, "I don't know. I speak Romanes—the Kalo jib. You speak it brokenly—pos-Romanes!"

She leaned nearer, her slender fingers on my shoulders:

"Kalo Rom san tu?" she demanded, "—are *you* a real Gypsy?"

"Why not, then?"

"Katar aves, prala—whence come you, brother?"

I passed my arm around her: "I come from a place

so far away that it would take all night for me to count the miles for you."

"I won't pass the night with you," she said; "I don't love you."

"Doubtless," said Peep, "you've spent many a night with paying soldiers in the garrison."

"Gay liar," said she, "I have not yet been in love so how can that be true?" And, to me, "You are a strange Rom. But I am glad you are one."

"Shall we have a bottle of champagne on it, Silver Knees? Do you like champagne? Kames mol?"

"I kiss it!" she said, enraptured, "—me cumidavle! Wait! They are calling for me! Wait while I dance. Will you?"

I nodded, smilingly, for the roar of voices drowned our voices.

So she stepped slowly across the empty floor, glanced coolly at the noisy throng encircling her, then, suddenly the wild Gypsy music caught her as a whirlwind catches a scarlet maple leaf, and her red skirt below and red shawl above became twin flames between which her supple figure—a misty blur—flashed naked.

"Sangre de Dios!" murmured Peep, his eyes blazing, "she is the ghost of the rosa incarnada! She is a tiger-cat playing with hell-flames! God himself stands astonished in His Heaven to behold this siempre flor —this chovihani—this Gypsy witch!"

A tremendous shout, a rain of coins, Silver Knees sauntering about collecting them, fanning herself, but missing no coin however small.

A number of sandalled soldiers of all arms, and several Gypsies, were hovering amorously around her—chavos with hats cocked over one eye, wearing espadrilles—here a jondo strumming a guitar and rolling impassioned eyes at her, there a couple of picadores and alguacils in gala dress, strutting like pigeons to captivate her careless eye and fancy.

When they became too importunate and crowded her, "Ca!" said she, sweeping them with an impertinent glance, "—it is because I have money that you beggars come smelling around!"

Peep laughed and called out to her: "Avali, hermana mia! The trotting dog finds the bone!"

A soldier, in a grey uniform faced with green, pushed through the circle, took hold of Silver Knees by the naked arm and looked threateningly at Peep.

"Mind your business, you muleteer," he said to Peep. "This Gypsy wench doesn't belong to you!"

I said to Peep: "Look out! That's a soldier in St. Patrick's Battalion, who may recognize us."

Silver Knees was trying to twist loose from his grasp.

"May God blot out your name!" she stormed. "Let go of me, you Irish pooch."

"I want you tonight, niña," he said with a drunken leer, getting hold of her again and dragging her about.

Her language became frightful. She swore at him in Gypsy, Spanish, and English: "Let go of me or I'll teach you what my garter guards!" she said fiercely.

"Silver knees it guards," he cried laughingly.

"And a silver knife, you dancing goat!"

"Que disparate querida mia!"

"Que Dios remate tu nombre! Take that, then—"

Her knife slashed the grey sleeve of his tunic; I sprang forward, jerked her free of the bleeding fellow who regarded the slash with astonishment. Then he became frantic:

"I'll kill that damned maja," he yelled, reaching for his bayonet.

"What about the lois prale!" shouted Peep, giving him a violent shove. And instantly a dozen big, sweating Gypsies had hold of the yelling Irishman, kicking and pushing him through the door into the alley.

"Help!" he shouted, "help, for St. Patrick's! These damned muchachos are killing me! O'Rourke! Kenna! Dineen!—"

Grey and green uniforms and gaudy Gypsy rags were blended in a fighting mass already; knives flashed; bayonets glittered; a sort of strangled ferocious roar filled the room.

"A corrida!" cried Peep. "I have been a diestro, too, in my day!"

He started for the tumult, his knife glittering, ambushed behind his rolled serape.

I was holding back Silver Knees with one hand; I now seized Peep with the other.

"For God's sake, keep quiet," I whispered; "there's Jim Martin, who deserted from my regiment!"

The scallawag, who had been staring at us, began

to push and shoulder his way toward us through the excited crush.

"You," he shouted at me, "in your Mexican serape —you look like Captain Jack Maddox, and, by God, I believe you are! Spy! Espia! Death to the spy!"

I said in Spanish: "I don't understand you. Are you trying to pick a quarrel?"

"You dirty hound!" he yelled, "you can't fool me!" And he began to bellow in his bull-like voice: "Look out, St. Patrick's! There's traitors and spies in the place! Guard the two doors till we catch them—"

I hit him a terrific smash in the face and he sprawled. But from everywhere in the tumult came fierce Irish yells— "The dirhty spies, lave us at them! Bar the two doors an' fetch a rope!"

Peep could have deserted me. But he pulled his pistol, menacing Mexican, Spaniard, Gypsy, and foreigner.

The girl caught my hand and began to drag me after her: "Behind the bar," she panted, "la tercera puerta —the third door—"

"Show us the way, then—"

"Follow!"

The crowd shrank back before the nervous sweep of our pistols; we backed in behind the bar. Only our pistols, always in motion, were delaying the enraged rush to overwhelm us. Hoarse voices cursed us; a violent forward movement of Mexican and foreign soldiery started the whole yelling mass toward us.

"Run!" cried Peep.

I saw the girl gliding through a small doorway lighted by a lantern. Peep darted after her; I shattered the lantern with my pistol butt and followed, stumbling wildly through darkness out into a dim maze of wagons and tents under a starlit sky. We were in a Gypsy encampment.

"Gypsies in trouble!" cried the girl, as we ran on among the tents; "put out your lanterns, brothers! The Gajos are after us!"

Instantly torch, candle, and lantern on pole, tent, and wagon went out like magic. There was a hurry of dim shapes, cautious words, grey figures scarcely visible in the dark, that whispered in our ears, caught our hands, guided us, while behind us the baffled yelling came in fiercer bursts and outcries; and we could hear the gallop of patrols already attracted by the tumult.

We were under trees, now, then suddenly emerged among the ruins of a deserted hacienda and became tangled in the rank growth of the patio, floundering among wild roses.

The girl led us on into and through the roofless house, lighted only by the stars; on across a crevasse in the garden wall where wild orange trees grew; and, abruptly, we were inside the city again—some remote quarter I never had seen—a maze of black, dirty, crooked alleys and lanes deep between crazy houses of wood or sun-baked brick, which leaned over the streets so far that their flimsy balconies nearly touched.

Shadowy cats fled before us in the starlight; the

scent of jasmine and heliotrope mingled with gutter stinks; there was not a light in any street or alley; not a sound in the deathly stillness.

The girl led on, breathing heavily; Peep fell back to my side, panting:

"This is the quarter of the Kairin—the house-dwelling Gypsies—the Ursari Bear Tamers and the chalanes—horse-dealers," he murmured with broken breath. "Doubtless little Silver Knees lives here, far from the Calle Mayor, among these dirty casetas. Carramba! What an escape—thanks to the intervention of God's blessed Mother!— That rushing bull of an Irishman—that cursed chocada—how your honour felled him—"

He began to gurgle and laugh; and, at that moment, the girl turned into a pitch-black cul-de-sac.

As we came up I felt her little hand searching for us in darkness; I kept hold of her fingers; Peep grasped my sleeve, and we entered a door.

There was straw under foot and it smelled like a stable. The girl was already climbing a ladder; we followed, and came into a starlit room which gave on a low roof.

Here the girl flung herself on a blanket-covered pile of straw, breathing fast and brokenly. Peep went out on the roof for a cautious exploration.

"Sit down," she said to me in English.

When she had recovered her breath a little: "What is a spy, then, that they wished to tear you to pieces?" she demanded.

"There is no use denying I am an American officer," I said.

"Ca! Is there, then, an American army somewhere in Mexico, coming to destroy us?"

"There is no war, so far. There is an army. It comes peacefully, but only to the Rio Grande."

"Here?"

"No, it halts on the farther bank."

"Then why do you come into Matamoras secretly, dressed like a peon?"

"I was ordered to come. . . . Your name is Encarnacion, isn't it?"

"Oh, I have names of all sorts—a Gypsy name—a Gypsy name—in mockery—Esmeralda—which means 'betrothal ring'—a jest, you see, because neither chal nor Gajo ever would marry me. . . . My Spanish name is Encarnacion—the nuns of the Incarnation christened me—that was before I ran away from them—"

"You ran away from a convent?"

"My feet must always move, señor."

"Are you really Gypsy?"

"My feet are, anyway. Very restless, señor. . . . So when the chalanes camped near the mission, over the wall I went—God only knows why—and my Gypsy feet have been moving ever since. I was seven when soldiers took me to the nuns; I was eight when my feet took me into the open world. Wild birds to the woods, señor."

"Are you Gypsy born?"

"God knows. Are there white Gypsies?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, the Comanches caught us when I was seven years old. And maybe when they killed my father and mother and burned them up in our wagon, two Gypsies died in the flames that day. We were on our way to Oregon, I remember. We spoke English and Spanish and my mother spoke Gypsy; I do not recollect hearing my father speak Romanes. That is all I remember concerning myself, señor."

She got up, went to the roof, stood listening. Peep glanced at her and nodded.

"A patrol," she whispered. "Do you hear the horses?"

I heard them trotting along some unpaved, unseen street not far away—heard the rattle of lances in stirrup-buckets, the faint ring of sabre, spur, and housings.

"Lancers," she motioned with her childish lips.

Two or three horsemen were groping about the mouth of our impasse.

"Encarnacion," I whispered, "do you still stand our friend?"

"Gypsy to Gypsy, do you ask me that, prala?"

"And if I were a rye, querida mia?"

"And if you be chal or hidalgo, or seem like a Gajo or Gorgio, yet the tender Mother of God has made for you a Gypsy heart and given you Gypsy speech;—and what more to a man is there than these two, prala?"

"May God remember you, Encarnacion. We had

been hanging to a rafter at this instant, save for you."

"The Irishmen?"

"Or the Mexicans. But what does the corpse care whether it was a horse or a mule that kicked it to death?"

She laughed: "How droll you are, your honour! And how kind."

"Mi alma," said I lightly, "death is as funny or as sad as the mirada. It depends upon the look you exchange with Death when you catch sight of the old goat!"

She laughed and laughed. Peep came in from the roof, saying that the peloton of lancers had ridden on, and that it was time to go.

Silver Knees stood up very straight.

"Are you going?"

"Ei, mi alma."

"Where?"

"Back to those who sent me, chiquita."

"Mother of God, sir, why should your departure meddle with my heart? Stay the night, prala; I don't mean bed with me—"

"Take us to the river, miri pen—my sister; we must go."

"Djas?" she asked pitifully, "will you go then?"

"Dila! She is crazy. She is in love with your honour," muttered Peep.

"No," she said vehemently, "—not the kind of love that desires to bed with him! But he meddles with my heart when he speaks of departing—"

She suddenly flung both arms around my neck and kissed my hair, passionately:

"Mother of God, prala, don't go while our two hearts are so hot, and leave me lonely under these pretty stars!"

When at last I managed very gently to put her away, she stood with her face averted, buried in her tawny hair which her slim hands pressed to her eyes like a handkerchief.

"Devla—devla," she whimpered, then flung her hair free of her face.

"Very well, I understand. You are a spy—espia—bersali in the Gypsy tongue. Your army will come to Matamoras and cut my throat!"

"My little dove," said I, "do you believe it?"

"I don't know," she cried passionately. "Anyway, you shall learn that it will be the throat of a bedora they are slitting—and I am not lying to you either, whatever is said about me and whatever you think!"

"After all," said Peep soothingly, "—that is between you and God's Virgin Mother, whether or not you are as immaculate as you say. We love you anyway for your kindness to us, Silver Knees."

She began to cry: "Ask any remacha what success he has had with me, even if I am a dancer, rocamblo. That's all I want of you—friendship—not money—I am no orzica—osté—I seek no pirando pirabar—"

All that filth coming from her whimpering, unspoiled mouth of a child gave me a strange sensation of anger and shame—though I knew the dirty frank-

ness of Gypsy speech which so oddly contrasts with their proverbial personal chastity.

"If you really are our friend," said I coldly, "you would guide us to the river and bid us go with God."

Her whimpering ceased instantly. She looked at me through tears.

"Bas!" she said simply. I gave her my hand; she led me down the ladder—Peep following—through an endless row of stables where unseen horses stamped, stirred, snorted, out across a corral into a meadow.

Now through mesquite, now along a narrow path in dense chaparral, now among trees, now skirting marshes and starlit ponds and pools, she led us through the dark.

Now, faintly, we caught the distant sing-song hail of the sentries calling from post to post in the Mexican fashion. Against the stars we saw lancers slowly riding, two and two, patrolling the river.

"Where do you wish to go?" she whispered.

"Toward Palo Alto."

"This way, then."

Now we descended a high bank and were at the water's edge where a boat lay.

The girl pulled a pair of oars from the mesquite; Peep took them, launched the boat, and held it.

"The boat is not mine to give. Take it, all the same. Also, you will need money. Take it—" she pulled a knotted handkerchief from between her slight, young breasts and began to unknot it.

"No, no," I said. "We have friends awaiting us.

You are kind—kiss us, little sister, and bless our journey!"

She began to whimper again: "Vaya con Di—Dios—"

I kissed her forehead, but she clung to me in a passion of tears—

"Go with God," she whispered in a strangled voice, "—Oh, Mary Mother, how my heart is hurting me!—Sangre de Dios, what ails me then that a strange white chal should leave me desolate!"

"I shall not forget you," said Peep gratefully, and, standing up in the boat, he gave her a loud smack between the eyes.

Her face wet with tears, she touched my forehead with her lips, then took my head in both hands and fiercely kissed my mouth.

"Oh, brother," she gasped, "oh, brother—it is my regalo I give—the first ever to any man!—"

The river was about two hundred yards wide and quite swift.

When we landed under the forty-foot bank on the Palo Alto side, I looked back. But I could not see our little Silver Knees—only a vast darkness against a glittering shoal of stars.

III

PRAIRIE SCUM

THAT gallant old numbskull, brevet Brigadier General Zachary Taylor, appeared to be only mildly interested in my report that the Mexican army, in and approaching Matamoras, already outnumbered our own army two or three to one.

"Well, well, Maddox," said he genially, "we are likely to have a busy time of it if war comes."

Wearing a checked shirt, an old brown duster, and carpet slippers, he sat on a camp-stool in his big tent, a glass of lemonade at his elbow, glancing absently over my report.

"Well, well," said he in his tranquil, kindly manner, "these fellows may give us some little trouble, yet. I guess so. How did they strike you, Maddox; do they look like good soldiers?"

"Yes, General—except the Presidiales and the Northern Towns Battalions. Their cavalry are fine—their lancers—and the line regiments are a sturdy lot. The cavalry and the line will fight if decently led. So will the artillery, the marines, and their renegade St. Patrick's Battalion. As for the Presidiales and National Guard, I don't know, but I doubt if they amount to much."

"Do tell," murmured the General, stifling a yawn. "Well, now, Maddox, I'm certainly much obliged to you. . . . Have some lemonade—" He poured out a glass of it for me and hitched his camp-stool closer to me to place a kindly hand upon my shoulder.

"I'm going to tell you in confidence just what I'm aiming at, Maddox. Here's a secret; I've orders to march to the Rio Grande."

"Then it's to be war, General."

"No, t'ain't, sir. It's just a good-natured, friendly advance to the Rio Grande. If they get mad, I can't help it. If they want to fight I ain't a-going to run, neither." He smiled, patted my shoulder.

"So that's what I aim to do, Maddox; pitch tents opposite Matamoras and pay 'em a neighbourly visit. . . . The fleet sails for Fort Isabel with supplies. My base will be there. It's handy and healthy, they tell me—barring snakes and centipedes."

"Yes, sir, it is," said I, smiling; "I passed through it on my way to Matamoras. I thought it best to make that detour."

"Any troops there?"

"None, sir, and no fort. But it could be easily defended."

"I guess so." He smiled: "We got to defend our pork and powder, Maddox. . . . What's the Arroyo Colorado like?"

"It's about eighty yards in width, General. The banks average fifteen feet high. There's a ford on the Point Isabel road, about four feet deep. On the

Mexican side there are woods and thick undergrowth; on ours, clear fields backed by woods. You'll find a sketch of it among the papers in my report. Also a sketch of Point Isabel."

"Oh, well," said the old gentleman, "we'll go through anyway, but I hope they ain't a-going to act foolish when we cross the Arroyo."

He finished his lemonade, patted my shoulder:

"Now I've told you what I'm a-going to do. Now, here is a complication: some of our dragoons have had a brush with the Comanches near Bexar. I hear we killed some of them. Now, I don't want a muss-up with the Comanches, Maddox, not just now, anyway."

"No, sir, it would be rather bad for us."

"Very," he said mildly. "When I got a tom wild-cat by the tail, I ain't got a great deal to hang onto. No, sir. And I need both hands and a good holt.

"If I had three hands I might reach for the female, which is the most fiercest. But I ain't got four hands."

He smiled, and so did I.

"Well, Maddox," he said, "you better try to get in touch with the she-cat—the Comanches. You talk to them pretty. You got a way with you. You tell them all about how the Great White Father in Washington loves 'em. He'd like to skin them—but you needn't say so. Tell 'em he loves Comanches. . . . And after this Mexican fuss is settled, mebbe I'll warm their buttocks for them. Teach 'em to fool with my dragoons."

"Very well, sir," said I, surprised and troubled, "but I don't speak Comanche or Navajo, sir."

"Jeff Davis tells me you can converse in the sign language."

One of my spies, a half-breed Apache, had taught me the simple sign language while I idled in my tent at Corpus Christi.

"I think my Apache interpreter and I can get along, sir," said I. "When shall I start?"

"You better start right away," he remarked, snapping a wood-tick from his duster and setting his carpet-slippered heel on it. "And, Maddox, when you're done with the Comanches, you just take a passear around by Hidalgo—I mean I want you should kinda take a walk-around and kinda peek into their back door and see what they're doing over Matamoras way. Understand, Maddox?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right," he said; "when you're done with the Comanches and have peeked into the back door of Matamoras, just skin around by the hacienda of the Palma family and look me up somewhere along the Matamoras road. I'm a-going to march on the tenth. I'll be on the Nueces on the eleventh, at Agua Dulce on the twelfth, then by San Fernando and the Filisola Wells to the Arroyo Colorado, which I'm a-going to cross, no matter what they do. And after that," he added genially, "you'll find me a-mosying somewheres on the Point Isabel-Matamoras road."

"Yes, sir."

"And by that time," said he, "we'll know whether there is a-going to be war or peace between the United States and Mexico."

We both smiled. There was war already. Only the millions of honest folk of the United States and Mexico—the plain, sober, busy people did not know it. Some evening, very soon now, a dead lancer lying in the chaparral beside his dead horse would start the blaze of war from the Rio Grande to the Pacific.

Colonel Cross came into my tent while I was getting ready to leave. He said with a shrug:

"Old Zack is sending you out to chase Indians, to be rid of you. He knows nothing of the art of war. He's not a West Pointer. All he knows how to do is to slog along and batter his way into the enemy country and fight 'em as he finds 'em. Some day," he added, "the old blockhead will get his belly full."

That night we crossed by water; and, thirty-six hours later, I was riding along the Nueces, north by west. The moon, now, was nearing its half; the weather was like July.

I had with me a small troop of scouts—Pio Pacheco, or Peep; José Escobar, or Hozy; Dan Sleeny; the two Texas Rangers, Frank Hazlett and Gordon Bruce; Calixto, a gentle Mistec Indian, and my orderly; and Emilio Bandara, the half-breed Apache, my chief guide and interpreter, and from whom, during the shamefully idle days at Corpus Christi, I had very easily

learned the universal sign language used by Indians of all nations.

We slept that night near a pond of clear sweet water, set in a rich country of prairie and delightful woodlands. At dawn I had a heavenly bath; and, a few minutes later, our little cavalcade rode out through a real terrestrial paradise.

Everywhere the prairie was gay with wild flowers—rosy phlox and fire-weed bloom, vast patches of celestial blue and purple where acres of lupins and spiderwort blossomed; hollows brilliant with primroses between "mots," or groves of stunted locust-trees in fragrant flower. And everywhere towered the slender stems of Spanish bayonet set with exquisite masses of snow-white blossoms.

And everywhere flashed big, golden-banded butterflies, their velvet-black wings terminating in two delicate tails.

As for game, never in my life had I dreamed that there were so many wild animals in America. Innumerable herds of deer moved in every direction. Bandara remarked that we had passed at least ten thousand of them in a single day.

Wild horses were to be seen everywhere. Herds of antelope stared at us across the mesquite. Bands of peccaries—little neat-looking, slate-coloured wild boar—trotted about their fierce business between chaparral and mot. Bandara advised us to let them alone.

Everywhere thousands and thousands of wild geese

and ducks were swimming in the sloughs and ponds or flying in angular formation or in great, wavering strings. Their clamour was incessant. Curlew called, snipe squawked and darted into crazy, skyward flight; tall, solemn, respectable-looking cranes stalked in dignified groups across the plains, like parties of distinguished old gentlemen promenading for their health.

But the most impressive of all creatures were the superb wild bulls who lifted their magnificent heads from the reeds to glare at us.

These are my memories of that six-day ride into the Northwest, between chaparral and marsh, mot and prairie.

Not a human habitation, not a human being, nothing but this God-created paradise unpolluted by the filthiest of all living creatures upon our earth—the sinister creature that the Almighty had made in His own image.

One morning Bandara, riding beside me, pointed skyward. There was a flock of buzzards wheeling in narrow circles up there; another flock swooping in wider circles nearer the ground.

Something lay dead yonder. Or the attraction might be offal from an Indian encampment.

For, although the row with the Comanches had occurred at Bexar, Bandara, always full of mysterious intuition or information, or both, expected to find a Comanche camp near a certain prairie, encircled by a series of ponds between two mots, known as the Gar-

den of the Angels. And we were not far from it, now.

There was no state of war between the Comanches and our Government at present. The clash with the dragoons had been most unfortunate, but it did not mean war by any means.

I realize now, however, that we took our lives in our hands, and that everybody knew it except myself.

Presently Bandara made out a haze of smoke hanging among the trees. The blue tint was so faint that I had not noticed it at all.

"Comanches," he said. He added, calmly, "And here they come, sir."

Of course they had discovered us before we had seen them. Bandara had expected that. But that they should burst upon our view at a dead run gave me a shock.

Now Bandara led us into an open mot of locust-trees where, in a hollow, we tied our horses. Then, in a circle, each man to a tree with rifle loaded, we awaited the headlong arrival of the most ferocious Indians in North America.

They appeared very quickly, flogging their war ponies—rushing streaks of fluttering feathers, skimming the grass like gaudy birds. Feathered lances and war-crests glimmered above be-feathered shields of painted bull's hide. "Houp! Houp! Yip! Yip!" they yelped as they came tearing toward the mot where we awaited them, as though they meant to sweep through the trees like a wave of prairie fire.

But at a hundred yards, with fierce falsetto yells, they pulled up their spotted ponies in a wide half-circle, and a single warrior, stark naked except for a scarlet clout flanked with two antelope tails, rode out through the flowery meadow, pulled up, and lifted his slim lance.

"Come, your honour," said Bandara to me. "These are Quahada Comanches and seem ready to parley."

Peep fetched my horse and Bandara's; we mounted and rode to the edge of the mot, our loaded rifles across our saddles.

The strange mounted warrior sat stock-still on his pony, watching us.

I flung up my arm, palm outward; up went his arm; I rode slowly toward him; and we met, midway between his mounted warriors and our party.

With my rifle balanced across my pommel, and using both hands, I offered him a friendly greeting in the sign language.

He returned it, warily.

Then, by sign, questions and answers followed:

I: "I come with an embassy from General Taylor, to speak in friendship to the Quahada—the Antelope Eaters."

HE: "We are Quahada Comanche. Speak."

I: "General Taylor has heard that there has been a fight between American Long Knives and the Quahada, near Bexar. Is it true?"

HE: "It is true."

I: "Has Quahada blood been spilled?"

HE: "The Long Knives also bled. We paid them back, drop for drop. The debt is settled."

I: "Have scalps been taken?"

HE: "None. It was a fight, not a war."

I: "Then there is no war between the Quahada and the Long Knives?"

HE: "The Quahada are not afraid if the Long Knives wish a war."

I: "Nor are the Long Knives afraid. But they do not want a war. Why should we have war? The Great White Father at Washington loves the Comanche. The Quahada are his children. Our Long Knives at Bexar had no orders to quarrel with the Quahada who are our brothers. The Great White Father is very sad because his children have quarrelled. He desires all his children to live together in peace and friendship."

HE: "It was the fault of the Long Knives at Bexar. We of the Quahada have no quarrel with them. But we have a quarrel with the Navajo. Why did the Long Knives interfere when we drove off the Navajo horse-herd?"

I: "It was a mistake. The Long Knives mistook the Quahada for Yaquis and feared for their own wagons."

I beckoned Bandara to come up. The Comanche never stirred.

There ensued a silence; the Comanche stared fiercely at us both out of brilliant black eyes.

"Speak to him if you can," I said in Spanish to Bandara.

Bandara spoke rapidly in the Apache tongue. The Comanche replied.

Presently both men pushed their horses forward and shook hands. Then the Quahada chief offered me his hand and I took it.

Bandara said to me: "It is settled. This is a war party hunting for Navajos. This is Lame Wolf, a Comanche chief. He says that his young men would like to smoke the pipe with your honour."

"Very well," said I, "let us smoke together."

And in a little while these fierce, crazy-brained pagans, and my own men, were seated amicably in a circle around our fire, where venison and antelope were roasting, passing the red pipe from lip to lip.

I felt as though I were dining with a pack of pumas. They were the wildest-eyed creatures I ever had seen on earth. And they were utterly untamed, ferocious, irresponsible—and even had the rank, feral smell about them—a strong, wolf-like stink natural to their species—and not because of their dirty, painted and greased bodies.

Bandara talked amiably to them, translating into Spanish what they said, for my benefit.

They boasted of their success against the Navajo. They impudently bragged of atrocities perpetrated on white people before the latest peace was made—of horrors practiced on poor emigrants along far frontiers.

The Lame Wolf, with a diabolical leer, pulled from his antelope-tail flaps a knotted calico rag, and, undoing it, displayed the dry, smoke-cured hand of a white woman. In the packet there was, also, one of the new daguerreotypes, the oval, pinchbeck frame of which dangled from a cowrie necklace around his neck.

"He says," interpreted Bandara, "that he took this woman's hand, and the picture, in 1837. He says that this dead hand is big medicine, and that no bullet can ever harm him while he carries it."

I reached over and picked up the pitiable relics of this murdered white woman. The hand, which bore a tarnished wedding ring, was mummified but shapely —the bones small and fingers delicately formed. I looked at the oval bit of lacquered tin. On it was a tinted picture of a child—a daguerreotype of a blue-eyed girl in curls and gingham dress.

The child's face was like a lovely cameo, delicately incised as the clear-cut features of a little Egyptian princess. A shock of tawny hair framed the face.

I showed it to Peep.

"Mother of God," said he, "it is Silver Knees!"

"That's what I think," said I. "She must have looked like that."

"She is only seventeen now," said he. "Where did this tiger of a Comanche find it?"

I spoke to Bandara. He talked to the Lame Wolf who was tearing with teeth and fingers at a strip of half-cooked venison.

Between grunts and gulps and belches he answered;

and Bandara translated the story to us in Spanish:

"Six years after the Black Hawk war," said he, "the Lame Wolf, then a young man not yet a warrior, desired a charm. But the Comanche Medicine Men were no good; a Piute killed one of them, a Clamath another, and a Digger shot a bird arrow in another. So he says that when he saw that even a Digger could harm a Quahada Sorcerer, he made up his mind to pay a visit to Black Hawk's celebrated Prophet, Naopopi, and ask him for a charm against bullets.

"Naopopi told him to take the left hand of a white woman who had a girl-child with her, and cure and smoke it. The Lame Wolf never had a chance to do this until emigrants began to travel again.

"It was there he killed this white woman and a man with her; and he severed the hand and cured and smoked it. The dead he burned in their own wagon. The child he took up on his horse.

"He says he would have made a Comanche squaw of her, only that a squadron of Mexican Presidiales surprised his band, and he had to drop the child and gallop for his life."

"Where did this happen?" I asked.

After a lengthy conversation: "He says that the man and woman were killed and their bodies and the wagon burned in the chaparral on the Pecos where are three springs of water together—two bitter and salt and hot, and one sweet and cold.

"He says that his band plundered the wagon, stripped from it the tires and all ironwork; that there

was an iron chest in the wagon which they lifted out and opened. It was too heavy to break up or carry away, and had only papers in it, so they left it in the chaparral, burned the wagon and bodies, and rode away, only to be surprised and chased by Sonora lancers from the Presidio near Pecos."

"Ask him what were the names of the white people he murdered."

But the Lame Wolf didn't know.

"Where are these three springs on the Pecos?" I asked.

Both Peep and Bandara knew the springs very well.

"That," said I to Peep, "is probably where our little Silver Knees of Matamoras lost her father and mother. I believe this is her picture. When this trouble with Mexico is ended, you and I will ride there and look through the chaparral for the iron chest with its papers. It might be very fortunate for Silver Knees to learn who she really is."

"Did she tell your honour this same story that this filthy Comanche has just told to Bandara?" he asked.

"She did. And that picture, in my opinion, is certainly a picture of Silver Knees."

I asked Bandara to offer to buy the little oval daguerreotype from the Comanche. He nodded and offered it to me for half a pound of powder; but he would not sell the pinchbeck frame which hung from his neck. It, also, was very powerful medicine, he said.

When the stinking, gulping, slobbering Quahada

were as full-fed as gluttonous jaguars, and the last bone from spit and kettle had been picked clean and flung derisively toward a score of hulking buzzards, the Quahada got up, gorged, greasy, their paint-daubed bellies heavy with blood and fat, and scarce able to waddle to their ponies.

There were no adieux. It was not their habit. They had eaten all there was to eat; they had said all there was to say. The Navajo, not the Whites, happened to be their quarry at the moment. Half stupefied by their gluttony, bedaubed with food and war-paint, they got themselves aboard their nervous ponies and headed slowly toward the open prairie where lay their murder-trail—the fiercest, cruellest, most beastly and debased human creatures I ever had laid eyes upon.

Peep said to me that the Apaches and Yaquis were fiercer. Bandara overheard him and gave me a terrifying grin.

"Maybe," said he, "el tigre blood is in me, but there are no rosettes on my yellow hide and I am your honour's friendly hound to track his enemies to death."

"Dios," said Peep, "they stank like dog-wolves! They are wild beasts for certain, and some, they say, even grow tails."

"Those are bulls' tails which they tie to their belts and trail behind them," said Bandara scornfully, "—like the buffalo horns which they scrape thin and which seem to sprout from their lousy heads. Comanches are no more than men, after all, amigo."

"Wolves suckle them sometimes," insisted Peep.

"By God," growled Frank Hazlett, "we had them where we wanted them, Cap, when they was all a-guzzlin' around our fire. A look from you was all I wanted to let loose on 'em."

"You wouldn't have murdered them in cold blood, would you?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, just like they was a passel o' coyotes a settin' up around a dead hawg," burst out Sleeny. "Me an' Bruce was wishful that they'd make some dirty play."

Bandara remarked that such behaviour would have been shameful; Hazlett replied jeeringly; then I put a stop to further argument.

Whether or not we had averted a Comanche war I did not know. But I had executed my orders.

On the long trail to the Pecos we mounted guard every night. All the men maintained that the Quahada were treacherous enough to dog our trail and try to run off our horses. Bandara said so, too.

However, nothing more dangerous than coyotes came near our fire; we saw not a living soul from sun to sun.

Half a dozen times a day I fished from my pocket the daguerreotype and studied the features, sometimes convinced, sometimes doubting that this really was a picture of the strange little Matamoras Gitana called Silver Knees. Yet, even if it was, her history was only the frequent and tragic story of many a child whose parents had been murdered on the blind trails that run

from East to West across a hemisphere almost utterly unexplored.

The men, guarding the outposts of Texan civilization, regard all Indians as lobos, and consider all Mexicans as coyotes to be exterminated on sight.

Fate wills it. The occult energy which started the white hegira from the Atlantic to the Pacific still drives us like damned men. It is ordained; the Whites must march. All shall give way before them. Nothing ever can check us, not even the Pacific itself—perhaps—

So, day after day, with these vague thoughts ever stirring in my mind, my horse belly-deep in wild flowers, and in my palm the oval picture of a child, I rode on toward the upper river and the ford above Hidalgo.

There was nothing but a few ranchos there. Bandara told me that the great herds of horses had been driven across the river by the rancheros, and the Presidiale cavalry summoned southward from the Pecos.

We needed bread very badly, but Bandara said we'd have to wait until we had reconnoitred Matamoras. We could pick up grain and corn at the hacienda of Esperanza on our return.

He and Hozy dug up some roots for us. The flavour was agreeable. But those who lived on them too long became sickly.

We were riding, I recollect, along a broad road through chaparral, and were just coming out into a flowery meadow when, right ahead of us, we heard

yells, screams, and loud shouting, and suddenly arrived in view of some odd-looking covered wagons halted on the road. A body of mounted men—some two dozen in all—were galloping around these wagons, shouting and chasing men, women, and children across the grass in every direction; and I saw instantly, by their uniforms, that they were volunteer dragoons and mounted rifles.

"What's that they're doing to the wagon train?" I said sharply to Bandara. "Why are they chasing those women and children?"

"I think," said he, "that our volunteers are making sport with a band of travelling Gypsies."

As we spurred out of the chaparral toward them, these cavalrymen caught sight of us, evidently taking us for Mexican bandits, for their bugler sounded a sharp alarm, and they quitted their cruel activities and came scampering back to the road, huddling together in a panicky attempt to form and receive us.

I pulled out my white handkerchief and, holding it fluttering, galloped on toward them, and straight up to their officer—a big, mean-faced lout of a lieutenant who swaggered in his saddle, his drawn sabre shining in his gloved fist.

"Sir," said I, "why do you stop this Gypsy caravan and chase women and children with your troopers?"

"Who in hell are you?" he retorted.

"I'm Captain Maddox, of the Military Intelligence. Be good enough to answer my question."

He was clearly in two minds whether to salute me,

but he did. He said, sulkily, that his men were having a little fun with a Mexican wagon train.

"What is your name, sir?"

He told me, sullenly.

"Sir," said I, "you and your command disgrace your uniforms. No Mexican ranchero is more brutal and cruel."

He reddened violently, opened his lips to speak, gulped.

"One word out of you," said I, "and I prefer charges against you, and you can tell your story to a court martial."

I turned and said to Bandara, so that all my men could hear me: "Ride over to those poor folk and find out whether any of their women have been maltreated."

He whirled his horse and cantered out across the meadow.

There came an uneasy stirring among the volunteers which I thought might be a tendency to bolt.

I called out to my men: "Shoot anybody who leaves those ranks!" And, to their Lieutenant: "Control your command, sir, or I'll do it for you!"

Down in the meadow I saw Bandara talking to a group of men and women. After a little while he came trotting back to us from the wagons.

"No harm done, your honour," said he. "These brave caballeros were afraid of the Gypsy knives. The women and young girls fought them off."

I turned to the scowling, uneasy troopers: "The

crime of rape," said I, "is punished, in the army, by death. You volunteers have already acquired the contempt of the regulars, and a sorry reputation for indiscipline, cowardice, and cruelty. I don't care what State or Territory you come from; you're all tarred by the same brush. And what you are doing is going to sow a hatred throughout Mexico toward the United States which a hundred years of peace cannot quench. You belong among rancheros and Comanches, not among soldiers.

"Take your command out of here," said I to the Lieutenant.

He was speechless with shame and rage and had no voice. All he was able to do was to lift his shaking sabre and swing it forward.

Past my derisive and sneering men trotted the infuriated volunteers, headed southeast; and we watched them in disgust until they broke into a gallop and disappeared behind the chaparral.

Bandara spat on the grass, turned to me with his faint tiger-grin: "Bandits, your honour," he said. "The lancers will arrange their affairs some day."

The Gypsies in the meadow had hitched up their mules and horses and oxen, which the volunteers had unhitched, and the caravan was already in motion.

"They can't come this way," said I to Bandara. "If the Comanches don't get them the rancheros or our volunteers will."

"They are fleeing from Matamoras," said he, "dreading a bombardment and sack."

"They'd better go the other way," said I. "Tell them so."

He and Peep rode off toward the slowly moving caravan. The river ran along the meadow's further edge, where were pretty woods and a ford which led across to the Hidalgo-Matamoras Wet Weather road, and from where we could make a circle of the city as far as Reynosa and perhaps take a peep in at the back door.

Near a clear pool on the wood's edge we off-saddled and made camp. I had had a refreshing drink and a bath, and was eating an antelope and root stew, unseasoned by peppers, when I saw the Gypsy wagons come down to the meadow's edge near the ford. Very soon, up went their brown tents; their animals were turned out to graze and the smoke of their fires mounted straight in the still evening air.

Bandara said: "They are very happy to be under your honour's protection."

Peep, who had not returned with him, came in presently with a big basket of candy and another of tortillas.

"Dulces!" he exclaimed in delight, "—and bread, your honour! They send us a basketful fresh out of Matamoras."

It is strange how the utter craving for sweets possesses one in Mexico. One suffers for lack of them more than for want of salt.

"By the way, your honour," he said to me as I stretched myself out on my blanket with a cigar be-

tween my lips, "our little friend Silver Knees is with them."

"Oh," said I, "are they those Gypsies?"

"Yes, the Bear Tamers. They've got a couple of black bears with them."

"Have they decided to travel southwest?"

"No," said he, "they've decided it's safer for them in Matamoras, and they're going back there."

"I think I'll walk over and talk to Silver Knees," said I. "I want her to see the daguerreotype."

"She told me to say to your honour that she is coming here after supper," said he indistinctly, his mouth full of chocolate candy.

Lying flat on my back, looking up through the cottonwood branches, I saw the new moon in its first quarter—a shy and dainty debutante amid a sky full of great, boldly staring stars.

I could see the Gypsy fires across the meadow, burning down by the ford road. Evidently they had recovered from their scare, for the wild wail of fiddles, throbbing of guitars, and bang and jingle of tambourines came to us through the May starlight, and on the night air hung a faint and savoury odour from their camp kettles.

We mounted guard en vidette to be relieved every three hours—Frank Hazlett and Bandara taking the first tour of duty while Peep, Calixto, Bruce, Hozy, Dan Sleeny and I slept.

As the vedettes mounted and rode out, I said to them: "If a girl called Encarnacion comes from the

Gypsy camp, tell her to come to the fire and wake me up."

In the Gypsy camp they were dancing a lively czardas when I fell asleep.

IV

THE SHADOW

I AWOKE with the touch of a human hand on my face, softly tracing my features.

As I opened my eyes, a coin-necklace jingled; the hovering hand fell away.

There she crouched in all her Gypsy finery, her tawny locks bound by an orange handkerchief, a brilliant shawl trailing from one naked shoulder. She held in one hand a lighted lantern masked by her gaudy petticoat.

"Is your honour well?" she whispered in Spanish, with a slanting glance at the blanketed, sleeping men around the fire.

I got up; she took me by the hand and led me out under the cottonwoods to the grassy river bank. Here we settled ourselves in the starlight.

"Is all well with you, Silver Knees?" I asked smilingly, in English.

"Si, señor. But, oh, Captain Don Juan, I have been very lonely. Where have you been so long?"

"Talking to wild Comanches."

"Your blue-coat soldiers who chased us in the meadow are no wilder," she said bitterly. "One great fool took me by the body and tore my waist. So I got

at my knife; and when I gave him a little stab he was so astonished that he let me go. 'Xa mro khar!' I said to him—"

"Don't use that language," said I. "You know better, don't you?"

She shrugged: "Ei—yes."

She hung her head a trifle, her hand played absently with mine. Then she looked up cheerfully: "Did your honour enjoy the dulces we sent to you in thanks for your honour's protection against your wild Comanche soldiers?"

"Yes," said I, smiling; and thanked her. "Lying by the fire," said I, "even after a full supper, I smelled the zumi in your camp kettles and it made me hungry again."

"Oh, prala," she cried, "let me run over and fetch some for you—"

"No, thank you, sister; hunger is asleep again—"

"But, brother, our zumi is made of chicken with sweet peppers, onions, parsley, tomatoes, potatoes, and bacon—" She sprang to her feet.

"No," I laughed, detaining her and pulling her down to her knees beside me. "And look, pretty sister," said I, showing her the daguerreotype by the light of her lantern, "—see what I brought you from the Comanches! A picture of a child which looks like you!"

She squatted up on her haunches like any young Gypsy girl, and held the picture close to the lantern light.

"Mother of God," she exclaimed in amazement, "this is I myself!"

"Are you certain, Silver Knees?"

She stared at the picture, her lips trembling with emotion; "yes—that is my blue gingham dress—and my new shoes—oh, holy Virgin, I remember them—I was only seven or eight—God knows. . . . This picture was taken"—she pressed her hand to her forehead in an effort to recall—"I rode in a blue and yellow wagon with my father and mother—through a wide, noisy street on a very hot day. . . . In a place of windows that smelled of strange odours they sat me down upon a high chair and put behind my neck two cold prongs of iron to keep my head still—" After a strained and quivering silence: "Oh, Don Juan! —my blue gingham dress! . . . And my mother who kept whispering: 'Don't move! Kek! Sit still—yes, this way—ava adova, si!' "

"Then your mother *was* Gypsy!"

"Ei. . . . Now I can remember. . . . There were two men there with a box on three legs and a black poncho. . . . One man showed me a toy bird which chirped; the other thrust his head into the box—which frightened me—and I remember whispering to my mother, 'Daia, Daia, tengo mucho calor!' Oh, what is he doing with his head in the box—"

"What was your English name?" I asked.

She wiped her eyes with her shawl and shook her head. It seemed so long ago that the nuns had chris-

tened her Encarnacion. It had been so long, so many, many years since the Romaniæ had named her Silver Knees. . . . And now her names in the nav gajikanes were completely gone from her mind; only the nav Romanes remained. . . .

Very gently and cautiously I questioned her. She still retained hazy recollections concerning the Indians who had killed her parents, and the Mexican soldiers who had taken her from the Indians and given her to the nuns of the Incarnation.

I did not tell her what the Comanche, Lame Wolf, had told me about the death of her parents, or about the iron box and the papers. I meant, when opportunity offered, to search the chaparral at the three springs, and try, for this vagabond child's sake, to learn something concerning her.

"Your mother," said I, "certainly must have been Gypsy if she talked Romanes to you."

"Oh, yes, brother, she was of the Zincali—a true Gitana."

"But you once told me that you never heard your father speak the Gypsy language."

"No, brother."

"Do you remember him, Silver Knees?"

"Faintly. . . . Tall and fair."

"He spoke English?"

"We spoke English and Spanish."

"Except when your mother talked Gypsy to you?"

"Ei."

"You remember how she looked?"

"Yes . . . Spanish . . . slender and smooth to touch. . . . I remember she used to sing:

"La chimutra seardela
A pas erachi;
El calo no abillila,
Abillila la Romi! *

"—And she often played games with me, like Anda la rata—you know?—

Anda la rata
Detras de la caja,
Anda la gallina
Detras de la cocina—

"You know how children play it with a rebozo? And how it ends with:

"The moon runs
Behind the cactus—"

She was leaning close against my shoulder, her cheek against it, her ankles gathered in her hand:

"Is your honour truly a Gypsy and my brother?" she asked wistfully, "—that you are so kind to me?"

"Do I not speak like one? And I am truly your

* At midnight when the moon began
To show her silver flame,
There came to him no Gypsy man,
The Gypsy lassie came!

brother, Silver Knees. . . . Do you travel south with the Zincali Bear Tamers tomorrow?"

"Ei, prala. Where else am I to go?"

"Janes tu lil?—can you write?"

She laughed tearfully: "Yes."

I pulled out my note book and wrote my name and address, and rank, and tore out the leaf and gave it to her: "Headquarters of the first United States Army of Observation, Department of Military Intelligence," said I, "or Number 609 Bleecker Street, New York, if you don't hear from me. . . . And when the war ends —if, indeed, it ever begins—then I shall wish to see you, Silver Knees."

"Not before that, Don Juan?"

"I always shall be glad to see you—"

"Then I shall come to you again, Don Juan, if God wills it," she whispered ardently, edging her lithe body closer and onto my knees, and imprisoning my neck between her warm little arms. There fell a silence between us, then:

"Mother of God," she whimpered, "I love you with all my heart."

I didn't quite know how to respond to this gathering emotion. Her hot little mouth was pressed against my forehead.

"Oh, brother," she whispered, "I feel so strangely excited in your arms . . . Debla quirindia! What shall I do?"

I tried to laugh: "You are a Gitana," said I, "—Plubi rulisarra—"

She both laughed and wept at that: "If you mean my white knees," she murmured, "the word is siarias. I fear you are no Gypsy, after all, Don Juan." She kissed both my eyes, then convulsively pressed my head in her arms and crushed her mouth against mine.

The swift embrace left us breathless and dumb for a moment; then she stammered: "What have I done, my sinastro! Tuyslo! It is bad. It is madness. Now you will not believe that nobody ever has unloosed my girdle."

She slipped out of my arms, breathing brokenly, and sat up on her haunches in the starlight:

"Madre de Dios," she wailed, "I know not what ails me with this man, but I want him for my lover!"

I turned over on my side, rested my head on my hand, and looked down at the Great River of the North flowing in silver splendour below.

This sort of thing wouldn't do; this young Gitana—this passionate adolescent—was too terribly attractive. Close quarters were to be avoided with such a child.

"You are as still as a river, Señor Captain," she whispered.

"A noisy river often has a still mouth," I quoted, laughingly. "There is another Tzigane proverb—'Passion, bridled and cruelly bitted, carries the caballero to the stars!' "

She flung herself down on the flowering herbage near me:

"Only that I am a Gitana," said she, "I'd slip that bit and bridle for you! Alala!"

I said nothing.

"Ei," she repeated, plucking flowers and biting the petals, "—if I were not Gypsy."

"But you are."

"Ei. . . . Prala, you would never marry me, would you?"

"No, Silver Knees."

"Because you are a Rom?"

"No, I am not married."

"Then because you are a gentleman and a great caballero?"

"I am no guruju."

"And I no jaba; I am a jaña. Furi! What am I to do?" she wailed, rolling over twice and coming up face to face with me.

"Silver Knees," said I sharply, "your language is filthy!"

"I don't care!"

"Then go with your Bear Tamers to Mexico City—"

"Ful—"

"Be silent!"

"May I not mention the guchiba, señor?" she said impertinently. "Oh, I can see very plainly you despise me because, like all Gypsies, I use frank and honest speech—"

"Your father didn't. You are half Gentile."

The girl was angry, bewildered with herself and me, excited and disorganized by new emotions and unfamiliar pain.

"Su men—your lordship," said she fiercely, "may I not say lole when I say pele, and chica when I say pirabar—"

"Are you trying to disgust me?"

She repeated, mockingly, the words of the Gypsy song:

"Although thou wash thee in the sea,
Thou shalt not rid thee of the stain
Thou didst obtain
Through me!"

We were lying face to face on tne grass; she turned up her nose at me defiantly; her eyes mocked me; but her child's lips were quivering and she began to cry, and reached her arms blindly toward me.

"Oh," she sobbed out, "I don't know what ails me, brother—I am so unhappy to be in love—"

I took her into my arms and gave her a hearty hug and kiss.

"The trouble is," said I, "that you are more English than Gypsy, and the two bloods in you are having their first struggle."

"Mother of God," she whined, "all the world has been but a whirl of dust since I first laid eyes on you, brother. I seem like an empty house after a temblar, and somebody I do not know has crept back into the ruins."

"Perhaps, if God wills it, Silver Knees, I can help you build your house again some day."

"Oh, truly? Oh, brother!—"

She kissed my hands passionately. Then, suddenly radiant:

"Let us forget what my dirty, wicked tongue has said."

"I have forgotten already."

"I love you, Señor Don Juan!"

"You are my sister, Encarnacion."

"Come to our camp of the Bear Tamers!" she cried joyously. "We have a bad name—we of the bear family—but we do not deserve it! And everybody in the tribe is very grateful to your honour—"

We sprang up; she caught my hand, and we walked swiftly through the starlight toward the Gypsy fires of the Kalo Rom, where the Bear Folki were gathered.

Flutes, fiddles, tambour-basque were playing madly and the Bear Tamers were singing the Song of the Tribes, which is hundreds of years old—

"Search among the Kalderas
For a likely Gypsy lass!
Go, my lover, lightly go,
Look among the Macvano,
Look among the Maritsare,
Look among the Budisare—
Search the merry Karavlasi
For a pretty Gypsy lassie—

"Daia! Daia, let him learn,
Roaming forest heath and fern!

There will dawn a day in May
When my lover shall return—
Weary of the Kalo Rom,
Soon I'll see him coming home
Saddened by the world so wide,
He shall buy me for his bride!—

Loose my girdle, loose my hair,
Daia, tell me I am fair!"

When we came into the firelight the music and singing ceased abruptly; scores of brilliant eyes, intent upon me, glittered in the ruddy, flame-shot obscurity.

Then an old man who had been sitting between two large black bears, asleep, got up and came toward us to express to me his courtly obligations and the warm gratitude of his tribe.

"Kalo Rom san tu?" he quavered.

"Hom Rom."

He kissed me on both cheeks and poured out his gratitude.

"It was nothing," said I in Romanes. "The Kalo Rom have always been very kind to me and I was glad to do them a slight service."

At that they all crowded forward to take my hand, men and women and children, and I heard everywhere their happy, garrulous voices in wondering reassurance: "He is a Gypsy, this señor, Captain Don Juan! His worship is both a caballero and a Gypsy! His honour condescends to visit his poor brothers. Sar

mai san, prala? Katar aves, prala? Sangre de Dios, he is no rye. We Bear Tamers of the Ursari are his real brothers!"

They made me a place in front of the striped tent. Silver Knees slapped and pushed aside two or three girls who were fetching pulque and sweets; and, snatching the refreshments, brought them to me herself, casting a dangerous look at her discomfited rivals.

The old chief, whose name was Mecka, which means "a bear," said tolerantly:

"Misto. O dat. She is a cei nasli and has no father and no mother, and nobody would buy her to marry her."

"His eyes are closed," said Silver Knees coolly; "closed eyes break no hearts."

A mischievous girl retorted: "If he opens his eyes, God help you!"

"Mother of God, that's true," said Silver Knees, carelessly. "In the meanwhile, I am not too poor to have his honour, Don Juan, for my brother. And he himself has said it."

"Hei! He is jesting with thee," retorted another girl.

"Avia!!" cried Silver Knees, "what of it!" She kicked off her espadrilles and showed her lovely little snowy feet:

"These, also, are made to follow the drom, chiquita! Let him take what God sends him and ride away if he will. His horse's hoofs are a patteran—if I choose."

"He will spit thee a patrin—if he chooses!"

Silver Knees whirled on the girl in fury, but the old chief shouted at them both:

"Kiss and forgive!" he said sternly.

The next instant they were kissing and laughing. A fiddle struck up an odd, clumsy air; a young man jumped up, cuffed one of the big black bears, and, as it rose to its hind feet, began to wrestle and dance with it to the shuffling, banging rhythm of the fiddles and tambourines.

The bear seemed to enjoy it; everybody shouted until the young fellow, panting and the breath nearly squeezed out of him by his big, shaggy partner, herded the bear back to the tent and rewarded it with candy.

Then the music began a tarantella; everybody called out to Silver Knees; and she sprang up from where she had been seated on the seran beside me.

First, with naked feet and tambourine ringing, she flung herself furiously into the unbridled dance, and her white shoulders and slender body fairly burst from shawl and waist, flashing unconfined and dazzling in the firelight.

It was the danza Gitana—the flaming, passionate whirling of a young witch half naked amid the gaudy shreds that scarcely veiled her.

Suddenly she banged her tambour-basque upon the ground; the music ceased, then the flute began again, a languid, sensuous air. Her castanets clicked; she pulled her shawl across one shoulder; her lithe, bare body rippled in serpentine undulations; her arms and

fingers coiled and uncoiled with the slow, lascivious grace peculiar to those strange nomad girls whose personal chastity is proverbial, but whose provocative effrontery passes all bounds. Her body seemed like some jewelled snake swaying above lantern-lit flowers.

Click-click-click went her castanets. She was singing "The Gitana"—

"With tambourine and castanet,
With silken skirt and naked knee,
No man can choose but follow me
And curse the hour we ever met!
Beware the moon that burns above,
The Gypsy fire that burns below,
The burning eyes that promise love,
The scarlet lips that softly glow,
The tender tongue, the sobbing breath,
For these can do a man to death!"

"Oh, God," sighed the young girls, "is she not beautiful!" The eyes of the young men shone in the fire-glow with a feral light.

When, after midnight, I took my leave of the Ursari, the whole camp escorted me to the outer guard-tent, calling:

"Good-bye, brother; good-bye, hijo de mi alma! Adiós, querida mia! We are glad you liked our zarzuela. Our tents and hearts are always yours!"

By the time I reached the corral lantern, where the

horse-herd guard sat bundled in his blanket, only Silver Knees accompanied me.

And here she made her passionate adieux:

"Seóo," she sobbed, "I have no tent, no regalo to offer. Prala—kiss me once more—and go with God—"

When dawn saw my men mounted, the Gypsy camp had been struck; the wagons were gone; nothing remained of it except dead fires and trodden grasses.

That day we crossed at the ford, and, keeping to the timber, rode in a wide circle by Saliceño and Villanueva toward the Reynosa highway, which was the back door of the city.

Into this back door we looked, at a respectful distance—there was no getting nearer—and we could see infantry and cavalry moving in, and long military wagon trains drawn by horses, mules, and oxen. Every regiment was trailed by the wives and women of the soldiery who invariably accompanied the troops to cook for them, wash, and otherwise care for husband and lover while on campaign.

There was a vast number of people, great herds of horses, numberless wagons and pack animals, all pouring into the city by the Reynosa and San Fernando roads, and along the eastern road to Brazos Santiago.

One splendid regiment of cavalry—lancers—rode slowly near where we were secreted in the chaparral. They wore dark green uniforms with scarlet plastrons, collars, cuffs, and stripes on their breeches. Their red

schapskas glittered with gilded eagles and helmet cords. A torrent of scarlet pennons fluttered from their lance-heads.

Frank Hazlett sneered; Gordon Bruce laughed; Dan Sleeny aimed a squirt of tobacco juice at a hovering butterfly:

"Mebbe them fancy cow-chasers has forgot San Jacinto. Mebbe so," he said. "But they'll remember it if the Texas Rangers ever ketch 'em again."

I heard Emilio Bandara say in Spanish to Pacheco:

"He talks like a dog-soldier, this hombre. What kind of song will this lobo sing with a lance in his guts?"

V

PALO ALTO

WE had been away nearly six weeks, leaving the army practically destitute of military intelligence. The conclusion—flattering neither to me nor to General Taylor—is inescapable; he considered military intelligence of little or no importance. Colonel Cross had said so to me—"Old Zack," said he, "doesn't give a damn how many Mexicans are in Mexico. What does he want of military intelligence when he hasn't any at all himself?"

Poor Cross! We had had a drink together when I set out to hunt Comanches. In confidence to me he damned Old Zack for the only ass on earth who didn't know enough to waggle his ears.

Now, as we were halted, east of the river once more, at the adobe ranchería of Esperanza, to buy breadstuffs, there came galloping a scout of Texas Rangers, which, at first, we mistook for Mexicans as they wore no uniform, only their fringed buckskins and fancy dress, part Indian, part Mexican.

It was odd how many of these fellows bore facial resemblance to one another, as though all came originally of a common stock—skins burnt almost black

from the sun, high cheek bones, slanting eyes of a lobo, and often a faint snarl in their laughter.

A Captain Walker, who was civil enough and seemed to have brains in addition to the ordinary courage common to all these reckless Texan horsemen, led them.

For many weeks I had been without news. He now gave it to me.

And this was the news: Old Zack had gone blundering across the Arroyo Colorado, in spite of Mexican protests. General Mejia might have annihilated him at the crossing. Why he didn't, nobody knows.

So on shuffled Old Zack and the army, like a bunch of stubborn bullocks, trampling through the water and paying no regard to a cloud of Mexican lancers who capered and retreated before them in an agony of rage and indecision.

General Mejia sent an aide-de-camp to say to Old Zack that the crossing would be considered an act of war.

Old Zack was good-naturedly sorry, but he had come to pay a friendly call on the Mexicans at Matamoras, and, by God, he'd do it if he had to bombard his way to the city!

Walker and his men, helping us to pack our corn meal, roared with laughter. I laughed too. But their contemptuous attitude toward all Mexicans found little real response in me. They sneered because the poor patriotic people at Point Isabel had set fire to their

little houses—all they possessed in the world—rather than endure the American invasion.

"Then they ran," said Walker, "—men, women, and brats. By God," said he, "they had the impudence to set fire to the public storehouses, too, and have nearly ruined the place as a depot for our fleet. I tried to catch 'em and hang 'em up, but, damn them, they got into Matamoras."

"What else has happened?" I asked.

"Your friend, Colonel Cross, went for a ride. The rancheros caught him and murdered him. Lieutenant Porter—the old Commodore's son—took ten volunteers to search for him. The lancers killed him and three of his horsemen. Mejia says it was none of his doing."

"Probably it was not," said I soberly. "The rancheros are often bandits. They are irregulars, Cossacks, Gauchos—"

"So are all Mexicans," said he fiercely, "and we Texans know what to do with them."

"Same as the Comanches do to us when they ketch us," added one of his men bitterly.

"Like Santa Anna's lancers done to us at San Jacinto and the Alamo, and like what they done to Fannin," growled another.

"For God's sake," said I, "don't let us begin this war by butchery. Let us keep our own hands as clean as we can." I turned to Sam Walker again: "What else has happened, Captain?"

"Pedro Ampudia rode into Matamoras with a thousand lancers," he said drily.

"Where is our army now?"

"Didn't I tell you? We're in a fortified camp opposite Matamoras. We're building a big fort full of eighteen pounders. It's got eight bastions. Our flag's flying. There are twenty Mexican flags to one of ours, flying over Matamoras."

"It's war, then?"

"It sure is, Captain Maddox. There's a hell's mint o' Mexicans in the city. Their General Arista rode in the other day with another army. He's in command now."

"Has there been any firing?"

"Naw," said he, "they're writing letters—him and Old Zack. They're very polite, and it's Don General this and Señor General Don that, and 'I avail myself of this opportunity to assure you of my distinguished consideration. Viva Mexico!' And say, Captain, that sissy-faced Madiano Arista printed a lot of proclamations inviting all American soldiers to quit and become Mexican citizens!"

A rumbling roar in Texan throats. If jaguars laughed they'd make such a sound.

Well, Sam Walker and his tiger-faced Texans rode off to the southeast; we lay at Esperanza, eating our tortillas and frijoles—a welcome change from the dug roots and the game on which we had subsisted so long—and toward evening we saddled up and set our horses toward the Great River of the North.

All night we rode, and, at dawn, came to a lonely rancho—a solitary adobe house. A poor old man and his handsome, ragged daughter lived there. They herded goats.

We paid for the goats' milk they fetched. They did not know we were Americans. The girl had a story to tell—was full of it. She had seen General Torrejon's cavalry—two thousand lancers.

"Señor," said she, "we first noticed the dust. It rose to the sky and spread over the world. Then the earth began to shake under their horses, and all the plain became blood-red with the scarlet bonnets of the lancers!"

"Where were they riding, my child?"

"God knows. A young officer turned out from the column and rode up to us. He stood there where your honour stands; and I gave him a bowl of milk. He told us that the American dragoons had gone to the Hacienda of Carricitos, and that the lancers were going there to kill them."

This was serious news. But our horses needed grain and rest, and we ourselves were falling asleep in our saddles.

We fed, watered, and rested our horses, and set two men on guard, to be relieved every hour, while the remainder of the command slept.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, the sun still very hot, we saddled and started toward the river once more.

Toward sundown we saw a horseman, and chased

and caught him, only to discover that he was one of our own dragoons, and had been wounded in the face by a lance.

"My God, sir," said he, "I thought you were rancheros and were chasing me to cut my throat." He had lost his nerve, and his eyes were full of tears.

"What has happened to your regiment?" I asked gently.

"Sir," said he, "I belong to Captain Thornton's squadron. We were scouting, and our Mexican guide led us into a plantation enclosed by a thorn fence. And, the first we knew, their lancers and infantry had us trapped.

"First the lancers charged us and we countercharged and beat them off. But their infantry—God himself couldn't have broken through, sir."

His torn cheek and ear began to bleed again, and he wiped it off with his sleeve.

"They killed Lieutenant Mason in the chaparral, and a lot of our people. Captain Thornton, Lieutenant Kane, and I managed to jump the thorn fence. They killed or captured the rest of us—Captain Hardee and about seventy dragoons—and Lieutenant Kane and Captain Thornton, too. . . . I don't know how I got away, sir—what with the thick musket smoke and their red lancers yelling and riding us down, and spearing the wounded—"

"From where did you start on your scout?"

"From our fort opposite Matamoras, sir—"

"Was there a battle?"

"No, sir. Everything was peaceful. You could see, across the river, the roofs and towers and high buildings in the city crowded with citizens, men and women, watching us.

"Then, suddenly there was a rumour that the Mexicans were crossing above and below to cut our supply road to Point Isabel. So the General sent Captain Thornton to find out, and we ran into a whole Mexican brigade."

"Is General Taylor still in camp before Matamoras?"

"No, sir. He's at Point Isabel with most of our army. The 7th infantry and a field battery are holding our fort."

Here was a sorry mess. And it had come because Old Zack paid no attention to military intelligence.

He had shipped off me and my command to hunt Indians. He still had plenty of hard-riding Texans for scout duty. And Major Monroe, of the artillery, once told me that the Secretary of War had written to Old Zack suggesting that he use the Texans for scouts. He never did. He didn't know anything that was happening beyond his camp limits; and didn't want to.

And now this dangerous situation had developed; a Mexican army, outnumbering him two or three to one, sat behind the walls of a city opposite his little fort, watching to destroy him while another army crossed above and below; the one to flank him, the other to cut the road that led to his base of supplies.

And what had he done to meet the situation? He

had left a single regiment, one battery, and a few irregular horsemen to hold his little fort, and had marched off to try to save his food and ammunition at Point Isabel! Maybe God and Jeff Davis could get him out of this mess.

I patched up the wounded dragoon whose name was Hammond. Then, keeping to the mots, or little patches of timber, we rode cautiously toward the river.

About sundown, Bandara and Peep, who were scouting far ahead, galloped back to tell me that the country ahead in the direction of Palo Alto was swarming with enemy lancers, and that it was utterly impossible for us to get through them to the fort.

So we off-saddled and camped among the trees, not daring to light a fire.

Later I went out myself with Bandara and Escobar, and found, ahead of us, an impenetrable cordon of cavalry; vedettes, and patrols alert. Palo Alto was heavily occupied; the Point Isabel road had been cut, and the camp fires of an entire enemy infantry division burned there.

I went back to the woods, and there I explained the situation to my men and invited them to express opinions.

It was very quickly agreed that we must remain where we were. We could not get through to the beleaguered garrison; that was certain. We could not get to Point Isabel. That, also, was certain. And I became convinced that there was nothing to be done

at present except to wait and see what that old military dunderhead, Zachary Taylor, was going to do about this disgusting business.

We mounted guard over our sleeping camp.

About dawn, one after another in measured majesty, seven heavy detonations shook the ground. The opening guns of the Mexican war.

The roar of the cannonade swelled to an unbroken roll of thunder. And we knew that the Matamoras forts had opened upon our intrenched camp, and that our fort was replying with every gun.

For six days we crouched in our little woods, the incessant thunder of the guns in our ears. We were almost in the middle of a Mexican army; and so close to their cavalry division on the left flank that these gaudy horsemen watered their nags at the little pond of clear, sweet water which edged our grove on the west.

From that pond, by night, we drew our own supply of water. We lived on cold scraps of frijole; we dared not even smoke, and always remained in a state of dread lest our horses whinny when the Mexican horses were being watered across the pond.

After sunset we reconnoitred as far as we dared; their vedettes were everywhere about us; but we learned that a Mexican army was astride the Point Isabel road, severing communication, and cutting off Old Zack and his army from his intrenched camp before Matamoras.

When we had definitely established this disastrous fact, I called my small group around me where we lay in the marshy woods, and laid the situation before them.

"It is possible," said I, "that the safety or destruction of our army may depend upon our getting through to General Taylor with our information.

"We can't all get through. But if even one of us makes the grade it will be worth it.

"General Taylor ought to know what we know. It is between thirty-five and forty miles to Point Isabel. We can try it, mounted, or we can attempt it afoot. I ask your opinions. . . . Frank?"

"I ain't no good off'n my horse," he growled.

"Gordon?"

"Same here, Cap."

"Dan?"

"That's me, too. If I gotta bite alkali, lemme dive for it off a runnin' hoss."

"Hozy?"

"Si, señor. I have six legs or none."

"Peep?"

"Whatever pleases your honour," he said, flashing his quick smile.

"Calixto?"

The Mistec crept to me and kissed my hand in silence.

"Bandara?"

"Señor Captain Don Juan," said he calmly, "I am half Apache, but I am not half horse. My legs are

mine, and they take me where I will. So it is all the same to me, your honour."

"Do you think we all should go mounted?"

"The six-legged must ride or die, your honour. As for me, I am no tarantula!"

"Can you ride?" I asked the dragoon, Hammond.

He said he could.

A little after midnight we led our horses out of the darkness of the grove into the starlight. The moon, in its first quarter, gave us some light and shadow. We needed the latter and slunk along the shade of the mots, trying to keep to dry ground so that the telltale slop of our horses' feet should not arouse the vedettes to the east and south of Palo Alto.

On a herdsman's trail in the chaparral we mounted, I leading beside Bandara. A few moments later, against the stars, we saw lancers and the sombreros of rancheros, and at the same instant came their high-pitched challenge.

"Ride over them!" I called out, driving home my spurs and launching my horse forward. Bandara's horse plunged ahead; behind us bounded the other horses. In the dim light just beyond I saw a lancer put his horse to the chaparral and fairly lift it over the thorns out of our way. Another's horse reared, swerved, fell backward into the thorns with his screaming rider.

Huddling together in front was a little knot of lancers. As we crashed into them a horseman lanced

me, tearing away the entire left breast of my jacket and half stripping it from my body. As he made his horse pirouette to free the lance, Bandara struck him with his pistol-butt and he collapsed on his saddle, his horse galloping wildly on into the men behind me.

Close to me I saw a horseman disengage his lance, twirl and set it; but my horse kicked his and Bandara's horse crashed into him, smashing horse and rider into the thorns where Frank Hazlett, leaning wide of his saddle, drove a knife into him repeatedly.

Then came the first shot, a blinding flash in Dan Sleeny's face, tearing his very features off and blowing his skull to pieces.

The uproar and struggle in the narrow trail became horrible with shrieking, kicking, biting horses agonized by lance thrusts; and gasping, panting men murdering one another in the crush.

There was no elbow room to swing a lance, yet a ranchero lanced José Escobar who fell back on his saddle, stone dead, his horse carrying him past his slayer at a dead run.

Another rider fired his oddly-shaped carbine at Gordon Bruce, almost disembowelling him and setting his clothing afire. Down he went under his kicking horse; the horses of two lancers stumbled and fell on top of him; and I saw the dragoon, Hammond, sabre one of the rancheros, and Frank Hazlett shot the other.

Close to me Bandara was wrestling in his saddle with a lancer, trying to tear him from his stirrups.

The ranchero managed to shorten his lance, but I got hold of it before he could thrust.

Then another rider came at us with his sabre swinging and would have done for us both had not Pacheco overtaken him and knifed him from behind.

"Señor," he cried, "we are through their lines! Mother of God, let us ride!"

Bandara tore his enemy from the saddle and hurled him, half-strangled, into the chaparral.

"Bandara! Frank! Pio! Ride!" I shouted. "Calixto, come on! Come on, Hammond!"

Out of that bloody, suffocating welter of men and horses we galloped just ahead of their unseen cavalry yelling at us from the chaparral in every direction. The darkness, now, was ringing with Mexican bugles.

Bandara, galloping in advance, led us into a sheep path between impenetrable walls of thorn and cactus, where we rode in single file, hearing the clamour of pursuit all around us.

Out of the chaparral, across a dim marsh flanked by two ponds, into timber, on through mot after mot we rode.

Dawn streaked the east; brightened the horizon. Against it were flying vast flocks of water-fowl which, at first, I took for masses of smoke blowing.

"Nevertheless, I smell smoke, your honour!" cried Bandara. "There is no rancho in this direction, but the Point Isabel road is very near, and the smoke I smell must come from our own army!"

For two hours, now, we had lost all sound of pur-

suit. We had broken through. Gordon Bruce was dead, and Dan Sleeny, and José Escobar.

Peep, seeing my jacket torn nearly in two and blood on my shirt, offered to bandage my ribs which were visible through a rent in my shirt.

But it was only torn skin and a burning bruise where the metal lance point had slid along my ribs.

Bandara was badly slashed by thorns; so were the others—Peep, Calixto, Frank, and the dragoon, Hammond; and our poor horses dripped blood.

When we came to a pond of sweet water, close to the Point Isabel, we dismounted, drank, washed our horses while they drank, and were engaged in this way when Bandara, who had mounted and ridden out upon the road, called back to us that American dragoons were galloping toward us. He stood up on his saddle, Apache fashion:

"The dust!" he cried. "The whole army is coming to Palo Alto, your honour!"

We rode into an advance guard of the 2nd United States dragoons. I recognized Captain Ker.

"Good God, Maddox!" he said, "what's happened to you?"

I told him that the Mexican army stood astride the Palo Alto road, and that, at midnight, our fort before Matamoras was still firing.

He whispered to me: "We've four thousand wagons with us, and have been as slow as hell. The army is losing confidence in Old Zack."

The remainder of his squadron came into sight on an easy lope. Behind it trotted May's squadron.

As we galloped past them I saluted the queer-looking Captain May and called out to him:

"The chaparral is lousy with lancers, Captain."

"Well," he laughed, "if there are as many lancers as there are Mexican generals, we'll have our hands full, Maddox!"

A little farther on we met Blake, of the topographical engineers, who waved gaily to us and called out:

"Mexican cavalry are coming into Burrita! Don't go that way!" And he galloped on toward our front.

South of us lay the Salt Prairie; southeast, the Salt Lagoons and the Boca Chica road between Brazos and Burrita.

A great cloud of alkali dust obscured the Point Isabel road as we drew bridle and turned aside into the desert.

Walker's Texans passed us at a canter. Behind them rode Old Zack with a small but gorgeous staff—he alone in cotton-drill, check shirt, an old farmer's hat, and horse-traders' boots, hunched up on his blooded horse like a fat, greyish spider.

Behind him, its band playing, came the 5th regulars, Lieutenant-Colonel McIntosh and his staff leading on proudly prancing horses.

"Good heavens, Maddox," he called to me, "where have you been?"

Old Zack screwed his head around to look, too, and

I hastened to report to him, ranging my tired horse up beside him at a motion of his hand.

"Well, Maddox," he said, as genially and carelessly as though no outnumbering enemy was awaiting him just ahead, "did you fix it up with the Comanches?"

"Yes, sir. They're hunting Navajos just now."

"Do tell!"

"They'll not bother us for a while, sir. And further, sir, I have to report a Mexican army astride the Matamoras road at Palo Alto."

"So that's where they are?" he said pleasantly.

"Yes, sir. Being cut off, we have reconnoitred them during the past six days. There seem to be about two thousand lancers on their left flank. More on their right."

"Torrejon's cavalry," he remarked.

"From tree tops, with a glass, I made out artillery and masses of infantry beyond—toward the river, sir," I added.

He nodded, turned in his saddle: "McIntosh, come on!" he called to the Colonel of the 5th infantry. "Sam!"—to Captain Walker—"just run back and start 'em up right smart. Bring up Major Ringgold. Tell Allen and Garland to hustle. I want Duncan and Ridgely to cut around and come up with their batteries. Tell Churchill I said so!"

To me: "You been scratched up some, Maddox."

"I lost three men getting through their lancers, sir."

"Your fellows act right?"

"Extremely well, sir."

"That's good. Come on."

Back along the road we galloped, Old Zack, his staff, I, my ragamuffins, escorted by our dragoons.

Blake came back to report the Mexican army in line of battle and awaiting us.

"That's elegant," said Old Zack, affably.

Suddenly, riding out of the chaparral, the whole thrilling panorama burst upon our eyes. Even Old Zack grunted.

For, ahead of us, stretched level prairie set with little lakes, lagoons, and pools of water, spreading straight away ahead for three miles or more.

At its further limit loomed chaparral—cactus, prickly pear, thorn, mesquite, split in half by the Palo Alto road. And here, blocking this road, and stretching across it at right angles for a mile or more, was massed a Mexican army in line of battle.

As Old Zack pulled in his mettlesome nag and fished a telescope out of his coat-tail pocket, we heard the gay marching music of the 5th infantry coming up behind us.

From the little hill I looked back along the road; and, as far as I could see, it seemed to have turned a brilliant blue colour and was flowing toward us like a narrow river over which white lightning flashed and played.

The 5th regulars went in on the right, followed by Ringgold's artillery, and a pair of 18's under Churchill of the 3rd artillery. Garland's 3rd infantry brigade,

the 3rd and 4th regulars, and Ker's and May's dragoons composed our right and centre; and Belknap's 1st brigade, the 8th regulars and Childs' artillery formed our left. Our train halted near the water, protected by Texans and dragoons.

We advanced in columns, briskly, our regimental bands playing, our pretty flags brilliant in the wind, and, at a scant quarter of a mile, deployed.

It was all as bright and clear as a picture in a picture-book. It was perfect. The Mexican batteries on the right began to fire, followed by a stupendous outcrash from their entire artillery.

Churchill, Ringgold, and Duncan went into picturesque action. It was terrific; it was grand. Nobody was hit among us, but we could see how the great wave of Mexican cavalry opened, sagged, closed up, opened again after each salvo from us where our shot and shell tore through them.

We sat our horses spellbound. I did not hear Old Zack give any orders at all. He sat hunched up on his horse, his long-nosed, square, good-natured face of a country horse-trader amiably interested.

Now that he had brought his army face to face with the Mexican army, he seemed to think he had done his job. Apparently the rest was no concern of his. It appeared to be a colonels' and captains' battle. He sat with his kindly face turned toward the distant Mexican cavalry, where our shells were tearing men and horses to pieces.

"They're steady," he remarked. "They got pluck."

Sam Walker came galloping up to report that Torrejon, with fifteen hundred lancers, was moving through the chaparral to attack our wagons.

"Do tell," said Old Zack.

Walker began to laugh. He seemed to know what was to be done. He and his Texans galloped off to Ridgely's smoking battery.

"Tell Ringgold and McIntosh to keep their eyes cocked," said Old Zack to a boyish aide-de-camp, who spurred away into the smoke on his blooded horse.

Then I saw a heart-rending sight; one thousand five hundred lancers, superbly mounted, rode out of the chaparral and, with a shrill cheer, spurred straight across the meadow toward Ridgely's jumping, flashing guns.

Shell and solid shot swept them, whirled them about like brilliant autumn leaves in a tornado. We could hear the shrieks of the dying riders and the screams of mutilated horses above the cannonading. Entire files crashed earthward; down went scarlet bonnets, scarlet plumes, scarlet lance-pennons; officers, trumpeters, lancers, horses fell sprawling in one horrible, bloody, kicking mess.

Upon this sickening shambles opened Ringgold's battery in a roaring sheet of flame. Then, wheeling where they stood, the 5th regulars poured into them a terrific storm of musketry, firing by wings.

The poor, scorched, crippled, blood-drenched horsemen seemed bewildered. The terrible discharges seemed to stun men and horses, and they stood stupidly

staring ahead while they were being shot down and blown to bits by dozens.

At last, as though aroused from a nightmare, a bugler sounded the retreat, feebly, brokenly. Other bugles sobbed out the recall.

Suddenly the horror of it seized the dazed horsemen; they turned, broke, scattered, and galloped blindly away—some even running headlong into our wagons and into our dragoons who sabred them as they pleased or dragged them from their saddles.

A gigantic wall of smoke fringed our front, through which red flames began to flicker and leap. The wadding of our guns had set the long grass afire.

A mile of blazing prairie blotted out the enemy's left flank, and we could see their cavalry and artillery riding hard to get out of its way.

"I guess," said Old Zack, "it's kinda hot over there. Maddox, just run across the street and tell May to charge. And tell McIntosh and Churchill to move up and wing 'em good. Looks like as if their cavalry has a mind to try it again."

I spurred across the road and meadow to Churchill and McIntosh's commands.

May's weird face brightened at the order, and his bugles rang out as the infantry began to run forward to occupy the shambles where the Mexican lancers went down.

As May charged, a whole brigade of enemy cavalry moved out toward him and a battery opened on him.

What with the smoke and flash of the guns, the

crowding, stifling powder-gloom, and the thick smoke of burning grass, it was difficult to make one's way about. There was much confusion.

Somebody told me that Major Ringgold, of the 3rd artillery, had been killed among his guns by a round shot. Luther, of the 2nd, and Page, of the infantry, were carried past me, wounded.

May came galloping back. He had lost seriously. He told me he could do nothing against an entire cavalry brigade, and asked for orders.

There were no orders. Old Zack wasn't giving any. The regulars solved their own problems, fought their own battle in their own way.

An awful uproar announced a charge of lancers against our right. They were brave men; they came on again and again against squares formed by our infantry. Our gunners sent an unending stream of shot and shell into them, tearing entire squadrons to fragments, paralyzing the masses of Mexican infantry supporting them, blowing the Mexican gunners from their guns.

And everywhere raged the vast prairie fire between these two fighting armies, glowing redder as the sun set, angry, scarlet, terrible in the gathering twilight.

Night came. There was nothing to see to shoot at any longer, only an ocean of tossing flame and the chaparral, also now afire.

The roar of artillery and musketry slackened, died away, ended with a few dropping shots.

Old Zack squatted on his saddle, his benign features ruddy in the flickering light of the flames.

"I kinda guess," said he to the silent ring of horsemen about him, "that it's all over for today. Just about all over. Yes, I guess so."

And that was the Battle of Palo Alto, fought almost entirely by our field artillery—a battle which began and left us standing on the defensive before a vastly superior army which had lost nearly ten times as many men as we had lost, and which still retained its position astride the bloody road to Matamoras.

BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA·OXON

VI

RESACA

ABOUT sunrise a Lieutenant of Indiana dragoons, named Pleasanton, rode up with orders from Headquarters, sending me forward with the mixed command of Captain McCall to scout the chaparral through which the Mexican army had been retreating since dawn. Their withdrawal was voluntary, leisurely, and in good order.

My men and I had enjoyed refreshing baths. I requisitioned fresh horses and new clothing for them; we had breakfasted. So we were in high spirits when the uniforms of Smith's light companies began to appear, advancing on the right side of the Matamoras road, while McCall, with infantry and flying artillery, moved out to the left.

Pleasanton's Indiana dragoons trotted in the rear, their strangely shaped helmets, with great arched crests, reminding one of the Grecian headgear of Homer's heroes.

As we were saddling, cinching, and mounting our horses, Sam Walker's reckless Texans galloped up and began to file past us into the chaparral. They were singing their song of "Goliad":

"When we rode down to Goliad,
To Goliad,
To Goliad,
Three hundred Texans all alone,
A-riding down to Goliad
To wake the town
And take the town,
And hold it for our own.

"Their army marched to Goliad,
To Goliad,
To Goliad;
A mighty host surprised the town,
Surrounding us in Goliad;
And then, alas,
It came to pass
We laid our rifles down.

"God help us all in Goliad,
In Goliad,
In Goliad!
They bayoneted the sick-abed,
They slaughtered all in Goliad—
At evening bell
Their lances fell
A-dripping wet and red—

"We're going back to Goliad,
To Goliad,
To Goliad;

We'll leave in Goliad no stone
To mark the town of Goliad;
The buzzards high
That sweep the sky
Shall know the spot alone."

Chorus (with trumpets)

"Almighty God! won't we be glad
When we get back to Goliad!"

The ferocity of their shout and their strident trumpets sent shivers over me. These Texans had had a frightful score to wipe out at Goliad and the Alamo. But I supposed it already had been wiped out at San Jacinto.

The land across which we rode was a sad country of salt wastes, muddy ditches, pools, ponds, swamps, and matted chaparral. In this melancholy wilderness we rode forward, starting a few lurking rancheros and lancers who floundered up like wild creatures and fled frantically westward along cattle paths and game trails. The Texans laughed fiercely as they fired at them from their saddles.

About three miles out the Rangers overtook and caught a terrified ranchero, and killed two plucky Mexican lancers who fought savagely to the bitter end.

Near one of the adobe and plank ranchos belonging to the Palma family we emerged abruptly into open prairie flanked by fresh water ponds and thickets; and

here, instantly, we made lively contact with the rear-guard of the Mexican army, and whirled our horses to escape the hornet's nest.

Sam Walker's Texans, who had blundered headlong into this ambuscade, were suddenly peppered and stampeded by grapeshot from a masked battery. A private and two sergeants fell; Bandara, Peep and I dismounted and brought in these desperately wounded men—the private already in a dying condition, his lower jaw entirely gone.

We had had, however, time to discover the real situation. And it was this: an old, unmapped river channel crossed the Matamoras road at right angles, just ahead of us; and Mexican infantry and artillery were occupying it as a breastwork.

When I told this to McCall he sent back three Indiana dragoons with the news; and we of the scouting column withdrew to a respectful distance to watch the enemy's movements and await our old dunderhead of a general who was fussing somewhere in the rear with his cursed wagon train.

A few graceful enemy lancers moved gingerly about in the dense thickets of thorn and cactus, their red bonnets and red pennons visible. Now and then an escopeta went bang! in our direction; and we fired at the cloud of smoke at long range.

About noon we ate what was in our haversacks. Toward one o'clock a blue trooper of May's dragoons came loping along to say that General Taylor was on his way—with his damned wagons.

But it was four o'clock in the afternoon before Ridgely's flying battery galloped up and unlimbered on the Matamoras road. This outfit had been poor Ringgold's battery; and now Randolph Ridgely took it into action with a gay abandon and dash that started us cheering the red cannoniers from our saddles.

Instantly then began that strange affair at Resaca de Guerrero, which we call the battle of Resaca de la Palma—though neither palms nor Palmas were present.

So dense was the growth of woods, mesquite, and chaparral ahead of us that, as our troops pushed on into the thickets, no two companies were in view of each other. Even platoons lost touch and wandered in circles. Lost officers, commissioned or non-commissioned, led whatever troops they could come across; volunteers became bewildered, demoralized—their officers seldom amounting to anything—but the old discipline and instinct of the regulars carried them on, hacking their way through the chaparral, floundering across swamps, beating a bloody path forward—the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 8th regulars—while Ridgely's and Duncan's batteries flamed and banged away, and May's fiery dragoons rushed at the Mexican guns, sabring the gunners at their pieces, yelling and whooping like Comanches.

As May, leading the rush, galloped past me, he turned his lion-like head and called out: "I say, Maddox, please tell McIntosh to come on!"

The fighting for these guns instantly became ter-

rific. I saw Lieutenant Inge go down; saw eighteen superb horses and eight yelling men blown into atoms in the blast of Mexican grapeshot, as May's dragoons crashed into the battery and raged among the smoking guns, slashing at the gunners and Tampico marines who put up a desperate and gallant defense.

I sent Bandara to find the General; sent Peep after him; and began to hunt for the Colonel of the 5th infantry, McIntosh, to support our cavalry.

Before I found him, however, an entire wing of his regiment, led by subalterns, had charged the battery among the guns of which May still slashed and raged. Finally I stumbled over McIntosh and Stanisford in the chaparral, chasing lancers like rabbits.

In reply to my shout, McIntosh shouted back that he knew what to do. As he spurred forward with the remainder of his infantry, a whirlwind gallop of Mexican lancers enveloped him; and whether he was lanced or shot I never learned, but down he went, and another ferocious little fight began—bayonet against lance—until Major Stanisford galloped headlong into the mêlée with the remainder of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th infantry, stampeding the lancers into frantic flight, carrying the battery, and battering his way clean into the enemy's very centre.

A terrific racket on our right, cheering, crack of rifle, bang of musket, and noisy explosion of Mexican escopetas announced still another infantry charge. Our 4th regulars had broken right into General Arista's headquarters where were vast stores of bag-

gage, private property, provisions, and ammunition.

Four hundred Mexican mules instantly stampeded; shrieks and screams filled the air where the poor Mexican camp-women were running in every direction; shells arrived from Duncan's battery, blowing lancers, horses, mules, wagons, camp-women into bloody fragments. And into this confusion Ker's dragoons came galloping and swinging their heavy sabres through the screeching horror of it all.

The Mexican regulars, marines, infantry, and cavalry fought like cornered wildcats; our men were falling everywhere. I encountered Kirby Smith who told me that Lieutenants Chadbourne and Cochrane were killed; Lieutenant-Colonel Payne, Inspector-General; Captains Hooe and Montgomery; Lieutenants Fowler, Jordan, Maclay, Burbank, Gates, Selden, Dobbins, Morris, were down, wounded or dead.

A Mexican artillery captain fell under my horse's feet; and, dying, tried to kill me with his pistol. The wild cheering of our men dominated the uproar of the guns; Mexican caissons began to explode, shaking the ground.

In a plazoleta I came upon General Taylor, riding slowly and calmly forward with his gorgeous, gold-embroidered staff—and why Mars was kind to this snuff-coloured old gentleman in dusty linen and glazed cap the god of war only knows; for it was perfectly plain that he had had no more influence in directing this amazing and sanguinary row than the perplexed buzzard that circled above the smoke.

When Old Zack saw me he called out: "Say, Maddox, I'm a-going to drive 'em across the river tonight, and I want you should ride forward and try to get some of your men to take a peek into Matamoras for me."

"Shall I go myself, General?"

"No. Send over a spy or two tonight. You better go in with me when we take the city. I guess you can be a lot of help to me."

As I spurred forward I encountered Peep and Bandara, who told me that the Mexican cavalry were now in headlong flight, and that their infantry was in a panic and running after them.

I told Bandara and Peep to ride on, mix with the fugitives, get across the river and into the city, and bring me information at the fort. I sent Frank Hazlett to care for their horses.

They went off at a gay gallop toward the tremendous cloud of dust ahead where the Mexican retreat was becoming a complete rout. For all cadres were now broken and demoralized; artillery, cavalry, went thundering on toward the river where their boats lay—their only hope of safety.

And here, under the high banks of the Great River of the North, the spectacle already had become terrible. The Mexican infantry, arriving first, had swarmed and tumbled into the flat-boats, barges, and skiffs; and down upon these thundered their cavalry and artillery; crushing, mangling everything, driving their horses aboard the barges packed with shrieking

men and women, and hurling them into the river.

The river was covered with swimming and drowning men and horses and mules; through these masses of agonizing creatures, barges and boats forced and fought their way, beating off the desperate hands that clutched at oar, pole, and gunwale.

Then horror piled on horror as American shells began to explode over the crowded boats and amid masses of plunging horses ashore.

Mounted volunteer riflemen—but of what State and regiment I knew not— galloped along the crests of the forty-foot river bank, firing at loaded boat and splashing swimmer; from our fort the eighteen pounders hurled shells; the frantic counter-cannonade, from the city opposite, swelled to an earth-rocking roar.

If you call that a battle, there it is—the Battle of the Resaca.

I counted more than four hundred dead lancers along the shore. A thousand, it was said, died in the Great River of the North.

Near our fort I came up with Captain May and his dragoons. They had with them the regimental colours of the Mexican marines and a sheaf of enemy cavalry standards and guidons.

May told me very seriously and simply that never in his life had he experienced such heavenly pleasure as in that charge upon the Mexican artillery. I thought of the hot, nauseating stink of disembowelled horses, and of a dragoon I saw who sat screeching with

his belly blown to pieces and his intestines spilling out upon his lap—

And of a Mexican woman, her face completely gone and only a red hole there, and still crawling blindly across the grass—

May, with his haunting, zealot's eyes and his gaunt, symmetrical visage of John the Baptist, rode on straight ahead of him, his stained sabre in his reddened hand.

Into the flaming sunset he rode—the pale, enraptured, inexorable type of a fanatic nation born to march as long as there remains a world to march across, and whose doomed progress no ocean can ever bar.

I turned in my saddle; everywhere the sunset world was covered with marching blue; its bedded sands shook in the diapason of American guns; above the ramparts of our fort, dark against the setting sun, rippled the flag of the United States.

Just ahead of us, leading his gorgeous blue and gold staff, rode Old Zack in glazed cap and linen duster. Beside him rode a magnificently uniformed Mexican prisoner—General la Vega—taken fighting among his guns by May's dragoons.

I heard our General say to his interpreter in his kindly, simple way: "You tell General la Vega I want he should eat supper with me and my aides; and tell him he'll find us pleasant and friendly, like he was one o' the family come to Sunday dinner."

Their General Requina came over from Matamoras to ask politely for an armistice. But Old Zack shook his head; for Peep and Bandara had come in from the city with news that four-fifths of the Mexican army had been destroyed—thousands dead and wounded—and the Matamoras hospitals crammed with bleeding creatures unattended and starving.

That being the decision, Torrejon's cavalry rode out of Matamoras at one o'clock; and at twilight the Mexican retreat began toward the plains of Doña Rita—brigade after brigade of dusty infantry, dragoons, lancers; battery after battery of artillery; the park, the trains, baggage of officers, clerks, staffs; corps chests; ox carts, soldiers' women, wagons full of sick and wounded.

Kirby Smith told me that mail from the East had arrived and was being distributed. But Old Zack wanted me to go across to the city, so I told Peep to get any mail for me and fetch it to me at the Restaurant Zayas.

I went across the river with Bandara; we saw half a thousand wounded left behind; saw cannon being spiked, wagons run into the river, ammunition, provisions dumped over the bank, horseless dragoons marching afoot with the infantry, wretched, barefoot soldiers limping off, laden with their heavy equipment, and vast strings of mules piled high with officers' baggage.

The mounted staffs of seven generals rode out of the gloomy city across the fine esplanade where a huge

fire burned in front of the unfinished cathedral, throwing a sinister light across silent façades of handsome buildings facing the Plaza.

I left Bandara and went back across the river to our fort and told Old Rough and Ready—as some admirers called Old Zack—that the moment had come to make prisoner the beaten Mexican army of General Arista, and spare us all another and bloody battle.

I do not know to this day why he didn't cross and do it. He didn't. It was said that want of means of transportation delayed Old Rough and Un-ready. It may have been his cursed wagons; they had already delayed him often enough.

So I went back to the city and, under my proper and disgusted nose, I saw this decimated and demoralized Mexican army and seven discouraged generals escape toward the rancho of Medraneno on their way to the plain of Esperanza, Encadenado, the Hacienda of Conception, and the lovely city of Monterey.

So utterly defeated and cowed were all Mexicans, military and civilian alike, that, although dressed as a ranchero, I took no precautions at all and went about the wretched city as I pleased.

In the beautiful Plaza, lurid with the shaking light of great bonfires, an ominous silence reigned, broken only by the clank of retreating artillery and trample of jaded lancers.

But in remoter quarters there was some rioting fomented by sage-brush bandits and other dregs of

the desert—robberies, fights, brutal violence toward women; but the soldiers of St. Patrick's renegade battalion—the last to leave the city—did their patrol duty admirably, driving slinking desperados from their victims, protecting women, guarding property as well as they could.

As for the sick and wounded, the city was in a dreadful condition; I saw little huts, not fifteen feet square, where nearly a hundred wounded lay packed together, festering, bleeding, helpless. The stench was terrible; the arms or legs of some were gone, many had been shot in the eye or the mouth; blood, entrails, human excreta, vomit covered them. A few frightened Mexican women were trying to help them a little.

Peep found me at the deserted Restaurant Zayas, eating an omelette. He fetched me a letter from New York—the mail having come in to Commodore Conner's squadron by a gunboat, and sent on from Point Isabel.

The letter was from the sanctimonious old gander who had employed me in New York. He wanted me to drum up a trade in Bibles for him whenever off duty.

"The Lord God Almighty and General Zachary Taylor are about to smite the Mexican heathen hip and thigh," he wrote, "and I do not doubt that these idolaters shall be utterly cast down before the terrible vengeance of the Lord of Battles.

"Now is the time, Mr. Maddox, to do a little profitable and godly business. It is God's own business, not

mine, I bid you do. Your status as an officer of the army should not prevent you from engaging in a Christian business affair.

"As soon as General Taylor takes the city, I suggest that, on a commission of ten per cent, you point out to the Mayor of Matamoras that his gilded wooden virgins and bedizzened Saints and Christs have not protected his idol-worshiping, degraded and superstitious people from our civilized, God-fearing, and educated army; and that the surest comfort and hope of these defeated and wretched heathen lies in a bountiful consignment of Protestant Bibles and of Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist hymn books, all lovingly translated for Mexican use and published by Lemuel P. Loveday and Son—"

Tearing the letter into small shreds I looked at Peep who was one of the idolaters referred to.

"What news have you?"

"United States cavalry have crossed the river below and are at Burrita, your honour."

"They are too late," I said drily. "What is that blood on your shirt?"

"Nothing, your honour."

But it turned out that this degraded and heathen worshiper of gilded Madonnas had been shot by desert rats and, though painfully wounded, had continued on faithfully to fetch to me this business letter from one of those peculiar creatures parasitic upon the God that made it.

I took Peep into the kitchen and washed and dressed

his wound. The bullet had passed out. He smiled during the painful process, but he knew as well as I what was to be feared from a Mexican bullet sheathed in poisonous copper.

I told him to go back and report at our flying hospital behind the fort—which was now called Fort Brown, in honour of the officer who had died there, torn apart by a Mexican shell.

Perhaps if Old Zack had fussed less about his damned wagon train and a little more about his abandoned garrison, Major Brown might have seen his native Vermont again.

As there seemed to be no point in my remaining in the city, I went along with Peep to where he had left his little boat concealed.

"It was very bad in Matamoras, your honour," he said. "Some desert rats raped and murdered a poor girl in that alley behind the Baile Flamenco—your honour remembers?"

"I went there," I said sombrely, "but the Bear Folk had gone."

"Ei, prala, the Gypsies went to Monterey. I saw them departing."

"Did you see our little Silver Knees?"

"Ei, seño."

"Well?" I asked impatiently.

"She sat astride a mule, seño. When she beheld me—'Love to my Señor Captain Don Juan!' she called out to me—her face white with terror—and the rancheros with their lances, slinking along the caval-

cade like lobos, and only held aloof by the dragoons of Torrejon, riding with escopeta on thigh."

"Do you suppose the Bear Folk are safe?" I asked, deeply worried.

"Ei, seño. Torrejon has long had an amorous eye upon the little Silver Knees. His dragoons and lancers answer for the Bear Folki."

This was sufficiently disturbing, too.

I took the oars and sent the frail boat out into the current, not permitting Peep to row with a wounded arm.

He watched me in silence for a while. As we were landing he said:

"Prala—your honour—Don Juan, my Captain, why, if you desire her, do you not take our little Silver Knees for your honour's diversion, and to cook and wash and mend for your honour?"

"Because," said I, "we don't do such things in the United States."

"And yet you desire her?"

"I do not," said I. "Also, it is none of your damned business."

"Pardon, señor," he said dejectedly. "I spoke only from my heart, because I love your honour. That is all that occupies my mind, seño—my loyalty and love for my Señor Captain Don Juan."

As we got out of the boat he seemed very weak and I passed my arm about him to sustain him up the slope.

"I hope," said I kindly, "that your little sweetheart, Lilias Quintana, is safe."

"Ei, prala," said he in a whisper, "safe with God."

"What!" I exclaimed, dismayed.

"It was she whom those desert rats raped and murdered, in the Perdido Alley, prala."

"Good God—and you came to find me all the same —with this horror on your mind—and wounded, too—"

"I stabbed the big one till he squeaked and bubbled up blood. The little fellow shot me; and I got my pistol into his mouth and fired it; and both his eyes spurted out of his head. . . . As for Lilias, they had cut her throat. I found a candle and lighted it and set it on the floor beside her. That was all I could do. . . . And your honour was waiting for his mail—"

VII

TO THE BLACK FORT

FOR three months Old Zack and his educated, God-fearing Yankee army remained in the miserable city of Matamoras.

There had been only one thing to do—follow and capture or destroy the beaten army of Mexico.

There was no excuse for not doing these things. Where the ragged, mutilated Mexicans had marched toward Monterey and safety, our cavalry, infantry, and artillery could have marched after them, overhauled them, taken them, from prancing general to the littlest barefoot drummer lad.

But no. Old Zack's unmilitary mind was obsessed with wagons. Wagons haunted his sleep; wagons distracted his waking moments. All day his brain rattled with the clatter of wagons; all night an interminable procession of wagons creaked through his dreams. War, to him, had become but one endless wagon train, and the principal object of his army was to guard it.

I will say, however, that he had learned, a little, to use his Military Intelligence Department, and kept me fairly busy in the agreeable company of Lieutenant George G. Meade, our principal engineer officer, try-

ing, through every secret source, to procure a plan of the city of Monterey.

Those burning months are a miserable memory to me. Peep, very ill of his wound, had recovered; and he, Bandara, Frank Hazlett, and I scouted beyond Camargo, became peons among peons, rancheros among rancheros, rats of the desert among brush bandits and desert rats, creeping forward to the very base of the vast bastioned walls of Monterey. We *could* not get in.

With the serious-minded, peppery George Meade, and with Captain Williams, our topographical engineer, we mapped, for Old Zack, a vast, sizzling, desolate region—God help us!—taking our lives in our hands and breaking our hearts over it—which meant no more to Old Zack than a shopping trip downtown in Matamoras.

What interested him was his wagon train, not the road to Camargo.

And, meanwhile, the Mexican world around us was profoundly disturbed and changing; general after general "pronounced"—in other words, revolted; presidents seized the central power and were chased out by others who snatched it away; governments tumbled, were reconstructed, crumbled. Men talked of Parades, of Ampudia the Frenchman, of Santa Anna of sinister memory. War at full gallop could have ended matters then, mercifully. But Old Zack's brains rattled with the racket of ungreased wagons.

In August—and why, I never knew—I was detailed for duty with one of the most charming men I ever met—Albert Sidney Johnston, Inspector-General of Volunteers—late Colonel of a three-months' volunteer regiment recently dismissed.

Every day transports were arriving at Santiago Island with raw, seasick volunteer regiments. Frail, filthy little steamboats fetched them up to the river's mouth from Brazos; over burning sands they plodded and staggered, wading the shallow Boca Chica, and dragged their fevered bodies on toward Burrita and the blazing hot city beyond.

Poor, confused, untrained lads, already sickening on the blazing edge of the tropics, clothed in heavy, padded uniforms, perishing under leather shako, knapsack, and ponderous flintlocks altered to percussion—poor, fever-scourged devils dazed by pain—what, after all, could we expect of them but stupidity, timidity, and the instinctive cowardice consequent upon indiscipline and bewilderment? And the brutal reaction from bodies made frantic by fright and pain.

Day after day they came marching into Matamoras, their thin, miserable regimental bands playing, their jaunty, vacant-faced political officers riding ahead—regiments from Georgia, Alabama; regiments from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi.

Matamoras hospitals were crowded with these pitiable lads—victims of typhoid, of malaria, of measles, dysentery, chagres fever; men nearly dead of

the sun, of the poisonous stings of buffalo-gnats and ticks; men in agony from centipedes' bites, from virulent contact with trapdoor spiders and scorpions; men dying of the deathly virus from coral snake and rattler.

Fresh from the clean, cool northland, after seventeen days' loathsome sickness aboard overcrowded transports, these wretched youngsters had been dumped out into an alien and strange country which a flaming, unfamiliar sun turned into a burning hell. All around them was as unreal as a desert in Mars—dazzling sands, cactus, Spanish bayonet, vast hot, red sloughs that suddenly took wings and lifted under their fever-wide eyes when thousands of scarlet-winged flamingos rose into the air—

One morning, down the river, we heard drums beating the "Rogue's March." Later it changed to a dead march. Later still we heard a volley.

Riding with Albert Sidney Johnston, Kirby Smith, and a scrawny young gunner, T. W. Sherman, we encountered a volunteer regiment reeling along the river in the dreadful heat. I do not recollect from what State they came, but upon their sweating faces was stamped a kind of dazed horror; and, to General Johnston's question, their Colonel stared at us out of haunted eyes in silence.

He found a ghost of a voice, presently, to tell us that he had executed three soldiers for rape that morning. We said nothing. Presently he spurred his sweating horse, riding straight on, and blindly as in a

nightmare, the sun blazing on epaulettes and gilded facings outlining his whole figure with infernal fire.

Kirby Smith, speaking in bitter contempt, commented on officers not competent to maintain discipline and too ignorant to handle their men in action.

He said that the very name of "volunteer" already was a stench in the land; that they were dreaded like death in every Mexican village and had fled in every action in which they had been engaged.

He spoke with disgust of the political General, Pillow, mentioning his utter unfitness for command—quoting his brother, Edmund, to confirm his estimate.

The gaunt gunner, Sherman, remarked that war was an agreeable occupation, anyway, whether fought by fools or experts.

Albert Sidney Johnston, pale as a handsome poet, rode on in silence, his lost gaze on the horizon.

He said in a dreamy voice: "God leads us, I think, through Mexico to Armageddon where all the Western World shall clash in arms in one last, mighty battle. . . . And our world shall perish. And all things pass away. . . . And there shall be a new Heaven and a new earth—"

Nobody said anything. We rode on, gloomily; and it was as though the sunlight suddenly had died out and the Shadow of Slavery, black and monstrous, lay all around us.

It was the anniversary of Mexican independence. Bandara and I, scouting far in advance that morning,

and in touch with the rear of the enemy, could hear plainly the solemn music of the Mexican regimental bands saluting the birth of their nation. What was *my* country about, down here, with her strangling clutch upon the throat of this infant Republic?

By the end of August Old Zack's army was in camp at Camargo, a prey to fever; and through the camp the dead march wailed and thudded every day and all day long.

The first week in September we marched for Monterey. I had reported two thousand fresh veteran troops of the Mexican line entering Monterey. Already I had reported the Querétaro battalion and one other, two squadrons of regular cavalry, a regiment of Jalisco lancers, the Guanajuto dragoons, fifteen batteries of flying artillery—all from the City of Mexico —and, including a thousand rancheros, between eight and ten thousand troops of all arms—every man ready to fight like a devil.

"Well, Maddox," said Old Zack in his kindly, genial way, "if it's to be angels against devils, I ain't worrying any."

His smart brigadier, General Worth, who stood near, eating a sandwich, began to laugh in a disagreeable way.

"General," said Old Zack, "I guess you don't think our volunteers can qualify as angels."

"I hope to God, sir," said the Seminole veteran,

"that they may qualify as something, because, at present, they're not anything at all."

"Now, Worth," remonstrated Old Zack, "you're too darn hard on the boys. You're too hard on a lot of folks, Worth. We can't all be veteran soldiers—or veteran angels."

"I could do with a few veteran devils," remarked Worth, irritably.

"What do you want *I* should do with our volunteers?"

"Send the damned volunteers home, sir. And cashier several generals."

He had no use for political generals like Pillow, or for generals without military experience, like Major-General Butler, Generals Harner and Quitman. He himself was a gallant, impetuous, experienced officer, wanting, perhaps, in judgment and self-control, but he was a real soldier; and there were not many general officers of that species in our little army of the Rio Grande.

General Taylor diverted the conversation to his favorite topic of wagons.

Well, we marched for Cerralvo, three thousand regulars, three thousand volunteers, and about a billion wagons, always in view of a cloud of Torrejon's lancers which drifted away through the chaparral before our advance, like a dancing mist of scarlet mosquitos. Once, at Ramos, they suddenly swarmed and stung us, enveloping the Texas Rangers for a few mo-

ments in a poisonous vermilion haze, then vanishing with bloody lances and thin, far cries, cheering for God.

On the eighteenth of September Old Zack's motley outfit pitched tents near the forest of Santo Domingo, before the beautiful walled city of Monterey, rising from the plain and flanked on three sides by mountains.

A rapid little river, the Santa Catarina, washed its northern battlements; to the left soared the Silla Peak, above the Sierras; to the westward, on the Loma, towered the solid, stone-domed Bishop's Palace; eastward lay the flat-roofed, oriental-looking city dominated by a superb cathedral.

Both Bandara and Peep had managed to get into Monterey a week previously, and I had given Meade a pretty good plan of the city which, like most Mexican towns, was regularly laid out with straight, narrow streets running north and south and east and west.

The lively section of the town was the southeastern quarter, where lay the great plaza flanked by the Cathedral, with the Municipal Palace opposite. Just west of this lay a smaller plaza and a heavily walled cemetery. The street, continuing westward, swung toward the river and continued between it and the Bishop's Palace as the Saltillo highway.

I gave him a plan of the citadel, or Black Fort, north of the city, with its thirty-odd gun-embrasures and twelve pieces mounted—a few of them 18's.

I marked the guns on the Loma and south of the river; the Soldado battery; the Devil's Fort; the Teneria, and two other easterly lunettes; the northern

tête-de-pont with its motley breastworks and armament; the barricaded streets north of the little tannery brook.

It was a pretty good map, made better by Williams and Major Mansfield's engineers, and seemed to mildly interest Old Zack.

Calixto was cooking supper for me; Bandara, Peep, and Frank Hazlett were eating at a near fire; and I was washing myself, when Old Zack came stumping into my tent.

"Say, Maddox," he began, in his genial way, "I want you should do something about their spies which keep right on a-pestering me and a-peeking into every darn thing I do."

"Yes, sir. Frank Hazlett killed two on Thursday."

"I want to know!"

"Yes, sir; they started to run and he had to shoot them. They had no papers."

"Do tell!"

"The scouts, Bandara and Pacheco, caught another at Camargo. Do you recollect, sir?"

"Yes; I had to hang him. But they seem to breed like rabbits all over my camp. *Somebody* sends 'em in. Can't you and your men get into Monterey and take a kinda secret peek at their Intelligence Department?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right, Maddox. I got to assault the city and I'd like to have a leetle privacy about my plans if I can git it."

"Very well, General."

"You'll go in tonight, will you, Maddox?"

"Yes, sir."

"You'll send this Bandara fella? And Pacheco? And Hazlett?"

"And I'll go, also."

"All right, Maddox," he said pleasantly.

I called to Peep and Bandara: "Get into your rags," I said. "We're going into the city to stop the rat-hole where the enemy spies continue to come and go."

"Jesu," said Peep, smilingly, "we are very likely to hang this time, your honour."

Bandara remarked that it was pleasanter to kiss a girl over a wall than an escopeta under it.

Frank Hazlett said he didn't give a damn how he died as long as he could take a couple of Mexicans to hell with him.

Peep, leading his horse, halted, wet his little finger in his mouth, held it aloft. A heavy south wind had been blowing for several days.

"Pio smells a norte," remarked Frank. As he spoke, it began to rain.

Peep shrugged as I turned to him with the question in my gaze.

"Sur duro,
Norte seguro,"

said he cheerfully. "However, at God's banquet I eat frijoles or dulces—as He fills my platter. Vaya,

there is no more end to weather than to the Jota Aragonesa—plenty of both to please all tastes!"

Saddling his horse he sang one of the thousand verses:

"It rained on a man who was drowning;
'More water, by God!' says he,
'The sooner the better
I drown, for it's wetter
Up here than down under the sea!—'"

I covered my basket with my poncho and got into my saddle. Bandara looked up at the sky.

"Is it going to be a norther?" I asked.

"I think not, Captain Don Juan. I think the stars will shine on us in Monterey tonight."

There was no moon and it was still raining a little when we started. I had taken my basket of charms and medicines with me, and wore leather and linen and espadrilles.

Down by the river we ran plump into a vedette, but Bandara sprang upon him as a crazed cougar springs upon a bull, and pinched and cut his throat before he could scream.

What to do with the poor devil's terrified horse we didn't know; the startled thing wanted to run away across the river; so Bandara and Peep killed the frightened creature with their knives, and we threw the dead lancer into the river, and his pennoned lance after him.

It was a horrid killing there in the dark of the rain—

a foul, hot stink of blood heavy in the air; and the high-pitched crying of the Mexican sentries from post to post all about us in the night.

Fording the river, Peep whispered to me: "Your Silver Knees and the Bear Tamers are in the town."

"How do you know it?" I demanded.

"I saw the patteran, prala."

"Where?"

"On the Serralvo road, señor; and again where Colonel Garland scouted across the Guadalupe road near Fort Diablo."

As we reached the opposite shore he came close to me and said in a humble voice:

"I would give you anything in the world, prala. I would like to give you this girl. Even General Torrejon wants her. But you will not take her even for an hour's amusement—which seems very strange to me," he added sadly.

The rain had ceased and a few stars were trembling brilliantly overhead.

VIII

THE BROOK TENERIA

WE found no difficulty in penetrating Monterey by the Huajuco road and along the trenches to the San Antonio Gate through which refugees from the Obispado were still entering the town.

In this beautiful, regularly built city of hewn stone, washed by a river crystal clear, there seemed to be no panic, and even no particular excitement. A kind of bright, alert seriousness reigned, reflected upon the visages of the inhabitants and soldiery. There seemed to be nothing of fear, much less of despair. People went about accustomed duties and pleasures with a sort of cheerful solemnity. What was to be, must be. Today is today.

Cafés and restaurants were brilliant with lights, plaintive music sounded discreetly from dance-halls; streets and squares were thronged by slowly moving, fashionable promenaders, refugee country folk, poor peons.

Soldiers in gay uniforms, well fed and wearing carefully cared for side-arms, sauntered everywhere; the barred windows of handsome private residences, of churches, shops, consistorial buildings, and other re-

ligious edifices, barracks, hospitals, were brightly illuminated.

A spy always welcomes a crowd; we were grateful to get under cover of all this discreet but incessant noise and movement.

It had been arranged among us that Bandara should hang around the Plaza of San Antonio, where was the Campo Santo and post of military police, and pick up what he could concerning the Department of Mexican Military Intelligence.

Frank Hazlett, in the rags of a poor bullock guard, was to roam the slums between the Plaza del Toros and that of the Virgin del Roble and the Capuchins.

Pacheco I sent to the Plazuela de la Carne where he could be in touch with me from the Plaza del Mercado to the Grand Plaza, the Cathedral, and Ampudia's headquarters, guarded by Romano's superb cavalry and the magnificent lancers of Jalisco.

The main streets were lighted, but not very well. In my half-Gypsy dress of linen and leather, and straw sandals, and with my basket of charms, medicines, and amulets, I loitered along the hibiscus hedges under the palms and pepper trees of the lovely, fountain-set promenade where the air was saturated with the fresh fragrance of white jasmine and of pink oleander in heavy bloom.

Priests, passing, regarded me with curiosity or aversion; nuns gave me a shocked glance and went on with downcast eyes.

Young girls and young men, slowly strolling along

the footwalks, noticed with furtive interest my woven basket where lay my strangely interesting wares, and then they always looked at me; and I could read the half murmured words on their scarcely moving lips: "Gitano," or "a young sorcerer of the Zincali."

And all the while I kept up my smiling, discreet patter: "Buy my remedies, your honours. . . . I sell Venenillo, Ojo de Venado to avert the Evil Eye! Buy a deer's-eye, señora, against those envious of your youth and beauty. . . . I sell the chuparosa, your honour," said I to a handsome caballero; "buy it, señor, and wear it in your honour's faja so that all shall be amazed at your honour's energy and success!" . . . And, to the frail and painted damsels of the street: "Ladies, buy my amulets to inspire men's love. I have Cantarida; I have the San Benito; I sell the Hueso de Muerto, bone and backbone. . . . And for her who seeks vengeance I have the magic lodestone—the Piedra de Iman. It is alive. It must be put into water every Friday to drink, and it must be fed with iron dust. If you rub it on your dagger it will poison the man you stab. It will cure sores. It must not be worn at mass—no, ladies—because the devil hides within it—"

An elderly man, who looked like a planter, bought an escudo of me and placed it in his belt.

Two prostitutes bought a San Benito; a woman with a swollen cheek purchased a hormiga de hueso for toothache, and a cascabel for her son who was a fiddler in a dance-hall.

A lovely, shy mestizo sidled near to price a Ticus.

I sold her the left leg of the charm for half price, and she went away blushing.

Soldiers, loitering about me, usually purchased a San Benito de Palermo.

Twice I was questioned carelessly by military police, asking if I was one of the Bear Tamers; and that is how I learned that the Ursari were camped north of the little brook Teneria, and west of the Devil's Fort.

My eyes and ears, meanwhile, were extremely busy between the passing throng, the bustling military headquarters at the Cathedral, and the Palace opposite.

Presently Peep glided into the little crowd around me, and, while bending over my wares, told me, in Gypsy, that the Department of Military Intelligence occupied the Palace.

"What is it that you wish to buy, compadre?" I inquired smilingly; "I have dried humming-birds, devils' prayers neatly written, mortuary candles, oak-rods, cocoa-oil from Tuxpam—everything necessary to witchcraft I sell in my little red and white basket."

"Give me a magic amulet against the Americans," he said. "I know how to creep into their camp. Give me a devil's amulet to cast among them so that, like swine, they suddenly go mad and rush headlong into our river to destruction!"

There was a dead silence in the crowd around us. Then a soldier cried softly in his woman-like voice: "Viva Mexico!"

"Here," said I, "is a snake's rattle and a black

alacran—a dried scorpion. They are yours without pay, compadre. Take them and go with God!"

As he took the little bag of green silk an officer touched him on the shoulder.

"Come across to the Palace with me, compadre," said he quietly, "and I promise you that Mexico shall find employment for your devotion so truly brave."

"No, Señor Captain," said Peep, "I wish to creep into the American camp and turn them all into maddened swine with the witchcraft in this magic bag of silk."

"And I tell you," insisted the officer in a low voice, "that the Department of Secret Intelligence has instant need of such as you."

"May I take my little green bag, your honour?"

"Take it."

Peep, hat in hand, bowed deeply: "Unworthily," said he, "I beg the honour of following your excellency."

The staff-captain started to walk across the Plaza. As Peep moved lightly at his spurred heels he murmured in Romani, as he passed me: "At the Bear Folki in an hour."

I turned amiably to the crowd gathered about me: "Yonder goes a brave volunteer. May he go with God!"

"May he go with God," they murmured.

"Buy my remedies," said I, smilingly; "I have Agudas of romero—'Por la virtud que tienes por San Pedro y San Pablo'— Your honours know the saying.

And, with a jicara, one may find missing persons and those who are drowned—"

A soldier said: "Who wants to discover drowned Americans?"

A young girl whispered: "May God's Mother pity us all in Monterey."

I said, gravely: "Mother of God, look upon us all in thy infinite compassion. Jesus, forgive us all, for we know not what we do! . . . And I have in my little red and white basket, for sale, Mariguana, Palomita, for headache; I have Taquachi, Concha nacre, Escrella de Mar—"

"Have you sesor de cantara?" murmured a young girl in my ear.

"Not for you, little sister," I whispered, "so go with God and flee His anger."

She shrank back, flushed in her confusion. I sold some Aje for headache and a congrejo to a sickly looking soldier, for the fever which plainly was invading him.

I was moving slowly, now, northward along the Plaza, disposing, at intervals, of some cheap charm or medicine to be worn in the belt or faja, but never around the neck where practically everybody wore a church scapular or medal either of Monterey or Guadalupe, or St. Vincent Ferrer, Toluca—or the niño dios of Atocha, or the Virgin de los Remedios, or some "Little Jesus" of Sonora or Chihuahua.

The little crowd I had attracted followed, dissolved, was renewed, and slowly fell away as I still moved

northward; and by the time I had traversed the fifth transverse street running east and west and, crossing the brook, came into the poorer quarters, nobody was following me except a small, barefoot drummer boy of the Yucatan regiment, and a little yellow dog; and these two finally sat down under a china tree in the Plazoleta Teneria and watched me disappear through the maze of narrow streets and alleys northeast of the brook Teneria.

Here were no lights excepting the great liquid, trembling stars overhead. Crazy old adobe and wooden houses leaned outward over dirty alleys, balcony almost touching balcony; crumbling plaster walls, overhung with foliage, lined lanes that led nowhere.

Now and then some blanket-shrouded, shadowy shape slipped past me or glided like a phantom across the starlit darkness ahead.

There was a smell of stables in the night air, and of wood-smoke, and tan-bark. For this was the quarter La Teneria, and the fort of the same name lay northeast, and the Black Citadel due north.

I could hear a cavalry patrol in San Caralampio Square, and the clanking of field artillery passing the Virgin's Church toward the Capuchins and Citadel.

And now, on a grassy place bounded by four streets but unoccupied by houses, I saw the Gypsy tents of the Ursari, and their wagons, and two lanterns on poles, and the embers of a fire.

Beyond lay another vacant lot upon which stood a

candle-lit café and dance-hall made of boards, from which a fiddle sounded, playing a slow dance step.

It seemed strange that here, almost under our hostile cannon, there should be music and dancing. I could see people clustered about the café where two torches flared. Now and then a soldier crossed the grass, going toward the dance-hall.

Under the pepper trees along the tannery brook I sat down, unstrapped my basket, set it beside me, and disposed myself to wait for Peep.

In the darkness some mounted men drove a small herd of horses down to drink at the brook. I heard them talking in Gypsy but did not speak to them.

Save for the stream's gurgle, the distant fiddle, and the intermittent twittering of some night bird, the silence remained unbroken until somebody touched my arm in the darkness, and Peep's voice murmured my name.

He told me that he had been in the office of the Mexican Military Secret Service; had been rigorously questioned; had been accepted; and was to take six Mexican spies into our camp after midnight, by the Topo road.

"His honour, the Señor Captain Don George," said he, "will know how to question these poor fools when they are trapped. It will make an end, I think, of their spying on his Excellency General Don Zachary."

"When do you go?"

"After the half hour past midnight. I have plenty of time. . . . Yonder fiddle, seño,—it is playing a

Gypsy tune. . . . Ei! And there are the tents of the Zincali—the Bear Folki! Has your honour seen Silver Knees?"

"No."

"Doubtless she dances yonder. She is a dancer, prala."

"I know it."

"And your honour has no desire to see her?"

I did not answer. I did wish to see her, and the desire had preoccupied me ever since I entered Monterey. But, until this moment, I had not admitted it to myself.

The fiddling had ceased. We heard a guitar twanging and a girl's voice soft in the night air.

"A Gaja song," said Peep, "but the voice is the voice of little Silver Knees."

I knew it, too. I said nothing.

The distant voice sang on—

"I am an English maid,
Naked I stand here,
Nursing in my mind
What raiment I shall wear,
Now I wish this,
Now I wish that,
Now I desire I cannot say what!
All new fashions be pleasant to me;
I will have them of thee or of me,
Till I be a frisker on whom all men look,
And what shall I do but set cocke on hoop!
What do I care though virtue shall fail

If I have a garment reach to my tail,
And be a minion and wear a fair guise,
And look at all lovers with saucy eyes—
For love of new fashions my mind hath begot,
And for fashion I'll suffer I cannot tell what!"

"That is a very, very old song out of England," said I, "—hundreds of years old."

"What has a caballero to do with years that are dead, your honour? . . . When a Gypsy girl of seventeen years is singing under the stars?"

"The guitar is silent," I said.

"I shall teach it the deepest thrill in the world, prala—"

"Where are you going?"—for he had risen.

"Leave your basket, prala."

So I left it under the dripping pepper trees by the brook Teneria, in the trembling starlight.

The fiddle had begun again.

Nobody noticed us particularly. The dance-hall was but a wooden shed open on all sides. Common soldiers, rancheros, furtive characters from the chaparral, Gypsy youths and Gypsy girls were dancing and drinking pulque.

I remained outside in the shadow of a great pepper tree, leaning against it. Peep went inside, took a partner, and danced. I knew that every Gypsy there had recognized him immediately. Not one gave the slightest sign of recognition.

Suddenly I saw Silver Knees, in all her gaudy Gypsy

finery. She was dancing with a big, bony cavalryman; and, as she passed Peep and his partner, I saw her exchange a word with him behind her fan.

And now the music ceased; Peep went over to a post and took down a guitar which dangled from a peg. Silver Knees, declining an offer of pulque from her cavalier, slipped away into the crowd.

As I was searching for her with my eyes, I felt her hand steal into mine from behind me.

"Oh, Mother of God," she whispered, "oh, Don Juan, what happiness has my dear Sainte brought to me this night of stars!"

"Are you well, Encarnacion?"

"All is well on earth in this hour, prala."

"Tell me—"

"I do tell you. Because I love you, all is well with the world."

"The world will prove cruel enough to Monterey tomorrow, little sister."

"Ei. Tomorrow is tomorrow. Who knows? God wears a mask, but I think He is always smiling at us behind it. Do you love me, Don Juan?"

After a silence, Peep's guitar rang out sonorously. He sang in a clear, sombre voice his ominous, haunting Song of Sonora:

"The desert wind is dead o' fright
Where like a spider from her den
The moon is creeping through the night—
Yo también;

Haunted by stars with cruel eyes,
Your soul is crying while it dies,
Yo también—
Yo también!
Along my dagger's blade the dew
Glimmers in tears at thought of you.

"The Yaqui flute may wail and mourn
The loves of maidens and of men,
Body and soul accursed, forlorn—
Yo también!
O scarlet lips and scented breath,
God is the word of love and death—
Yo también!
Yo también!
The crawling moonlight glimmers red
Where my cold dagger kissed you dead."

"Esto no me gusta," cried Silver Knees with a stamp of her foot.

"He sings finely—"

"Estoy cansado de esoucharle—I am tired listening!"

Far away we heard the thin cry of the vedettes, "Quién está ahi?"

"Soy yo!" she whispered, laughing; then, passionately: "I love you. Don Juan—prala, I love you—"

Her hot, impetuous embrace left me silent and troubled. She rested against me, her warm, scented hair against my breast.

"What are your soldiers going to do to us poor folk in Monterey?" she murmured.

"Why did your people not continue on, little sister? Why, in God's name, must they always linger on the edge of battlefields?"

"I'll tell you," she whispered; "all Gypsies plunder the dead."

"What!" said I, astonished.

"Ei. You know yourself we are poor people. What do the dead want of their clothing and trinkets?"

"That is horrible."

"Why? The Romanacel have nothing; the dead have no longer any use for what they had. Why is it horrible, prala, for the poor and hungry to take what the dead no longer want?"

"Do you do this, Encarnacion? Do you rob the dead?"

She shrugged: "No; I am afraid of dead people. If they suddenly opened their eyes and looked at me I should die, I think. . . . Are you afraid of dead people—who have seen so many dead?"

"No. Silver Knees, do you tell fortunes, and cheat and steal from the Gajo, as do other of the Zincali of the Bear Folk?"

She laughed: "You talk like a Gajo yourself, prala, but I will answer you like a true Gitana. No, then; I dance for my living; and I eat and clothe myself by my dancing, and not, as you seem to think, by stealing or cheating or swindling or prostitution—"

"I did not think it," I interrupted angrily, "or I should not be here with you now—"

"Had I been impure," said she, "I had not dared to embrace your honour. . . . And I have had plenty of chances to take a rich lover—"

"Like that general of cavalry," said I sharply.

"Ei! The lancer, Torrejon," said she gaily. "And General Don Thomas Venegas. And the Captain of dragoons, Don Leon Ramirez. And many another, Don Juan, many another among the gold-laced Gajos. . . . Sometimes I wonder why I continue to dance for my bread."

I said nothing. She clasped my left hand lightly and began to swing it and her slim body, from the hips, rhythmically, humming the air of "Los Enanos" under her breath.

"Ei, prala, when a cei nasli—a runaway Gitana—knows well that no man will ever marry her because she is penniless—well, she is tempted. Ava, adova si! Youth is brief. Love is sweet. A full stomach goes to church; an empty one to the brothel."

"A pretty proverb, Encarnacion!"

"Not pretty, prala; true. . . . And, at my age, there is another hunger when the blood is swift and young. . . . Hom Gitanella!"

"You are half English, hijita."

"A maja—"

"A rani! Rani Ingrés, little sister—miri pen—chiquita—"

She caught me around the neck, laughing into my eyes:

"Bobo," she murmured, drawing my head down against her thickly clustered hair. Her full lips on my mouth stirred me to impulsive response; suddenly she became a flame in my arms, burning, melting in a passion of reckless abandon.

"Oh, Mother of God," she stammered, "I don't know what—I am about—any longer— Are you falling in love with me, querida mia—"

She disengaged herself; leaned limp and breathless against the tree, whimpering under her breath like a bird bewildered.

After a little while, her voice scarcely audible, I heard her begin to swear in Romanes, fluently, steadily.

"Encarnacion! Stop that cursing!—"

"Damnation," said she, in tears, "if I behave this way you won't believe me—"

"I *do!* . . . But this—calmazo—is silly. We behave like two fools—"

"Ca! I am the fool, chikno! . . . And, after all, what do *you* want of a Gitana?"

"Silver Knees," said I, "I'll tell you. I want to take you away from the calo pralor—take you North with me when this war ends—take you to New York, give you an education, give you every opportunity to grow up among the sort of people where you really belong—"

"Ca! Is your honour dreaming aloud!"

"From our camp there are always wagons going

back to the transports off Fort Isabel. You could go there and wait for me. I can arrange—"

"Oh, darling brother!—why do you wish this?"

"Because you have taken a firm place in my heart, chibori—"

"Oh, devla—devla!"

She began to whimper and grope toward me: "Life began for me when I first beheld you, prala—"

"Ei, prala," said I, "—and remember that is what I really am to you, Silver Knees—and shall always be—"

"Devla, devla!" she wailed, "it is written in the stars that I shall die a maid—"

"It is written there that you shall await the esmeralda, Silver Knees. Let the stars of future years answer you, chovihani, and, meanwhile, cling close to the hand of God's Mother. . . . I do not know how I am to bring you into our camp at the forest of San Domingo. . . . Are you afraid to leave the city with me tonight?"

"No."

After a silence: "Shall I go and make my bundle?" she inquired.

"Will the Bear Folk stop you?"

"Why? I am not of the Ursari. I am a runaway Gypsy girl—a cei nasli—and neither busni, nor of the gachi, not Gitana—only a bailarina flamenco with white knees!"

She was becoming excited. She laughed, caught my hands, and clung to them tensely.

"Shall we go, prala? Will you really take me away, my darling Don Juan, to be with you forever and ever and ever?"

"I'm going to do it, somehow, Silver Knees."

Flushed, excited, laughing, she stood swinging from our clasped hands, in rhythm to the distant dance-hall cadence of the Jarave Palomo.

I said: "Leave your Gypsy finery with the Bear Folki. You shall have means to buy what you require in Matamoras—or whatever city flies our flag—"

"Ca! I care not what I wear—or if I wear anything at all while I have you, prala!"

"You shall be dressed like an English girl and you shall become exactly like one—"

"Hush!" she whispered, "—here comes Pio Pacheco very swiftly—"

Peep glided toward us among the trees, glanced smilingly at Silver Knees.

"I must go, your honour."

"We go as far as the brook with you," said I.

He flashed a look of delighted intelligence at me. But I said quietly: "Listen, prala, and do not mistake what our little Silver Knees and I are going to do. For she has become my little sister, and nothing else, prala, and nothing more. And, if God wills it, I shall some day take her to New York where she shall become an English señorita and live like one, and very honourably. And there await—with confidence in God's holy Mother—whatever destiny may have to offer her."

We walked toward the brook Teneria in silence; and

here Peep took a gay and mischievous leave of us, and it was very plain that he believed us lovers and did not credit the explanation I chose to offer him.

He was still laughing mischievously when he left us, going away gaily to what might be his death—and not wasting a thought on it—only delighted at what he was convinced must be a headlong love affair that would bring me the happiness he always desired for me—if only for an hour.

I found and strapped on my basket. Silver Knees slipped her hand into mine. We crossed the foot-bridge and entered the dark city where now only a few barred windows were lighted, and where, through every street, rode shadowy patrols of horsemen, their long lances slanting athwart the stars.

We had taken, perhaps, a dozen steps from the bank of the little brook, and were just coming into the street beyond, when a sentinel challenged us.

Even before I could answer, a dozen infantry soldiers had surrounded us, silent as cats on their espadrilles, their bayonets pricking my body through my thin jacket of linen.

Silver Knees, startled, clung to my arm, but other soldiers tore her fingers loose and flung her across the brook, driving her back brutally with blows and bayonet prods.

"Be off," they shouted, "or we'll do your business for you! If you show your painted snout here again we'll flay your Gypsy hide for you!"

I struggled in their clutches; the straps of my basket

burst, showering them with charms and amulets; but they got my arms behind me and a rope around them.

Somebody with a gold-banded sleeve lifted a lantern close to my face.

"This is the man," he said. "Take him to La Teneria Barracks. March!"

IX

AN INQUISITION

TO say I was not frightened would be to brag. But I was not so badly scared that I lost my self-possession. The slightest sign of panic, and I knew well enough I was lost.

Surrounded by sandal-shod soldiers of the infantry regiment Querétaro—one of whom carried my basket of charms and amulets—we followed the gliding spot of light on the ground under the lantern, northeastward toward the Teneria Fort until a patrol of Guanajuato dragoons with torches halted us, and their handsome officer directed my escort to take their prisoner to the post of police in the Plaza de la Carne.

So we about-faced and back-tracked behind the Virgin's Church and the Plazoleta of the same name, recrossed the brook by a lovely bridge between two charming villas, marched southward two squares, and entered the police barracks under the big, hanging lantern.

Not a word had been said to me; I was not treated roughly, except when first seized. There was a little blood on my shirt from one or two ardent bayonets.

I was marched immediately into an empty antechamber. Here I stood, guarded, for perhaps half an

hour; then was taken into a larger, whitewashed room; my arms were untied, and I found myself confronting half a dozen army officers seated behind a long table.

A gorgeously uniformed officer of Jalisco lancers presided. A dragoon officer of the San Luis regiment, in a brown uniform faced with orange and gold, sat beside him. Other officers of the Querétaro and Guanajuato infantry battalions completed the silent group.

I took off my straw hat and saluted; the officer of the squad which arrested me gave a brief account of the episode. The grounds of arrest seemed to be an "accusation" based upon "secret information the most certain."

The major of lancers, stroking his curled mustache, addressed me in the cultivated voice of a gentleman:

"Your name, prisoner?"

"My name is Yanši, your honour."

"What kind of name is that?"

"It is the nav Romanes, Señor Major. My father's name was Ilya, and therefore I am called, also, Yanši le Ilyasko."

"What jargon are you talking?" he demanded.

"The Gypsy jargon, your worship—the language of the Ursari of the Kalo Rom."

"Are you a Gypsy?"

"Yes, your honour."

The handsome lancer turned to the officer who had arrested me:

"Where did you find this fellow, Lieutenant?"

"Crossing the brook near the camp of the Gypsy Bear Tamers, your honour."

"With whom was he when you discovered him?"

"With a Gypsy dancer, Señor Major."

"What do you find in his clothing and in his basket?"

"Nothing but a few caramels in his clothing, your honour. In the basket only witch-charms."

"What information had you that led you to arrest him?"

"A drummer lad of the Yucatan battalion saw him selling amulets near the Cathedral, and recognized him as an American spy whom he had seen in the Baile Flamenco in Matamoras last April."

"Where is this drummer boy?"

"In attendance, your honour."

"Confront him with the prisoner."

Then, to my horror, there came into the room that same shy little drummer lad of the Regiment of Yucatan—the same youngster, with his girlish face and figure, who, last April, had so shyly asked a dance of Silver Knees that night at the Baile Flamenco in Matamoras. And instantly, also, I realized that he had been the soldier who, with his little yellow dog, had followed me from the Grand Plaza to the brook Teneria, and had there sat down under a china tree in the Plazoleta, still looking after me.

Good God, why had I not remembered him then? I recognized him now; and I knew he recognized in

me the man for whom Silver Knees had refused his company with a cruel, unthinking retort.

To the questions of the Major of cavalry, the little drummer lad gave his name, the name and number of his battalion. The Major wrote down what he said.

"Tell your story!" he growled.

The boy began, tremulously. "This accursed Gypsy—"

"How do you know he is a Gypsy?"

"He was with Gypsies at the Baile Flamenco last April. I asked a girl called Silver Knees to dance with me. But she mocked me. This man beckoned to her and she went to this Gypsy. And sat upon his knee. And I heard them talking together in Gypsy."

"Continue, little one."

"At the Baile Flamenco this man quarreled with soldiers of the Battalion of St. Patrick. They were the soldiers Murtha, O'Rourke, Kenna, and Dineen. When they accused him of being an American spy, he ran away."

"Continue," said the Major, writing down the testimony on a blotter.

"With him," went on the boy, "was a Mexican I knew by sight, named Pio Pacheco. They both ran away from the Irish soldiers."

"Yes."

"Tonight, while this Gypsy was selling amulets near the Cathedral, this same Pio Pacheco came to him and whispered in his ear. Then Pacheco went with an officer into the Municipal Palace. I pointed him out

to a policeman who followed him. Afterward he joined this Gypsy—"

"Yes, yes, we have this Pacheco safe in jail! Go on, little one."

A cold chill crept all over me. They had taken Peep prisoner! That ended him, and probably me. But I looked at the Major of lancers with the troubled, bewildered eyes of utter innocence.

The boy stared at me out of beautiful, velvet-dark eyes: "I never forget," said he in his pretty, girlish voice, "the features of those who have done me a wrong. . . . I wished to get behind him and stab him, there at the Baile Flamenco—when she sat upon his knee—"

"Never mind," interrupted the Major; "go on with your story!"

"At orders, your honour. Well, then, I followed him tonight to the Gypsy camp. I saw him making love again to the Gypsy dancer, Silver Knees. Then, in a red rage, I ran to the depot of police. . . . Vaya —that is all—your honour—"

After a silence, to the Lieutenant of infantry who had arrested me: "Why did you not arrest this Gypsy dancer, also? How do you know she is not a part of the American spy system?"

The Lieutenant fingered his slight mustache in blushing embarrassment.

"Answer!"

"May I whisper to your honour—"

"No! Answer me," said the Major, impatiently.

"Well, then—this dancer—called Silver Knees—is known—is known to be a—a friend of—of—"

"Of whom—carramba!—"

"Of your General Torrejon, then!—if your honour must have it!" burst out the exasperated Lieutenant.

A startled silence followed. The Major of cavalry, very red, motioned the drummer lad aside.

"Bring in that wretch, Pacheco," he said, wiping his flushed features with a yellow silk handkerchief.

An agony of indecision seized me. I did not know what attitude to take toward Peep—or what might be his attitude toward me. How much had he already admitted? I could not guess; and, fearful of involving him and of betraying myself, I resolved to remain silent and alert for some cue to help me.

Peep came in, smilingly, moving with brisk grace between two soldiers of the military police who carried drawn sabres. An officer of police followed, swinging his cocked pistol.

Elegantly Peep saluted the Mexican officers seated behind the long table, made me a gay, familiar gesture of friendly recognition:

"What is all this about, brother?" he began in the Gypsy tongue.

"What is that you said?" interrupted the Major angrily. "Who the devil told you to speak?"

Peep bowed to him jauntily and repeated in Spanish what he had said to me.

"Hold your monkey tongue," said the Major, "and

answer my question. You are an American spy, are you not?"

"I? Mother of God, your honour is joking," cried Peep, laughing and slapping his bare knees.

"You will stop your grimacing and answer me seriously!" cried the Major in a rage. "If you are not an American spy, who are you?"

"A poor Gypsy, your honour—one of the Bear Folki, and brother to this Rom—"

"Will you stop your cursed parrot-chatter!" And, to the drummer lad: "Do you recognize this impudent fellow?"

"He is Pio Pacheco whose sweetheart, Lilias Quintana, was killed by desert rats in Matamoras," said the boy. "Everybody knows that."

"And on those same desert rats, who killed her, I took my revenge," smiled Peep. "Vaya—they squealed when I let out their dirty guts—"

There was an odd, sympathetic stirring of gold-laced officers behind the table.

The dragoon Captain said: "That is spoken like a real Mexican and not like a cowardly American who runs to a lawyer for his revenge."

The Major turned to Peep: "If you confess that this fellow has tempted you to betray your country I will see what can be done for you, Pacheco."

"Your honour, if I am to die in this hour, this man is innocent; and if you skin me alive and tan my hide at the Teneria, I shall not alter what I have the honour to say to your honour, by Jesus!"

"You seem to speak truthfully and like a Mexican. . . . Is it a fact that this Pacheco is so well known in Matamoras?" he added, addressing the little drummer boy.

"Yes, your honours," said the drummer, "all Matamoras knows how Pio Pacheco revenged himself. . . . I have nothing against him. But I hate this other—"

"Pio Pacheco," said the Major, "and," turning to me, "you, Yanŝi, who call yourself a Gypsy Bear Tamer—both of you will be confronted by soldiers of St. Patrick's Battalion with whom, it is said, you quarrelled at a Gypsy ball last April in the city of Matamoras.

"If you are identified as Americans masquerading here as Gypsies, you will suffer accordingly. If not, we have nothing against you."

The drummer lad stepped forward and pointed a dirty, trembling finger at me: "It is certain," he said shrilly, "that this one is a spy! And if he is to escape the police he shall not escape my vengeance—"

Like lightning he whipped out a knife and sprang at me; and a military policeman caught him by the faded collar of his tunic and jerked him back, strangling and screeching and sobbing.

"Thirty lashes," nodded the Major, very pale under the insult.

Two soldiers dragged the crazed and screaming boy away, speaking soothingly to him. There was a kind of shocked sympathy on the faces of everybody, in-

cluding Peep and, probably, myself. I doubt that the thirty lashes hurt the young tiger.

The Major picked up a pen, drew a sheet of paper toward him, wrote a few words and handed it to the fat Lieutenant of Police.

"Lock up these two Gypsies and send for the soldiers O'Rourke, Kenna, Dineen, and Murtha of St. Patrick's Battalion."

The officer saluted, took the paper, motioned to the two military policemen who waved us forward with their heavy sabres.

It seemed only a few paces along a lantern-lit, white-washed corridor before we encountered another soldier carrying a bunch of huge keys. He unlocked an iron door for us.

One of our guards said: "Are you going to leave two Gypsies together? Two rattlesnakes?"

"There's only this cell unoccupied. Vaya, let them bite each other, then, these rattlesnakes."

The door slammed on us; the key turned; steps retreated along the stone floor.

Peep came close to me in the darkness, groping for my hand.

"Prala, I think we are done for," he whispered; and gently kissed my hand.

X

MORNING

THERE was not even a plank for us to lie down on. But, in the last hour of life, few have the patience to remain still very long.

Like others, under the circumstances, we paced the narrow darkness, listening nervously for what already might be on its way.

Peep talked more than I did. We English accumulate courage in silence; the Latin fortifies a natural bravery with words.

"It is for you more than for myself, prala, that I resent this. . . . Because I love you as I love God—to whom, doubtless, we soon shall make our report. . . . That goddam drummer boy! Who would have thought the little ocelot would have remembered us! . . . But that's what a woman does to us—stabs us with a look. . . . Poisons us with passion. . . . As too much chili poisons one with bile. . . .

"Ei. So me kerdiom. . . . That I must die at twenty-one! . . . Like Lilias. . . . Devla! . . . Sar mai san, prala?"

"I am all right, brother."

"Rom san tu—you are a Gypsy, and that is why you say you are all right. . . . I, also, brother. Death,

the droll dog, can not frighten me by looking at me with his tongue hanging out. . . . I wish I had a cigar."

Tired of our nervous pacing, we leaned against the masonry wall. Nobody came.

"Vaya," said Peep, cheerily, "life is the flash of a butterfly's wing. . . . And those angels above, up there, prala. . . . Are there any young girl angels, I wonder?"

"I wonder what time it is," I said.

"Take off the crystal of your watch, brother, and my finger-tips will tell us."

I got it off in the darkness; Peep said it was nearly three o'clock in the morning.

"Those accursed Irish," he added, "are doubtless too drunk to confront us in a military court. . . . Who would have thought, prala, that the seeds of death would stick to us like beggar's lice there at the Baile Flamenco! . . . Do you remember how that young jaguar blushed like a girl when Silver Knees mocked him?"

The sound of her name hurt me; mind and heart had been constantly preoccupied with her; were heavy with thought of her. . . . Heavy with surmise of all the strange and curious things that might have been. . . . My face suddenly twitching, I straightened myself and squared my shoulders.

Peep began to hum the air of a popular prison song:

" '—And who are you in leather clout
And dirty velvet roundabout?'
'The Royal Robes your worship mocks
Are State Regalia for the stocks!'

" 'Whence do you come and whither fare,
You rascal with your saucy air?'
'A caballero I who begs,
Riding a stallion of two legs.'

" 'You tell me you're no vagabond?
Then what is it you do?'
'I mostly live by stealing, Judge,
The same as you!'

" 'I loiter mid the busy mart
To filch a lady's purse;
Sometimes I steal the lady's heart,
And sometimes I steal—worse—' "

A tremendous explosion obliterated his voice and shook the solid walls about us.

As our rocking senses steadied and the shaken silence settled heavily over us again, we heard the Mexican drums beating the alerta in the city, and the far clangour of cavalry trumpets.

"Prala?"

"I think it is one of our 18's on the Marin road, testing the range to the Citadel."

Listening, we heard the rush of flying artillery across

the Plazoleta outside—bump and clank of cannon, clash of chain and harness, the cracking of whips, and drivers shouting.

Bugles, very far away; after a while a sudden trample of cavalry; strident, sing-song voices of officers; a receding tremor of sound; utter stillness, intensified by the loud ticking of my watch.

After a long while—hours, perhaps—somebody lighted a lantern in the corridor outside our cell.

This burned for a very long time; and, when at last somebody extinguished it, a grey light overhead revealed a barred slit in our cell wall. It was nearly six o'clock in the morning.

About nine o'clock a soldier in wrinkled linen and naked feet unlocked our iron door, set a pot of water and a few frijoles on the stone floor, and went away.

"Aven," said Peep, calmly.

We drank and ate in silence.

At half past nine we heard the shuffle of espadrilles, the metallic shock of grounded muskets. Our cell door creaked open; an officer in green and scarlet uniform, carelessly swinging his pistol, motioned us to come out. A moment later we were in the whitewashed room again, seated on a bench, facing the Major of lancers and two other cavalry officers, one wearing the busby of the Mexican hussars, the other, a Colonel, who was presiding, wore the curious helmet of Mexican dragoons clasped over his bullet head and swarthy cheeks.

Scarcely were we seated than a file of soldiers of

the Yucatan battalion came shuffling into the room, guarding three new prisoners.

The prisoners were Bandara, Frank Hazlett, and Silver Knees.

This, then, meant the end for all of us. I looked at Silver Knees. Under her shock of curly hair framing her pale face her iris-tinted eyes looked straight at the three officers.

Bandara's grim features remained inscrutable; Frank Hazlett's expression was of dark and baffled rage. He chewed tobacco continually.

When Silver Knees, presently, caught sight of me, her pale face flushed brightly and she made a slight, impulsive movement of recognition.

The Colonel of dragoons, who had been staring at her, noticed it, and said loudly: "You Gypsy girl, there, you recognize your lover, then!"

"Señor Colonel," she replied coolly, "I see my brother here, but no lover."

"Oh," said he, "so your brother is a spy for the Americans, then!"

"My brother is a Gypsy of the Ursari people, as I am, señor."

"All very well," he said harshly, "but it is known that you furnish information to these Gypsy vagabonds who sell it to the Americans! How do you do it?"

"Sar keres?" she repeated impudently. "Po vast—by palmistry, perhaps."

Peep whispered to me: "That is Torribio Lopez—

Lopez the Leopard. My God, she ought not to be impudent to him."

Colonel Lopez gave her a hot stare out of his odd, yellowish eyes.

"Conduct yourself with respect toward this military court," he said.

"I know well enough it is no Romano Kris—no Gypsy court," she said with a shrug.

Colonel Lopez continued to stare at her. There was an odd, preoccupied expression in his fixed gaze, almost a leer.

He said in a low voice: "Do you wish to save your life?"

"Naturally, señor."

"Then admit that these vagabonds are spies to whom you furnish information."

She looked around at me, at Peep, and from Bandara to Frank Hazlett:

"Dilo!" she said gaily, "he is crazy!"

Colonel Lopez glared at her. Yet, for all the swift ferocity of his yellow gaze, there glimmered in it a kind of smirk.

"You are young," he said. "Life is sweet to you. . . . Is there anything more desirable than life?"

"Probably."

"Do you mean love?" said he, smirking at her; "—because, without life, love can not exist."

"True, señor—only one thing can survive death."

"And what may that be?" he sneered.

"Honour," she said gaily, "—for it even survives

the death of those who die in rags. Vaya, your honour can not frighten me into lying, nor scare me into perjury to save myself!"

His fixed leer never altered; still staring at her he said to the Lieutenant of the Yucatan squad:

"Fetch in those Irishmen."

As the youngster left the room a distant cannon shot shook the building, followed by a terrific crash that rocked the room.

The bombardment had begun, and I knew that it came from the northeast where our batteries were opening on the Bishop's Palace.

Boom—boom—boom! The Mexican batteries were replying, now. And, from the northwest, came the heavy thunder of the guns in the Teneria Fort and the deep crash of mortars in Fort Diablo.

But now I saw grey and green uniforms in the room —fantassins of the San Patricio Battalion—reckless, sun-scorched Irish faces that peered half-humorously at me, at Peep, at Bandara and Frank.

Two of them recognized me, and Peep, also. One of them—a sergeant named Clancy—swore that I resembled a certain Captain Maddox of the American Department of Military Intelligence. He could not take his oath on it, but he was certain. Anyway, I was the same man who ran away from him at the Baile Flamenco in Matamoras last April.

A soldier named Murtha, confronted with Bandara and Frank Hazlett, could not swear that he ever had seen either of them—muttering to himself in English

that all Mexicans were yellow skinned and looked alike to him.

A corporal, Dineen, identified Silver Knees, saying she was a well-known Gypsy prostitute.

"You lie," said the girl, good humouredly—"ma Xo-Xaves!"

"What do you say?" demanded Lopez, his hot eyes fastened upon her.

"Dilo si?—is this soldier crazy, señor? He says I am a prostitute!"

Lopez moistened his thick lips with his tongue. He spoke a moment, with the two other officers. One of them smiled.

"Take that girl to the Virgin's Church and tell the nuns of the Incarnation to take charge of her," said Lopez.

Silver Knees seated herself and slid along the wooden bench toward me.

"No," she said, "I prefer to remain here with my brother."

The Major of lancers motioned her away:

"Go," he said; "there is nothing against you." . . . And, to the soldiers of the guard— "Take her to the Incarnation!"

She struggled for a moment, pulled up her skirts to snatch at her knife—but her arms were instantly pinioned. As they forced her out of the room she gave me a heart-breaking look and would have spoken, but a soldier closed her mouth with his big, brown hand.

The young hussar Captain—evidently an elegant on staff duty from Mexico City—looked at Bandara: "A poor Indian peon," he said. "Is there anything against him?"

"Let him go," said Lopez.

"And that sulky fellow yonder?"—nodding to Frank.

Lopez said: "It is safer to shoot him, I think."

All three officers looked at me and at Peep.

"When in doubt, shoot," remarked Lopez.

In the swelling roar of the cannonade we could scarcely hear him.

Peep stood up, his ragged hat clasped in both hands:

"Señors," he said, "I protest, in God's holy name, against the sentence which condemns my brother to a squad of execution."

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Lopez.

"I say to you, solemnly, and call God to witness my words, that this man is loyal, patriotic, and incapable of betraying his native land."

"Very well. Sit down."

Peep stood a moment more, his gaze fixed on Lopez. Then he sank down beside me, trembling a little.

"And you?" demanded Lopez.

I got up:

"Señors," I said, "if this is the proceeding of a civilized military court, then I am astonished. Because no real evidence has been brought against us—"

"Sit down!"

"Señors—"

"Sit down!" repeated Lopez. He nodded to Frank who got up glaring out of bloodshot eyes.

"All I got to say to you three yellow dogs," he said, "is this!"—and he spat a stream of tobacco juice straight at them.

There was a horrified silence, then the soldiers had him. Fighting, kicking, biting like a mad wolf, he was dragged out into the corridor where his yells and curses and the noise of the struggle receded until a distant door clanged.

The Yucatan soldiers escorted us, bayonets charged, into another corridor, across a patio, and into a small room with barred windows. Here we were locked in; we sat down on the stone floor and, in silence, strove to adjust ourselves to our impending fate.

The noise of the cannonade had become stupendous; our walls trembled under the concussions. We could hear the rippling crash of musketry not far away to the north of us and the terrific explosion of mortars in the direction of Fort Teneria. All the northern, eastern, and western bastions of the city were noisily ablaze with artillery and musketry fire, and with the detonations of American shells bursting all over the Obispado and even as far as the villas in the pretty suburbs along the river.

My senses informed me of all this but my mind was desperately preoccupied, as is natural to a man about to die, with thoughts of Silver Knees and of life and death.

Hour after hour passed with scarcely a word between Peep and me. The uproar of battle increased steadily, swelling ever nearer and nearer; and, half listening, I could distinguish the distant shouting, the far cries of officers urging their men, the wild flurry of bugles rallying, warning, hysterical; the clatter of cavalry through the streets; the gallop of staff officers and aides-de-camp between the Carne and the unfinished Cathedral.

Nobody came near us. The sun slanted through our barred window. A mocking-bird in a china tree, outside, sang carelessly despite the awful uproar; and I saw lizards basking on the white wall of the patio, their jewelled flanks contracting, palpitating, expanding under the burning sun.

About three o'clock some sweating, slovenly soldiers shuffled into the patio, in charge of a shabby-looking officer in cotton uniform trimmed with red.

They stood at ease close to our window, not noticing us, but talking excitedly among themselves.

One of them fetched a chair and a fan for the officer who seated himself in the shadow of the wall and began to fan himself.

We could hear what the soldiers were talking about. There had been a charge of Mexican cavalry on the Saltillo road, followed by a terrific fight with American infantry. Mexican artillery had driven them back, but they had come on again, wading the river, evidently determined to storm the Bishop's Palace.

"Dios," said a sweating corporal, "our light troops

gave them a bellyful. One would think they had had enough."

"Like swine," said another, "they don't know when they're gorged, but run on grunting for more."

"By God, our lancers will let out their stuffed guts for them!"

Another said: "Their regulars are real men, but their cowardly volunteers are wild beasts. Women and children they outrage and murder, but they run squealing when our rancheros ride into them with bloody lances!"

It was toward four o'clock, and the sun, westward, blotted by a great coil of thunder clouds, when Peep, looking from the window, reached down and jogged my elbow.

"Aven," he said.

I got up and looked out. Into the patio shuffled a dozen barefoot soldiers of the permanent militia. In their midst slouched Frank Hazlett.

His swollen, red hands were cruelly knotted behind his back; his dishevelled hair straggled over his sullen visage. He was chewing tobacco, steadily.

The officer in shadow of the wall got up, laid aside his fan, drew his sword. The squad of execution came to slovenly attention.

They led Frank to the wall, pushed him back against it. He spat.

"You like a priest?" demanded the officer in command. "It is some at the barracks—ver' holy man—"

"Go to hell!"

"It is you who shall go, not I," retorted the officer, laughing. "How you like? Eh? I shall tie your eyes with a handkerchief? Yes?"

"You damn greaser," said Frank, "why don't you shoot me in the back like you done to our people down to Goliad!"

"For why I shoot you behind?" asked the officer with good-natured curiosity.

"Because you're afeard to look a Texan in the face, you yeller pig!" said Frank. "Shut up and go on with your job!"

When they aimed their muskets at him he sneered at them.

He was still chewing tobacco—a little faster than usual—when they fired.

He slid down gently to the foot of the wall and remained there, half seated, his head sagging over.

A sergeant reloaded and cocked his piece, went toward him, felt of his heart, uncocked his musket, and walked back to the squad.

The mocking-bird had already begun to sing again.

XI

MONTEREY

NOBODY came near us. We were suffering severely from thirst. But hunger seldom mates with fear, and we were not hungry. We talked together about the cannonading—about the overcast sky which promised rain—about anything to keep our minds occupied.

Frank Hazlett's riddled body lay almost under our window, against the wall, until about five o'clock in the afternoon, when some barefoot soldiers of the militia came in, rolled it into a ragged poncho, and lugged it away.

At that hour the outrageous noise of battle dominated all other sounds in the city; salvos of shells from our batteries fell along the river, exploding with frightful detonations. The racket of musketry, punctuated by the bang of field guns, had become continuous in the direction of the Bishop's Palace and toward Fort Teneria.

In the courtyard the sun, blotted out by clouds every now and then, dappled the bullet-pitted wall with intermittent sunshine.

It was very hot in our prison; the threatened rain already drew a grey veil across a distant mountain.

Toward half past five some dismounted cavalrymen came dawdling into the patio and began to draw water from the well. They smoked and gossiped and did little work.

Peep called to them and asked for a drink. One of the troopers obligingly filled a gourd full of clear, sweet water and passed it up to us. We had been feeling a little demoralized, and it helped to steady us.

While the last troopers were still drawing water, there came filing into the courtyard some soldiers of a Sonora battalion—wild-looking fellows—who grounded arms in front of the wall where Frank had been shot, and drew and fixed bayonets.

A few moments later, into the patio rode some lancers and dragoons—half a dozen, perhaps—but among them I saw Colonel Torribio Lopez. Presently that handsome Major of lancers who had presided at our first interrogation, galloped into the yard.

Lopez spoke to him by name, calling him Major Romano:

"You had better shoot those two Gypsies at once," he said. "Here is the firing squad from the Sonora battalion."

I heard Major Romano give a brief order to the Senora Lieutenant. Peep heard it, too.

"Well," said he, forcing his voice which had a quaver in it, "at least we are no longer thirsty, prala."

As the squad of execution came to attention, they were thrown into some confusion by a sudden irruption of excited cavalry—Jalisco lancers escorting a

Colonel in full uniform, accompanied by a bareheaded Colonel of dragoons who wore a bloody bandage across his face.

"For God's sake, Major Romano, what are you doing here!" shouted the Colonel of lancers. "The Americans have driven in our dragoons and are galloping down the Tepo road! Mount your men!"

Romano bawled after Lopez who already had dismounted and was entering the corridor of our prison: "Colonel Lopez! Colonel Lopez! Here are Colonels Don Juan Najera and Don Mariano Moret! Leave those Gypsies to the Sonora squad and mount your men!"

A bugle blew wildly; the patio instantly became a turmoil of milling horses and riders—lancers and dragoons—some mounted, others mounting, others afoot and running after their nags or trying to control them in order to get into their saddles.

As for the firing squad, it was already scattered in confusion, trying to avoid the horsemen whose nervous animals, crowded in the courtyard, were rearing, kicking, huddling, backing into each other.

It had suddenly grown quite dark in the courtyard. Huge thunder clouds, crowding up from the southwest, buried the sun. A livid, unreal twilight fell over the city.

Colonel Najera, irritated and impatient, hustled and knocked about in the semi-darkness, spoke loudly and angrily to Romano, telling him to let the dragoons out

first as Colonel Moret's troopers appeared to be better disciplined than the lancers of Jalisco.

I saw Lopez spur out through the alleyway at the head of his Guanajuato dragoons, just as the first gust of rain swept the patio.

Najera followed, accompanied by Romano who seemed to be in a rage, glaring right and left under his scarlet schapska. After these, crowded their lancers at a trot, breaking into a swift gallop as they entered the alley beyond.

Against the inky blackness of the skies shells were exploding redly just above the northern roof-tops, and in full view of our windows. And, as we looked, lightning flashed from the clouds and, after a long while, the heavy reverberation of thunder followed.

The Lieutenant commanding the Sonora firing squad, a dumpy, square-visaged Indian, left his men under the china tree where they had taken shelter both from the cavalry horses and from the rain, and came toward our prison.

"Mother of God," said he, unlocking our door and walking in, "here is a real storm coming, and I think we all had better sit dry until it is over. . . . Unless, señors, you prefer to die in the rain."

Peep said, with an effort at a smile, that we preferred to die dry, lest our corpses catch cold.

The Indian Lieutenant went to our barred window and shouted across to his men: "Fetch over that pulque brandy!"

Turning to us: "You have a journey before you, señors; you should fortify yourselves."

A soldier in bare feet and dripping blouse came in with a gourd full of brandy. The Lieutenant set his lips to it first.

As he began to drink, Peep pinched my arm. At the same moment the soldier who had fetched the pulque came close up and looked at me in the gloom of the gathering storm. The soldier was my own scout, Bandara.

Such a violent emotion possessed me that I set my teeth to control it.

I saw Peep crouch. Bandara stepped aside and behind the officer.

As the Lieutenant lowered the gourd to take breath, Bandara's right hand encircled his throat, and the left covered his mouth.

Crash went the gourd; there was a moment's furious struggle in the dusk; then the half-strangled officer stood reeling on sandalled feet, Bandara's bayonet prodding his back, and his own pistol, in Peep's fist, pushed up under his chin. Peep also had his knife.

I took off my sash and tied the fellow's arms firmly.

Peep said to him: "You will call to your men from this window, and order them to stack their arms and cartridge boxes in the corridor outside; and then you shall order them to go into the alley stable until the rain is over. . . . If you refuse, I shall encourage this large knife of yours to play tag with your liver."

"If the coyote yelps, kill him," added Bandara.

"Everybody—all together—if he as much as whines."

We took him to the window. His throat was badly bruised and swollen, but he managed to find voice enough to save his life.

It had grown so dark that only by the glare of the lightning could we see the soldiers stacking their muskets in the corridor and going off into the alley on the run.

Now the thunder had become louder than the cannonade—or perhaps the cannon had ceased firing and we were mistaking the flare of lightning for the swift brilliancy of exploding shells.

We made the wretched officer sit down on the floor, facing the wall. I watched him, pistol in hand. Peep and Bandara went into the corridor and fetched in ten loaded muskets with bayonets, and ten sacks of ammunition including percussion caps. Then we locked and bolted the outer door.

The roar of the rain in our yard was like the tremendous noise of a high falls pouring into a ravine. The lightning was continuous; the solid shock of the thunder, peal on peal, deafened us. Except in the glare of the lightning we could see nothing outside, and could not see each other.

We had Bandara's brief story in bits and snatches between bolts.

After they had let him go he had hung about the market place, watching and listening for news of us.

They were bringing dead soldiers into the Carne where the Sonora Indians had dug a trench and made

a breastwork. Shells already had killed several of them; and Bandara, discovering a dead man in a butcher shop, put on his uniform, took his equipment, and went out into the square just as the order came for a volunteer squad to do our business for us.

That was all; he had volunteered, hoping for a chance to help us. The chance came and he took it.

Peep and I pressed the brave Indian's hand in silence.

"It was nothing, your honour—nothing at all, brother Pio," said he; "it would be a poor Jacarilla who could not outwit that Lieutenant."

The rain roared and roared unceasingly. Evening became night; hour dragged after hour; the thunder, receding, rolled and boomed among the mountains; the lightning flickered and flared.

About six o'clock in the morning the rain slackened; the rumble of thunder died away; a pale, watery, primrose-tinted light spread beyond our barred windows.

One of the Sonora soldiers—a corporal—swathed in his poncho, came into the yard and called up to his Lieutenant.

We made the wretched officer go to the window and give orders for food, then sent him back to squat down and look at the whitewashed prison wall again.

At that moment a frightful cannonade began, and we heard musketry in the market square and the explosion of shells.

When the soldier came running back with a sack

full of tortillas, chili-con-carne, and a gourd of sweet water, Bandara took in everything through the bars.

"Our Lieutenant," said he to the nervous soldier, "has gone to the Guard Plaza and has left me to guard these American pigs. . . . What is the news, compadre?"

"Well, then, there is plenty, compadre! The Americans are in the city and are breaking their way through from one house to the next with crowbars and pickaxes. Like an army of burrowing moles they swarm through our house-walls from the west, and have come almost to the Plaza de la Carne where they fire from roof and window upon our men in that accursed trench we dug!"

"Where else are the American pigs?" demanded Bandara.

"Good God, they are everywhere! They have taken the Obispado. Romano's cavalry are all cut to pieces and Romano is dead. Also, the lancers of Jalisco are ruined; Don Najera fell dead at their head. We have lost the Tannery Fort; our 3rd light infantry ran! . . . Are there orders for us, compadre?"

"Yes. He orders you to take the squad to the Purisima Bridge where you will find your regiment—"

Like a panther our prisoner, the Indian Lieutenant, was on his feet and had leaped to the barred window:

"A lie!" he shouted; "it is death to go there! I am a prisoner here—"

Bandara drew up his musket and fired at him.

"Viva Mexico," he gasped; then his fingers relaxed

and he sagged down dead under the barred window.

Out of the powder-fog in the room we looked through the bars at the soldier outside. That ragged Sonora corporal was as brave as his dead Lieutenant. He hadn't the slightest chance for life under the muskets of Peep and Bandara. He glared dauntlessly at the latter:

"Traitor to your country!" he said, "you will burn in hell for this!"

"I am no traitor, then!" shouted Bandara; "I am a Jacarilla Apache and no Mexican!"

"Nor am I," cried Peep; "I am Pio Pacheco, a Gitano of the Ursari! What have I to do with your cursed Mexico!"

"Let that man go," said I.

Bandara hesitated; Peep shrugged and lowered his musket.

"Clear out," he called to the Sonoran, "—the American you were going to murder gives you your life!"

Very coolly the corporal stepped forward three paces, lifted his dirty hand in salute:

"Señor," said he, "I thank your honour very much."

Then he turned his back and walked leisurely away into the alley.

"Now," said Bandara, "let us get away from this window because, in a few moments, we are going to catch it."

We were eating when the first volley came through the window from the alley, filling our room with lime dust where the flight of bullets battered our wall.

I went into the corridor where I could see through a tiny hole made for that purpose.

Again the walled yard echoed with the crash of musketry; but no Mexican soldier ventured to show himself.

For half an hour this fusillade continued; but, in the comparatively quiet intervals between volleys, we could hear the rapidly approaching uproar of fighting between the cemetery and St. Anthony's Church, and the Plaza de la Carne.

Bandara said that our troops must already have carried the cemetery, and were battering their way through the houses of the street directly west of us.

Northeast of us, too, there was a steadily rising roar of battle, as though not only the Teneria Fort had been taken, but the Devil's Fort, also; and our people already were in possession of the Campo Santo and within musket shot of the Cathedral.

Nevertheless there came always the heavy booming of the Citadel cannon from the north, which told us that the Black Fort was holding out.

As for the unseen soldiers who were firing at our jail windows, we paid little heed to them. Cannon alone could batter in our walls.

Now and then, between volleys, Peep and Bandara aimed at the alleyway and let off their muskets with tremendous bangs; then we squatted on the stone floor to wait for the next storm of bullets.

This useless business continued until about three o'clock in the afternoon. By that time the street fight-

ing raged so close to us that we could hear American shouts and cheers amid the racket of musketry; hear the blows of mattock and pickaxe on partition walls of houses close to ours.

In the corridor was a ladder leading to the low, flat roof overhead. Up this I climbed and ventured to look out over the city.

Everywhere smoke whirled upward from musketry and field guns in action; the handsome Mexican flag on the Bishop's Palace was gone; our flag flew there, dainty as a wind-whipped blossom in the flying smoke.

The Mexican flag with its stately eagle was gone, also, from the Citadel, from Teneria, and from the Devil's Fort.

An immense uproar arose all around me, shouts, shrieks, cheering, explosion of muskets, rifles, escopetas; the shattering crash of field guns in the city streets; the shaking thunder of heavy artillery and mortars.

There, in that roaring pandemonium of smoke and flame, we three sat down on the parapet of our roof, muskets in hand, and awaited what fate held in store for us.

It was as though the city of Monterey had become, suddenly, the pit of hell itself. On three sides of us towered huge mountains, their broken peaks looming high against the sunset sky. Eastward, Saddle Mountain dominated the gloomy barrier of rock; westward the jagged coronet of Mitre Mountain, bathed all in shadow; to the south the Sierra Peak soared.

Over the beautiful, doomed city which is entirely built of stone, hung the storm cloud of battle laced with incessant lightning.

Through whirling smoke we could look down into narrow, paved streets and walled gardens where orange, banana, pomegranate and fig trees swayed, mangled in the blast of exploding shells.

We could see very plainly all the Mexican forts; the Citadel; the huge ruin called the Bishop's Palace with its turrets, battlements, and the stone Christ overhead; the Cathedral—its Moorish façade unfinished—flying the Mexican flag. I could even make out the main bridge over the San Juan and the great statue of the Virgin with her green cloak and gilded gown.

Suddenly, two houses west of us, I saw a United States regular soldier climb to the roof and peer over it into the street below.

"This way!" I shouted to him; "bring your men over here and you can come down through the scuttle!"

Other soldiers appeared on the flat roof-tops. As they moved toward me they fired down into the street and dodged back to reload.

A sergeant of the 5th infantry reached our roof first. His blue uniform was white with plaster dust.

He and a dozen others descended our scuttle. Then I saw Rossell of the 5th running toward me. The uniform on his bony body was drenched with blood.

"How on earth did you get here, Maddox?" he asked, cheerily.

I told him in a word or two. "From the patio

below," I explained, "your men can command the entire Plaza de la Carne. What on earth is the matter with you, anyway, Rossell?"

"Only a prick from a lance. It's nothing—"

But as he went down the ladder I heard his boots wheezing and slopping with the blood that filled them.

Looking down at the square below I could see dismounted troopers of the Texan cavalry—Wood's regiment—swarming across the streets between the Carne and the cemetery.

An officer of the 7th regular infantry, whom I knew slightly, now appeared on our roof, leading a file of men.

He told me, bitterly, that some of our volunteer regiments had behaved abominably, running like rabbits from the Mexican lancers and leaving his regiment in the lurch.

"They're a brutal, undisciplined, cowardly lot," he said; "their officers are ignorant and incompetent, and can't handle their men in camp or in action.

"They are making our flag in Mexico an emblem of outrage, robbery, and ruin and they are dreaded like death in every village in the land."

I asked him which regiments had bolted and he told me.

"Old Zack," said he, "knows how these volunteers are behaving. The Mexican Government has complained to him and he has sent an apology for their behaviour. But I tell you, Captain Maddox, their

cruelty and brutality will make the name of America stink in Mexico for a hundred years to come!"

By this time his regulars were swarming over the roofs in every direction. He descended the scuttle, sword in hand. I followed him; his dusty soldiery came tumbling after. Bandara and Peep unlocked and opened the jail door for them.

And now, down the scuttle, came pouring more soldiers from Indiana and Louisiana regiments, yelling excitedly, drunk with powder fumes and the reek of blood. They rushed out through the patio into the Market Plaza, storming shops, stalls, houses; carrying all before them, trench, breastwork, barricade; and overwhelming the few frightened Presidiales and rancheros whom they surprised there, looting.

I saw some Texan cavalry galloping out of the cemetery. A regular battery, Sherman's, I think, which had been firing from there, limbered up and trotted through the market place which now was thick with smoke.

I caught Bandara by the sleeve and asked him if he had seen the little Gypsy, Silver Knees, since they had released her.

"No," he said; "Lopez sent her to the Incarnation nuns."

"I know where it is," added Peep; "—and we had better get there before some of these crazy volunteers break in."

XII

THE INCARNATION

THE two streets running northward from the Carne to the Plaza of the Virgin were swept by musketry. Our troops had entered the houses again, breaking and blasting their way through the solid walls from one building to the next.

The 1st Ohio infantry now occupied the market place. The regiment had been shot to pieces and badly cut up by lancers. They were in support of one of our field guns which was sending blast after blast of grape-shot toward the Plaza of the Virgin, from which we could see Mexican lancers stampeding in every direction.

I saw Colonel Davis with his fine regiment of Mississippi riflemen, moving northwest to take the suburb by the flank.

He told me that Old Zack was fighting to the eastward, and had penetrated so far that his infantry were close to the Cathedral Square where the bulk of the Mexican army was now massed.

In the smoky sunset glow a section of one of our light batteries—Braxton Bragg's, I think—came trotting up, dropped its guns and opened on the long street running eastward.

Out of it, in terrible panic, rushed the ranchero lancers; and instantly the whole quarter was in a frightful uproar as some of our volunteer regiments surged into it and began to tear the shutters from shops, break in doors, and start the sinister work of violence and plunder for which they already had become infamous.

The streets were already dusky. A lurid light from the setting sun just touching the roofs and treetops, intensified the smoky gloom.

In the square of the Virgin del Roble, dead Mexican soldiers and dead horses lay sprawling everywhere—on footways, on the pavement, in the gutters which ran through the middle of the streets, and which were thickly splashed with blood.

In some of the gardens and alleys just beyond, hand-to-hand fighting was still going on where our volunteers had encountered plundering bands of rancheros. Everywhere a disorderly mob of volunteers surged, shouting, cursing, quarrelling, laughing. Yells, screaming, the noise of splintering doors and shutters sounded from darkened houses in all directions.

As Bandara, Peep, and I pressed on toward the low temporary refuge of the nuns of the Incarnation, who had recently sought safety in Monterey, we caught sight of the Virgin's Church just beyond, where something inside had caught fire. A crowd of screaming women and children were running in and out of the sanctuary which threatened no longer to protect them.

I saw a Sister of the Incarnation come out, her face

and hands and coif scorched. She spread her tortured hands wide in a gesture of protection over the terrified women huddled behind her and already threatened with violence by some ruffians dressed in volunteer uniform.

I went up to their leader, swung my musket and knocked him senseless. Then Peep, Bandara, and I turned on the others who bolted before our levelled muskets.

"Have they done you any violence, Sister?" I asked.

The poor nun looked at her scorched hands.

"They have done us nuns no violence," she wailed, "but between them and the rancheros and Presidiales they have mistreated the women and murdered inoffensive men in all these houses. God will punish them all—Americans and rancheros alike," she sobbed, wringing her burned hands distractedly.

I took hold of her sleeve: "Listen to me, Sister," I said. "Colonel Lopez sent a Gypsy girl under guard to the nuns of the Incarnation. Where is she?"

"Oh, Mother of God!" she wept aloud, "the drunken Presidiales broke into our refuge where all the poor young girls were hiding. . . . We tried to protect them. . . . They even ran out among the bursting shells—preferring death—but the rancheros drove and dragged them back. . . . Then the Americans came—and it was the same thing. . . . Two young girls lie dead there—God knows of what. . . . I saw the Gypsy girl fighting like a wildcat. A drummer lad—and others—had hold of her. . . . They

got her knife away. . . . When at last they let her alone she was lying all huddled up in a corner—under the altar Virgin—"

As I turned and pushed my way across the square through crowds of frightened women and children, a column of our flying artillery began to traverse it, preceded by regular dragoons of the 2nd regiment. These splendid horsemen rode out with drawn sabres, driving the plundering soldiery before them, who scuttled away like rats, through lanes and alleys in every direction.

Riding with the dragoons was an officer I knew. He passed close to me in the smoky gloom, and I called out to him, naming myself, and asking him to detail a trooper and a led horse for a business I had in hand at the Incarnation Refuge across the square.

Then I strode on, Bandara and Peep at my heels, and presently came to the Refuge with the cross above it.

The heavy doors, badly splintered, hung open. A young woman lay dead on the steps; another, her clothing in indecent disorder, slumped across the threshold.

Inside was a chaos of broken chairs, bedding, overturned choir-stalls, and prie-dieus. A candle still burned redly in the shrine.

Under it, in the shadow of the gilded Virgin, crouched a little, half naked figure, her head bowed on her white knees under a shock of tawny hair.

Bandara and Peep halted. I went forward amid the débris. At the sound of my footsteps the figure lifted a bloodless face in the candlelight.

"Encarnacion?" I whispered.

She looked up at me.

"Eraño!" she said in a colourless voice, "—my lord and master!"

The next instant she was on her feet, and stood shivering and staring at me out of swollen, startled eyes.

"Eraño—are you dead?" she gasped.

"This is no spirit but myself, Silver Knees."

Tears started, welling up and running over her marred cheeks.

"I thought your honour was dead," she whimpered. "Lopez came and told me so. Oh, prala—prala—he told me you had died begging for life—under the jail wall—"

"Silver Knees," said I, "have they harmed you?"

"Oh, Don Juan, what do I matter as long as you are alive!" she cried hysterically. "What has my Gypsy carcass to do with you!"

"Did they harm you, little sister?" I repeated hoarsely.

"Prala, I fought them with my knife. . . . That crazed drummer lad—oh, Virgin Mother, they used me ill—"

I took her into my arms; she cowered against me, her wet face buried on my shoulder.

"Mother of God," she sobbed in a stifled voice, "what am I crying about when you are alive! . . . And I am still young and strong and healthy. . . . To

serve your honour—with devotion—thanks be forever to God's Virgin Mother—"

She wept and wept, shivering in my arms, blindly striving to gather and fasten together the few rags of Gypsy finery that still clung to her body.

I called to Bandara and told him to go outside and fetch me the dragoon's long blue cloak.

Silver Knees looked at Peep through her falling tears.

"Now that I am become what you used to say I was," she sobbed, "you will laugh at me and mock me, Pio."

"By Jesus," said he, "I shall do neither, but I shall laugh at that drummer lad when I have his neck between my two hands. And I shall also kill Torribio Lopez, some day, to do you pleasure, my little sister of the Ursari."

"Ei!" she wailed, "why should you care to please a Gitana dancer of the camino? Oh, dua! dua! I ought to die of drao, like the slut of the Gao I am become—like a sick rat of the Guchiba—grajuna, garibarda—wounded, soiled, and full of pain—"

"Esden y joóbe—what are you talking about?" said Peep, "who still have three times your years to love in! Laugh, then, little sister. . . . Ha perádo la lon chingaripén!—the quarrel with the liló drummer shall have an end to please you! I, Pio Pacheco, swear it! Bandara, too, shall swear it—"

Bandara brought in the dragoon's mantle. I wrapped it carefully around Silver Knees.

"Where are you taking me, prala?" she asked through her tears.

"To the camp of the American army, little sister. You are to remain with me."

She looked up at me out of widened eyes, her whole features transfigured with ecstasy.

"Am I to cook for you, and sew, and mend? Oh, Don Juan, am I to serve you on my knees, then, after all?"

"Not as a servant."

"Servant am I to none," she cried. "I am a free Gypsy, and serve only him I choose. And I choose to serve you all my life on my knees, prala. God gives me happiness in this hour of shame."

I took her small hand in mine; she moved as lightly as ever beside me on her naked feet from which the espadrilles had been torn—picking her way amid the fallen chairs, stepping gracefully over the sprawled corpse on the sill and the dead body on the steps.

In her horseman's cloak I lifted her to the saddle of the led horse. The dragoon offered me his horse, but I preferred to walk beside Silver Knees, leading her mount through the dark disorder of the silent city under the glittering hosts of tropic stars.

We encountered long columns of prisoners, Presidiales with their hang-dog looks and blackened fists and faces, betraying their part in the murderous looting; rancheros—a beggarly looking lot, and tarred with the same brush; a few fine looking dragoons and lancers, and many stalwart prisoners of the Mexican

line, well uniformed and accoutred, bearing themselves proudly and like soldiers.

These were escorted by Texan cavalry who rode carelessly, lolling in their Mexican saddles, their rifles balanced across the pommels.

Silver Knees, riding the dragoon's horse, swathed in her dragoon's cloak, her little bare feet in the stirrups, her face shadowed by the shock of disordered hair, leaned down and spoke my name in a low voice.

"Prala, if your brother-officers are going to laugh at you on my account, I can go to the Incarnation Sisters . . . rather than shame you in my rags."

"You do not shame me."

"—Yet, some might say, 'What is his honour doing with this naked thing in rags?' . . . Or, 'His honour takes a beggar for a mistress?'—"

"You need have no concern, little sister."

Some of our dragoons passed, carrying torches. By the light they shed I recognized Colonel Garland.

"What have you been up to, Maddox?" said he, reining in. "You've a very pretty prisoner, I see."

"Very," said I, drily. "Where is Headquarters?"

"At the Tannery. But Old Zack isn't there." He took off his cocked hat, wiped his forehead, stretched his legs in the stirrups.

"Lord, what a day, Maddox," he said gaily. "*What* a battle! Old Zack had no more to do with it than any non-com fighting in the ranks. All he did was to wander around under fire with that absent-minded air —you know? General Worth did all the brain-work.

But—what of it? We have the city and Ampudia's entire army; and we'll gobble 'em in the morning. . . . Where's Mansfield?"

I told him I didn't know. He began to laugh, fished out an order from his breast pocket and showed it to me: "What a casual, hazy old farmer Old Zack is! What do you think of an order like that?"

I read it:

"COLONEL GARLAND,

"Lead the head of your column off to the left, keeping well out of reach of the enemy's shot, but if you think you can take any of them little forts down there, with the bagnet, you better do it. But consult with Major Mansfield. You'll find him down there."

We both laughed at the old Indian fighter's notion of military strategy and manœuvring.

"I'll go to the Teneria Fort," I said.

"It's all right to go there. We hold everything except the Grand Plaza, Maddox." He looked at Silver Knees with a twinkle in his handsome eyes, touched his chapeau gravely, and rode on.

I called to Peep and Bandara and told them to go ahead to where Headquarters baggage was parked, find my servant, Calixto, and have my tent pitched in the usual proximity to Headquarters.

They vanished into the darkness; I walked on, leading the horse which carried Silver Knees; the dragoon rode behind, his carbine at a ready, starlight glittering on his gilded cheek-straps.

Far to the southeast I could see a ruddy glare marking the Grand Plaza; the Cathedral, Palace, and solid stone edifices on the surrounding streets—the whole forming a vast and massive citadel garrisoned by General Ampudia's formidable divisions.

Everywhere, now, sentinels halted us where, silently in the starry darkness, our regiments were taking their position for the assault at dawn.

We passed Quitman's tired troops who were being relieved by Ohio infantry. Indiana and Texas cavalry were marching westward; some regular batteries were already in position; Texas Rangers carrying heavy rifles, bowie-knives, and Colt's revolvers, stood to horse near the guns. We passed through the 2nd brigade of mixed troops, Butler's field division of volunteers, and the 1st division of regulars before we forded the Tannery brook and rode up to Fort Teneria.

Here I saw the General's marquee, and other tents not far away—my own included—and Calixto awaiting me with camp-table spread and supper hot on the fire.

He came to welcome me—this gentle Indian in his leather dress—and God knows I was glad to see him, for I never expected to when I was awaiting the squad of execution.

I lifted Silver Knees from the saddle; she laughed outright as I set her on the ground; all traces of tears —of grief and shame and despair—had vanished as lightly as mist at sunrise.

Barefooted, wrapped in the blue mantle, limber,

always graceful, she walked beside me to my tent where Calixto already was bringing hot soup.

"Are you hungry?" I asked in Gypsy.

"Ei! Shall I wait until your honour finishes, or shall I sit upon the ground by the fire with a little dish upon my knees?"

"We shall eat together," said I, smiling.

"Ca! Does your honour eat with servants?"

"I eat with the Zincali, Silver Knees."

She laughed enchantingly, humming aloud:

"La romi que se abillela
Debajo delos portales,
No s'abillela con tusa
Que s'abillela con mangue!"

"And the next verse," said I—

"Flamenca de Roma
Si tu sináras mia,
Te metiéra entre viere
Por sari la vida!—"

"Oh, brother," she said with flushed emotion, "how kind are the Zincali to one another! O daia, daia, I am glad, after all, that I have been born!"

Calixto fetched two basins at my command, towels, soap, and a great gourd of water; and Silver Knees and I performed our ablutions and combed our hair by the little looking-glass fixed to the tent-pole.

Then we ate. The child was starved. I gave her a little pulque brandy in water, but her resilient young body and healthy constitution seemed immune to physical fatigue and hardship, and to the deathly aftermath of spiritual shock.

Whatever of terror, suffering, exhaustion she had passed through, meat and drink refreshed and instantly restored her. She smiled, she exclaimed, she laughed, and whispered in happy confidence as she ate and drank.

The equipment of the tent—my military chest—everything enchanted her. And when, at my bidding, Calixto hung a blue military blanket across the tent, and fetched from Headquarters another camp-bed, she was all astonishment and delight.

"After all, brother," said she in Zincali, "your bed is too narrow for us."

"All beds are," said I, drily; "hade mushe halal—that is not lawful."

"Cul shi halal—everything is lawful," she retorted, reddening.

"Not to decent folk, Silver Knees."

She blushed violently at that, ate in silence, very mortified and humble. I wondered what was going on inside her small head. But very soon she brightened—wished to help Calixto wash the dishes. When restrained she sat down on her camp-stool outside the fly and looked up at the stars. And presently I heard her singing softly to herself—

"Ave Maris stella,
Dei Mater alma,
Atque semper virgo—"

And after a pause:

"Ei. . . . Semper virgo. . . . Jaña—Ostélinda—Diósa—Jába! Mai doorshi! . . . Ave Maria, gratia plena, ora pro me—"

XIII

VIVA MEXICO!

A STRANGE night under the rain-washed stars. Stir of restless horses, recurrent foot-beat of pacing sentries, vague, indefinable sounds from the beleaguered city, broken by the far, thin cry of "Alerte!" echoed from post to post like the repeated call of night-birds answering one another in darkness.

A lantern hung from my tent-pole. By its dim light, seated at my camp-table, I wrote out my report.

Like big, fat chrysalids, swathed in their serapes, Peep and Bandara slept by the embers of the fire outside the tent; Bandara soundly, unstirring; Peep restless, sighing and murmuring the name of Jesus.

Calixto lay just inside the tent, across the entrance, sleeping lightly as a hound, partly unsheathing his black eyes of an Indian whenever my letter paper rustled.

When at last I had ended my report I got up noiselessly and took a look at Silver Knees behind the hanging blanket.

Her sleep appeared to be profound. A delicate, healthy glow suffused her face, exquisitely young under the tawny shock of hair. On the floor beside her little bed lay the rags of her Gypsy finery—a gaudy heap

of tatters. Still tied to the scarlet garter of one stocking was the empty sheath of her narrow knife.

I rearranged the dragoon's cloak over her. She never stirred, breathing as peacefully as a child in its cradle.

My gentle Mistec, Calixto, was awake and stood awaiting me, always smiling, perpetually prepared.

I told him to go to sleep; but, as ever, he divined my every need, and now he fetched a great tin basin and filled it with warm water, and laid towel and soap on the boarded floor beside it.

So I scrubbed myself as silently as I could; and when, at last, I lay down to get what sleep I might before reveillé, I saw him laying out my best uniform and boots.

"Why?" I murmured drowsily.

"Your honour receives the enemy's surrender in the morning," he replied with a proud confidence and finality that must have left a smile on my face as I fell asleep.

The resonant blast of Headquarters bugles fairly ripped the dark silence of dawn to shreds and startled me out of my flimsy bed before I realized I had been asleep at all.

The mechanics of dressing found me still partly stupefied with sleep. A cup of scalding Mocha waked my mind to the instant necessities of the situation.

I looked out into the dusk, scarcely tinged, as yet,

with grey; and I saw Bandara bringing up my horse, making his way through a squad of mustering dragoons of the Headquarters troop.

Everywhere dim figures were passing swiftly—some on a run—and lighted lanterns moved fast in all directions, crossing each other like flying stars.

I drew aside the blanket and looked at Silver Knees. She had merely turned over, and now was sound asleep again.

With a whispered word to Calixto and to Peep and Bandara concerning her, I mounted and rode along the wagon train to the tents of the married men attached to Headquarters.

Here I found Sergeant O'Hara's wife frying frijoles and bacon.

"There is a young Gypsy girl in my tent," said I. "Find decent clothing for her. She is slim and of average height. Straw sandals will do. . . . And you go over and give her a bath—a thorough scrubbing, Mrs. O'Hara. . . . Be good to her. You understand?"

She said she understood. Her manner was hearty, vigorous, capable, but prim.

"Lave th' gossoona to me, sorr, till I scrub the Gypsy hide av her. Ye'll never know her at all at all, Captain, dear!"

"Be gentle with her, Mrs. O'Hara."

"I will that, sorr—the poor haythen child—"

"She's a good Catholic at heart."

"Is she that! Glory be! Well, then, I'll scrub the

Gypsy out of her entirely, or may I never live to peel another spud!"

I wheeled my horse and rode across the greying meadow toward Headquarters where a dragoon escort sat their horses and officers were continually arriving, dismounting, and entering Old Zack's tent or coming out of it, getting into their saddles, and spurring away.

I handed my report to a staff officer who told me that the General had heard of my safe return, and asked me to wait a moment.

He came out again almost immediately, motioning me to enter.

I saw General Pillow talking to Old Zack—a handsome man, pallid of feature, in which were set two untrustworthy eyes.

I heard him begging Old Zack for a single company of regulars to stiffen his volunteers who, he insisted with an oath, might bolt at any moment under artillery fire or if charged by Mexican cavalry.

"General," he repeated in his heavy, restless manner, "their lancers lanced some fifty of my men yesterday. Volunteers don't understand such weapons and are afraid as death."

"You tell 'em that the bayonet is just as good as a Mexican lance," retorted Old Zack disgustedly. "It's better, too. What's a lance, anyway, only a extra long tooth-pick! You tell 'em that, General. And you fix that regiment so it can't run without it runs into more Mexicans than is a-chasin' of it! . . . Ain't that an idee, Mansfield?"

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

Major Mansfield said, with some reluctance, that a certain fear of unknown weapons really had demoralized some of the volunteer regiments—the lasso, or lariat, of the rancheros frightening them in particular.

"Them cow-herders," said Old Zack, scornfully. "I guess a cow with a bossy-caaf would scare some folks, too. . . . Say, Garland, I want that the Ohio boys move out to relieve Quitman. You go and start 'em right now—"

His rough, good-natured smile broke out as his eye caught mine.

"Well, Maddox, I hear you can stand a lot of killin' and still live to report your own death!"

As I moved toward him several officers gave me a friendly pat on the back or shook my hand.

"I've been rather unfortunate in supplying you with intelligence, Generál."

"Onfortunate! Well, as long as you ain't dead, I'd call it the contrary. It's all right, Maddox. You see I come right along all the same—provin' that what a man can't git he's got to do without. If I don't like it I lump it. When in doubt, march. 'T'ain't so pleasant, like Kit Carson says, to be chased by Comanches with a arrow in your backside, but it helps hurry you along."

Everybody laughed; even Colonel Jefferson Davis smiled a pale, delicate, well-bred smile.

"Maddox," said Old Zack, "you and your people have been pretty well shot up in this campaign. How many you got left?"

"Two beside myself, General."

"I want to know!"

"I could find others, sir."

"You better recruit, then. I got to clear their spies out of my army. We're going into the Grand Plaza, now, to gobble Ampudia. After that I reckon to clean house and reorganize; and I want you should have a corps of real reliable fellas handy."

"General?"

"Sir?"

"Would it be too much if I asked to have the honour of participating in the assault?"

"H'ain't you had enough Mexican pepper-sass to stay your stomach, Maddox?"

"I'd like to ride with Colonel May's cavalry—"

The crash of drums from the Ohio regiment drowned my voice.

Through the open tent flap in the grey of dawn a river of moving bayonets was overflowing the entire meadow.

Old Zack went out and climbed into his saddle amid a throng of mounting officers who departed for their posts at a gallop.

"I guess you'll hear plenty of bullets if you ride with me, Maddox," he said amiably. "Come on."

We trotted forward toward the city. All over the landscape, from every thicket, every grove, every hamlet, our troops were now in glittering motion toward the silent city beyond us.

Then, from that dim place, burst a blast of Mexican trumpets.

But, instead of scarlet lancers galloping to envelop us, a gorgeous officer—Captain Don Francisco de Moreno—cantered out across the grass, followed by a glittering Mexican dragoon who carried a white flag wildly flapping from the spear of his lance.

Old Zack, in his linen coat and little glazed cap, jogged out gravely to receive the flag.

Garland, riding beside me, reined in with the others.

"This is the moment," said he to me in a low voice, "that I wish to God we had a West Pointer in command."

I nodded.

"We've got their entire army between both fists," muttered Garland. "If Old Zack makes terms with them now, we'll have it all to do over again."

We waited, watching the scene intently. To Old Zack's chief of staff the Mexican officer delivered a document which, in turn, was delivered to our Commanding General.

After a brief conference the Mexicans saluted, turned their horses, and rode back.

Then our bugles sounded the advance; but, in a few minutes, the Mexican trumpets blew a parley once more, and our long, shining line came to a halt.

Another white flag, with every circumstance of politest ceremony.

"Oh, hell," murmured Garland.

Well, that was the end. Monterey was ours. But, God help us, we let Ampudia go—let him march out with the honours of war. Why? Nobody can guess. . . . But it enraged the Administration in Washington. It was the beginning of the end of Old Zack's career as a soldier.

Brave, ignorant of strategy, unable to foresee, mentally unfitted to realize profit from profitable situations, Old Zack's good-natured blundering brought everything to a standstill. And, to the horror of all regular officers, an armistice was permitted to Ampudia.

But if this misled army was so pitiably at fault, the Administration in Washington was equally muddle-headed. Even at this late hour our Government had agreed upon no plan of campaign.

There could be no decision following the unstrategic and random actions fought at hazard and without plan along the edges of the enemy's territory.

The President didn't like what Old Zack was doing, but he didn't know what to tell him to do. Anyway, Old Zack wouldn't have done it.

We had learned, too, that now the United States had four separate and independent forces in the field —Wool's, Kearny's, Doniphan's, and our own—all hammering away at the fringe of things and with no vital object, and utterly regardless of one another.

Wool, Kearny, and Worth were real leaders. Doniphan was a fighter. The Commander at Matamoras was an ignorant martinet; his men hated him; and they

were dying like flies from his ignorance and neglect.

The curse of politics was undoing us all.

We stood and watched the departure of the almost uninjured Mexican army from the beautiful city of Monterey.

On Saturday, the twenty-sixth of September, the evacuation began.

At eleven o'clock in the morning a Mexican field battery saluted the Mexican flag. Down it came from the Palace. Drums, bugles, trumpets saluted it again.

Then, very slowly, a superb regiment of lancers followed by a fine six-gun field battery emerged from the city.

A brigade of regular infantry followed. The evacuation of Monterey had begun under the curious eyes of our soldiery, drawn up in readiness to occupy the city, and the angry or disgusted gaze of all officers properly educated in their profession.

In general, the retiring army was poorly uniformed. Their infantry were great, lubberly, thick-set fellows, sandal-shod, loaded with pack and musket and scores of pots, pans, and gourds. The streets were jammed with camp-followers—men, women, boys, afoot or mounted on mules, donkeys, mustangs, and even oxen.

The Mexican lancers and dragoons, however, were splendidly uniformed and equipped—though in comparison to our cavalry horses theirs seemed inferior. But theirs was the barb type of horse, of Arab and Spanish descent.

Two infantry regiments of the line, as I say, led

the march, their colours fluttering and their drums, fifes, and bugles sounding almost triumphantly.

Well might Ampudia depart with his tongue in his cheek; his army retained arms and baggage, and a battery of six pieces, twenty-four rounds to each gun.

"Godamighty," grunted a grizzled, war-scarred Major of regulars, "am I alive to see an army of greasers thumbing their noses at the United States!"

There came a shrill tumult of cheers from the passing battalion of Querétaro: "Viva Mexico!"

The enraged Major turned purple. God is kind, but He can be very cruel, sometimes, to an old soldier.

When the red bonnets and scarlet pennons of the last peleton of lancers disappeared in the Rinconada Pass, and the last field gun had clanked through, and the last ragged foot-soldier, weary but uninjured, had plodded patiently out of view, our perplexed army marched sheepishly into the sneering city of Monterey. And there, for two long months, our uneasy army remained in meaningless occupation while, at Saltillo, all Mexico in arms was gathering to crush the Yankee invasion forever.

Illness, disease, desertion, ambush, murder—the fatigue of guarding the long line of communication to our distant base—all these were reducing us to less than twelve thousand bayonets.

And that was the situation—stupidity in Washington; inertia and military ignorance in Monterey; Kearny's shabby, ragged dragoons scouting the un-

known wilderness of Santa Fe; Wool at San Antonio, kicking his sickly, insubordinate volunteers into some semblance of discipline; the Mexican nation, intact, undismayed, arming and gathering in overwhelming force at Saltillo.

And Old Zack bumbling and pottering about, "reorganizing."

City administration resumed its municipal functions; the characteristic life of the inhabitants, briefly checked, now continued as casually, leisurely, amiably as ever. Bailes, cafés, restaurants, theatres resumed; fashionable folk promenaded; the inveterate habit of bell-ringing broke out from every spire, belfry, convent, monastery—from palace and chapel and ancient mission—tinkle-tinkle, kling-clang, dingle-dingle all day long.

All fear, all dread of the Americans had fled. Under balcony and barred window Mexican young men "played the bear"; the twang of guitar and the thin tenor voices of the love-smitten once more filled the starry silence; pretty girls peeped through window bars and half-closed shutters; from walled gardens crept the heavy perfume of jasmine and orange bloom; and everywhere mocking-birds and cardinals sang in the magnolias; and golden lizards slept on dazzling, heat-baked walls.

Yet, just outside the city lurked murder militant, ambushed in the chaparral. And all along the long line of communication with Matamoras and Point Isabel,

bandits, chaparral rats, desert robbers, rancheros prowled, plundering teamsters, murdering stragglers, lassoing solitary vedettes, lancing post-riders, shooting into convoys, stealing horses, stampeding beef cattle for the army.

Everywhere along the Matamoras route Death grinned behind the cactus at the passing gringo.

For we held nothing except the city and its suburbs, and the bit of road which our cavalry and mounted rifles happened to be traversing.

Through the dust of their horses' heels Death leered after them. And when security had passed, the reign of peril recommenced with the bang! of the escopeta or a shriek from some lanced vagabond.

Under orders from Headquarters I had moved into the city and had established myself and my department in two small villas situated in the garden of a very beautiful and perfectly irreconcilable young Mexican lady named Doña Maria Josefa Zozaya—her very name a poem!

She lived just off the principal plaza in a handsome house flanking her garden.

Her ceremonious politeness and perfect composure, her extreme beauty and the dainty youth of her might very easily mislead one into self-complacency and hopeful enterprise.

But I happened to know, during the headlong assault of the Mississippi infantry led by that stainless cavalier, Colonel Jefferson Davis, that this same delicate young aristocrat had gone out on the azotea near

the house of Señor Garza Flores, among the desperately fighting Mexican soldiery, and there, amid a pelting storm of rifle bullets, had encouraged them and taught them to disdain danger with a gaiety entirely Mexican.

Yet, when I presented myself and my billet-de-logement, no charming hostess could have received me more courteously.

The western garden villa was to be my lodgings. The other, at the eastward end, was to be my office and departmental headquarters, shared by Mansfield and the engineers. It included the adjacent stables, peons' huts and gardener's house, the whole enclosing a patio.

In my own villa were two bed-rooms and a parlour; Silver Knees occupied one, I the other, and the parlour and roof, with its awning and potted flowers, were neutral ground.

"Your honour's mistress," said Doña Maria with exquisite equanimity sweetening fundamental contempt, "need have no dread of inquisitive intrusion from any among my household if she walks in the garden."

"Señora," said I, "the child is not my mistress."

"That surely must be as your honour pleases," said Doña Maria sweetly. "The garden, nevertheless, is hers as I do not choose to use it—for the present."

We walked slowly from the orange-tree terrace to the rose garden.

She wore a thin gown of silvery-rose, and a man-

tilla. Her delicate features and smooth little hands were translucent like alabaster faintly veined in blue.

Her fan she waved very slowly—slowly, perpetually, gracefully—as a lithe and golden puma, quietly reflecting, awaits whatever is to be, gently waving its golden tail.

My gilded fatigue cap was in my hand. The ceremony of departure impended. I bowed very low:

"Madam, I am at your service."

"Many thanks, sir."

"Madam, pray believe me to be your most humble servant."

She curtsied; I bowed again. For this was the proper etiquette in Monterey between those well born. She should learn, at least, that I was no barbarian, but acknowledge me a caballero perfectly conversant with aristocratic usage.

"Madam," said I, retiring backward by one step, "I kiss your feet."

"Sir, I kiss your hand."

"Madam, I am humbly overwhelmed."

"Sir, my poor house, and all in it—even myself, though of no value—yet, even so, and including all I have, is yours."

"Madam, the honour leaves me inarticulate."

"A thousand thanks, sir."

"Adiós, madam."

"Adiós, sir."

"Pray pass first, señora."

"No, señor, pray pass first."

"Madam, I die a thousand deaths to disoblige you."

"Vaya—well—to oblige you—and without further ceremony. . . . I dislike compliments and etiquette."

"Madam, it is not etiquette but my heart which offers to lay every honour in the world at your feet."

"A thousand thanks."

So, like the ghost of a silvery rose, she becomes lost among the other roses in the path. A slight swaying of foliage; of bud and scented blossom; Doña Maria Josefa Zozaya was gone, leaving the garden less lovely and the sunshine a little dim.

XIV

JANA

SILVER KNEES was still in her bed-room when I returned from army Headquarters in the Palace, dismounted, and tossed my bridle to Calixto.

"There is nothing more to be done today," said I. "Is Señorita Encarnacion awake?"

"Oh, yes, your honour. Señorita Encarnacion has had her Mocha and honey-cake, has studied her English lessons very diligently, and has been practicing her music very beautifully and like a little bird rejoicing."

"Say to Señorita Encarnacion that I wish her to dress and come to the parlour."

I went into my bed-room, washed, changed to an undress uniform, and returned again to the cool, airy parlour.

Silver Knees came in wearing sandals, a lacy garment over her night-gown, and carrying her beribboned guitar.

"Oh, prala," she cried, "I have studied in my geography how vast is the United States. And now I am wondering why the Americans have arrived to take away even more land from the poor Mexicans."

She came to hold up her face for a kiss—which she received between her eyes with an angelic look belying

her rapidly developing capacity for infinite mischief.

We seated ourselves on a lounge; she began to pick at the guitar.

"Why," she repeated, "does your army desire more land?"

"Mexico declared war on us," I said. "That is why we are here."

"So you are going to take her land away from her to punish her?"

"I don't know what we are going to do."

There now remained little doubt in my mind that this war had been unnecessary; that with a little intelligence, politeness, and good-humour on our part we could have avoided it.

I believed that we meant to strip from Mexico, California, Texas, New Mexico, and all territory north of the Rio Grande. And that robbery had been the motive of that Sleepless Intelligence which had desired and contrived this war.

Not land-hunger alone, however, but an ant-like obsession for marching was in our blood.

We *must* move. We were created to travel. We *must* move. And we were moving. And I knew in my heart that the Pacific itself could be no permanent barrier to our insect-like progress; that it merely would present only one more obstacle to surmount in the predestined march of human termites.

Fortunately the earth is round, and we can, through the ages, march 'round and 'round it. Had the earth an edge, no doubt we would march off it, somehow,

urged on by ant-like and automatic predestination, and swarm indefinitely throughout interstellar space.

"Encarnacion," said I, "there is no business at Headquarters for me to attend to today. Would you like to go shopping?"

"Oh, prala, I already have everything to please me! Let us remain together, then; I never have an hour with you any more—"

"Stop wheedling!"

"But it's true," she whimpered; "all day you are on duty with all those gold-laced officers—"

"Stop whining!"

She got possession of my hand, played with it, kissed it swiftly and with malicious pleasure in her disobedience—I having forbidden the Gypsy caress.

"You listen to me, Encarnacion," said I. "As far as I can learn from the Sisters of the Incarnation, you are only half Gypsy. Your mother probably was a Gitana; your father was American and Gentile. You are as American as I am—"

"We *are* Gypsies, you and I!" she cried vehemently.

"Look at your snow-white skin—"

"There *are* white Gypsies!"

"And tawny hair—"

"There are red-headed Gypsies—"

"And your eyes the tint of wild swamp-iris—"

"Yes, and there are blue-eyed Gypsies, too! I am Gypsy. It is in my heart. It is in my feet—" She kicked off her sandals, crossed her bare knees in defiant effrontery. Her legs and little feet were Mexican in

their delicate beauty. Her hands—now properly cared for—confirmed it.

"Prala," said she, "in your deepest heart you *know* we both are Gypsy to our bones! You know, in your heart, also, that I am yours—not hoping for more than service—not even before I was ill-treated—for I never had anything to offer in exchange for the esmeralda—"

"I am determined," said I, "to take you to New York as soon as this war is over, and have you educated, and make of you a civilized and accomplished American girl fit to marry anybody—"

"Ei! And my—"

"Don't dare use that word!"

"Nevertheless—"

"That is what I'm telling you, Encarnacion; *nevertheless!*"

"Mother of God, prala, this that you propose for me is not possible for a Gypsy—"

"It is possible for an American girl."

"Marriage?"

"Yes."

"And the esmeralda?"

"You shall have it, little sister."

"I shall become a busni?"

"Avali, chiquita."

"The—the kiss-gift of true betrothal—the choomapé—shall *I* receive it?"

"Hari," I laughed, "miri pen, you shall have everything that is proper, niña, for a novia—a betrothed bride."

"The—the son-kaypé?"

"Everything, I tell you!"

"Yo lo creo—vaya con Dios—" She gave me a push and her eyes filled. "Oh, I believe you mean to do all this for me because you desire to be rid of me," she said tremulously; "and all I desire is to love you humbly like a little maid-servant—"

"Damnation," said I, "you always find your way around to that! Obstinate as the Ursari—"

"I am!"

"You are *not!*"

"Prala," she whimpered, "how can I be American and become a busni and the wife of a Gajo when I am an Ursari Gypsy and love only you—"

"Stop that!"

"I do! I do! O, daia, daia, I do, I do, I do!—"

"If you can't behave yourself I'm going back to talk to General Taylor."

"Go, then!"

After a defiant silence she lifted mutinous eyes to me:

"I wish I had a lolo to give you. Maybe you'd like me then."

I ignored her Gypsy frankness.

"A girl does it in Laloró—the Lalore do it to inspire affection," she added, perfectly aware of my displeasure.

"Another such remark and I go," said I.

She gave me a look of delighted malice as though

ready to venture further and curious to see how much of her nonsense I'd stand.

She picked up a ribbon-end from her guitar, displaying it:

"Laló," she said. "Even the Mayarí wears it."

I had to laugh; and instantly she snuggled closer to me, and picking up her guitar began to play and sing to the air of "Los Enanos"—her head flung back on my shoulder:

"I would make love;
He will not make it;
I drop my glove;
He will not take it!
When stars are bright
He does not care
To come at night
To play the bear.
Dilo!
Dilo!
Love is swift,
Love is swift,
Aphrodite gives the gift!
Let him go,
Let him go;
I'm aflame but he's too slow!"

One knee cocked up over the other, her little toes pointed at the ceiling, her head with its disordered tawny hair resting on my shoulder, she sang away,

twanging her guitar with the gay insouciance of a bird a-swing on a bramble.

Calixto came in with a bowl of fruit and she reached for it, burrowing about with her slim fingers. Plum and peach juice spurted under her white teeth.

"You'll get my uniform all sticky," I protested, shifting her head; but she only let it fall across my knees and continued to investigate the dripping pulp.

"As for Torribio Lopez," she murmured, "and that tambour—may God blacken their faces—"

"Decent people don't curse."

"No, they take revenge. But they gave me no opportunity to stab them—"

"Decent people don't stab each other, Encarnacion."

"Mother of God, why not?"

"Because it is murder."

"No! Murder is a cardinal sin, prala. But vengeance is a virtue—"

"Vengeance is God's alone."

"Prala—isn't your army here to avenge the insult to your flag of stars?"

"That is different."

"Why? You kill to avenge an affront, don't you?"

"I'm not going to argue the point. What a nation does collectively is one thing—and, by the way, have you a knife now, in your garter?"

"Ei."

"That is an uncivilized custom—"

"It is Mexican and it is Gypsy. Dios, am I not to protect myself?"

"What is the law for, then?"

"The law?" She laughed. "Caspita! You know very well, prala, that a Gypsy is outside the law. No law ever yet protected us. The law! Ei! It chases us, it beats us, it puts us into jail—or into the cabaña or the Caltralbó."

I picked her up and sat her down hard on a chair, to her astonishment and rage.

"Wash your mouth out," said I, drily; and walked off toward the garden.

She sprang up, looked at me, eyes ablaze: "*Where* are you going? Do you desert me then?"

"I do."

"Carramba! What have I done?" she demanded furiously. "What did I say? A silly word. What of it? Dilo! For a word he leaves me!"

She stamped her bare foot: "I wish I were dead! I wish I were—were cambri—to disgrace you—"

I slammed the door and went out into the garden.

"Prala! Prala!" she sobbed, "why do you leave me!"

But I had had enough of her tantrums.

XV

THE GARDEN OF DOÑA MARIA

WITH this impulsive, sensitive, fiery and sometimes foul-mouthed little savage I seemed to be able to do nothing.

I was intensely annoyed that, after weeks of decent conditions and civilizing influence, she should use such language to me.

The wild freedom of thought, of language and behaviour—the terrifying honesty, guileful coquetry, and guileless simplicity of this young Gitanella were not to be coped with by any mere man. I ought to have known that it was hopeless.

Nothing controlled her except a passionate attachment to me—an affection which partly included the inborn loyalty of the Zincali to their own kind. It was the age-old defiance of the Tzigane toward the hostile world of the Gajo and the law of the hated Gorgio.

What attached me to her was something more complex, more subtle, more indefinable—something born of her tragic history—the instinctive response of white blood to white. And partly it was her frightful honesty, her unregenerated and primitive emotions, her extreme loveliness, and her daintiness—sometimes unwashed.

And mostly, no doubt, her hot, heedless, headlong inclination for me. No man could be indifferent to it.

At the moment, however, I was full of wrath and disgust when I went out into the garden, headed for my departmental office under the pepper trees at the other end of it.

Recently, and on several occasions while traversing the garden, I had encountered Doña Maria Zozaya who, it appeared, had reconsidered her decision to keep out of her own garden whilst the hated American invader was in possession.

I encountered her now—exquisite as a silver-pink rose among the riot of delicate bloom.

I bowed extremely low; her curtsey was lower. Then ensued the formal preliminaries, always de rigueur:

"Good morning, Doña Maria."

"Good morning, Señor Captain Don Juan."

"Are you well, Doña Maria?"

"Sin novedad. At your service; and you?"

"I am rejoiced; and how are you, señora?"

"At your disposal; and you?"

"A thousand thanks."

"Pray be seated, señor."

"I beg of you to be seated."

"Vaya, to oblige you. How beautiful is your garden today, Don Juan."

"Your beauty would turn the chaparral into Eden."

"A thousand thanks."

She re-seated herself on the fountain's rim where,

in the limpid water, fat, lazy goldfish glided, brilliant as the hibiscus blossoms around her.

"I was looking over some old miniatures," she said, showing me two dangling from a gold chain around her neck, and which she held out for my inspection.

On the back of one was written: "Don José de Zozaya y Herrera, Enviado Extraordinario y Ministro Plenipotenciario de la Republica Mexicana cerca de la Cartagena; y su Esposa, Doña Francisca Maria Carmelita de Zozaya. Plazuela de Buenavista, No. 2."

"Undoubtedly," said I, "this handsome gentleman and very beautiful lady are the fortunate parents of Doña Maria."

"Alas, señor, fortune departed with my birth, I think."

"Impossible."

"Well, look at me!"

"I see only youth and health and beauty, señora," said I, smiling.

"You see a daughter of Mexico overwhelmed by her country's misfortunes."

"When two brave men meet, both can not be fortunate, madam."

"Your delicacy consoles me. . . . Vaya, enough of war. . . . I am reading the little American romance which you so kindly loaned me. I read quite well the English, sir—but do not speak it so fluently."

I think, take her all in all, that she was the most beautiful woman I ever have seen. Her very presence was a perfume.

"I have ventured to suggest," said I, "that a little daily conversation with an American might offer you practice in our language."

She laughed a little.

"Very often," said I, "you are absent from the garden during several days."

"Do you think your General Taylor would be pleased to have one of his officers teach English to a Mexican?"

"Why not?"

"Mexican women are dangerous."

"I know my peril, señora."

She laughed again, and drew her finger-tips across the surface of the pool. Jagged reflection of hibiscus bloom made the water a rocking basin of fire.

"Well, sir, if you already are on your guard."

"Too late, madam; I am a prisoner at your feet."

"It is I who am captive in my captured city. I wonder why you never interrogate me, Señor Captain?"

"Interrogate you, Doña Maria?"

"Yes. You are Captain of all the American spies in Mexico, are you not?"

I reddened.

"Is it not your duty, then, to catechise me in your unsatiated quest for military intelligence?"

"Do you think it is?"

"Why not? I know a great deal. I am your enemy, too."

"A gentle one."

"Do you think so, Don Juan?"

I looked at her. Her eyes were softly regarding me; her delicate red lips were edged with a smile.

"I shall not be the first to take the offensive," said I, laughingly.

"Who does not take the offensive must ultimately retreat," said she. "That is war, Don Juan."

"There is none between you and me."

"There always is war between man and woman."

"I surrender in advance."

"There is another war as implacable between Latin and Anglo-Saxon."

"Not in my heart, señora."

"And what do you suppose is going on in *mine?*"

"All that honours a true Mexican must animate your heart and mind, madam."

She said, with an odd smile: "You fence so honourably and beautifully that very nearly, at moments, you disarm me. Vaya, I must not be careless. . . . Some day I shall prepare an ambuscade for you, Don Juan. I shall invite you to take tea with me, in my own house, after the English fashion."

"Is that an ambuscade?"

"Ah! Under the intoxicating influence of tea, señor, you shall tell me all the secrets of your army. Will you accept, nevertheless?"

We were still laughing when, in my villa, a door slammed, echoing through the garden like a pistol shot.

There was no wind blowing to slam it. Calixto didn't slam doors.

Doña Maria did not even appear to notice the star-

tling noise where she sat, idly trailing the points of her fingers across the fountain and watching the goldfish following her moving hand.

She said quietly: "Gentlemen are not too many throughout the world, Don Juan, compared to the swarming myriads of the canaille. Therefore, you will not misunderstand it that I find your society pleasant, and that it would be agreeable for me to receive you under my own roof."

I kissed her hand as she rose; once more, as was incumbent upon the well bred, we went through the unvarying ceremony of leave-taking.

When, at length, Doña Maria had disappeared within the bluish shadow of her own portal, I went back to my villa to learn who had slammed that door, and why.

XVI

A STORM

SILVER KNEES was in her bed-room, door bolted. I knocked.

"Come out," said I shortly.

She came, undaunted, her face white, her eyes marred with recent tears.

"Did you slam that door, Encarnacion?"

"Ei."

"Why?"

"Quién sabe?" she muttered.

"Answer me, Encarnacion."

"What you were doing did not please me, Don Juan—"

"What do you mean?" said I sternly.

"Doña Maria made slut's eyes at you—"

"Que disparate!" I exclaimed, exasperated; "savo pusca san tu, that you explode when no one touches you? Also—although it is none of your business—there is nothing sentimental between Doña Maria Zozaya and me—"

"I know when a woman is pleased with a man—" she interrupted stubbornly.

"What is that to you? And if it were true, and concerned you, is it a reason for rudeness and temper

and the slamming of lateen doors? Can't I converse with a lady if I choose—"

"She is too beautiful—"

"Odoros—jealous fancies!"

"I am jealous," said Silver Knees, palely.

"Ca! You talk like a bobota!"

She said in a low voice, "I know the Gachi and I know the Romanacels. Doña Maria's eyes were like a deer's when she looked at you. And you had the air of comer el hierro—"

"The terms you employ are highly impertinent! What do you mean by 'Gachi'?"

She gave me a dangerous look: "Is she la Señora Marquesa, then, this Doña Maria? May God blot out her name before I see you two exchange the mirada again—"

"You *are* crazy!"

"No! She excites you as the muleta excites the bull—"

I was so incensed that I was seized with an impulse to spank this outrageous youngster, and I took her by the shoulder in a policeman's grip.

"Vaya," said she, white as a sheet, "beat me—send me to the Alcalde if you choose. I love you, nevertheless, and will affirm it daily in the calabózo!"

I let go of her and went and sat down on her bed, and, taking my head between both hands, tried to comprehend this young devil I had evoked naked out of the Great River of the North that day in February, and whom I did not understand how to exorcise.

My attitude of perplexity and despair, however, wrought an instant change in her; she uttered a stifled and strange little cry—"Johár de mi alma!"—and threw herself upon the floor against my knees, sobbing, "Daia, daia, what have I done who am so desperately in love with him and know nothing of love or how to behave when afflicted!"

I smoothed the tawny hair away from the flushed, tearful face: "Hijita, let us forget all that we have said. I love you dearly. Doña Maria Zozaya is a very grand lady; and you must behave like a rani Ingrés, and I must conduct myself like a hidalgo—an American caballero—lest she think meanly of us and of my profession and of my native country. Vaya, that is all there is to it, chiquita!"

"No more than that much, Don Juan?" she asked piteously.

"Nada. . . . Shall we go shopping in the Plazuela?"

"Ei," she nodded, drying her eyes naïvely with the hem of her night-gown.

She looked up with one of her heavenly smiles of a child.

"And in the Grand Plaza," said she, "we will have frozen cream and chocolate, and look at the promenade which passes!"

"Ei, niña."

"And there," said she, "we shall see all the chavos making eyes at the pretty girls—the maestranzas and the alguacils, and muchachos of the ganderia, after the

corrida!—the great diestro with his coleta, strutting among the toreros and pelotari after the derribo, and talking about his estocade!—and we shall laugh and whisper together when the chalânes saunter past us like capeadores full of vanity; and the picadores, envious of him with his cogida—and the American officers in their blue and gold with a tinkle and clink-clink of spurs—"

"Querida mia," said I, "put on your gown and stockings rosa incarnada, and your little narrow silver slippers with four-inch heels, and your mantilla of woven spider's-web, your silver comb, your painted fan, and in the cool of early evening, when all Monterey walks abroad in the Grand Plaza, all Monterey shall see the loveliest and best behaved rani tani that ever danced and sang the saeta!"

"Lozana!" she cried, flinging herself into my arms with the passionate abandon of a wilful child.

"Modo correcto!" I gasped, half strangled.

"Oh, the devil!" said she, letting me loose. And, straightening up, she swept me the laughing, extravagant curtsey of the wild Baile Flamenco.

Well, at the fashionable hour, in the cool of the declining sun, we sat at the Café Manzanilla and watched all Monterey parade before our eyes.

There had been a bull-fight; all society and the fag ends of it were promenading around the beautiful Plaza; cafés and restaurants were crowded; our military police kept perfect order. The aristocrats did not

condescend to notice them; others regarded them with a shrug of patience.

Doña Maria was there with an aged, yellow-skinned lady, and a lemon-tinted caballero wearing lemon-coloured gloves and tremendous mustachios.

I rose from our table to salute them; profoundly distant bows were exchanged; they passed, leisurely.

I did not dare glance at Silver Knees. She remained silent for some little time. I think I saw there every American officer I ever knew in Mexico. Several stopped to pay their devoirs, too gravely or with a touch of mischief, but their unfeigned admiration and masculine envy was plain enough. I couldn't help what they were thinking although I had told many of them about my youthful ward and what I hoped to do for her.

But Silver Knees' attitude and manners were perfection—and her shy dignity, modesty, and reticent composure charmed me and gently amazed every man who came to make his manners, leaving him very uncertain after all whether I had been politely lying to him, and whether I really was to be more respected than envied.

The band of one of our regular infantry regiments was playing in the painted wooden stand under the palms, catalpas, and china trees. The music and its execution did not compare with the native music and playing of the Mexican regimental bands.

As twilight deepened the street lamps were illuminated; theatres, cafés, dance-halls blazed out in prettily coloured arcs and festoons, and long strings of red,

green, and white lanterns twinkled, surrounding and criss-crossing the Plaza.

The military music ended, the band-master in his great plumed and gilded shako marched his red-tunic clad men away to the barracks.

Now, from the dance pavilion of El Mar where a jewelled fish hung sparkling red against a sea of blue light, came enchanting strains of violin, cello, and guitar. I could see Silver Knees' little high-heeled slippers going tap-tap to the enticing rhythm as she sipped her murciali.

"Murmo," she said in a low voice, "could we dance, Osté—just once?"

So I paid our reckoning in white money and we sauntered across to the Ocean Café and dance-hall where, presently, I had in my arms a creature of thistle-down, who floated as though blown and wafted by the music's breath—or a silvery-winged loré—a gnat drifting in the lamp-light.

We danced every waltz. This girl and the music were intoxicating. Also, it was hot, and we drank pulque iced—and danced and danced—and had supper of chili, dulces, and champagne. And danced and danced.

One can not help the stare of masculine admiration directed at one's partner in Mexico, which tribute is meant, and modestly endured, as an honour. But no American understands it or is flattered, and the staring of men made me restless.

One man in particular—he of the mustachios and

lemon complexion and gloves, who had passed us in the Plaza, escorting Doña Maria—annoyed me. And, moreover, he was the only man on whom the casual glance of Silver Knees lingered at all—fleetingly, it is true—yet more than once.

"Dios," thought I, "am I jealous in my turn? I would never dream of marrying this girl. What am I jealous about?"

Those who were playing our dance music were Gypsies of the Kalo Rom—"Romanacel of the Kalderas," Silver Knees whispered to me after a smilingly significant exchange of glances with these laughing musicians.

Now she caught the leader's eye and made a sign to him; and he rose, still playing his violin, and bowed to us. Then, ending with a ripping bow-stroke, he dashed into the wild Gypsy dance of the Kalderas, called Kheli Flamenca; and I, not even knowing it, nevertheless we danced it together till the last ringing clash of the tambour-basque died away amid the shouting applause.

The girl was excited; my own blood raced; such fierce, wild music is irresistible.

They played the Black Goat Dance and the Jojóy, and the crazy Mulatí or Gallows Dance of the Karavlasi horse-thieves.

We had had enough iced pulque, too. And that fellow with the mustachios never took his eyes from us.

Suddenly Silver Knees got up from our table, murmuring something.

"Are you ill?" said I.

"Na, ninelo; mutrar."

"My God," said I, "will you ever learn there are some things people don't say?"

"But you asked me—"

"Hereafter I'll ask you nothing!"

"Norungy san tu?—are you angry? Well, then—I retire—to pull up my stockings—" She made an adorably impudent face at me and vanished through the red curtain behind us.

A moment later I noticed that the gentleman of the mustachios, also, had disappeared.

When Silver Knees returned she was deathly pale, and I was afraid, at first, that what she had eaten and drunk had upset her stomach.

She was reticent; she would dance no more; she sat rigidly in her chair, swathed in her rose currandi, switching her fan with the menacing rhythm of a lithe jaguar meditating mischief. Her gaze followed the whirling dancers, but her thoughts were sombre and remote, and she looked at me blankly when I spoke. Yet, all the while, whenever my head was partly turned away from her, I felt that her eyes were observing me covertly.

Finally I asked her bluntly what had happened to upset her.

She was switching her fan nervously and with increased tempo when I spoke abruptly.

"Of what are you thinking?" I added, smilingly, "—For you look like a young ocelot ambushed in the mesquite."

"I was thinking," said she in an altered voice, "of a Gypsy proverb."

"What proverb, chispita?"

"It says, 'As soon as a girl tells a man she loves him, her lover begins to look about at other girls.' "

"How does that concern you?"

"I told you I love you."

"We both love each other, little sister."

"I don't love you only *that* way; I love you every way you let me. I have told you so, and instantly you begin to look around at other women—"

"What folly!—"

"You do! I saw you with Doña Maria—"

"Are you going to begin that nonsense again—"

"Is it nonsense?"

"It is."

"Very well," said she passionately, "read *that*, then!"

From her bosom she pulled a bit of crumpled paper and almost threw it at me. I unfolded and read it:

SEÑORITA GITANA—

Your lover is playing you false. Do you wish proof? Then tie a handkerchief to your window bars at sunrise.

(Signed) ONE WHO PITIES YOU.

"What idiotic stuff is this?" I asked, disgusted, "and where did you get it?"

"At the mirror in the ladies' parlour, I was arranging my hair to suit me. Somebody, in that room full

of women, tossed this billet upon the table under my very nose. Naturally I read it. Naturally I am infuriated."

"Silver Knees," said I, "don't be a little fool. In the first place, I am not your lover, and so could not play you 'false.' "

"In my heart you are my lover, and could cruelly deceive me—"

"That is a childish fancy—"

"You think I am a child, Don Juan? I will undeceive you if you'll let me—"

"What you say is silly—wanton—"

"Why is it shameless? I am a Gypsy and have no tribe; I am a runaway and have no marriage money; I am a rias who has lost her chica—posiláti—sasta rujia quejeláno. Ca! Nevertheless, I am young, healthy, and have beauty, perhaps, and a heart faithful in your service, humble to please you, and passionately inclined. . . . What am I to do with my life, then? Stab myself? Or *her?* Or—*you!*"

"No, quiet yourself, chiquita; you are very much excited—"

"Oh, daia, daia," she whimpered, "I am not even his mistress, and already I am losing him—"

"You are not! Be quiet!"

"Why that warning note, then? And I saw how Doña—"

"Damnation! I'm not going to listen to such stuff any longer. I've told you what I'm trying to do in

your behalf. I'll do it if you'll let me. But I'm not going to try to tame a gato!"

"A—what?" she demanded, astonished in her tears.

"A wildcat. I said it. You behave like one. Everybody notices us. Compose yourself!"

Fresh tears welled up from her eyes: "You compare me to Red Paws the Chac Mool, then! O Diosa Purisima! Majaro Soláres! To this man I am only a tigress of Yucatan! But his Doña Maria is a dove—"

"Come," said I, "we will go home."

When we arrived there, Silver Knees gave me a tragic look out of swollen, tear-marred eyes; but I would have none of her; indeed, I gave her a slight push in the direction of her bed-room; and like a desolate child she trotted into it, whimpering; and I closed her door.

In my own room Calixto came with a little crested note from Doña Maria Josefa Zozaya, bidding me to sip tea with her after the manner of the English.

This note I locked in my military chest and went to bed angry, disgusted, and uncomfortably perplexed. Who the devil was trying to stir up trouble between Silver Knees and me? What mischief-maker was meddling?

As for Doña Maria Josefa Zozaya, what business was it of this Gypsy girl whether or not I found her charming?

And I did. She was the most beautiful woman I

ever had laid eyes on. The sheer loveliness of her was astounding. Garrison life was dull. Old Zack scarcely employed my department at all. Nine-tenths of the time I was idle. Peep and Emilio Bandara were idle. So were the ruffians they employed or subsidized.

A normal young man tired of the society of men alone, becomes bored after a while. A woman of his own caste takes the curse off of masculine monotony.

This Gypsy youngster was something different. It was impossible for her to satisfy the social want in me, although I loved her dearly, and was concerned for her welfare. But the constant anxiety—the care and taming of her—kept me in a state of perpetual unrest. There was, with this enchanting child, no repose, no relaxation—always a subtle peril in her slender loveliness and primitive emotions—in her terrifying honesty and passionate attachment for me.

To be continually stirred up becomes wearisome. The charming, ceremonious sophistication and youthful composure—the calm assurance of caste—the feminine awareness always slumbering beneath her long, dark lashes—everything that she was made Doña Josefa Zozaya a very desirable incident in a young man's tiresome environment.

Before I went to bed I wrote a note to Doña Maria. Good Lord, why should I not take tea with her!

Nevertheless, I bade Calixto deliver it unobserved by Señorita Encarnacion.

XVII

WAR

WE had not been in touch with the Mexican army since it marched out of Monterey.

We did not know precisely where it was; and Old Zack didn't seemed to care where it was.

He had let the defeated Mexican army escape. One would suppose he might wish to know where it was and of how many troops it might be composed.

But at Old Zack's request I had turned public rat-catcher to rid the Monterey district of the vermin which, he declared, infested his camp and interfered with his "privacy."

So Pacheco and Bandara had trapped nearly a dozen Mexican spies for him, every one of whom went to his death with a calm courage not proverbially Latin and crying out in thin, frightened voices—when they could find their voices at all—"Viva Mexico!"

Also, between our military police, provost guard, and my secret agents, we caught, red-handed, far too many of our own soldiery—no regulars, as I remember—but worthless, prowling louts from volunteer regiments, whose plundering and brutal instincts neither Patterson nor Floyd had been able to eradicate.

Outrages against poor country women in solitary

ranches and tiny hamlets—murder for the purpose of robbery—these, and desertion were the principal crimes for which Old Zack executed the uniformed ruffians which disgraced our army and the Nation's flag.

As a matter of fact, my department had nearly all it could do to cope with crime committed by the vagabond element among our volunteers, and the constant succession of robberies and murders committed by roving bands of Mexicans—rancheros, chaparral robbers, desert-bandits—always hovering just outside our vedettes and all along our line of communications to overwhelm small wagon trains and their escorts, assassinate solitary sentinels and vedettes, rob and murder messengers and stragglers.

In time of war, when death has become too familiar to attract one's attention, nothing is more horrible to me than to hear the dead march throbbing through the lull between battles, timing the solemn march to the scaffold or to the field of military execution.

Camp gossip is not supposed to be reliable. But I believe our army at Monterey knew fairly well that the petty, blundering meanness of President, cabinet, and Congress had landed our country in that blind morass —that miserable military and political mess which is due to military and economic unpreparedness.

Incredibly sordid politicians intrigued with contractors, snouting and gruffling jowl-deep in profits.

An ignorant, petty-minded Congress, realizing too late its responsibilities and its parsimony, strove to re-

pair mistakes and authorize the armament and men which it had refused.

A sly President, a stupid cabinet, a wrangling Senate —all befogged by the reeking black fog of slavery, all wrangling, all afraid of successful generals in the field, whose suddenly won prestige might knock them, their politics, and their party into so many cocked hats —these squalid minds, full of jealousy, acrimony, and selfish fears, were watching the victorious progress of Old Zack with a kind of terror inspired by dread of his presidential availability in the coming campaign.

Everything was being done to discredit the military part of this rough and tumble row with Mexico. A political and party victory was what the Administration wanted; and it sent political envoys to Mexico City after—and during—every upset of the Mexican Government—to intrigue and barter and try to trade for a peace with each new Mexican president—until this crawling and louse-like policy nauseated the Mexicans themselves.

There was, in the United States, a veteran soldier who knew his business. He knew how to plan the vital campaign which must be fatal to the Mexican cause; he knew from where to start this campaign, how to pursue it, and what was to be his objective.

And all these things he laid before the Administration with all the simplicity and clarity and precision of a real soldier. And the Administration snubbed him, ignored him, and did everything to discredit him be-

cause his plan had originated in a soldier's mind and not in the mind of a stinking politician.

The soldier's name was Winfield Scott.

Yet, after all is said, the mean-minded Administration had more to perplex it than dirty politics or clean ones.

War with England loomed vaguely over Oregon; war with France and with Spain was no impossibility; nor was a civil struggle in arms unthinkable where not only a Southern State or two, but the mewling New England Puritan had threatened secession from the Union as the final remedy for that sectional bigotry which once hanged witches, outraged Quakers, and murdered friendly Indians in the North, and which made human slavery the foundation of civilization in the South.

All these matters were known in our little army occupying Monterey. Criticism of Old Zack became softened in the knowledge of the hostility of the Administration toward the brave old man. If he blundered he blundered victoriously; if his military ignorance lost us the fruits of victory and cost us dear, we liked him for his personal courage and his unvarying kindness to all.

As for General Scott, we knew about him only what everybody knew—that he had fought with courage and sagacity against England in the late war; that he was a professional, very handsome, and towered well over six feet in his gilt-spurred boots. We were for him to a man, regulars and volunteers alike. And were

very sick of war and wanted somebody who knew how to end it.

Now, when I began to write these memoirs of this Mexican war—which memoirs I am still writing during my all-too-many leisure hours, though the war is far from ended—I delivered myself of certain pious reflections concerning wars in general.

I said: "War never solved anything. . . .War never yet has unravelled any knot. . . . No human problem ever has been solved by soldiers."

I went on record as saying that war was the last resort of decadent intellects; I argued that always there is a Sinister Intelligence that wants war, and wills it; and that when it finds two fools it obsesses them, delivers them on the mark like two game-cocks, nose to nose, and composes itself to view the sport.

All this was written in my accumulating pile of copybooks at the end of each day, if convenient, or as soon afterward as possible.

All of this, too, was perpetrated on virgin paper before Monterey. But, since those earlier and shocked hours, and with the hot and nauseating stench of sweat, and latrines, and vomit, and gangrene, and spilled entrails in my nostrils—in my clothing, in my very throat, stifling my breath and turning my stomach—since then I have learned more about this business of war which, as Captain Sherman, the lank gunner, says is always agreeable whether fought by fools or experts.

Filth, disease, spurting blood, agony of men and

animals; the sight of outraged and mutilated women sprawling naked, splashed with scarlet; dead children turned black by the tropic sun, dead men and horses, gas-distended, stinking, covered with gorged buzzards —all these may be a hellish evidence against war. But they are even a more terrible stimulation to make war, in Christ's name. War against war. War to end wars. For only by war can war ever be ended.

This is my conclusion, now, after many days of consideration, of argument and debate with soldier comrades.

Such knightly and Christian characters as Captain E. Kirby Smith; such unstained paladins as Lieutenant-Colonel May, as Colonel Edmund Kirby of the staff, as Colonel Davis of the Mississippi Rifles, have deeply influenced me.

Colonel Davis believes that the conflict between evil and good is interminable; that always wrong will wage war against right; and that right must be armed and prepared for aggression.

Colonel Kirby believes that the Sinister Intelligence is no other than that original evil, twin-born with the good within us since the first man stood upright on two hairy legs.

May says that the race which will not defend its beliefs against armed argument is destined to disappear. But he is a crusader, and believes in armed aggression for God's glory as he believes in surgery for the sickened body.

Colonel Davis agrees with him. Christ, he says, was

no Prince of Peace. Once, even he himself used violence to clear the temple of evil.

Christ, he says, was the militant head of his followers; his campaign was a campaign of aggression; his assaults were delivered against the citadel of the heathen world. He died, leaving his orders for eternal battle—for perpetual advance and invasion until all the world should be conquered and of one mind.

He said that to lay siege to, assault, and carry the human mind was an aggression more violent than any physical fight.

After all, he said, it was aggression that was in question; and that aggression and defense, whether with spiritual or material weapons, could be right and holy, or wrong and inspired by hell.

One thing was certain, he said, that aggression and defense would last as long as the human race lasted—or as long as the last living creature of any order endured.

Kirby Smith had no doubt that there were two kinds of war, God's war and the devil's.

He said that the most just war in history had been our defense against the bullying violence of England in 1812. He did not believe that the war of the Revolution was as defensible. Matters could have been accommodated after the Ministry and Parliament had agreed to all our contentions which before had been denied us.

Of course it was better that we were free of England and her petty tyranny and sneers. But we *could*

have endured without war until we had become the greater nation—which we were fast becoming—when all annoyance and bullying must automatically have ceased.

Colonel Garland, who sometimes joined our debate, spoke of unjust wars, mentioning the late Seminole conflicts and western fights—all of which, he asserted, were due to the infamous selfishness of politicians.

He also cited the monstrous Napoleonic wars which have ruined Europe's manhood for generations.

Captain Sherman, also, often a listener but seldom voicing any view, quietly asked how we regarded the war in which we all were at present involved.

We all agreed that it could easily have been avoided and that Mexico, with her back to the wall, was fighting, now, only for her own.

"Gentlemen," said Captain Sherman, "are entitled to their opinions, but gentlemen who are soldiers have only one course to pursue. Which is to fear God, fight like hell, and keep their bowels open."

Well, at this writing, here in Monterey, I have altered my earlier opinion.

I believe in war as a step in ultimate solution. I believe in armed aggression upon evil; I believe in armed defense against it when it comes armed.

Like fire, which is cruel but sears wounds that might become mortally infected, a just war is a great purifier. A cruel one—for, with the dross, much gold is burned. Nevertheless, as in the early days of medicine,

so, in our still early civilization, rough and primitive methods must prevail until the kinder centuries teach gentle methods and until somebody finally discovers the vaccine and formula of prevention.

Meanwhile, whatever I think of the right or wrong of this Mexican war, I am a soldier in the regular army of my native land which educated me in my profession, free of all expense.

There is a debt I could not choose but pay. And shall pay it to the last drop of blood and sweat within my body.

Slowly, oh, slowly human knowledge of world-surgery advances—with much malpractice, many honest mistakes, too much cutting, too much blood, too many deaths.

But there continues always the blind seeking, the almost imperceptible advance, spite of the bawling of bigots on the one hand and the fierce yelling of free-thinkers on the other—always a creeping progress toward better surgery, better diagnosis, and finally, perhaps, a measurable approach toward that divine knowledge of the tired world's griefs which may end in the discovery of a prevention for all war on earth. Credo; I believe it.

Meanwhile, the stars do not pause in their courses; the poor old world totters on; and the world's doctors, with their scant knowledge, old-fashioned elixirs, and primitive instruments, must continue to prescribe for its maladies and do the best they can.

XVIII

LOVE?

The soldiers were always singing:

"I've lost my true love
Down by the Rio Grande.
I'll find a new love
Down by the Rio Grande—"

And—

"Green grew the rushes, O!
Green grew the rushes, O,
Down by the Rio Grande—"

I had been watching a certain mixed brigade composed entirely of volunteer battalions from which there had been a shameful number of desertions.

Desertions still continued almost nightly; Old Zack had determined to disband the outfit and send it home unless this disgraceful business ceased.

There were two kinds of delinquents—those who at heart were no more than ruffianly adventurers, and who went off to the enemy with their arms, equipments, and horses; and those whom illness, privation, hardship, and rigour of military discipline, homesickness, or

the tyranny of officers, or some sordid love affair induced to desert.

There was another matter even more serious to cope with; messengers from my department, carrying despatches in military cipher, had either deserted or been intercepted between Monterey and Matamoras; and I was convinced that the cipher employed had been decoded.

We used, of course, two systems. That in which the only keys were at Headquarters and base could not be decoded by the enemy. Any other system could be solved with patience and experience. One type of code, I am sure, already had been translated.

On the other hand, we had the key to the Mexican secret cipher. They had used only the one, so far; and it contained no difficulties.

But the root of all our troubles lay in the inertia of Old Zack. Long ago we should have marched for Saltillo where a large Mexican army was gathering. Now it was too late.

All the evils that arise in an idle army—especially an army quartered in and around an agreeable city—had infected our troops. Even the regulars suffered from the stagnation.

But Old Zack's mind, once more, was obsessed with wagons, and the noise of creaking, bumping wheels filled his brain.

But that was not all. Other phantoms were swarming in the simple and plebeian brain of Old Zack.

He didn't like either the President of the United

States or the Secretary of War. They didn't like him, either.

He was far enough away to ignore advice. He ignored it. He even disobeyed orders. Though at odds with the Administration, he began to realize how popular he was becoming with the people of the United States.

He believed in himself and in his own methods. Far away to the eastward he heard a distant sound. It was the first faint buzzing of the Presidential Bee.

That buzzing became louder when the Administration, after vainly trying to discredit Major-General Winfield Scott as it had tried to discredit Old Zack, finally concluded to save its prestige by adopting Scott's plan of invasion and by placing him in supreme command with orders to seize Vera Cruz and march straight to the heart of Mexico—the Castle of Chapultepec.

That, at least, thought the Administration, would end Old Zack and his armistice and his sedentary disposition, and, it was hoped, his dawning political aspirations.

One day in November, conferring with Old Zack at Headquarters, he told me with much simplicity that, as long as the Administration had forced him to terminate the armistice, he might as well prepare to march; but he didn't know in what direction he had better start.

It had become too late to go to Saltillo; he had not

now enough men to secure his communications and face a splendid and immense Mexican army under the highly-praised General Santa Anna. The Administration had pointed out this situation to him and had forbade him to lengthen his communicating lines.

"Maddox," he said, "I ain't a-going to let party politics push me and my army all over Mexico like they were playing checkers with me. No. I'm a-going to Saltillo to catch Santa Anna by his wooden leg."

"My people have reported twenty thousand Mexicans at Saltillo, General, and reinforcements arriving weekly."

"Maddox," he said amiably, "I don't care a cuss."

He slouched in his chair, an untidy figure in wrinkled, civilian linen, sloppy carpet slippers, whittling a lead-pencil.

"I got my wagons," he said. "I got enough men, too. If I don't go now, Scott will requisition half my army and send for my best regiments as soon as he reaches Tampico. Polk tells me to go and talk it over with Scott.

"If I'm at Saltillo when Scott gits to Camargo, I can't talk to him. And I ain't a-going to do it anyway."

His nonchalant proposal to disobey orders amazed me. He continued to whittle his pencil to a point.

"Say, Maddox," he remarked, "I just wrote to Crittenden. I wrote him that I'm in the hands of my friends."

"Sir?"

He looked up amiably at me: "Senator Crittenden, you know," he repeated. "I told him that I'm a candidate for the Presidency."

I was too astounded to utter a word.

He turned to the table, drew a sheet of paper toward him and began to mark it with his pencil:

"Here's the situation, Maddox," he said, "—here's where we'll all be by New Year's Day: Patterson and Quitman at Victoria, Wool at Aguanueva, Doniphan at El Brazito, Kearny and Cooke at or near San Diego in California; Butler here in Monterrey, and Worth and me at Saltillo. . . . And Scott at Camargo, doing his own job without bothering me any. . . . I aim to beat Santa Anna before I start to play second fiddle to Winfield Scott. And I'm a-going to—Polk or no Polk."

After a few moments' absent-minded reflection he indicated that the interview was at an end.

At parting I respectfully congratulated him upon his proposed candidacy and offered my cordial wishes for his nomination and election.

He took me by the hand in his genial, kindly way:

"By the way," he said, with a twinkle in his wrinkled eyes, "you better order a major's uniform, Maddox."

"Sir?"

"You don't know it," said he, laughing, "but a bunch of brevets has come in, and one of 'em is yours."

"What for?" I demanded in honest amazement.

"Bravery at Palo Alto and Resaca; peculiar courage

displayed in Matamoras, Monterey, and on a mission to the Comanches; and rescuing a wounded cavalryman under fire when the Texan cavalry were ambuscaded on the Point Isabel road."

He began to chuckle: "Say, Maddox, didn't you do any of these things? You look at me like it was some other fella I'm talking about."

When I got back to my quarters I found Silver Knees in a silent and hostile mood, turning over the pages of a religious book I had bought for her at her request, and evidently awaiting my arrival to start trouble.

On the table, torn open, lay a note from Doña Maria Josefa Zozaya, directed to me. This, I knew at once, was the casus belli.

It was a serious enough offence—this opening a letter directed to me; but what further incensed me was to notice upon the paper a round spot of moisture the size of a dollar, where the youngster had spat upon it.

Silver Knees gave me a sullen, defiant look.

"Are you going to take tea with her?" she asked.

"What the devil do you mean by daring to open a letter addressed to me?" I demanded.

"I don't want you to go—"

"You listen to me! I'm becoming tired of your ridiculous jealousy and absurd and filthy behaviour. If you can't conduct yourself like a decent and sensible American girl you'd better go back to the Bear Folki and dance for pennies!"

Tears of mortification and rage blinded her flashing azure eyes.

"If you go to tea with her," she said, "you'll be sorry."

I paid her no further attention, but wiped and read the violated letter—a brief note of polite formality, bidding me to come to tea.

In reply I sent a formal acceptance by Calixto; then, not noticing Silver Knees and her tantrums, I ordered my horse and rode into town to order a major's insignia for cap and uniform. This done I came back to my office to confer with Peep and Bandara about the spy situation so annoying to Old Zack.

There was no slightest doubt, of course, that the entire native population of the city was hostile to us, no matter how polite their manners or how guileless their behaviour.

We were invaders and enemies to Mexico. There was not a soul, I think, in Monterey who did not pray for our destruction, and who did not believe it was already impending at the hands of General Santa Anna. The same Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna who had run away at San Jacinto! But now he had become supreme head of the armies of Mexico. Also, he represented the supreme executive power in Mexico in the name of the provisional government of Don José Mariano de Salas, who, after the fall of General Parades, had assumed control amid the chaos of repeated revolutions.

Now the interception, robbery, and murder of sev-

eral of our messengers carrying despatches in military cipher had reduced us to a code, the key to which lay only in two printed and similar volumes of a certain classical work—the one in Washington, the other in my office.

By a complicated system of letters and numbers designating page, column, line, and the position of the required letter or word, a rather ponderous but perfectly safe cipher could be employed between the army in the field and the Government of the United States.

We knew already that attempts had been made in Washington to discover what book was used as the key to this cipher.

There was even some talk of changing the key volumes and substituting two others—the Secretary of War having written to General Taylor in regard to the matter—but Old Zack, always indifferent to such things, merely mentioned the correspondence to me, remarking that the Secretary of War was an old fussbudget.

To my inquiry, now, both Peep and Bandara replied that undoubtedly a very elaborate Mexican spy system existed in Monterey, and that I and my Headquarters were constantly under secret surveillance. Suspicious loiterers were frequently chased away by the sentries, they asserted, and only a constant patrol kept trespassers away from the garden walls and intruders out of the mews.

The majority of these, however, I believed were

beggars or petty pilferers of fruit, or merely loafers satisfying their curiosity.

"Your honour," said Peep, "matters have changed since Lopez de Santa Anna took command. You know, Don Juan, that Lopez the Leopard is kin to Santa Anna; and it is to this fellow that Santa Anna has confided a special section of the Mexican Military Intelligence."

"Lopez," added Bandara, "is as sly as old Red Paws himself, Señor Major; and if he smells the secrets in your office safe he will surely try to scratch his way into it."

"Which is why," I said, "that I have had it removed to my own bed-room; and why I have doubled all sentries and patrols outside my villa."

"You ought to let Emilio and me sleep in your garden," said Peep. "In our serapes it would be comfortable—"

"Nonsense," said I, smiling.

So Bandara, who had just arrived from a reconnaissance beyond Saltillo, gave me the substance of what he had seen and heard in the enemy's country, and with all the graphic and minute detail of an Indian—always the keenest of observers.

Of his report—for he could neither read nor write —I made shorthand notes.

Peep's daily report was in the laborious handwriting characteristic of the self-taught, but clear enough.

When I gathered together my papers and rose to go, Bandara said with a grin: "Lopez pays the Jaca-

rilla Apaches for news; but I am half Apache, and they give me real news for nothing."

"Nevertheless, pay them," said I, smiling. "Good will depends upon the heart, but both depend upon a full belly."

"It may be so with Indians," said Peep, after Bandara had departed, "but the good will of those who love you, prala, dies not in the body's death but lives on in God forever."

I was surprised and touched by the unwonted emotion in his voice, and I said so.

"Ei," said he, "do you think your Mistec Indian, Calixto, is the only soul who loves you blindly, prala? Well, then, I am another. And so is Emilio Bandara. And so is your little Gitana, Silver Knees. Ca! What magic does your honour possess that inspires such devotion? God knows. Even the Romanacel are your friends—the Ursari—"

"Affection begets affection," said I, "—therein lies the magic, prala. . . . Are the Bear Folki still encamped beyond the Teneria brook?"

"Ei."

"Does anybody use them ill?"

"Nay, prala. They know they are safe while your honour watches—" He began to laugh;—"Two from the Leopard's spies have tried to buy them, prala! Can you imagine? And one they poisoned with pig-poison, and the bones of the other were found where for three nights the coyotes were holding a full-moon council—"

"Why the devil didn't you report this?" I demanded.

He shrugged: "Lopez will send more spies. How should anybody know how the Zincali treated them? A trap is best baited without talk. Let the Romanacel take care of the spies of Red Paws—"

"Yes, but I wish to question them—"

"Then others will smell your honour's touch upon the trap and will become too wary to be caught. Better leave it to the Zincali to grease the trap with Gypsy bait alone, and so destroy in secret all the little cat-folk that come from old Red Paws."

"Did the Bear Folk learn nothing from these spies before they murdered them?" I asked, annoyed and perplexed.

"Only that Lopez knew your honour has taken Silver Knees into your own household. The little cats wanted the Bear Folki to steal her from you for Lopez."

I looked at Peep in troubled astonishment.

"Your honour remembers how Lopez acted with her," he remarked. "It is plain that she has bewitched him as she has bewitched the lancer General Torrejon, and Romano, and others. That is why the Ursari poisoned the one with drao and offered the other to the wolves of the Loma."

I said: "If another spy from Lopez appears among the Ursari, I want an opportunity to question him."

"Then, prala, it were safest for your honour to dress in Gypsy dress and go to the Ursari camp and there

question this doomed person as though it were a Rom and no Gajo who confronted him."

"A spy ought to be executed in the regular way—not murdered—"

"It is wiser that the Bear Folki attend to the business after their own fashion, prala. Then more little red cats will continue to come to the trap, and old Red Paws will never know why none returns."

Peep counselled wisdom. It was highly irregular, but crafty.

"I will consider the matter," said I, pocketing my papers.

When again I arrived at my villa, the door of Silver Knees' bed-room was shut, and she remained invisible while I copied the reports of Bandara and Pacheco for General Taylor, and sent them off by orderly to Headquarters.

Then I unlocked my safe, dragged out the volume, and began to prepare, in code, the despatch to be sent to the War Department.

It is a slow, tiresome, painstaking business to search for and write out all these endless lines and columns of symbols, figures and letters.

I heard Silver Knees open her door and come into the room, but did not turn my head.

"Prala," she said in a whimpering voice, "I am wretchedly unhappy because I love you."

"Yes," said I, "you prove it by opening my letters and spitting upon them."

"But I can't endure it when Doña Maria looks at you with tender eyes—"

"She doesn't! Don't be a fool."

"Please don't take tea with her—"

"I'm writing, Encarnacion. Please do not interrupt me."

"You are breaking my heart, prala—"

"We can discuss that later—"

"No! I can't stand it any longer. My heart already is in several pieces—"

"Will you keep quiet!"

"If you treat me cruelly I shall go back to the Ursari!"

I was silent.

"—And dance for p-pennies," she sobbed out.

No word from me.

"Prala—"

I continued to write.

"You *are* in love with her! You are—" Rage choked her and she stamped her foot in fury. A moment later her bed-room door slammed.

When I had finished my code work it was time to go to Doña Maria's. So I locked up the big, leather-bound volume, placed the cipher despatch in my breast pocket, washed my hands, and walked out across the garden toward the fountain-set patio which, during these latter weeks in Monterey, I had come to know so well.

At that time I honestly did not know whether or not I was beginning to fall in love with Doña Maria

Josefa Zozaya. She was lovely beyond words, this exquisite aristocrat of Monterey—spiritual, accomplished, charmingly sophisticated; and though I knew of her courage and daring on the ramparts, and her flaming patriotism and devotion, it had become certain to me that hers was a lofty and generous character, and that, in her mind, there was no room for the petty animosity that includes individuals in her natural attitude of racial and national hostility.

When I came into the patio we greeted each other with the invariable formalities which good usage demands.

But these once fulfilled, there followed the relaxation of a friendly intimacy which very subtly had been increasing between us for many weeks.

She had heard, it seemed, of my new brevet rank, and she rallied me gently, bidding me beware lest I exchange my oaks for willow leaves when General Santa Anna came out of the West.

"Señor Major," said she, pouring tea in the English manner, "I dreamed last night that I saw a very pretty flag flying over the Obispado. Could you guess the colour of that flag?"

"Señora," I said, smilingly, "it was red, white, and—"

"And what?"

"Blue."

"You are colour-blind, I fear, Don Juan; it was red, white, and green. And upon its beautiful folds was an eagle."

"Señora," said I, "that certainly is a beautiful and noble flag, and I have the honour to salute it."

"A salute from the enemy is always acceptable," she said; "even Lucifer saluted Jesus."

"Heavens," said I, "what an analogy!"

"A compliment, Don Juan. Was ever angel more glorious than Lucifer—before he fell and turned Yankee?"

"I admit," said I, "that at least one angel is Mexican."

"See how you disarm me," said she, "whose sole weapon is a saucy tongue!"

"It proved rather terrible on the ramparts, señora."

She shrugged her beautiful shoulders: "Oh, that! Do you really believe all you hear about me?"

"The city is quite ready to canonize you."

"My poor, darling compatriots! If they weren't such credulous children I should not have the honour today of drinking tea with an American major."

"Madam, it is the only blessing I ever heard of that war has yet brought to anybody."

"Do you consider it a blessing to drink tea with a poor Mexican girl?"

"I would renounce the treasure of the world to be here with you."

"You are very gallant, Don Juan. . . . So was the other."

"The other?" I repeated, perplexed.

"The other, and sadly celebrated Don Juan."

"Oh, madam, what a comparison!"

"He also was extremely attractive, they say. Doña Elvira thought so, anyway. And, like you, he was courageous. Yes. He was not even afraid to shake hands with the statue of the Commander. . . . Fortunately I am a widow."

Such charmingly malicious raillery made me laugh but left me wondering a little as to how much was really meant.

Evidently she had plagued me enough to suit her, for now her fancy altered, and she began to speak of other things—of Spain, of Spanish music and literature.

"*Don Quixote,* translated, is all I know of Spanish literature," said I.

"Oh, I never have seen it in English," she exclaimed. "Would you let me look at your copy?"

I felt myself turning red. I managed to say that the volume was not, at present, in my possession. Which was true; it belonged to the Government.

I felt her beautiful, dark eyes were resting on me intently, but she said nothing more about *Don Quixote* nor did I. She spoke of Spanish music, and its beauty, and a moment later she picked up her guitar to illustrate a Mooresque theme of which she had been speaking, singing à demi-voix.

Time fled like the shadows of flying clouds. It was the hour for departure—with every ceremony—and she let me kiss her hand after every compliment was said.

Going, I heard her say, "Don Juan," in a voice that

was almost a whisper; and I turned on the step, cap in hand.

"How do friends in America say good-bye?" she asked in the same soft, husky voice.

"They shake hands, señora."

"Take my hand, señor."

I took it. It was like a rose petal.

"Always remember," she said, "I am your friend—as far as my country allows."

"And I yours, señora."

"One's country and her welfare come first, Don Juan."

"Always, Doña Maria."

"Friendship must bow and retire until one's country is first served."

"Yes, that is true."

"Even if friendship die of it, Don Juan."

"Even if friendship die, señora. . . . Even if love die."

"Yes, even love must stand aside while the altar is served. . . . Will you always remember that?"

"Always. And—will you?"

"Always, Don Juan."

I kissed her hand again. I was halfway across the garden before I recovered my senses. Could there be any doubt at all that I was in love?

XIX

HONOUR?

WHEN I came into my quarters across the garden, still under the spell of Doña Maria and preoccupied with thoughts of her, I heard Silver Knees' guitar in the parlour, the ominous tinkle of strung sequins, and the light thud and stamp of barefooted dancing.

And I was extremely annoyed, when I went in, to find her clad in flamboyant Tzigane finery, barefooted, and slightly intoxicated.

She gave me an impudent, reckless look and an equally impudent flourish of her naked arm, then, continuing her goat dance, or Chivo Flamenco, and strumming her ribbon-slung guitar, she continued to bucket and caper with indescribable wild grace and abandon, singing the crazy bastard air of the dantza mutchi-koaka:

"—Two horns has my Ro,
And four hoofs for prancing—
I give him drao
To set him dancing.

Chibar un chivo,
En el avér pinré
Dilo! Dilo!
We both are crazy!—"

"What have you been drinking?" I interrupted angrily.

"Horchatas, your honour—"

"You have been drinking pulque!"

"Oh, no, only almond-water," she insisted, laughing, flinging her bare feet about, bucking, gambolling, capering as she played and sang—

"Two eyes has my Ro
And a beard entrancing,
Or—bajando
Has set us dancing,
Dance, my chivo,
Thy legs are lazy!
Liló! Liló!
The world's gone crazy!—"

"Where did you get that Gypsy dress, Encarnacion?"

"Vaya, Don Juan, I went to the Bear Folki and bought it. Did you suppose I stole it like a true Gitana?" And she danced away with a flash of her snowy knees and thighs under her gaudy, tossing skirts.

"—Liló! Liló! The world's gone crazy!" she sang.

"Go into your room," I said angrily.

"I wish to dance my goat dance, seño."

"What devil possesses you, Silver Knees—"

"No devil, seño, but a great gaiety of heart. Did your honour enjoy your tea?"

"Why have you been drinking pulque here all alone—"

"Why not? I had no tea."

"Was that a reason to drink too much pulque?"

"Did you make love to your lady, Don Juan? They say tea is a great love philtre—"

I turned on my heel, went into my room, seated myself at the desk in a rage, and tried to prepare my code despatch for the express packet which usually left Headquarters about six o'clock.

I had scarcely begun to write when the door opened and Silver Knees came in with a flurry of skirts and scurry of espadrilles.

"Take me to dinner and the dance this evening, Don Juan," she said in an odd, brusque voice.

"No, I have another engagement," said I drily.

"What engagement?" she demanded.

"See here," said I, "your manner is disrespectful. It's none of your business where I go."

"You are going to Doña Maria's!" she said. "If you do, you won't find me here when you return!"

"Come," said I in disgust, "don't you see I'm trying to write?"

"If you're going to love that woman I won't remain here!" she cried excitedly. "And I shall do something frightful," she added.

"What do you propose to do?" I inquired wearily.

"You'll see what I shall do, Don Juan!"—her stormy voice choked with a sob; she turned like a flash and vanished, slamming the door.

It was my impulse to rise and follow her and reason with her if possible—at any rate have a very plain understanding with her concerning her situation in my custody.

I didn't. In so perverse a condition of mind there could be no reasoning between us. She had been working herself into this tantrum all day. Also, she had deliberately taken too much pulque.

I went on writing; and while still busy with pen and ink I recollected that I needed several articles for the march, so I called Calixto and sent him down town to make the purchases.

After he had gone, and while I was still busy with my papers, Bandara rode up jingling under my window, and, hearing the clatter and tinkle of his horse and equipment, I went to the window and asked him what was the matter.

For answer he handed me a written despatch from Headquarters.

"Well," said I, when I had finished reading, "here are our marching orders at last. The army takes the field, Emilio. Are you glad?"

"Yes, Don Juan," said he, grinning his tiger grin; "I am not very happy in towns where there are too many smells, too many noises—too many houses and people. When do we march, your honour?"

"On the 15th. So tomorrow you and Peep had bet-

ter see to our horses and housings and arrange for the baggage and transportation. I am going to walk over to Headquarters now, and I'll tell Calixto to begin to gather up my effects when he returns from shopping."

I arrived at Headquarters amid a lively, gossiping throng of officers. Old Zack, who was strolling about the place with an absent-minded air, presently noticed my arrival.

"Look here, Maddox," he called across the room to me; and when I approached and stood at salute: "Say, Maddox, I want you should order me out a couple of your best scouts, and detail me a squad of Colonel Walker's Rangers, and take a peek into Saltillo and tell General Patterson that I'm sending Quitman and some artillery to him. But I ain't a-going there, Maddox; I'm a-going to Victoria first; and if I don't find Santa Anna there, then I'll march for Saltillo. I want you should tell Patterson so he won't worry none. Tell him I'll be along if the enemy starts in to act funny."

"Yes, sir. . . . But, General, with your permission, and with all respect, sir, as you would be without the services of my department at Victoria, I take it that your early arrival at Saltillo is practically certain."

"No, 't'ain't, Maddox. So if I don't move on Saltillo and San Luis Potosi, you got to come and find me at Victoria. See?"

He leaned over toward me with a shrewd twinkle in

his eyes, and whispered hoarsely behind his weather-wrinkled hand:

"I ain't a-going near Camargo, neither; I aim to fight Santa Anna before Scott stops me and takes my best regiments in requisition. See?"

Such orders were bewildering, almost incomprehensible. Why was Old Zack sending his Chief of Military Intelligence to Saltillo while he himself marched to Victoria?

The answer was obvious and unflattering; he placed little value upon my services; also he meant to send no more code communications either to Washington or to General Winfield Scott. That was the idea. The cunning old horse-trader had made up his mind to keep clear of orders from his superiors. He didn't want to know where they were. He didn't care how many Mexicans might be in the field against him. All he wanted was to jog along at his own pace and in his own way, fighting the enemy, wherever encountered, without plan, without objective, and in the same happy-go-lucky fashion that had given him unbroken victory from the day he had left Corpus Christi for the Colorado.

Old Zack took my arm and began to walk up and down the room with me.

"Don't get it twisted, Maddox," said he, "I ain't jealous of Winfield Scott. He's my superior and I like him. His plan is the right plan. The only way to end this war is to start in at Vera Cruz and end up in Mexico City. But all I want is one more good

crack at this Santa Anna feller who was let loose into Mexico by our blockhead Government. To kick Santa Anna will feel as pleasant as to kick Marcy, and I certainly would admire to do that, only 't'ain't good manners. Besides, my leg ain't quite long enough to reach Washington, D. C." He laughed and patted my arm.

"All right, Maddox," he chuckled, "we'll see happy days yet before I say good-bye to this damn fine little army o' mine. . . . Who is the bandit feller who sends word he wants to talk to you personally?"

"Why, it's that chaparral robber, Dominguez, General, who used to prowl along our communications."

"What's he want?"

"I don't know, sir. He sent word that he desired to see me, personally, with a view of arranging terms for himself and his command. He wishes to know if he could come into our lines at the river below the Obispado tomorrow at sunrise. So I said I'd meet him."

"You look out, Maddox, that he don't pull out a mamúcha and fill you full of copper slugs."

"Very well, sir."

As I was leaving the Palace with Lieutenant Bryan, of the topographical engineers, the marching music of a regimental band broke out from the Plaza. It was that splendid veteran regiment, the 5th regulars, already marching out of Monterey.

The streets were dusky when I came to my garden gate. There was no sentry there; none pacing the path before my villa, either, which surprised and dis-

turbed me. Nor did I encounter Pio Pacheco who had been acting as my orderly.

The door of the house was open. A lamp burned in the parlour.

"Calixto!" I called.

There came a soft shuffle of sandals, and the Mistec appeared, carrying the parcels for which I had sent him.

Also, he handed me a note. I recognized the faintly perfumed paper and the delicate superscription. It was a brief line from Doña Maria, saying that she was leaving for Mexico City, and asking me to come to her for a moment as soon as I received this note.

While I was reading it I was aware that Silver Knees had opened her bed-room door and was regarding me intently.

I put the note into my pocket and turned away toward the door.

"Don't go," said Silver Knees in the ghost of a voice.

But, still annoyed by her impertinence, I went out, not noticing her at all.

When I came to Doña Maria's house it was apparent that I had been expected, and a servant immediately conducted me to the drawing room.

It was quite dusky except for one lamp, turned low, on the piano.

Suddenly, in its vague light, I saw Doña Maria coming slowly toward me. She was dressed in black; and, in the uncertain light, her dark garb and shadowy

pallor blended and seemed scarcely detached from the dusk around her. She held something dark in her hands. It was a book.

"Señor," she said in a colourless voice, "I have the honour to return to you your book."

"My—book?"

"Don Quixote."

I stared at her; at the book.

"Señor," she said in a low voice, "I thought it was my duty. I thought I could do this thing, and that the deed was consistent with honour. One of my servants took a wax impression. I had a key constructed.

"Señor, I love my country. But, even for my country, I can not do this thing. It is treachery. And all treachery is dishonourable. And I do not believe that Mexico asks of her children that they sacrifice their honour in her behalf.

"Señor, I return to you your book which is the key to your secret code. . . . I believed that you had such a book in your safe. I did not *know* what volume it might be. Today, at tea, I guessed it was *Don Quixote.*

"Señor, I read a little in your volume. And, as I read, suddenly the truth overwhelmed me, and I realized, by God's grace, that this poor, mad knight, who was the soul of honour, too, and stainless, never could have reconciled his conscience to commit a treachery.

"And, God help me, he seemed, somehow, to me at that instant the very symbol and embodiment of my

poor, distracted country—gentle, chivalrous, bewildered, credulous, half mad!—

"Señor, you have your code again; and I have mine, and still intact. . . . And so, with every humiliation of pride and race—"

The volume fell on the carpet; and I was down on my knees and kissing her hand which she strove to disengage with a soft cry of terror and revolt.

"Mother of God, let me go! Would you have me die of shame, after all—uncertain that it was honour and not love that swayed me—"

She tore her lovely hands away and retreated as I followed her, closing her ears with both palms, against my impassioned protests.

"No—no—no!" she wailed, "I couldn't ever listen to you now! Don't you understand, Don Juan? I couldn't endure it—the frightful self-distrust—not understanding why I returned to you your book!"

I begged her to listen; she shrank away.

"No, no," she cried, "—if I have done this for you and not for my own honour I am an infamous woman, and may Christ punish me!"

"Maria, for heaven's sake, listen—"

"Oh, Virgin Mother," she sobbed, "if I really love this enemy of my country, make my sacrifice acceptable to God!"

There was a deathly silence between us.

Then, very slowly, she moved away into the deeper shadows. I heard a door open; close very softly.

I was alone with my book.

XX

THE BEAR FOLK GO

THE unexpected scene with its shadowy, dramatic setting and emotional situation had completely upset me.

The discovery that my military safe had been violated shocked me no more than Doña Maria's tragic admissions, and the violent reaction of my own passions so suddenly responsive, so swiftly aroused.

However, this was no time for emotional reactions and muddle-headedness; and as soon as I entered my room I notified both General Taylor and the Secretary of War, Mr. Marcy, that our key volume controlling that particular system of military cipher had become useless, and that another volume must be chosen before the cipher could be of further use.

The report concerning the matter cost me much effort, and was extremely difficult to write truthfully without inculpating the lovely and guilty person who had so utterly upset us all.

I had not only to compose and write out the original, and to put it into one of the vulnerable codes, but I was obliged to make a copy of both for Washington; and it was nearly four o'clock in the morning before I

had finished my attempt to repair the consequences of my own stupidity.

Of course there was nobody awake in the house, so I took the papers and went out through the garden toward my office where were sentries, and where Pacheco and Bandara could be found.

The sentry—a dismounted cavalryman—was the only soul awake—it being that early hour just before reveillé when instinct warns all soldiers to sleep as fast and as soundly as possible before the shattering bugle blasts their dreams.

I went into the cuartel, awoke Emilio Bandara, and sent him to the Palace with my papers.

Pio Pacheco also awoke, when I spoke to Bandara, and, insisting that he had had sufficient sleep, prepared coffee for us both, and accompanied me back to my villa.

Calixto was not yet astir; the door of Silver Knees' bed-chamber remained closed.

Over the sleeping city reigned that strange stillness which seems to deepen with the approach of dawn. The velvet darkness was scarcely yet tinged with grey when I went out upon the azotea, followed by Pio Pacheco. We seated ourselves on the parapet behind the oleanders and orange trees in tubs, and looked down at the garita below, which no sentry now guarded.

"That's a damned funny thing," said I, "that, without a word to me, all sentries on guard over my quarters have been removed."

"Prala," said Peep, artlessly familiar at night when all military restriction seemed to be in abeyance, "now that we have our marching orders what is to become of that saucy Gitana, Silver Knees?"

"If I leave her here with the nuns of the Incarnation," said I, "either she'll run away again or that pleasant gentleman called Lopez the Leopard will get hold of her and spirit her away. . . . We'll have to manage, somehow, to take her with us, Peep."

Peep could not understand my relations with Silver Knees. If I did not want the girl as a mistress, what did I want of her who neither cooked nor mended for me?

"There would be no difficulty about that, prala," said he with a grimace, "if she were like other Mexican girls—or even like other Gypsy girls. . . . Or, if you yourself—"

He hesitated, shrugged, turned his face toward the east which was growing quite grey.

Suddenly the silvery obscurity was pierced by a bugle note, and the next moment the vast crystalline silence was shattered from the Bishop's Palace to the Black Fortress, and from the Devil's Fort to the Bridge of the Most Pure Virgin.

I sat on the brick parapet, watching day break over the silhouetted eastern heights and splash the western peaks with gold.

Peep, feeling the oppression of rank once more with the advent of daylight—though never, in fact, permitting his gay, affectionate nature to be quite blighted

by any military or social etiquette, respectfully reminded me that I had accorded the bandit, Dominguez, a safe-conduct, and had promised to receive him as soon after sunrise as he chose to appear.

"All right," said I, "you and Bandara may ride out to the Obispado with me and we'll find out what this desert-thief wants."

As Peep and I went down into the patio, I stopped to listen at Silver Knees' door. She was, evidently, sleeping soundly; not a sound came from her chamber. In passing on I told Calixto not to awake her; and that I would return in about an hour and take coffee with Señorita Encarnacion.

This fellow, Dominguez, had been the highwayman captain of ordinary road robbers operating on the Vera Cruz road. Recently he had appeared along our lines of communication, lancing and robbing stragglers.

So when Peep, Bandara, and I rode out along the river through the pretty, villa-set suburb below the Obispado, I was wondering what this thug might want of us.

We saw him and his white flag almost as soon as we came to the river. He had with him his whole band of smiling, polite ruffians—sturdy, good-looking, gaudily dressed horsemen who saluted us with a merry flourish of their silver-trimmed sombreros, and seemed to feel quite at ease and confident under the guns of the Obispado, where I could see our gunners looking down at us, and riflemen, alert and curious, posted within easy range.

"Ha!" cried Dominguez, grasping my offered hand, "this is no moment for lies. So listen to the truth! Señor Major, I was a guerrilla. I robbed the Vera Cruz highway. And what happens?" he cried excitedly. "Why, the rancheros ruined my trade. I could not make an honest living by robbery. No! My own compatriots now monopolize it. They take the bread out of our mouths. They snatch from our lips the crumbs we have filched from others! Mother of God, Señor Major, is this just? I respectfully inquire your honour—is it right that the irregular cavalry of Mexico monopolize the trade of bandits so that no honest chaparral rider can make a living any longer?"

This perfectly sincere and naïve speech was delivered in a hearty, aggrieved voice by a large, powerful, muscular, fearless, six-foot Mexican bandit who saw nothing humorous or incongruous in the matter.

Nor did Peep and Bandara who, sitting their horses, continued to observe with sympathy Dominguez and his men who were frankly admitting themselves unable to compete with the Mexican irregular cavalry in banditry and murder.

"Don Juan," cried Dominguez, pounding his silver-embroidered breast, "Mexico betrays us and denies us bread. Very well; if we can't be guerrillas we can turn contra-guerilleros and punish these rancheros by serving America!"

"As what?" I asked.

"As a guide, scout, and spy company," he replied passionately. "Has not Mexico her Battalion of San

Patricio, made up entirely of deserters from your army?"

"Yes, Captain, but when we catch one of them we hang him for a deserter and a traitor to his country."

"Very well, Don Juan, let Santa Anna hang as many of us as he can catch. Will your honour accept us? Vaya, señor—here is my squadron and myself—guides and spies for the asking."

I said aside to Bandara and Peep, "Here is a strange offer."

"He means it," said Bandara. "After all, what does his native land mean to him except a place in which to ply his trade of thieving and cutting throats?"

"Is that, also, what you think?" I asked Pacheco.

"I think this Dominguez will serve your honour bravely and loyally if you don't interfere with his operations against the rancheros."

"I don't care what he does to the rancheros. . . . Very well"—nodding to Bandara—"take him and his riders to the Santa Rosalia Barracks."

"Ha!" cried Dominguez, dramatically flourishing his vast, silver-loaded hat, "does your honour accept me and my men, to serve you, Don Juan?"

"When we march," said I, "you shall ride with us as aspirant, and we shall soon learn how much your services are worth."

Around us, now, the entire city was becoming noisy with bugle calls, the strident music of cavalry trumpets, racket of fife and drums and the crash of regimental bands as some battalion began its march out.

As I rode back into Monterey at the head of this strange company of horse—one hundred and fifty of them gaudily dressed, mounted on their odd little Mexican steeds—our people everywhere began to speak of them as our new "Spy Company"—and Mexicans, in the street, on azotea, and at door and window, regarded these fellows with horror, who, to them, were traitors sold body and soul to the hated invader.

On my way back to breakfast I passed Old Zack and his staff in the Plaza de la Carne, riding out toward the Teneria. He seemed willing to give Dominguez an opportunity to prove his value. "Tell him," said he, "to show us what he can do to Reilly and that damned St. Patrick's Battalion."

Having made arrangements for my new gang of cutthroats at the Santa Rosalia Cuartel, I left Bandara to keep an eye on them and rode back with Pacheco to my villa where I expected to breakfast with Silver Knees and have a final and definite understanding with this wilful, wayward girl whose conduct was becoming unendurable.

Calixto told me that he had knocked at her door but that the Señorita Encarnacion refused to reply to him.

So I went to her room and knocked, and called to her; and, as she made no reply, I opened the door and stepped inside.

The room was empty; the bed had not even been slept in. All her personal effects—her clothing pur-

chased in Monterey, her underwear, slippers, mantillas, shawls, toilet articles—everything lay on the bed excepting the brilliant skirt and jacket she had bought of the Bear Tamers. Even money from the allowance I had made her in Monterey was dumped into a white handkerchief belonging to me. And, to this, was pinned a note dated the night before:

Prala, you betray me with this other woman! Here is what you gave me. Give it to her! As for me, I go back to my Bear Folki. I am a Gypsy. The Ursari never yet have betrayed the Gitana who trusted them!

Don Juan, I loved you and you broke my heart!

When I had read this I became scared.

"Pio Pacheco!" I called, "Silver Knees has run off to the Ursari."

"Well, then, your honour," said he, "she is far enough away at this hour."

"What? Have the Gypsies gone?"

"Certainly they have gone, Señor Major. Did your honour suppose the Bear Folk would remain in Monterey after the American army left?"

"We leave a garrison, of course—"

"Yes, but the Bear Folk trust to *you,* personally, prala. Now they are gone, bag, baggage, the whole camp—tent, nag and wagon, men, women, children, and babies."

"Where?" I asked.

"I don't know, prala. I don't even know whether I could follow the patteran for you."

I was angry, hurt, scared, and deeply concerned that Silver Knees should have gone to such lengths, proving herself more savage than civilized—more Gypsy than Gentile.

I was the angrier and the more frightened and concerned because I now began to realize how deeply entangled in my affections this youngster had grown, and how difficult it would be to uproot her.

This child's passionate devotion—wild, unruly, often violent, often tiresome, even exasperating—had meant more to me than I had understood. Now that it was ended and this little human whirlwind gone, the world seemed suddenly a stale, grey, unventilated place without freshness, tang, or flavour.

Alarmed, profoundly stirred, I understood that, within the few months since I had known this girl, her salvage, her well-being, her restoration to where she really belonged, had become my principal purpose in life and my deepest interest in present and future.

And here, in a second's space, she's off and away in a flareup of Gypsy fury, undoing everything that already had been done. . . . Gone in a flash of jealousy! . . . Because always I had striven to avoid any passionate and physical entanglement with her. . . . Poor, eager, headlong little pagan who, from the first, had flung herself hotly into my arms and who, nevertheless, had avoided the blinding, vital flash of revelation that later came to her amid the red and smoky reek of musketry and murder—

The steadily approaching rhythm of drums became

a deafening roar. From the azotea I looked down miserably where, through the narrow street, our infantry was marching out of Monterey. As far as the eye could see the streets ran blue with our uniforms—blue caps, blue tunics, blue trousers, and the bluish-white glitter of bayonets riding the moving blue as sunlight rides the ripples of a flowing river.

"Try to pick up the patteran of the Bear Folki," I said to Peep.

When he had gone away I called to Calixto.

"Pack up everything of Señorita Encarnacion's and of mine. She has run away in a rage, Calixto, but Pio has gone to look for her, and I shall send Bandara and Dominguez to scour the land for the Ursari. . . . I feel extremely unhappy over this—"

Calixto came softly to take my hand and touch it with his forehead.

"Your honour should beat the señorita soundly with a stick," he said in his soft Indian voice.

"Oh, lord, no; one does not beat a woman grown. . . . And it is useless to pretend she is anything else, Calixto."

"Two fine things, Señor Major, one can not beat too often or too hard—maize and mistress—"

Bandara, fully accoutred and equipped, came jingling and clanking to the door with an order from Old Zack.

"Very well," said I; "the General wishes to have our new Spy Company take the Saltillo road. Tell

Captain Dominguez to report to me with his command mounted, and forage and rations for three days."

I went out through the patio toward the garden and met Peep coming across from the cuartel beyond.

"Prala," said he, laughing, "there is a Mexican flag hanging from Doña Maria Zozaya's balcony. What will your honour do about it, who is paying court to the lady—"

"Do about the flag? Why, we'll salute it, Peep, when we pass it—as carefully and respectfully as a caballero salutes a lady."

When I went to take my leave of Señora Zozaya I was gravely informed that the beautiful mistress of the Zozaya estate had, that morning, retired to the Convent of the Incarnation for a long sojourn of meditation, repose, and prayer. And this, it was explained to me, was a custom of years and of generations among the ladies of that aristocratic race, who had inherited certain penances to be discharged during the weeks of Christmas and New Year's festivities, and who never failed to retire from the world during a period usually and universally dedicated to joy and gaiety.

I looked at the stately old servant, in his impeccable dress, his dark skin and white hair and side-whiskers.

I looked up at the balcony where, on a red, white, and green flag, an eagle stood upon a cactus, tearing a snake.

For all time, I realized, this race, this house, this flag, and this lovely creature in her devotional retire-

ment were irrevocably leagued against me, my country, and everything that North America represented.

Whatever I had begun to feel for Doña Maria, whatever she had, perhaps, begun to feel for me, was ended; and no ghost, even, of this shadowy, intangible passion remained to show whether it really ever had lived, and had its life, and died.

The band of the 2nd regulars, which was passing the Plaza, crashed out into that new song called "The Halls of Montezuma"—a stirring sentiment crudely versified and scored, but which all United States soldiers were singing, now.

The field music of the 2nd Tennessee infantry, which followed the regulars, was beating out and fifing the same air, and the soldiers sang it, timing the boastful words to the heavy tramp, tramp, tramp of their trudging column.

Suddenly a terrible feeling seized and held me in possession—the frightful realization that Silver Knees was all alone somewhere out in this savage world of brutal violence, and that I might have prevented this tragic catastrophe had I had sense enough to handle her with patience and intelligence. And if I really had cared for her enough I ought to have been able to endure, forgive, and understand a nature full of caprice, feminine tyranny, and childish mischief, yet tender, loyal, utterly devoted, and capable of supreme self-sacrifice and abnegation.

"Damnation," said I to Bandara, "I've made a bad

mess of this business. If Lopez the Puma gets hold of her I deserve to be shot!"

Bandara said, with his terrible grin: "If Torribio Lopez harms your wayward little Gypsy mistress, then, your honour, he will have to deal with the Jacarillas who know how to keep a man alive for six days while they are killing him all the while."

"That wouldn't help things, Emilio. I want you and Pio and Dominguez to pick up the trail of these Gypsy Bear Tamers before the rancheros do them a mischief."

Well, the army marched for Victoria. It was cold weather and a cold job hunting through hill and dale and over rock and rill for General Santa Anna.

I rode with the Headquarters staff, and Pacheco and Bandara kept the liaison between me and Dominguez and his strange horsemen who were proving to be thoroughly reliable and efficient scouts.

They couldn't find the Gypsies, but they discovered, finally, that General Santa Anna, that peg-legged pink of courtesy and duplicity, was not where Old Zack supposed him to be but was, in effect, exactly occupying the landscape where I had told the General he was certain to be found.

Then there began, by brigades, a vast amount of marching and countermarching from Camargo to Saltillo, from Saltillo to Victoria—Wool's brigade, Quitman's, Worth's, Patterson's—all milling around and looking for that impassioned orator with the wooden

leg, known as General Don Antonio de Santa Anna. And all the while I was explaining to Old Zack where this Señor Don Peg-leg could be found among his gorgeous cavalry—lancers, hussars, and cuirassiers, where helmet, breast-plate, sabre-tache, and crimson-crowned busby presented all the aspects of some European parade spectacle, and where twenty thousand well armed, well drilled, brave, patriotic Mexican soldiers in perfectly good health, awaited Old Zack and his few brigades as a den of healthy tigers awaited the first fat batch of martyrs.

And then, two days before New Year's Day, everything suddenly collapsed with the arrival of a letter from General Scott:

". . . I am not coming, my dear General, to supersede you . . . on the line of operations made illustrious by you and your gallant army. . . . But, my dear General, I shall be obliged to take from you most of the gallant officers and men whom you have so long and so nobly commanded. . . . This will be infinitely painful to you, and, for that reason, distressing to me. . . . Long before spring (however) you will be again in force to resume offensive operations." . . . And so forth. . . . And so forth. . . .

Good, kind General Scott. It hurt him more than it did General Taylor. A spanking always hurts papa more than it does progeny. Yes.

Back we marched to Monterey, our bands madly playing "The Halls of Montezuma," Old Zack per-

plexed and bothered as to how and with what he was to reach Santa Anna and smite him upon his sparsely thatched and rather flat skull.

Our best fighting brigadier was the first to leave us—General Worth, a New Yorker—with his veteran regiments.

Old Zack, in his plain overcoat, butcher's boots, and little glazed cap, sitting his horse like a huge, friendly toad, addressed his dissolving army thus—Colonel Davis having written out his speech for him:

"It is with deep sensibility that the Commanding General finds himself separated from troops he has so long commanded." And so forth, and so forth, and so forth. . . .

"To those corps, regular and volunteer, who have shared with him the active services of the field, he feels the attachment due to such association." . . . And so forth. . . . And so forth, et cetera.

It hurt the army to listen as much as it hurt Old Zack to give voice to these regulation commonplaces.

Nevertheless, the veteran army was sorry to part with General Zachary Taylor, although his genial ignorance of his profession had made their tuition a costly one.

All day and every day the streets of Monterey reechoed with the drums and fifes and sonorous military bands of veteran troops withdrawing to join the army of Major-General Winfield Scott. All the regulars, excepting to the amount of one battalion, had marched

for the Coast. Upon those volunteer regiments which now began to arrive to replace the departed veterans, many of us gazed with suspicion—even with aversion —so raw were these battalions of recruits with their brand-new blue uniforms and equipments—regiments of complacent and smirking fatheads, perfectly certain to continue the volunteer tradition and run at the first fire.

But Old Zack, always the ignorant and kindly optimist, regarded the arriving regiments fondly, seeing in their glittering lines the wherewithal to afflict General Santa Anna and smite with satisfactory violence his bedizened cavalry and gaudy infantry which now marched everywhere in noisy defiance of the United States, proudly thumbing its twenty-five thousand noses at General Zachary Taylor and the Star Spangled Banner waving over the beautiful city of Monterey.

But in all these events I took but a sombre and mournful interest. Silver Knees was gone with the Ursari Gypsies, and I couldn't find out where they were travelling, although I employed Dominguez and his accomplished rascals to scout for me.

We passed a gloomy Christmas and a dull New Year's Day in Monterey, amid the continual tinkle and dingle and clash of church bells, chapel bells, altar bells, bells jingling in processional, bells noisy upon the harness of mules, bells on goats driven through the streets to be milked—constant and monotonous jangling of bells that nearly sent me out of my wits—I

being already gloomy and nervous and very miserable with self-reproach and with a most painful longing to see my little Silver Knees whom I never again should see, I feared.

What a blind jackass had I been not to understand her better, not to give her more of my time, not to cherish and caress and win her intelligent mind and tender heart to ways more civilized and more decorous than were the ways of the Zincali of the Kalo Rom—of the Bear Folki of evil repute.

After all, what had caused our quarrel? Only a childish and unreasoning passion on the part of a wild young girl who was more child than woman.

With a little patience, a little effort, I could have persuaded and controlled her, and still have retained her affections and her confidence.

My easy and gay intercourse with Doña Maria had become more marked than was customary, perhaps; and possibly I had betrayed an increasing inclination for that charming young aristocrat, to the neglect of Silver Knees. Yet, with wisdom and good will I need not have hurt and offended the little blond Gitana, nor driven her, in an unendurable agony of loneliness and jealousy, to run away to the only refuge she knew was open to a runaway girl of the Zincali.

My department was now working smoothly again. We had a new code key which remained at Division Headquarters where I could use it when necessary.

I had plenty of native ruffians employed in collect-

ing intelligence, under the particular direction of Pio Pacheco and Emilio Bandara.

As for Dominguez, his scouting services were becoming invaluable to us. And Old Zack knew quite well what sort of hornets' nest he was headed for when, on the 20th of February, our drums and fifes and regimental bands struck up "Montezuma," and we rode out of Monterey with four hundred regulars and five thousand raw volunteer recruits to catch twenty thousand Mexican veteran soldiers composing the redoubtable fighting battalions of the army of Señor General Don Antonio de Santa Anna.

Whether or not the President of the United States really had lost faith in Old Zack's military ability, I don't know.

The President, a petty-minded, rather good-looking man, was, first of all, a politician. He wanted to annex all of Mexico that he could slice off without endangering his own popularity with a sanctimonious political party, or adding too much popularity to a victorious general.

He was jealous of General Taylor, and jealous of General Scott. However, he had to have generals to win victories; and all he could think of was to belittle the generals after the victories were won.

He took away Taylor's veterans and gave them to Scott.

He robbed Peter to pay Paul—not liking Paul any the better.

He and his politically smart Secretary of War

mourned and complained that Old Zack paid "no regard to the views of Government." Which was true —Marcy frantically begging Old Zack to come back to Monterey and shorten his five-hundred-mile line of communication, and Old Zack—a brave fighter but a poor soldier—doing exactly the opposite.

With a grin he wrote to Scott that he had "lost the confidence of the Government"—dictating this letter to me with a good-humoured wink, and his tongue in his weather-beaten cheek:

"Maddox," said he, "Winfield Scott has taken the best of my army, and the war will be over before I get 'em back. That means I've pretty near finished my forty-year career as a fighter. So why should I care for this nimble, mincing, pink and white dancing master, Marcy? Or for this monkey-minded President who talks in millions and passes the cup for pennies?"

It was a terrible thing to say in the presence of his staff and of other line officers. It was a terrible thing to laugh at, but we all laughed, convulsively.

"I'm a-going to Saltillo," he said, looking around him in his genial, bucolic way, "and I don't care a tinker's slut whether Santa Anna's got twenty-five thousand men to my five—as Major Maddox tells me —or how many thousand fancy cavalry are a-riding with General Miñon. All I want is one more good whack at the Mexican army, and, by God, gentlemen, I aim to git it!"

XXI

REVELATION

ON the 21st of February, while scouting with Dominguez' spies, in company with Pio Pacheco and Emilio Bandara, some friendly Jacarilla Apaches rode into our camp with news that the Gypsy Bear Tamers' camp was pitched in a palm grove near the Hacienda of Aguanueva, eighteen miles below Saltillo.

It was late in the day, the western cliffs already in shadow where the Saltillo road, which runs by the Hacienda of Buena Vista, traverses the deep arroyo between the iron jaws of the mountains.

Out of it had ridden these evil-looking Jacarillas, in their red paint and scarlet rags. I'll say this for them, they did this service for Bandara—an odd loyalty which refused the compensation I offered.

Into the fiery sunset they galloped, flogging their war ponies headlong through the iron maw of the mountain which sunset kindled to a sombre incandescence.

Captain Dominguez, towering six feet in his stirrups, and all a-glitter with silver lace on saddle, jacket, and sombrero, gazed absently after the Apaches as one

beast of prey watches with detached but respectful interest the operations of others.

"Seño Major," said he to me, "at your honour's orders I encircle and drive in these Gypsy Bear Folki for your inspection."

But I bade him take his command on toward the Encarnacion, from where our advanced scouts had brought us strange tales of hostile cavalry—of thousands and thousands of magnificently mounted, armed, and uniformed riders—regiments of hussars, lancers, dragoons, even of cuirassiers in steel helmets and corselets—and all marching straight upon the little army of which we were a part, and for which we now were scouting among the mountains of a ravine-scarred land scarcely known to us.

Bandara went with Dominguez; I motioned to Peep to follow me, and turned toward Aguanueva, along a strange, wild trail out of Zacatecas where, it was said, these Mexican hordes were moving in myriads like a scourge of locusts to devour the land from Querétaro to Chihuahua.

"Prala," said Peep, shaking his head, "it would have been better to do what this big, fat grizzly bear, Dominguez, suggested; drive in the Bear Folki and take your mistress, Silver Knees, by force. . . . A damned good thing is force, prala, and so is a sound beating with a stick—"

"We don't beat our women," said I, drily.

"That's why they don't love you, prala. Had you taken a good stiff whip to your saucy mistress—"

"I've told you a hundred times she never has been my mistress."

"Perhaps that's why she ran away from your honour. Ah, how many times, prala, have I warned you to take her into your honour's bed! But you held her in contempt, Don Juan—"

"I did not. I had honourable plans concerning her. She had become as dear to me as a little sister. . . . I tell you, prala, what she has done has rendered me wretched—"

"Ca. Also, seño, your courtship of Doña Maria hurt her. It was more than Silver Knees—or any other Gitana—could tamely endure. . . . Had she been your mistress she would have used her knife . . . on somebody. . . . And who could blame her?"

"Damnation," said I, "that's what I'd hoped to do—get rid of all this flamenca savagery in her—all this wildness—"

"Only the Zincali can tame their own. Did you hope to make of Silver Knees a Gaja?"

"Yes."

"Never. She is no busni. No! Nor are you, at heart, other than a brother to the Kalo Rom, and your honour knows it!"

"Ayés."

"Na, Don Barsalí. It is because she is wild that you notice her at all! Vaya, 'Loose hair lights the fire!'—'bedar or Yaque'! Therefore, prala, I counselled you—taste what jungle fruit you find while the dew remains on it and the tang is still wild—"

"Nothing like that was in my mind, I tell you!"

"Your mind? Mother of God—your *brain?* The heart considers the brain an ignoramus—"

"I have been absolutely honest with her, and she has cheated me," said I.

"Ei. The honest heart is the easiest to cheat. It even cheats itself when it is too goddam honest. . . . I know more about women than does your honour. Not that I boast of my fortune. God forbid. The only man who can justly brag of his fortune with women is the man whom they never notice. . . . But, prala, I have learned this; that no woman ever yet lived who really felt insulted by a lover's passion. Prala, we are Zincali, thou and I; and therefore am I free to say that my brother has been a fool. . . . But, Mother of God, who is not a fool in this world of asses? Only we don't know when we're fools. It doesn't hurt like a toothache. If it were painful to be a fool there'd be yelling in every home—'Si la locura fuese dolores, en cada casa habia voces!'—you know the proverb?"

"There is another Gypsy proverb," said I, "which says, 'There are schools to teach speech; none to teach silence.' "

"Ei, prala, you may rebuke me in proverbs; but, if you ever get your mistress back, remember this other Gypsy proverb—'Until cows fly, continue to shoot sparrows for supper.' "

"You know," said I, "even for a Gypsy, you are a singularly ruthless bird of prey."

"No crow is blacker than its parents, prala," he said

gaily, "and the first bird of prey was a female—or the race had died."

We rode on in the kindling light, looking right and left among the desert palms for a sign of the Ursari tents.

Now, on the road, we encountered Lieutenant Albert of the topographical engineers, with a cavalry escort, who told us that Mexican Presidiale cavalry in force were leaving San Luis and swarming all over the northern roads and trails, and that it behooved me to be very careful.

"What are you doing out here, anyway, Major?" he asked. And when I told him: "Oh," said he, "there's a camp of travelling Gypsies over by that water tank"—he pointed across the mesa where palms rose stark against the sunset, their foliage as stiff and bristly as though cut out of sheet metal.

As Peep and I rode toward the palms, the shape of the tank became visible in the ruddy dusk.

Here and there a burning lantern hung from a pole; wagons, horses, the prowling serape-swathed horse-guard took form out of obscurity; then shapes of tents became distinguishable; the light of camp fires reddened canvas walls, tent-flaps, blankets, and gaudy shawls hanging.

Dogs ran out through the trampled grass and barked at us—not very fiercely when we spoke to them in Romanis—and the horse-guard answered our friendly hail, "Palor?"

"Ava! Odoi!"

"Savó? Caloró?"

"Avali. Shom Kalo Rom."

Instantly we were beset by shadowy figures crowding about us to hug us, press our arms and hands—old and young, men and women and children.

And everywhere I heard excited voices repeating, "Hir mi devlis! It is the Romanó Rye come back! It is his honour Don Juan and Pio Pacheco. Always they bring the Zincali protection and good luck before a battle. Tché drak! is it thou, Don Jardani? How art thou?—sar shan, prala?—"

"All very well," cried Pio, laughing, "but the Rye comes for the Romany Chi! Gry to Grasni—"

"Rye to Rani!" said I sharply.

"Tché drak!" cried a gay young voice I recognized; and my heart leaped up.

"Ava, avella!—yes, he comes!" continued Silver Knees in a bantering way, "—the great Captain Major Don Juan—to see, perhaps, whether I yet have become a prostitute."

Gracefully, barefooted in her straw sandals, and draped in her gaudy shawl, Silver Knees came sauntering across the fire-lit space, all suppleness, loveliness, and effrontery; and, spreading her multicoloured Gypsy skirt, curtsied to me in the shaking firelight.

Upon her naked ankles and under and above her dazzling white knees hung showers of sequins. Over her shoulder and across her back hung a jarana—a guitar made of an armadillo shell.

"Why have you come, Don Juan?" she repeated

impudently; "—tchorava tchumi?—tatcheni tchumi gul eray?—to steal a chaste kiss, my sweet gentleman? And from whom, I pray?"

"I came for a word or two with you, Encarnacion—"

"It is not my name, señor."

"Come, Silver Knees," said I patiently.

She came, swinging her hips, every lithe undulation of her body an impertinence and a provocation. Together we moved off toward the grove of palms, the jarana swaying across her slender back.

"Why did you run away?" I demanded, taking her by the hand.

"What else was there to do for my sickness, unless I called in old Dr. Skull-face?"

"What do you mean?"

"Death is the doctor of the desperate, seño—"

"Who calls in Death to cure sorrow calls in a quack doctor, Silver Knees."

She shrugged her naked shoulder under the gaudy rebozo: "I was in a temper," she admitted; "anger loosens the Gypsy's garter. . . . So does love."

"I want you to come back to me," I said in a low voice.

She shrugged again, loosened the scarlet ribbon of her jarana and swung it around under her right breast, resting her fingers across the strings.

"I want you to come back," I repeated. "I am very unhappy without you."

She touched the strings of her jarana—extended her

left arm and, twisting the keys, tuned the strange little instrument.

"No," said she, "find another girl. All women look alike to you, anyway."

"Silver Knees—"

She interrupted me by striking her jarana and beginning to sing, and at the end of each line of her verse she spun completely around on her toes.

And around and around she whirled on the points of her straw sandals till the gaudy, barbaric skirts billowed up shoulder high and her slim, nude body flashed white to the budding breasts.

Breathless at last, she stopped; her skirts collapsed slowly and settled around her limbs like the gorgeous wings of a tropic moth; she looked at me defiantly, hatefully; struck a ringing chord from her jarana; flung it over her shoulder and across her back again, with a violent gesture.

"Well," said she, "do you think me a harlot?"

"No. . . . I want you back."

"Hir mi devlis!" she cried, laughing, "he wants me back! But I am wondering what has become of his beautiful Doña Maria."

"I never shall see her again."

"Prala, I thought she had slain you with her eyes!"

I smiled: "All women are not man-killers."

"You are wrong! The cat's child kills mice. The last woman will slay."

"Slay what she loves?"

"What does she care for what she loves? Do you

know what is the only thing that a woman loves? And prays for to God? Not love. No. But eternal youth."

I said: "The only way to enjoy eternal youth is to die young."

"And meanwhile slay. . . . El hijo de la gata ratones mata. . . . I am the cat's child. . . . Well, do you want me, after all?"

"Yes, I do."

"How do you know I have not taken a Mexican lover? . . . And let me assure your honour that we Ursari have been so close to the cavalry of Colonel Lopez that I have often heard them calling like alley-cats from post to post their eternal, miauling cry of 'Centinela alerta! Sentinel alert!' "

"Silver Knees," said I, "this estrangement between you and me is very foolish and very wrong. I'm sick of all this pretense and misunderstanding. I want you back."

I saw her head, dark against the stars, droop a little:

"The fault is yours, Don Juan," she muttered.

I said in a low voice: "The fault is mine, and I am sorry, Silver Knees—"

"The fault is *mine!*" she cried passionately, flinging herself into my arms. "Oh, prala, why did you not beat me with a stick! Oh, my brother—oh, prala—Don Juan, darling of my heart—"

Her bare arms jingling with sequins, flung around my neck, tightened hysterically as I kissed her tear-wet, quivering face.

"Daia!" she sobbed in Gypsy, "oh, daia, daia, how I need you to counsel me in this hour!—to teach me wisdom concerning love—concerning my Gypsy love for this young man—this caballero of the Kalo Rom—"

"I will love you, too, Encarnacion," said I, "—if only you will let me—"

"Let you!" she cried, flinging wide her bangled arms— "I'll let you if you want to! Now! Any time! Always!"

"Little heart of a Gypsy fire," said I, laughing and very happy, "yag flamenca, listen to what I say. All my life I am ready to devote to your happiness, education—to restoring to you all you once lost. Will you come with me?"

"Aváva," she sobbed, "—I come. . . . I have not dared ask man's love of you since Monterey, prala—only have I asked that you let me love you. . . . I was very wrong to be jealous of Doña Maria who is educated and beautiful—"

"—And who loves her country more than she ever could love any man. . . . Vaya, let us think of her, Encarnacion, as she was that day, encouraging her bewildered soldiers on the azotea of Monterey, leading them into our terrible rifle fire that swept those flowery parapets."

"Had I a country," said Silver Knees, "I'd die for it, too. But, alas—I have not even a lover to die for—"

"You have one to *live* for."

"A brother—not a lover."

"It is so dark," said I in a low voice, "that it is very hard to see which it really is—brother or lover—"

Silence; broken by the wind on the mesa and the high clatter of burnished palm fronds waving spread digits across the stars.

"Mother of God," whispered the girl, "are you going to let me love you like a mistress?"

I bent over and slowly kissed the tremulous little mouth.

"Yes—with the esmeralda, Silver Knees—if you will come North with me and, in the North, learn to become and to be what you were born to be—half busni, half Gitana—and wholly the loveliest thing ever God created!"

"Diosa!—" She fell upon her bare knees in the starlight and clasped mine. There came the old, swift struggle, sudden, familiar—the passionate, breathless difference of opinion concerning the forbidden embracing of hands and knees—her lovely little mouth hot on my palm—my lips crushed between her flower-like fingers—

Suddenly Pio's sharp whisper, "Alerta!" cut the silence like a sword.

"Ca! The horsemen! L'encurados!" breathed Silver Knees.

"Jesu! What folly," muttered Peep. "Here is your honour's horse. For God's sake, get upon him and take up your Gitana behind you."

It was too late. The mesa was crawling alive with

the lancers of Lopez, so that the entire plateau seemed to be moving along in the dark from the tanks to the Victoria and Saltillo highway.

"We can pass as Gypsies if they don't notice our horses," whispered Peep.

The Cuerados—the leather-clad lancers of Torribio Lopez—were already swarming through the palm-trees, poking about among the Gypsy tents, wagons, and picketed nags with their long lances.

Uneasy, timidly defiant, the Bear Folk—men, women, and children—confronted these Presidiales who rode their little bronchos almost into the tents and probed the tumbled bedding with their long, slender lance-points.

They seemed good-natured and without malice—these cavalrymen whose leather jackets, sombreros, saddles, and bridles glittered with burnished silver as though completely and solidly silver-plated.

Several of them dismounted at the cooking fire and helped themselves to what remained of the savoury contents of the kettles.

"These Gypsies eat well and sleep soft," said a Lieutenant, looking affably around him.

A Captain, dismounted, rummaging about the nearer tents for a gourd of pulque, stumbled over what he took to be a pile of fur rugs, but, fetching them an ill-tempered kick, stirred up a full grown bear which rose, bewildered and resentful and growling.

"Here, you Gypsy folk," shouted the startled Cap-

tain, "take away your bear or I'll do his business for him with my pistol!"

Before I could prevent her, Silver Knees sprang across the fire-circle as the big, shaggy brute reared, swaying on his hind legs, and caught him by his collar-chain.

"Dosta, Bahadar!" she said, soothingly, "no insult was meant to thee, Bedrájami the Strong Man!"

The cavalryman looked on curiously as Silver Knees coaxed the dangerously disturbed beast to lie down again.

"That's the kind of girl I need," cried the handsome Lieutenant, catching Silver Knees by the waist and pulling her toward him; but she twisted out of his embrace, between his arms, with a gay, derisive laugh, bidding him go and embrace the dancing bear if he was seeking excitement.

Some of the other lancers were offering unwelcome familiarities to other Gypsy girls, and there were protests half in earnest, cries of pretended fear, and a real scream or two.

As Silver Knees forced her way back toward me, Pio called guardedly to us from behind the tent where he had led our horses, saying that the Presidiales were looking over all the Gypsy nags with a view of taking any that might serve as remounts.

Silver Knees caught me by the hand and guided me across the backyard and through a maze of taut guy-ropes, to where Peep stood with our horses.

"They'll kill us both," he said cheerily, "if they see

our American horses and housings. These fellows are Presidiales of Torribio Lopez from Encarnacion Hacienda. So mount, Don Juan, and take your little Gypsy sweetheart behind you, and let us sneak off like coyotes before they make porcupines of us with their lances!"

As Pio and I got into our saddles, Silver Knees sprang upon my horse, crouching crosslegged behind me and clasping my body with both her arms.

"Make for the Aguanueva Hacienda," said Peep.

Slowly, cautiously, we urged our horses out through the chaparral and across the mesa toward the Saltillo highway. And had nearly reached it when some unseen cavalrymen, riding out of the darkness almost into us, suddenly uncovered a lantern in our very faces, startling us and our horses.

"You!" I cried sharply, "l'encurado, there with your lantern, what are you about there, frightening our horses?"

"Hold your tongue, you impudent Gypsy!" came a cold, menacing voice from the shadowy group of cloaked horsemen. The voice seemed unpleasantly familiar to me.

"Mother of God," blurted out Pio, "it's Red Paws himself! Pull your pistol, prala—"

"It's Torribio Lopez," breathed Silver Knees, close behind my shoulder. "Ride over him! I've pulled your pistol!"

At that instant another lantern gleamed out from beneath a sheltering horseman's cloak, and the yellow

beams lighted up the group of restless, half-blinded riders and their milling horses. I saw Colonel Lopez under his dark cloak and sombrero, glittering with silver from head to foot, staring at Silver Knees with the fixed intensity of a snake.

"Seize that Gypsy girl!" he cried, laying a gloved hand heavily on my bridle.

Straight upon him I spurred my horse, knocking him and his Mexican nag clean over. A lancer clutched at me, but Peep launched his big horse at him and tumbled horse and rider over upon the grass.

In the gleam of the wildly tossing lanterns, I saw a lancer trying to disengage his lance and stab me with the counter-point; but Silver Knees, swinging wide from the croup behind me, fired one of my pistols at him, and he let go his lance and bridle and sagged back into the press of rearing, floundering, excited horsemen entangled in the strip of chaparral between the tank trail and highway.

Peep's horse bounded into the highway first; mine followed, taking the direction of Aguanueva at a terrific pace. And after us galloped a welter of shouting horsemen through the darkness, driving headlong toward our supply post at the Hacienda Aguanueva.

XXII

THE ESMERALDA

WITH our horses still at a heavy gallop—mine carrying double burden—and still chased by the hard riding encurados on their tireless little Mexican horses, we rode into the Hacienda of Aguanueva. Here the lancers left us, sheering off and, sweeping to the westward, thundering away into the starry darkness of the Sierra Madre toward the highway from La Encarnacion to the well and tanks at Santa Elena and the Capulin Pass.

A Lieutenant of Arkansas cavalry rode out to receive us. He told us that Old Zack's army had quit the hacienda and gone eighteen miles north to the Hacienda of San Juan de la Buena Vista; that Miñon's cavalry were already in the eastern mountains, threatening Saltillo which now was our base of supplies. Further, he told us that, all day long, Mexican Presidiale cavalry had been capering around Aguanueva and firing on our Kentucky and Arkansas troopers who were still trying to get the stores into Buena Vista by wagon train.

He seemed to be a nice lad, this Arkansas Lieutenant of horse. He was gentle and courteous to Silver Knees, politely accepting the social situation, whatever

it might be; and he found a hut for us and sent us blankets from the stores, and hot food from the kitchen of the handsome residence so soon to be abandoned and, probably, destroyed.

Even while he was talking to us, and while Peep, squatting by the hearth, was laying a fire of dry palm fronds and tabago shrub, the Mexican mamúchas—or short carbines—began to bang and spit fire all around us in the darkness, and the big, copper-sheathed bullets pelted the narrow streets of the hacienda, peppering walls, towers, the belfry, the corral gates and tiled roofs of houses and stores.

The sonorous, rolling volleys of our heavy Kentucky and Arkansas rifles replied to the Mexican fire from every alley and street and plazuela.

Silver Knees, Pio, and I ate our belated supper—which was, more properly, a breakfast—behind the bullet-swept walls of the main street. Then, using no ceremony, but with rough tenderness, I rolled Silver Knees into an army blanket and left Peep to watch over her while I went out to learn more about the noisy situation in this doomed hacienda around which quantities of our stores still remained, and which already was being menaced by the cavalry vanguard of the entire Mexican army in its march from La Encarnacion upon Saltillo.

Our last wagon train had been loaded and was just leaving, the wagons departing at top speed, all horses and mules flogged to a gallop, and an escort of regular

dragoons urging them ruthlessly across the rocky way and through the arroyo into the Buena Vista road.

I went out to our firing line across the street, where our dismounted cavalry, with their bridles looped over their arms, were shooting from behind every wall and every ranch building, at the flashes of the Mexican carbines which sparkled and winked like fire-flies all around the hacienda.

Somebody said pleasantly to me, "How are you, Major Maddox!" And I recognized, in the lantern light, the amiable features of Colonel Clay, of the Kentucky cavalry—the second son of the distinguished Henry Clay—with whom I had a very agreeable acquaintance.

His adjutant, Lieutenant Vaughan, also came up to salute me with much politeness.

"I understood from General Taylor," said I, "that this post and its supplies were to be defended to the last man. In fact, I took down and despatched those very orders, Colonel."

"All I know, sir," replied Clay, "is that we have had orders to save what stores we could, burn the place, and get back to the Buena Vista Hacienda as soon as the Mexican cavalry advances in force."

"Have you saved much of our supplies, sir?"

"Not very much, sir. Our last wagons have just gone to Saltillo with the regular dragoons."

There was a silence. We walked slowly along under the lantern light, where the Kentucky dragoons, dismounted, were firing at the carbine flashes.

As we passed the angle of a flanking wall connecting two large storehouses with one of the smaller corrals, there came a clatter of hoofs out of the darkness, and Captain Willis, of the Kentucky dragoons, galloped into the street with a squadron of Texan cavalry of McCulloch's battalion and another squadron of Arkansas mounted rifles.

"What's the matter, Willis?" inquired Colonel Clay, as the cavalcade came trampling through the corral gate where resinous torches were burning redly above the stockade.

Captain Willis reined in and turned his heavily breathing horse toward us.

"They are driving in the Arkansas troopers, sir," said the veteran, calmly, "and these Texans, who belong to McCulloch's Rangers, are just arrived from the Encarnacion to warn us to get out of Aguanueva as soon as possible."

"Well, I'll be damned," said Vaughan under his breath, "are we taking orders from Mexico and Texas?"

Clay said to me: "I've got to burn this beautiful place and I hate to do it, Maddox. But I think we'd better be about it," he added, as the Mexican volley firing broke out with a startling crash from a group of ranch buildings in a palm grove which the Arkansas volunteers had just abandoned.

Willis gave his orders in a gloomy voice; a sombre trumpet call pealed from the Kentucky corral; another from the Arkansas stables. The Texans, unslinging

their heavy rifles, began to fire from their saddles while dismounted men set fire to bundles of straw, fodder, and fuel which already had been placed in a score of handsome farm buildings for just such an emergency.

McCulloch, jingling and jangling like a Mexican, from his strapped sombrero to his spurred heels, came clashing and galloping up, his pistol swinging in his left hand. He saluted us in his reckless, happy fashion:

"There are some four thousand enemy cavalry coming, sir," he said to Colonel Clay, "—not counting two thousand regular lancers of Miñon's division that have ridden around us. . . . Are we to stay and fight, sir?"

"No," said Colonel Clay, drily, "we're to cut and run, Major. . . . And you'd better start the ceremony with your Texans."

Flames were already darting out from the windows of several of the ranch buildings, and the Arkansas troopers, in column of fours, were riding into the Buena Vista road, when I arrived at our hut and found three saddled horses there. Silver Knees and Peep, already mounted, were looking about very anxiously for me in the flame-shot darkness.

Silver Knees, swathed to her feet, wearing my horseman's cloak, and my gilded regimental cap strapped under her chin, hailed me excitedly: "Here you come, then, Don Juan, darling of my soul! What is happening, my angel cavalier!—with all this racket of escopetas and rifles and everything catching fire to burn us all to death?"

"What horse is that?" I asked, "—where did you find this animal which belongs to the Arkansas cavalry?"

Pio gave me a pious smirk: "How should she know where a strange horse comes from, or why it followed me about already saddled and bridled—"

"So you stole it!" I said. "Shame on you, Peep. Look at the saddle cloth!—an Arkansas troop horse!"

"Well, prala," he retorted impudently, "one is not born Gypsy for nothing, and the Gaja ought to pay for it!"

Major McCulloch, trotting past at the head of his Texans, shouted to me:

"Better get out of this village, Major! The Arkansas volunteers have taken the arroyo road and the Kentucky cavalry are moving up toward the Encantada."

"Silver Knees, come on!" I said. The girl, who rode like an Indian, launched her big American dragoon's horse forward, followed by Pio Pacheco.

"Be careful not to become separated from us in the darkness," I warned her, as our three horses, taking the direct road from Aguanueva to Saltillo, cantered forward toward the foothills of the Sierra Madre ahead.

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning; the entire country below us was now lighted up by a red glare from the huge conflagration at Aguanueva. As we rode rapidly on toward Buena Vista, we could see, looking behind us toward the vast, waterless desert

stretching to the gate of the Carnero and the Encarnacion, dark masses of slowly moving horsemen whom we knew to be the lancers of Torrejon from Bocas, the dragoons and cuirassiers of Juvera from the Venado; and the light cavalry of General Andrade from the Cedral. Only Miñon's magnificent regiments were missing, and they, we feared, had already surrounded Saltillo.

It had turned very chilly; and by the time we had covered the eighteen miles to the Hacienda of Buena Vista all our cavalry were riding swathed in their heavy riding cloaks and mantles, and steam came from the slowly moving column, rising like a thin fog from both horse and rider.

After sunrise, Silver Knees became very tired, and she drooped, half asleep in her saddle. Seeing Lieutenant-Colonel May riding with his regular dragoons near a column of transport wagons, I called to him and asked if there was room in any of the Conestoga wagons for a woman. But the only spaces were already filled with dead, wounded and prisoners; so I ranged my big horse up alongside of Silver Knees and, lifting her bodily out of her saddle, held her cradled in my arms, her head resting on my left shoulder.

"Pio Pacheco," she called out, "have the complacence to lead my horse." And, in a rapturous murmur to me: "Darling of my soul," she breathed, "you are very kind to me who have defied you with a mind full of grief and evil. Oh, prala, let me be your tacho

romanie and lie thus all night in your sheltering embrace!"

"Yes, when you are ready, hijita."

"I am ready now!"

"No, you're not, querida mia."

"Oh, Mother of God—Madré—Daia!—he says I am not ready to lie in his arms all night and love him like a woman! Santa Diosa, who was it caught fire when he first touched my hand at the Baile Flamenco last year in Matamoras!"

I said: "You are busni, too, chiquita, and must not forget the leis Gorgios, or that you are to become both rani Ingrés and rani tani, because I am both Rom and Rye."

"Sangre de Dios, Don Juan, let me love you in both fashions and with all the passions before Death plays me some dirty trick in this world of flying bullets—"

"Don Juan," interrupted Pio mischievously, who rode up beside me, "for God's sake stop her mouth with a kiss and have the goodness to look behind you!"

I looked up instantly, and saw, where the Parras road came into the San Luis highway, the leather-clad, silver-encrusted cuerados cavalry of Torribio Lopez. They were riding along the mountain pass on a road which climbed above us as our road gradually descended into the arroyo; and I could see that these glittering riders were not afraid of us and did not want to leave us, but seemed, reluctantly, to be obeying an

order which carried them toward the Santa Elena trail.

As they rode on, almost parallel with us and our rear-guard column of Texas cavalry, they kept looking around at us in the pale gold sunrise, with a kind of dangerous sullenness, like a troop of mountain lions moving unwillingly away before intruders of whom they had no real fear.

The pass through which we now were riding was a flat plain running north and south, and traversed laterally, east and west, by deep crevices, ravines, and cañons. This pass was flanked by rather high mountains on the east and west. Through a cañon running north and south, beside a stream, our road ran between these mountains, and close to those forming the western wall of the pass.

Captain Carleton, of the 1st dragoons, said to me: "Look at them, Major! They'd like to get at us; one can see that."

But already it was too late for them to do us any damage, for now we were in touch with our own army. Everywhere we began to pass tents, wagons, supply posts, Indiana and Illinois infantry on the march with field music playing, batteries of Washington's flying artillery; of Sherman's, Brent's, Reynolds', Whiting's, O'Brien's, and Bragg's commands, trotting jauntily out across the plain toward the eastern mountain wall where, against the sombre rocky parapets, something glittered like a winding mountain torrent—the pol-

ished lance-blades of two thousand Mexican cavalry under General Miñon, which already had turned our left and were manœuvring to assault the city of Saltillo which was our base.

"I want to get onto my horse," said Silver Knees with an enchanting smile.

"Do you think you can manage it?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. Besides, it is broad daylight and I don't want all these soldiers to see you carrying me like a baby!"

Her clear laughter rang out; she slipped her blue military cap from her head, gave the shock of tawny hair a shake, put on the cap again, buckled the chin-strap, and fastened the blue military cloak more tightly around her.

Then she gave me an adorable look and turned, delighted, to watch the picturesque and reckless arrival of my Spy Company which, discovering me as they stood to horse, mounted at the bugle's warning and came galloping down the road led by that burly, six-foot Mexican ex-bandit, Dominguez.

Pulling up his pinto he first saluted, then, throwing discipline to the dogs, flung wide his huge arms and vigorously embraced me, to the enormous amusement of passing officers and men.

"Good day, Don Juan, how are you?" he shouted, delightedly.

"Good day, Don Carlos, I am very well, thank you; how are you?"

"I thank God there is no change. . . . And Doña Encarnacion, is she well?"

"I thank God, señor, I am in health," cried Silver Knees, gaily; "—and you, Don Carlos?"

"Why should I not be grateful to our Lady of Guadaloupe for all she is ever doing in my behalf, señorita?" And, to me: "Don Juan, our stables are near to the great tank at the hacienda, where also are your honour's headquarters. We scout a little toward Santa Elena under orders from General Wool, and return at speed with news."

"Torribio Lopez and his Encurados have ridden that way, Don Carlos."

"So much the better, Señor Major Don Juan!" he cried with a bellowing laugh; "—so, until we meet again, then—if God wishes it. May you and Doña Encarnacion ride with God!"

"Many thanks, Don Carlos; remain with God!"

"Thank you, señor—if God wishes it!"

"Adiós!"

"Adiós! With your honour's permission—"

He swung his heavy macheta forward; his gaudily dressed command trotted across the road in front of us, and he and every rascally rider saluted us as they galloped along a path rising to the westward between the straight clay walls of a lateral arroyo.

We rode into the Hacienda of Buena Vista where Peep discovered Bandara guarding a house reserved for my headquarters, near the main tanks and within

two streets of General Taylor's Headquarters in the luxurious house of the head steward.

Flying batteries of the 3rd and 4th regular artillery passed us, moving out to the eastward on a trot, as Silver Knees, Peep, and I were conducted across the plazuela by Emilio Bandara and into a little, one-story, thick-walled house of two rooms, facing a patio full of peach, pear, and pomegranate trees—the azotea set with flame-coloured geraniums and flowering lemon-trees in tubs.

Here Calixto the Mistec came to kiss my hand and —very gravely and evincing no surprise—the slender hand of Silver Knees.

The weather had grown very hot—an unpleasant contrast to the almost frosty chill of the night before—and even the little charcoal cooking fire, on which were steaming Calixto's pots and pans, seemed oppressive. So we had a breakfast of fruit, coffee and tortillas served under the eastern balcony of the little patio where humming-birds whirred and a tiny fountain dripped crystal water through an old Aztec mask carved out of stone and pierced, for the purpose, with a tile of baked clay.

And here, in the very instant of battle and on the firing line itself, where from the elevated clay crests of the barrancas we could see the country which stretched away southward, all moving and crawling northward with twenty thousand Mexicans—here, to Silver Knees and to me, the happy circumstances and

conditions of our Monterey romance came back to us again.

Calixto and Bandara found, with Headquarters baggage, the mules and baggage wagon allotted to me; and they fetched to Silver Knees all the clothing and personal property which belonged to her, and which she had accumulated at Monterey.

The girl wept a little with happiness to see once more all these pretty things which she had abandoned —her gowns, slippers, stockings, underwear, toilet articles—everything in which she had taken such pleasure.

Calixto came with the little tin bath-tub which she had shared with me at the Villa Zozaya; and I could hear her splashing and sluicing cold water delightedly in her tiled room, and calling imperiously to Calixto for soap and towels and rose-water.

As soon as I had washed and shaved and changed into uniform, I went over to Headquarters, where Colonel Jefferson Davis and Lieutenant-Colonel May were engaged in polite conversation with the Mexican Surgeon-General Lindenbury, who had just galloped into Buena Vista from Encantada with a lancer, a trumpeter and a flag of truce from Santa Anna.

"Hello, Maddox," said Old Zack genially, "—read this letter aloud to me, will you?"

He handed me a letter written in Spanish; and I translated it aloud:

SUMMONS OF GENERAL SANTA ANNA
TO GENERAL TAYLOR

You are surrounded by twenty thousand men and can not in any human probability avoid suffering a rout and being cut to pieces by our troops.

But, as you deserve consideration and particular esteem, I wish to save you from a catastrophe, and for that purpose (I) give you this notice in order that you may surrender at discretion under the assurance that you will be treated with the consideration belonging to the Mexican character, to which end you will be granted an hour's time, to make up your mind, to commence from the moment when my flag of truce arrives in your camp.

With this view I assure you of my particular consideration.

God and liberty! Camp at Encantada, February 22nd, 1847.

ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA
TO GENERAL TAYLOR,
Commanding forces of the U. S.

When I finished translating this remarkable bit of Mexican literature, Old Zack looked about him with amiable gravity at the officers thronging Headquarters, who had heard the reading of this communication.

"Say, Maddox," said he, "I guess it ain't necessary to ask opinions in this matter. So if you'll just sit down at my camp-table and kindly write out a little note to General Santa Anna, I make no doubt but that it will suit everybody."

I wrote, as Old Zack dictated—everybody including the Mexican Surgeon-General listening intently:

Headquarters, Army of Occupation
Near Buena Vista
February 22nd, 1847

SIR:

In reply to your note of this date, summoning me to surrender my forces at discretion, I beg leave to decline your request.

Your obedient servant,
Z. TAYLOR
Major-General U. S. A. Commanding

SEÑOR GEN. DON ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA,
Commander-in-Chief
La Encantada

After a silence:

"Well, gentlemen, does that cover the case?" he asked pleasantly of all the officers assembled.

Everybody seemed to consider the reply a proper one.

"Fix it up politely, Maddox, and let this medical gentleman take it back to his C. O."

I altered the reply, slightly, making it more courteous and less brief and abrupt.

General Lindenbury and our officers exchanged formal salutations; and off he went down the road at a plunging gallop, followed by his hussar trumpeter, gorgeous in a fur busby, green jacket laced with gold. Behind galloped the red-bonneted lancer, the white flag at his lance-head snapping and whipping in the wind.

Old Zack said to me: "Well, Maddox, have you got

a pretty fair notion of the enemy strength? Was Lindenbury trying to scare us?"

"I don't think so, General."

"Well, what have they got?"

"They have six thousand cavalry and about fifteen thousand infantry, sir."

"I want to know?"

"Their celebrated hussars from Mexico City are here. So are the cuirassiers."

"What are those?" he asked carelessly.

"Like the French cuirassiers, sir, wearing steel helmets and corselets."

"Do tell!"

I couldn't help laughing. General Wool scowled at me as though to say, "Do you think twenty thousand Mexicans against four thousand five hundred Americans is a funny joke?"

But Old Zack's rugged visage beamed with benign good nature:

"All right, gentlemen. Here's the map and here's the plan. . . . Just pin it up on the wall, Maddox. Thank you kindly. Now, Major Warren, if you'll lend me that walking stick—much obliged—"

He walked over to the map and explained it to us as a teacher explains a blackboard problem with a pointer.

"Now, here's the situation, gentlemen:

"First: If we hold this mountain pass the enemy have got to drive us out before they can attack Saltillo.

"Second: If they attack us they've got to come by this narrow road because their artillery and cavalry can't cross all them ravines, and if their infantry tries to we'll blow 'em to flinders.

"Gentlemen, as I look at it, this pass and this battle are going to repeat Thermopylæ. And I don't care whether they've got twenty thousand or twenty million men; they can't get through unless they come through this arroyo; and if the whole world in arms came against us by that road we could stop them with a thousand riflemen.

"Gentlemen, I guess that's all."

As the crowd of officers began to separate and leave the building to rejoin their commands, I heard Colonel Davis say something to Old Zack about the ravines.

"They can't cross 'em," said the General. "What's on your mind?"

"Two thousand Mexican cavalry have crossed them," said Davis, "where the ravines are only shallow ditches to the eastward, General."

I stood near the door, listening intently to this conversation in which Colonel Davis was innocently revealing the imperfect strategy of Old Zack who seemed mildly surprised to find a flaw in his own military knowledge.

He said: "But that fellow Miñon, with his fancy cavalry, has gone clean around us. He means to assault Saltillo—and I guess I better go back and take a look at the city, Colonel—"

"But," insisted Davis, "if Mexican cavalry can ride over the gullies and along the mountains east of us, their light troops can flank us and turn us from the eastward, General."

Old Zack turned a puzzled face from Davis to me. He had not taken that aspect of affairs into consideration.

"Say, Maddox," he said, "take a few of your people and ride over to them mountains."

"Very well, sir."

"And, Maddox—try to catch me a Mexican soldier —officer, if possible. I want to hear what he's got to say about twenty thousand troops coming out of the Encarnacion."

When I came to the garita in front of my little house, I found one of Dominguez' picturesque ruffians there on duty. He said with a polite grin that Major Dominguez, who had not eaten that day, was being graciously entertained at luncheon by Doña Encarnacion in the patio.

When I came into the patio I discovered Silver Knees in a hammock under a pepper tree near the fountain, and Dominguez in his sky-blue, silver-embroidered jacket, playing the guitar and singing with all the sweetness and cherubic innocence of a choir-boy the wailing, syncopated air of "The Noche Triste"—

"Virgin de los Remedios,
In the black mist,

Who escaped thy foes
Through the Noche Triste,
Where on Totoltepec the Aztec gods
Salute their Mother who serenely nods,
The good fathers of San Gabriel,
Virgin divine,
Shall build, to guard thee well,
Thy holy shrine—"

When Silver Knees saw me at the doorway she sprang from the hammock and made me an eager curtsey; and I went to her and kissed her hand as Dominguez rose respectfully, his spurs, sabre, and silver trappings jingling musically.

"Captain," said I, "be good enough to take ten men as escort. I go with my lieutenants, Bandara and Pacheco, to find out why Miñon's cavalry can ride around my general's entire army."

Silver Knees, keeping tight hold of my hand, went with me to the smaller corral to see the saddling. Pio Pacheco, who was on the roof, called softly to me in Gypsy:

"Prala, be pleased to mount to the azotea, your honour, where every officer in Buena Vista is watching the Mexican army!"

I went up to the roof with Silver Knees and stood in uneasy astonishment and admiration at the splendid spectacle.

Toward our left flank a superb regiment of Mexican cuirassiers was riding slowly along the edge of the

plain. Through our field glasses every detail of their uniforms and equipment was perfectly visible.

Just behind them some squadrons of brilliantly uniformed lancers were trotting out in perfect alignment as though on parade.

A very handsomely uniformed regiment of hussars advanced with beautiful regularity and precision from Encantada along the brook; then came, in three finely marching columns, the Mexican light troops and infantry of the line. They were wearing their full dress uniforms; their regimental bands were playing gaily; their muskets, bayonets, buttons, glittered like silver.

Large bodies of cavalry supported the first two columns. The third column was marching briskly toward the arroyo road where I could see our gunners with eight of our guns, awaiting them in utter silence.

Bandara said: "Señor Major Don Juan, those troops have marched fifty miles without food or water in the last twenty-four hours."

"They are good troops," said I in a troubled voice. "Come, let us be off."

In the room below, Silver Knees began to beg that she might be allowed to ride with us, saying that she had a boy's suit of leather and silver which she could put on in a few moments.

"You had better let her come, Don Juan," said Peep; "God knows what might happen in Buena Vista if Miñon's cavalry assault Saltillo tonight."

All at once the full realization of Old Zack's strate-

gical ignorance rushed over me, and I comprehended the devilish pickle we were in already.

At the same moment I heard bugles just in front of my quarters, and saw the Arkansas and Kentucky troops, dismounted, marching westward, followed by the rifle battalion of the Indiana brigade. It was plain that Old Zack was realizing his mistake and had begun to try to rectify it.

Through the door I saw Bandara and Peep bringing up our horses—and an extra one—a big, handsome troop horse of the regular dragoons.

"Very well," I said to Silver Knees, "get into your caballero's suit of leather and silver and ride close to me, for, by God, I believe you will be safer there than in this hacienda which seems to me already outflanked and doomed!"

"Oh, Don Juan, darling of my heart and soul," she whispered, embracing me rapturously, "what do we care for doom as long as we can live together and die together, when it pleases God to give His orders for our death?"

"We are not going to die," said I gaily, though there was no gaiety in my heart, only an increasing resentment and disgust against the military ignorance that was so swiftly involving the lives of every man in this little army of ours.

Silver Knees ran back into her room where I could see her, like a stormy, passionate child, tearing off her rose-coloured gown and slippers and stockings, and flinging them in every direction.

"Calixto! Calixto!" she called excitedly. "I am going to ride with Don Juan, and I need my boy's suit of soft leather overlaid with silver—"

I closed the door so that nobody passing could see the state of deshabille she was in, and went out to the garita to watch three guns of Washington's artillery passing westward.

Bandara pointed to the right where more guns and troops were hurrying toward La Angostura, and where I could see aides-de-camp riding about furiously with orders from Headquarters where, I hoped, this Mexican envelopment had begun to throw the fear of God into the wooden skull of our brave old Indian fighter.

As I signalled Dominguez to ride up with his irregulars, Silver Knees came running out, glittering like a dragonfly, and flung herself joyously aboard her resentful American troop horse who never before had carried anything that jingled and jangled and clinked and clashed like that, and who reared and danced a little under the admiring gaze of Dominguez, Bandara, Peep, and myself.

So, Silver Knees on one side of me and Peep on the other, and followed by Bandara, Dominguez, and a platoon from the Spies, we swept at a gallop through the streets of the hacienda, and very soon came out across the plain toward the western mountain rampart.

Here, to my disgust and alarm, I found that the going was not difficult for cavalry, and perfectly easy for infantry.

Everywhere our troops were hastily marching to stop and hold the gap through which Miñon's cavalry already had passed, completely flanking us, and toward which Mexican infantry were swarming, every battalion at a double.

"Bang!" The first shot of the day came from a Mexican howitzer and was fired at Colonel Marshall's dismounted cavalry.

Then, from the slopes beyond, the Mexican light troops opened a terrific fire upon our men who lay down taking advantage of the terrain, and replied leisurely and in almost perfect safety to the Mexican fire.

It was raining—not very hard—but enough to spin a slight fog in the increasing dusk, against which the cannon flashes and the sheets of flame from the Mexican musketry made an infernal spectacle, turning the low, sagging mountain mists to floating clouds of fire.

Before night finally closed in, one thing had become clear to me; the entire Mexican army could pass our left flank and turn our position unless we extended it up the slopes of the eastern mountains. And this we could not do now. All we could hope to accomplish would be to hold back this flank movement. Which meant that the battle of Buena Vista, after all, was not going to be the Thermopylæ that Old Zack had dreamed of, and was not going to be fought in the narrow arroyo as Old Zack had planned. Santa Anna was not even a moderately good general, but he was

not ass enough to walk into a trap a mile long, commanded by American cannon.

It had become so dark on the mountain, now, that Dominguez' men had to guide us back with lanterns.

Bandara said artlessly to me: "It looks as if we were surrounded, your honour. If our volunteers run we'll have a regular wildcat fight on our hands before they cut our throats."

Peep observed, jovially: "It promises to be a good fight, anyway, Emilio. Maybe our volunteers won't run away this time."

"Don Juan, I tell you one thing," said Dominguez, fiercely; "if it is God's will that my command is to die here in these hills, then I want to take the encurados of Torribio Lopez with us, and as many of St. Patrick's Battalion as I can—"

Peep burst into a laugh and even Bandara made odd, tigerish noises indicating mirth.

Silver Knees, riding close beside me, leaned near to whisper: "Pride of my soul, do you think we all are going to die in Buena Vista?"

"No. But when the General rides to Saltillo tonight, with Colonel May's dragoons and the Mississippi cavalry, I wish you to go thither with Pio Pacheco—"

"Mother of God, he thinks I would desert him!" muttered Silver Knees. "Well, then, *no,* darling of my heart, Don Juan—I refuse to go to Saltillo with your General and his cavalry!"

"If I ask it, Encarnacion—"

"No, no, no! . . . Oh, Goddess Mother of God,"

she exclaimed in a low voice trembling with passion, "—I have feared some dirty trick of fate in this bullet-tormented world! I know—I *know* I shall never have you for my lover, darling of my soul!—never! Because the world has been too kind to me, already, in letting me know you, my angel, and in letting my heart adore you. Now the cards change! It is always so! Too much kindness breeds cruelty in the old Aztec gods, prala, who are watching us here in darkness from those black mountains. . . . Oh, prala, my Gypsy brother—my Rye—I know now, I never shall live to love you as women love their lovers!—because the bullets will fly too thickly for me, Don Juan, and I never shall win through to your embrace, prala—never live to win my way to you—"

We were riding into the hacienda now, and were halted by the gallop of dragoons and mounted riflemen escorting General Zachary Taylor to Saltillo where were his beloved wagons.

As Old Zack, humped up on his horse, in his shabby old overcoat, came bouncing along in the rain, I told Pio to take Silver Knees home and wait there for me.

"Just a word with the General," I added to Silver Knees; "I promise to come back to you—"

A passing cavalry torch flashed its smoky light across the girl's white, frightened face.

"I promise to come back to you," I whispered, "and love you. My God, I don't know why I've waited all this time!"

Another blazing torch, tossing above the plumed

crests of the dragoons, flashed rosy across her face, all flushed with lovely surprise.

I spurred forward and overtook Old Zack in the next street.

"Hello," said he good-naturedly. "What did you find out about them fellers on the mountain?"

"There is nothing to stop their turning our left flank, sir. The ravines are merely gullies up there."

"All right, Major," said he, cheerily, "I got to run back and take a peek at Saltillo, so's to be sure about the garrison and the wagons. Then I'll be back here tomorrow morning and we'll see what there is to be done."

I saluted. There was no more to be said to this man.

I drew bridle, wheeled my horse, and rode back to my little house. Both our bed-rooms were dark. There was no light at all, except in the outside kitchen where Calixto squatted cooking our evening meal.

As I made my way into the dark house, and felt about for my doorway, something soft and kneeling and slimly unclad embraced my knees, pulling me down into two young arms.

"Soul's darling—prala—" Her voice faded to a sigh. The patter of rain on the azotea was louder.

It was nearly midnight when Silver Knees flung a Gypsy scarf around her and, holding it together with both hands, stole out on naked feet to call softly to Calixto:

"Bring your master something to eat and drink, in the blessed name of God's merciful Mother," she urged in a childlike voice vibrant with suppressed and tender gaiety.

Then she came back to me and, seating herself, felt in the darkness for my face and pressed her slim ring-finger against my lips.

"Heart's darling," said she, "I am humbled before God and thee that you two should offer me this night both Love and the blessed esmeralda!"

XXIII

BUENA VISTA

IT was very dark and rainy. Close ahead I could hear the thin, womanish cry of the Mexican vedettes, "Centinel! Alerta!"

Silver Knees stirred in my arms; sighed.

The first vague glimmer of dawn in the eastern sky was saluted by all the Mexican regimental bands. The one nearest us played "Chirriqui Girls."

It had rained very hard. The cold before sunrise was intense, the sky crystal-clear and heavy with stars.

The slender, fragrant little thing, nestling so warmly asleep, stirred and sighed again when the Mexican cavalry trumpet's clangor broke out brazenly in the greying mist.

Smack-bang! A field piece spoke, the shot echoing and re-echoing through infinite rocky corridors along the Sierra Madre.

Silver Knees sat up bewildered, clearing the tawny hair from her eyes.

Again the smacking crack of a field gun split the shivering dawn with its short, pallid tongue of flame, reflected an instant across our plaster wall.

Her arms fell around my neck and tightened. And,

in that instant, a dreadful presentiment assailed me that she never was destined to outlive this day.

"Lord of my heart and soul," she whispered, divining my troubled thoughts, "if this day is to be our last together, let that old fool, Señor Death, find us hand in hand and laughing. God's Mother knows I have shed tears enough."

As she spoke she caught sight of the ring on her slim finger, its great Mexican opal ablaze with gold, green, and crimson fire.

"The esmeralda!" she whispered, "ava adova si. Me ćumidavle!"—and she kissed her wedding pledge.

"Usti, querida mia—get up, darling," I whispered.

Her soft young arms were only linked the closer, and her ardent mouth melted on mine. But I freed myself and sprang up:

"Aven, chirriquita. I must dress and go to the ófisa—the cuartel, darling—"

"Then I go with thee, Lord—"

"No—"

"Si! *Ei!* Am I not wholly thine, Don Juan—except that the alcalde and the black-robe shall yet confirm it? Oh, my darling lover—O Diosa Purisima!—so me kerdiom?—what have I done?—"

Her voice was drowned in the startling racket of our Headquarters bugles.

Suddenly again, without the slightest reason, the awful conviction seized me that Silver Knees would not see another sunrise.

As I dressed I could not rid myself of the terrible

foreboding that this girl whom I loved at last, with all the recklessness of a passion no longer to be controlled, would never live to see the end of this day's battle.

I could not shake off the sinister obsession—the strange certainty that, no matter where she took shelter, or whether she followed me into battle, wherever my business chanced to carry me, death had already marked her, and she could not escape her destiny.

In vain I mocked savagely at my own thoughts, jeering the stupid, superstitious mind that hatched them. I could not reason them away, or laugh them into nothing; I knew—I *knew* that Silver Knees was going to be killed that day, the 23rd day of February, 1847, here among these cataracts and rocks and forests of the Sierra Madre; amid a thunderous tumult of musketry and cannon; of infuriated horses and murderous multitudes of men.

As the ghastly certainty clutched me, I could scarcely endure it—she seemed so exquisitely new a thing on earth, with the surprise of it still starry in her eyes.

I watched her dressing in her soft brown silver-covered leather. She was singing as sweetly-loud and carelessly as the very bird she was singing about—Amen sar ciriklé—"We are like birds"—

"The Gitanilla sings,
O cirikeo p'enel'
How strange that God gives wings
To souls and birds as well;

Let us, my love, be gay,
Amen sar ciriklé,
Love and mate when we may,
Amen sar čiriklé—"

Headquarters drums began to beat, drowning all other sound.

"Thou, Silver Knees," I said unsteadily, "give me thy lips once more—"

She was in my arms—a very part of my body, breathing, pulsing in supple rhythm with every heart beat and throb of nerve and vein within me.

"I love you, Silver Knees."

"My lips to thy sandal's dust, my heart's lord. Kalo Rom san tu! If it be God's will, I give thee a boy-child of this night's happiness—"

She stretched out her narrow hand; the opal flamed:

"Purisima! O Diosa daia! Look what this young man has done with me so that I may go in safety to the God of gods!"

We clung together for a little while—the frightful premonition almost crazing me—and I could not strangle it or fight it off, seeming to know beyond all doubt that this day was the end of all for Silver Knees. . . . And that I must go on, and on, and on, plodding forward through life without her—

The noise of the cannonade was becoming tremendous. Calixto came in with our coffee, fruit, and fri-

joles, saying smiling that a cloud of fire could be seen floating in the skies over the eastern mountains where the sound of Mexican musketry was rapidly growing louder.

Silver Knees, gay, carefree, buckling on her great, tinkling, silver-gilt spurs, was singing "Ysabella" at the top of her lusty voice:

"Gypsy-roses by the trail—
Crimson roses of Granada—
Tell me why my cheeks are pale!
Gypsy Rose-Incarnada,
Teach me to incarnadine
Lips and cheeks to glow like thine!

"Ysabella, Ysabella,
Take a lover, Gitanella;
If thy cheeks would blush like mine,
Drink, oh, drink of Love's warm wine—"

"Bang-g-g!" came the shattering explosion of a heavy gun from the battery of Captain Prentiss, 1st artillery.

"Oh, Señor Don Jesus, my adored!" she exclaimed in graceful dismay, "I felt the wind from that gun slap my face!"

"That's Prentiss and his big guns back of us, darling. . . . How pretty you are, bruñita—" I relapsed into the easy, intimate Gypsy tongue.

"Why do you call me a kid, prala?" she exclaimed, laughing.

"Well, then, brujita!"

"Ooh! Shame! That is no Gitano word, either, Señor Chivo-Peujo! . . . But eat thy breakfast, light of my soul!" . . . She handed me a hot tortilla smeared with honey: "Le, prala, le!—take it, my brother!"

"Nais tuké; nai bokhalo—thanks, I am not hungry—" I said, striving to quell the hellish fear in my brain with a careless smile.

"Mista—very well. Will you have some repañi—some aguardiénte, then, to restore you, my life's delight?"

"Neither pulque nor dulces," said I, "but only coffee and a little fruit. . . . Encarnacion, I love thee."

"I love thee, Juan, my soul's darling lord," she said, flushing.

We ate breakfast with that heavenly and leisurely absorption in each other that lovers know. Only we two seemed real in this noisy, rocking, thundering world; all else was but a vision—a ghostly pageant in preparation for display before our careless eyes—eyes utterly preoccupied with each other, and too incurious concerning battles and the life and death of men and nations, to be bothered with such trifles at such a time.

But all the while, lurking like a lamp-cast shadow of a midnight watcher, the ominous certainty of losing her whom I now adored above all else on earth lay

black across my vision, haunting the dim recesses of my mind.

A tremendous salvo from our howitzers brought us to our feet. High to the southward we could trace our towering shells by the burning fuses. Fountains of red fire marked their bursting.

Before sunrise Pio Pacheco came to announce that our horses were ready, and that Bandara and Dominguez were awaiting us in the saddle. He handed me the latter's night report. It was clear and well written.

"The General," said Peep, "is still in Saltillo, and there is already a very vicious fight beginning over there on the mountainside."

I went to my camp-table and wrote out briefly what disposition was to be made of my property in case of any accident to me—and that everything was to go to Silver Knees. . . . As though my poor, inky defiance of destiny could alter the maddening and cursed thing that was impending, and which I *knew* would this day destroy her whom I loved as never in my life had I loved any human soul.

"Darling," I said to her, "there is no hurry. Finish your coffee. I am just stepping into the next street to talk to an officer in the Judge Advocate's department, and I will return in a few minutes—"

"I want to go with you, prala."

"Very well."

We went out together into the chilly street. The sun was just rising; the day promised to be magnifi-

cent. All of Captain Washington's guns were firing just beyond us along the main arroyo, and their smoke formed a high, silvery curtain full of shaking, squirming folds and convolutions, hiding the wide view southward.

As I came to General Wool's headquarters I saw the chaplain of an Illinois regiment just entering the cuartel.

With a heart heavy with foreboding, I spoke to him in a low voice, and he stopped very courteously to listen to what I had to tell him.

He looked kindly and curiously at Silver Knees who stood politely at attention, like some slim and tropical West Pointer, in her Mexican boots and spurs, awaiting my convenience.

"Truly a tragic business, Major," said he in his quiet, pleasant voice. . . . "And you don't know her real name at all, sir?"

"No. The Sisters of the Incarnation gave her the name of their religious order—Encarnacion. . . . I propose to give her my family name. . . . Would you be kind enough to legalize the matter now?"

"I will, Major Maddox." He turned to Silver Knees with kindly courtesy.

"Encarnacion," said I in a low voice, "here is a good Father who has a remedy for our chiefest ills."

She came lithely, blithely, touching her silver-encrusted sombrero with a mischievous smile when she recognized the character of the Protestant army chaplain.

But when she entirely understood what was our present business with the reverend gentleman her face paled exquisitely, and she found scarcely any voice to breathe her answers to his brief and whispered questions.

"Do you, Encarnacion, take this man, John, to be your husband?"

"Ei! . . . Si! . . . Yes!"

So it was done there in the garita of the cuartel where our Headquarters flag flapped smartly overhead and the ground trembled with the cannonade. . . . After we had risen from our knees and had kissed, I went into the Judge Advocate's office to deposit my will and to arrange for a certificate—both to be at the call of Doña Encarnacion Maddox in case of accident to me—a useless provision, my tortured brain reminded me, because this young and lovely thing beside me was never to survive this cursed day at Buena Vista.

General Wool, coming out with his staff—a grim, stern-visaged soldier, not a West Pointer but one who perfectly understood his profession—asked me to procure him further information regarding the very noisy fighting which was now going on all along the eastern mountains beyond our extreme left flank.

"It is General Mejia's brigade, sir," said I. "Last night we discovered his light troops filtering through behind Miñon's cavalry. . . . Here, sir, are the dispositions of the enemy's corps, as fetched in a few minutes ago by Dominguez and his company of spies belonging to my department."

"Read it, if you please, Major. Gentlemen, pray listen."

I read: "General Blasco is now (8 A.M.) advancing by the Saltillo road with the following four battalions: Sappers, mixed of Tampico; Fijo de Mexico Hussars. Lombardini's division advancing on the right; General Ortega following; General Ampudia with the light division and 4th of the Line, attacking our left flank on the mountain."

"Very well, Major. Thank you." He and his staff got to horse and rode slowly out into the cannon smoke ahead.

Alone, Silver Knees and I looked at each other in a kind of dazed, enchanted wonder. Then she gave me her delicate little hand and I kissed it. There were tears in her eyes and in mine.

"Papers that belong to you are to be found in the Judge Advocate's department," I said huskily. . . . "And, darling—Calixto has the sheets of paper upon which are written my diary and my memoirs."

"I know, Don Juan. Every night you write them."

"Every night."

"Up to last night?"

"I wrote a line concerning that, this morning."

"Did you say—" A bright blush dyed her face.

"Read it, Silver Knees—some day."

"Is my name in your diary every day?"

"Your name—good God, there is scarcely anything else. . . . What else is there for me in life excepting you, star of my soul—"

"Jaña santisima," she whispered, joining her slender hands, "I also am blessed above all women! Maria Erira! of tinder and fire—yésca y yug!—let our first born be true seed of the Romani-chal!"

We went back to the cuartel where Silver Knees got onto her horse and began an animated conversation with Bandara and Dominguez.

I could see them from where I was, talking to Calixto and showing him once more, in my military chest, my journal, closely and minutely written on small, thin sheets of paper, each week's doings recorded, tied up in a separate square packet and sealed and taped.

"Everything belongs to Doña Encarnacion if I do not survive this day, Calixto," said I, miserable and unconvinced—as though such self-conscious preparations for eventualities could stay and ward off that inexorable and sombre fate which, somehow, I knew meant death this day to Silver Knees.

I went out slowly and got into my saddle. Silver Knees joyously reined her horse up beside mine. God—if there were any way out of this hell-trap for her! I looked around me as though it were I, not she, who was entrapped. But I knew in my heart and soul that wherever she went her tragic fate would follow her. It was already written. I knew it.

I motioned Bandara forward and beckoned Pio Pacheco to ride on the other side of me. Then, with a curt nod to Captain Dominguez, we were off at a canter toward the constantly increasing tumult on our left flank, where Marshall's mounted rifles were slowly

retreating from the shallow gullies where they had been posted along the mountains. Here a battalion of the 2nd Illinois, supporting three guns of O'Brien's battery, was trying to check and extinguish the fire of a Mexican twelve pounder which played general havoc with our people wherever they attempted to move up.

And now, battalion on battalion, horse, foot, and artillery, sabres, muskets, and polished lance-points glittering in the sun, the whole mass of the main Mexican army began to move ponderously, slowly, irresistibly upon our left flank from which a rising roar of musketry and cannon began.

Colonel Bissell galloped by, leading out his regiment.

"Can you get word to Old Zack at Saltillo how things are going, Maddox?" he bawled out to me. "Wool told me to ask you."

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Well, then, for God's sake, give him a picture of the mess we're in."

I called to Bandara, scribbled a report in my note book, using from time to time the field glasses he held for me. What I wrote was this:

Left flank; 10.30 A.M. Your left flank is slowly doubling up. The Indiana volunteers of Bowle's regiment are in disorder. A few of Bissell's, also, are disgracing themselves in the same fashion. General Lane can't control the 2nd Indiana. The 2nd Illinois behave better. Hardin's regiment and Clay's Rifles stand firm under a very heavy fire.

Sherman's flying battery, followed by Bragg's, has

just galloped up and unlimbered. They are firing into moving masses of enemy infantry with no hope of checking them. An entire Mexican division is nearing us, now.

General Lane's brigade is already disorganized, breaking up, melting away. The Mexican cavalry is forming to charge us. There are two thousand of them very near us.

Bowle's regiment has broken under the fire of four thousand enemy infantry; his men are running from the field. Major Dix, pay department, is trying to rally them with the regimental colours of the 2nd Indiana. He can't do it.

I send this by Bandara, my chief of scouts. General Wool and staff are just arriving. We are making ready to countercharge the lancers and cuirassiers.

MADDOX,
Major, Int^gnce Dept^nt

General Wool, walking his horse, came up with his staff; and when he saw what I was about:

"Tell General Taylor," said he, "that the battle is going to be fought on our left flank, and that it will be won or lost right there! Say to him that I respectfully suggest his immediate return from Saltillo, to cope with an extremely serious situation."

"General Wool respectfully requests your immediate return to this army," I wrote in postscript. Then I gave the note to Bandara and sent Pio with him.

"Get through to Saltillo somehow," I said, "even if you have to ride around Miñon's entire division."

For now matters were coming to a head very swiftly; more than a thousand of our stragglers and

deserters already were skulking along toward the city in our rear—cowardly fugitives from almost every regiment except the regulars.

Wool, having no provost guard, asked me to take Dominguez and his horsemen and try to stop this disgraceful and alarming behaviour. I was bitterly ashamed that this Mexican traitor and ex-bandit should witness the cowardice of our volunteers, but there was no help for it; so I ordered him to stop the skulkers with drawn sabres; and I rode down with Silver Knees to argue with them and try to shame them into obedience; but could do very little with these raw, undisciplined fellows who, thoroughly scared, were determined to get out of the range of Mexican fire.

And all the while my heart was heavy within me and a dull feeling of dreadful helplessness weighed me down in the imminence of an impending disaster which would leave me desolate and bereft forever.

Yet, never have I seen so blithe a face as was Silver Knees', or heard so gay and carefree a voice amid the confusing and abominable uproar of musketry.

Under a pelting, deafening fire she did not even seem to be aware of the flying bullets, and was constantly running out from behind the rocks and trees where our horses were tied.

I knew she was doomed. I knew I was experiencing one of those fearful cases of clairvoyance and premonition of disaster which were to prove true, no matter what I did to prevent it.

Dominguez and his ex-robber riders came galloping

back from the rear, disgusted with their efforts to stop the stragglers and malingerers. The sabre blades of some of them were bloody. Dominguez was reloading his smoke-stained pistol.

"Swine," he grunted. "Well, we have made pork of some of them."

He and I went forward to take another look at our flank; and we saw that the Mexican cavalry still pressed overwhelmingly all along our left, where our infantry were sagging farther and farther back, giving ground everywhere, and leaving the batteries almost without support.

Silver Knees, who had come out to where we were standing, said to me:

"That is shameful, Don Juan. Can't somebody stop those men who run like sheep over there?"

I looked at her helplessly, hopelessly. Wherever I sent her, whatever I did to avert it, her bullet would find her. Yet, I took her warm little hand and led her back to the rocky shelter by the picketed horses of Dominguez' command, and begged her not to leave this place of comparative safety until I told her to do so.

She gave me an enchanting smile and a promise of passionate obedience; but half an hour later I saw her riding out excitedly to meet Bandara who came galloping in ahead of Colonel May's regiment of regular dragoons, and Colonel Davis' rifles, to announce the arrival in Buena Vista of Old Zack.

The field of battle was now a disgraceful sight;

Bissell's regiment, outflanked, was rapidly retreating. Everywhere our infantry were on the run. The battle —an artillery combat on our side—was raging along the entire front of both armies, now, where twenty-five thousand men were locked in a life and death grip, and the deafening dissonance of artillery reverberated through the mountain pass, crashing from peak to crag like the iron thunder of hell itself.

So terrible had our batteries' salvos become that I could see vast masses of the enemy rolling under our fire like ships in a raging hurricane.

And now upon this stricken field came wandering Old Zack, in his glazed cap and shabby coat, squatted upon his slowly pacing horse, surrounded by his staff in all the brilliancy of pipe-clay and full dress.

"Maddox," he called out genially to me, "I'm much obliged for that message, but I was on my way already. . . . And say, I don't admire the way this fight's a-going, very much. I told May he'd better go in and clean up things. He's coming now, I guess."

As he spoke there came a roar of hoofs from the rear, and Colonel May's mixed regiment, including the entire regular cavalry, and the Arkansas and Kentucky Horse, passed us at a gallop, the men cheering wildly, half standing in their saddles.

"Take your spies in, too, Maddox," said Old Zack. "I want Colonel May to chase away them pesky lancers as soon as Davis stops 'em!"

I repeated the order to Dominguez who already had heard it. Instantly his men were in the saddle.

"Dominguez, Bandara, Pio, come on!" I cried, drawing my pistol. And to Silver Knees: "Go back to the rocks in the grove until I return. I ask it of you. For God's sake, obey."

There came a sheet of fire and a terrific crash from Davis' regiment which had opened like an inverted V to receive the Mexican cavalry.

In the smoke-blurred scene before us we saw the armoured cuirassiers and the scarlet-bonneted lancers jerk their horses to a standstill, and stare at the levelled rifles as though stunned. Another terrific discharge in their very faces tore them to shreds; down, down went horse and rider, kicking and struggling in a horrible and bloody welter.

"Come on, dragoons!" shouted Colonel May, lifting his sabre and swinging it forward.

Ahead of us I could see nothing but a confusion of red pennons, lances and horses; and the next moment the fierce lancers, rising in their stirrups, launched their horses at us in a thundering charge which overwhelmed the Kentucky cavalry ahead of us.

I saw the Colonel of the Arkansas Horse strike with his sabre at a furious lancer who drove his lance-point into his face. The poor Colonel fell, pierced through the eye; and his adjutant, Vaughan, also speared to death, tumbled clean out of his saddle in front of me.

There came a terrible confusion of rearing, kicking horses and yelling men around me where Dominguez, Bandara, and Peep were tearing and slashing at the frenzied and fleeing lancers.

Down in an arroyo a brigade of Mexican infantry and light horse were being exterminated by our artillery fire and were preparing to charge us.

In the midst of it I saw Lieutenant Crittenden with a white flag. Colonel May saw him, too, and shouted to him: "What's the matter, Crittenden! What's that flag for? Get out of my way, I'm going to charge!"

"Wait! I'm going over to tell those fellows in the arroyo to surrender," yelled Crittenden.

"Don't you do it till I've charged them!" roared May. "Get out of my way, I tell you."

"Impossible; the old man has sent me—"

"But, my dear fellow," cried May in an agonized and grief-choked voice, "for God's sake just rein in for five minutes and give me a half a chance at them!"

"Sorry; I've got the old man's orders. He doesn't want you to massacre their entire cavalry division!"

"Damnation," bawled May, "you're spoiling the whole party with your silly white flag!"

"If you weren't crazy you wouldn't want to charge an entire division!" retorted Crittenden, galloping off on his errand of mercy.

But the errand was brief and useless; down upon our shattered batteries thundered more lancers, cuirassiers, dragoons, hussars. Our red-hot guns, firing like lightning, blasted great bloody gaps out of these galloping and splendid regiments, tearing open their ranks at every salvo, as now, in full strength, the entire cavalry of the Mexican army got into angry motion from the Saltillo road to the Buena Vista Hacienda and,

wheeling, descended like an avalanche upon the disrupted American line.

Down went every horse and gunner in O'Brien's battery; down to his death went Colonel Hardin of the first Illinois, down went Colonel McKee and his Lieutenant-Colonel of the 2nd Kentucky; down went rank and file. As the yelling lancers, rising in their stirrups, rushed fiercely at the Indiana 3rd regiment, Bandara called out to me that Torribio Lopez and his Encurados were butchering our fugitives in the ravines.

"Captain Dominguez!" I shouted, "here are the lancers of Lopez and the San Patricios! Now show me what you can do to them!"

"Well, then, Major, I'll show your honour what I and my riders are going to do to Red Paws and the San Patricios!" And, turning in his saddle: "Come on, you Santa Cruz wildcats," he shouted; "here's your chance to revenge yourselves upon the bandits who take the bread out of your mouths and rob you of your profession! Charge!"

Into the arroyo we galloped where the Encurados were riding up and down and spearing our terrified volunteers, and where, from the higher banks on the plain-level, figures in grey and green uniforms were firing at our retreating troops.

The sheer shock of our charge into the rear and left flank of Lopez' horsemen literally upset them, spilling them all over the clay arroyo in a frantic, cursing, inextricable mass.

I saw Torribio Lopez himself almost immediately,

in the act of shooting one of our wounded who had already been badly lanced; and I took a quick shot at him with my pistol, tearing his right ear with the bullet and splashing his cheek and shoulder with blood.

With a cry of rage he drove his wiry little horse at me and I had great trouble in parrying his sabre and beating him off. Then he yelled shrilly for help, and one of his riders unslung his lance and came galloping at me just as I reloaded; and I got him in the head with the first shot. He fell off sideways, still clutching lance and bridle and jerking his horse across the horse of Lopez so that the latter came down with a crash.

"Oyé! L'Encurados!" shouted Bandara, "do you surrender to our Señor Major, Don Juan?"

But Dominguez flung himself from his horse, sabre in hand, shouting to Colonel Lopez: "I'll teach you to laugh at me and show me a black rebozo! Death to Lopez the Leopard! Death to Red Paws! Death to El Tigre and his kits!"

"Death! Death!" yelled his half-crazed riders, drunk with blood, hurling their horses upon the Encurados, sabring them in their saddles, tearing their lances from their arm loops and their escopetas from their backs.

I strove to interpose and make a prisoner of Colonel Lopez who was in a bloody cat-and-dog scramble with Dominguez, but the latter, using his sabre with shortened arm, cut "The Leopard" to slivers.

Then he got into his reeking saddle again, bawling out to his men to charge the Irish and destroy them.

And the wild, dissolute soldiers of the San Patricio Battalion, every one of them deserters from our army, knowing well that, if taken, a military court would certainly condemn them, and that Old Zack would show them no mercy, fought like caged devils with bayonets and rifle-butts, where Dominguez and his yelling riders were trampling and sabring them to death.

It was a nasty fight—rats in a rat-pit matched against wildcats.

Captain Conner's Texans completed the bloody business. I was sorry to see any prisoners of San Patricio, because I knew what must be their fate. Military executions sicken me.

Dead men lying in the rain. The slippery clay arroyos were slimy with blood. Unlike the sand around Matamoras, the clay here does not absorb all this blood and human filth.

I told Dominguez to re-form his horse and rally behind the guns of Brent and Whiting. They came, soiled, panting, splashed with scarlet, leading their jaded horses.

Somebody gave me another sabre and relieved me of the grotesque sword-stump that still dangled from my wrist by its leather knot.

We stood to horse to the left of Whiting's guns. A medico from Wool's staff came over to inquire concerning our casualties. He told me that we had already lost one-fourth of all the commissioned officers in our entire army. Adjutant-General Lincoln, he

said, lost his life trying to rally Lane's Indiana brigade. Lane, too, he said, had been wounded. He estimated the Mexican loss, so far, at between three and four thousand.

I scarcely heard what he said. My eyes were on the Mexican cavalry forming to charge these guns of Whiting and Brent; my mind was on Silver Knees; my heart heavy with premonition. I don't know why the medico kept on talking about our losses—a third of our army, he said, gloomily—and presently I walked away from him to avoid his chatter and the sight of the stretchers being carried rearward to our wagons, which were leaking blood from every straw-covered plank.

Lieutenant Donaldson, of Webster's battery, came over to ask Whiting if he could hold out. Whiting said he could if I'd support him. I told Donaldson I would; and he rode back to his guns.

It had rained, but the rain had ceased as dusk began to darken the rocks and woods of the ravines.

I called Peep over to me and, striving to speak lightly, asked him to go and see whether Señora Silver Knees, as he called her, was uninjured and in safety behind our lines.

There was a deathly feeling in my heart as he rode off. I did not believe that she was alive.

He was gone for a long time. Things were occurring all the while; but did not seem to shorten the long waiting or relieve the mortal strain. . . . Yet, all the while, the deafening uproar was going on; flashes of

musket, rifle, carbine, escopeta—dazzling floods of hellish light from howitzer and field gun.

Suddenly, through the smoke, right in front of Whiting's guns, a roar of hoofs, a rush of lances; dark, gasping, staring faces under scarlet bonnets; a thousand red pennons fluttering like a thousand frightened birds; blast after blast of flame; horses, riders, red bonnets, lances blown right and left into flying fragments.

Then my voice, thick with dread of death—not dread of my own death!— Then a bugle: march, trot out, gallop, charge!

We rode back, bringing in our dead and wounded. Dominguez had a lance-wound—not serious—and kept his saddle, joking ferociously with others who were carried back to the redly dripping wagons.

Bandara rode a lancer's horse and led his own upon which three of our dead riders were tied like dead prairie deer.

It had grown very dark and cold in the smok-choked pass of the Sierra Madre.

Waiting, my naked, red-smeared sabre across the pommel of my saddle, I heard the far, thin shouting of Mexican hussars charging the hacienda; and the roar of heavy Texan rifles and light artillery defending it.

There was a great commotion among the Mexican cavalry in front of us. I was sitting my horse

near one of Whiting's powder-scorched guns when, close behind me, I heard a horse.

With terrible foreboding I forced myself to turn; and I saw Pio Pacheco already at my elbow—laughing, reining in, lifting his hand half in salute, half in adjustment of his silver-trimmed sombrero:—

"Doña Encarnacion is safe in your own cuartel, Señor Major," said he; "and the señora and Calixto have prepared for your honour every luxury and convenience upon your arrival."

For a long while I found no voice to utter a word of gratitude to this young man or to the God who made him the gallant fellow he was.

Somebody said it was six o'clock. An officer of General Wool's staff came over to Whiting and told him to limber up and come back to the hacienda. He asked if I were Major Maddox, and when he learned that I was he gave me a written order from Old Zack asking me to return to Headquarters to prepare and send a despatch in code to Washington.

When I rode into Buena Vista, behind Whiting's lurching guns, I was the most excited and happy young man in Mexico.

I sent Bandara and Pacheco to Silver Knees, saying I'd be there as soon as my duty at Headquarters was finished.

The steward's house at the hacienda was crowded with officers.

"Say, Maddox," called out Old Zack when I came in, "there's one of two things happened today—either we've given them a terrible whipping or they've given us a worse one. And I'll be jiggered if I know which it is."

Nobody even smiled. Nobody in that house had the slightest idea what had happened during that sanguinary, ferocious, blundering, formless affair which probably will be known as the Battle of Buena Vista.

Colonel Davis said to me: "I think they've had enough, Maddox. I think they'll go off tonight. If they do, why, I suppose we can claim this affair as a victory. . . . In fact, what else would it be if Santa Anna moves off tonight and we find him gone in the morning?"

I was too happy to care what became of Santa Anna, or whether, in fact, we had won or lost this battle which had been so terrible to me.

Where now were my premonitions? Where now were my superstitious terrors? God lived and reigned to rout such black auguries and confound the evil magic out of which such stuff as omens and premonitions are devised.

Pio Pacheco came with anxious inquiry from his lovely young mistress.

"Say to her that I adore her and that I am hastening to kiss her hand," I whispered to him laughingly.

"Prala—what detains your honour?—"

"A word of secret instruction to the battery captains forward of the road to the Encarnacion."

"Your honour knows a shorter road to—la Encarnacion—"

"Tell her that, you disrespectful Gypsy, and she'll laugh—for she is a Gypsy, too!—"

I set spurs to my horse and rode out of the torch-lit hacienda.

The night was turning extremely cold. I noticed no Mexican camp fires, but ours glowed and twinkled everywhere.

I remember I was riding along the little river which flows southward toward the Aguanueva Hacienda and the Encarnacion, and had nearly reached the batteries across the main arroyo when I heard the whining, waspish whiz of bullets overhead.

To be killed now, thought I, would be too unutterably stupid—

When I recovered consciousness and picked myself up off the ground, I realized I had been hit by a Mexican bullet. Also, I understood that the wound could not be very serious because I managed to get onto my horse again and find the battery captain I was looking for. After that I remember nothing at all except that I presently found myself in my own cuartel, and Silver Knees crouched on the floor beside my camp-bed, her lips hot against my weary hand.

XXIV

NOCHE TRISTE

I HAVE written up my journal to date. I shall continue to keep a diary and to elaborate it into memoirs. It will amuse Silver Knees and me some day.

One thing is evident; I can not be severely hurt. I do not suffer; my mind is perfectly clear; I lie here in the Saltillo hospital where, through my window, I can see the superb Cathedral. However, the church bells ring all day and every day, and they confuse and bother me.

The church bells confuse me. However, there is nothing to write about here in the Saltillo hospital. . . . I wish to God that my condition did not frighten Silver Knees as it does.

There's an old owl of a brigade medico whose sallow visage alone is enough to scare her. . . . If I feel as tired tomorrow as I feel this evening I shall not bother further with my memoirs.

After all, only Silver Knees matters, or means anything on earth to me.

That owlish medico with his comic face again. Solemn enough to sober poor Calixto's tearful visage.

. . . The pompous ass seems to have scared poor Peep. . . . And Bandara, too.

I have asked for my journal again. The night seems very long. It is the Noche Triste for Silver Knees who seems so thin, so white and frightened.

I don't desire to write. It is only to calm her—reassure her. I am deathly tired.

After all, what is there to write about any more in the world except to write her name.

And that I love her—

Major John Maddox, U. S. A., died the following morning a few minutes after sunrise.

On the 23rd of February, 1847, about half past six in the evening, while delivering secret orders to Captain Washington, of the light artillery, a bullet from some lingering Mexican patrol, near the hacienda, passed obliquely through his body, touching neither bone nor vital organ, and leaving, it was supposed, a clean wound not too difficult to care for.

He died of internal hemorrhage three days later, in the General Hospital at Saltillo.

His only son, Juan, was born November 23rd, 1847.

(2)

THE END

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