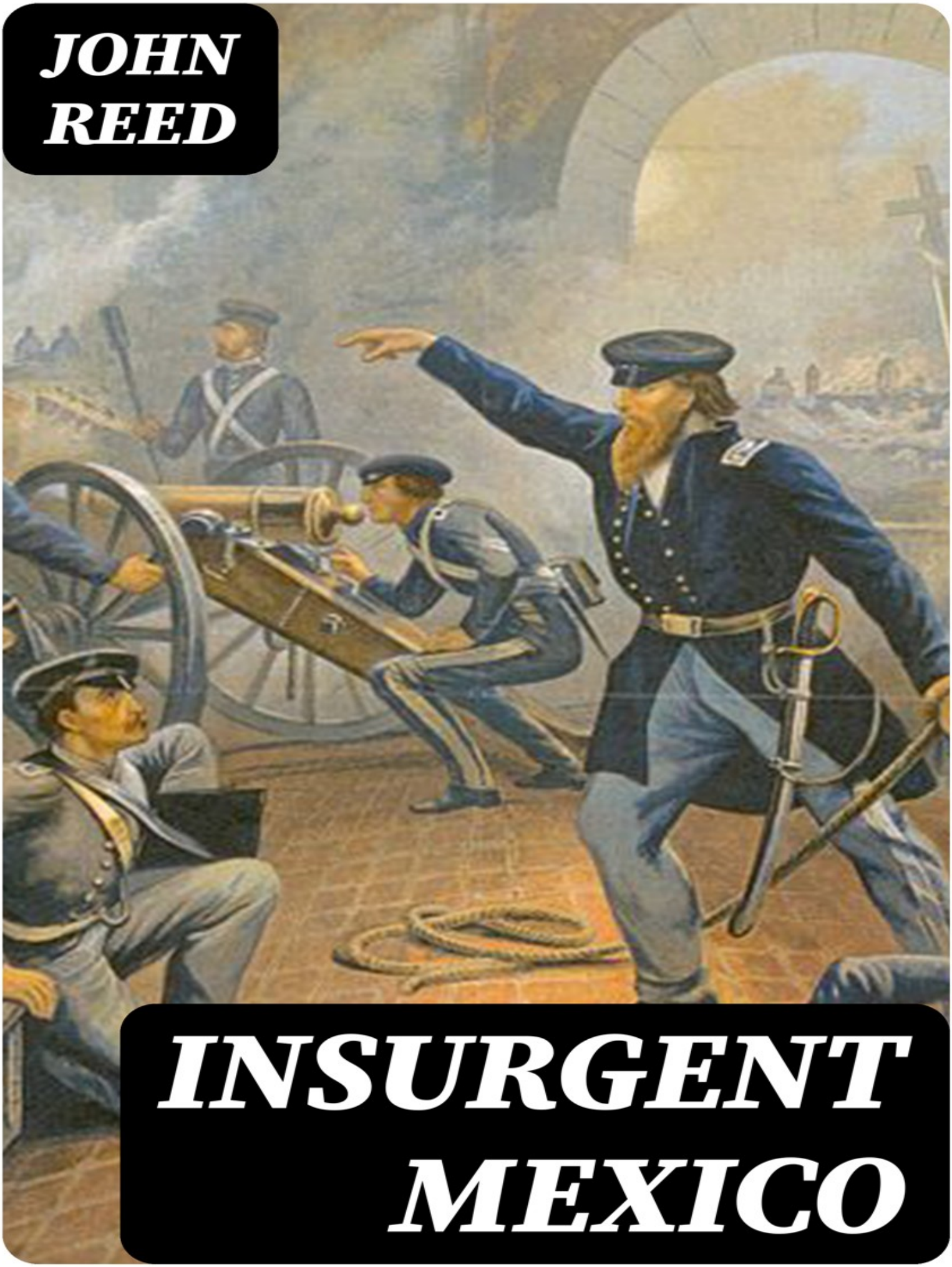
JOHN REED



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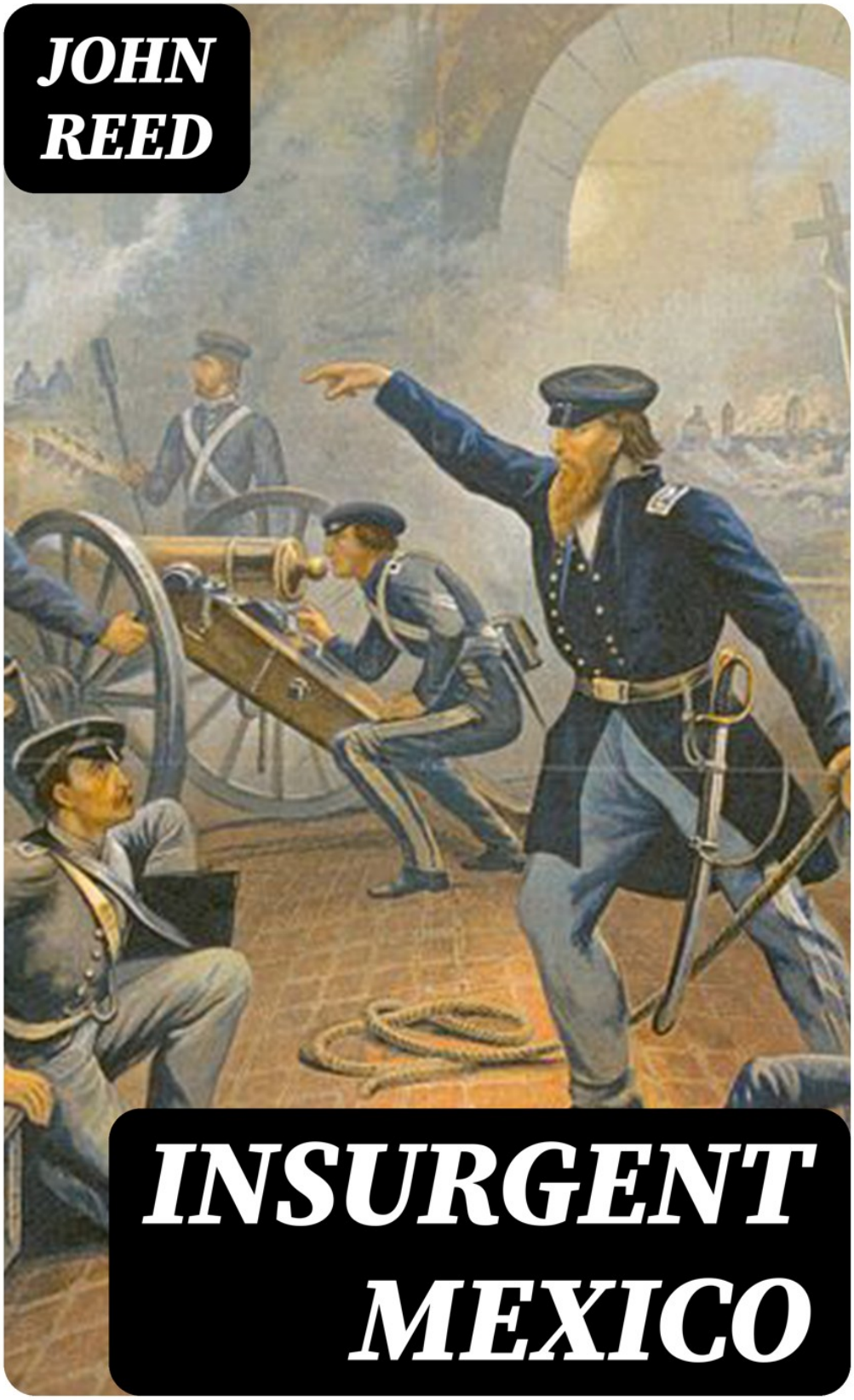

INSURGENT MEXICO

John Reed

Insurgent Mexico

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CHAPTER III
THE GENERAL GOES TO WAR

We had finished breakfast and I was resigning myself to the ten days in Las Nieves, when the General suddenly changed his mind. He came out of his room, roaring orders. In five minutes the house was all bustle and confusion—officers rushing to pack their serapes, *mozos* and troopers saddling horses, peons with armfuls of rifles rushing to and fro. Patricio harnessed five mules to the great coach—an exact copy of the Deadwood Stage. A courier rode out on the run to summon the Tropa, which was quartered at the Canotillo. Rafaelito loaded the General's baggage into the coach; it consisted of a typewriter, four swords, one of them bearing the emblem of the Knights of Pythias, three uniforms, the General's branding-iron, and a twelve-gallon demijohn of *sotol*.

And there came the Tropa, a ragged smoke of brown dust miles along the road. Ahead flew a little, squat, black figure, with the Mexican flag streaming over him; he wore a floppy sombrero loaded with five pounds of tarnished gold braid—once probably the pride of some imperial *hacendado*. Following him closely were Manuel Paredes, with riding boots up to his hips, fastened with silver buckles the size of dollars, beating his mount with the flat of a saber; Isidro

Amayo, making his horse buck by flapping a hat in his eyes; José Valiente, ringing his immense silver spurs inlaid with turquoises; Jesus Mancilla, his flashing brass chain around his neck; Julian Reyes, with colored pictures of Christ and the Virgin fastened to the front of his sombrero; a struggling tangle of six behind, with Antonio Guzman trying to lasso them, the coils of his horsehair rope soaring out of the dust. They came on the dead run, all Indian shouts and cracking revolvers, until they were only a hundred feet away, then jerked their little cow-ponies cruelly to a staggering halt with bleeding mouths, a whirling confusion of men, horses and dust.

This was the Tropa when I first saw them. About a hundred, they were, in all stages of picturesque raggedness; some wore overalls, others the charro jackets of peons, while one or two sported tight vaquero trousers. A few had shoes, most of them only cowhide sandals, and the rest were barefooted. Sabas Gutierrez was garbed in an ancient frockcoat, split up the back for riding. Rifles slung at their saddles, four or five cartridge-belts crossed over their chests, high, flapping sombreros, immense spurs chiming as they rode, bright-colored serapes strapped on behind—this was their uniform.

The General was with his mother. Outside the door crouched his mistress, weeping, her three children around her. For almost an hour we waited, then Urbina suddenly burst out of the door. With scarcely a look at his family, he leaped on his great, gray charger, and spurred furiously into

the street. Juan Sanchez blew a blast on his cracked bugle, and the Tropa, with the General at its head, took the Canotillo road.

In the meanwhile Patricio and I loaded three cases of dynamite and a case of bombs into the boot of the coach. I got up beside Patricio, the peons let go of the mules' heads, and the long whip curled around their bellies. Galloping, we whirled out of the village, and took the steep bank of the river at twenty miles an hour. Away on the other side, the Tropa trotted along a more direct road. The Canotillo we passed without stopping.

"*Arré mulas! Putas! Hijas de la Ho——!*" yelled Patricio, the whip hissing. The *Camino Real* was a mere track on uneven ground; every time we took a little arroyo the dynamite came down with a sickening crash. Suddenly a rope broke, and one case bounced off the coach and fell upon rocks. It was a cool morning, however, and we strapped it on again safely. …

Almost every hundred yards along the road were little heaps of stones, surmounted by wooden crosses—each one the memorial of a murder. And occasionally a tall, whitewashed cross uprose in the middle of a side-road, to protect some little desert rancho from the visits of the devil. Black shiny chaparral, the height of a mule's back, scraped the side of the coach; Spanish bayonet and the great barrel-cactus watched us like sentinels from the skyline of the desert. And always the mighty Mexican vultures circled over us, as if they knew we were going to war.

Late in the afternoon the stone wall which bounds the million acres of the Hacienda of Torreon de Cañas swung into sight on our left, marching across deserts and mountains like the Great Wall of China, for more than thirty miles; and, soon afterward, the hacienda itself. The Tropa had dismounted around the Big House. They said that General Urbina had suddenly been taken violently sick, and would probably be unable to leave his bed for a week.

The Casa Grande, a magnificent porticoed palace but one story high, covered the entire top of a desert rise. From its doorway one could see fifteen miles of yellow, rolling plain, and, beyond, the interminable ranges of bare mountains piled upon each other. Back of it lay the great corrals and stables, where the Tropa's evening fires already sent up myriad columns of yellow smoke. Below, in the hollow, more than a hundred peons' houses made a vast open square, where children and animals romped together, and the women kneeled at their eternal grinding of corn. Out on the desert a troop of *vaqueros* rode slowly home; and from the river, a mile away, the endless chain of black-shawled women carried water on their heads.... It is impossible to imagine how close to nature the peons live on these great haciendas. Their very houses are built of the earth upon which they stand, baked by the sun. Their food is the corn they grow; their drink the water from the dwindled river, carried painfully upon their heads; the clothes they wear are spun from the wool, and their sandals cut from the hide of a newly slaughtered steer. The animals are their

constant companions, familiars of their houses. Light and darkness are their day and night. When a man and a woman fall in love they fly to each other without the formalities of a courtship—and when they are tired of each other they simply part. Marriage is very costly (six pesos to the priest), and is considered a very swagger extra; but it is no more binding than the most casual attachment. And of course jealousy is a stabbing matter.

We dined in one of the lofty, barren *salas* of the Casa Grande; a room with a ceiling eighteen feet high, and walls of noble proportions, covered with cheap American wallpaper. A gigantic mahogany sideboard occupied one side of the place, but we had no knives and forks. There was a tiny fireplace, in which a fire was never lighted, yet the chill of death abode there day and night. The room next door was hung with heavy, spotted brocade, though there was no rug on the concrete floor. No pipes and no plumbing in all the house—you went to the well or the river for water. And candles the only light! Of course the *dueño* had long fled the country; but the hacienda in its prime must have been as splendid and as uncomfortable as a medieval castle.

The *cura* or priest of the hacienda church presided at dinner. To him were brought the choicest viands, which he sometimes passed to his favorites after helping himself. We drank *sotol* and *aguamiel*, while the *cura* made away with a whole bottle of looted anisette. Exhilarated by this, His Reverence descanted upon the virtues of the confessional,

especially where young girls were concerned. He also made us understand that he possessed certain feudal rights over new brides. "The girls, here," he said, "are very passionate.… "

I noticed that the rest didn't laugh much at this, though they were outwardly respectful. After we were out of the room, José Valiente hissed, shaking so that he could hardly speak: "I know the dirty——! And my sister…! The Revolucion will have something to say about these *curas*!" Two high Constitutionalist officers afterward hinted at a little-known program to drive the priests out of Mexico; and Villa's hostility to the *curas* is well known.

Patricio was harnessing the coach when I came out in the morning, and the Tropa were saddling up. The doctor, who was remaining with the General, strolled up to my friend, Trooper Juan Vallejo.

"That's a pretty horse you've got there," he said, "and a nice rifle. Lend them to me."

"But I haven't any other——" began Juan.

"I am your superior officer," returned the doctor. And that was the last we ever saw of doctor, horse and rifle.

I said farewell to the General, who was lying in torture in bed, sending bulletins to his mother by telephone every fifteen minutes. "May you journey happily," he said. "Write the truth. I commend you to Pablito."

CHAPTER IV

LA TROPA ON THE MARCH

And so I got inside the coach, with Rafaelito, Pablo Seañes, and his mistress. She was a strange creature. Young, slender, and beautiful, she was poison and a stone to everybody but Pablo. I never saw her smile and never heard her say a gentle word. Sometimes she treated us with dull ferocity; sometimes with bestial indifference. But Pablo she cradled like a baby. When he lay across the seat with his head in her lap, she would hug it fiercely to her breast, making noises like a tigress with her young.

Patricio handed down his guitar from the box, where he kept it, and to Rafael's accompaniment the Lieutenant-Colonel sang love-ballads in a cracked voice. Every Mexican knows hundreds of these. They are not written down, but often composed extemporaneously, and handed along by word of mouth. Some of them are very beautiful, some grotesque, and others as satirical as any French popular song. He sang:

"Exiled I wandered through the world—
Exiled by the government.
I came back at the end of the year,
Drawn by the fondness of love.
I went away with the purpose
Of staying away forever.
And the love of a woman was the only thing
That made me come back."

And then "*Los Hijos de la Noche*":

"I am of the children of the night
Who wander aimlessly in the darkness.
The beautiful moon with its golden rays
Is the companion of my sorrows.

"I am going to lose myself from thee,
Exhausted with weeping;
I am going sailing, sailing,
By the shores of the sea.

"You will see at the time of our parting
I will not allow you to love another.
For if so it should be, I would ruin your face.
And many blows we would give one another.

"So I am going to become an American.
Go with God, Antonia.
Say farewell to my friends.
O may the Americans allow me to pass
And open a saloon
On the other side of the River!"

The Hacienda of El Centro turned out to give us lunch. And there Fidencio offered me his horse to ride for the afternoon.

The Tropa had already ridden on ahead, and I could see them, strung out for half a mile in the black mesquite brush, the tiny red-white-and-green flag bobbing at their head. The mountains had withdrawn somewhere beyond the horizon, and we rode in the midst of a great bowl of desert, rolling up at the edges to meet the furnace-blue of the Mexican sky. Now that I was out of the coach, a great silence, and a peace beyond anything I ever felt, wrapped me around. It is almost impossible to get objective about the desert; you sink into it—become a part of it. Galloping along, I soon caught up with the Tropa.

"Aye, meester!" they shouted. "Here comes meester on a horse! *Que tal*, meester? How goes it? Are you going to fight with us?"

But Captain Fernando at the head of the column turned and roared: "Come here, meester!" The big man was grinning with delight. "You shall ride with me," he shouted, clapping me on the back. "Drink, now," and he produced a bottle of *sotol* about half full. "Drink it all. Show you're a man." "It's too much," I laughed. "Drink it," yelled the chorus as the Tropa crowded up to see. I drank it. A howl of laughter and applause went up. Fernando leaned over and gripped my hand. "Good for you, *compañero*!" he bellowed, rolling with mirth. The men crowded around, amused and interested. Was I going to fight with them? Where did I come from? What was I doing? Most of them had never heard of

reporters, and one hazarded the opinion darkly that I was a Gringo and a Porfirista, and ought to be shot.

The rest, however, were entirely opposed to this view. No Porfirista would possibly drink that much *sotol* at a gulp. Isidro Amayo declared that he had been in a brigade in the first Revolution which was accompanied by a reporter, and that he was called *Corresponsal de Guerra*. Did I like Mexico? I said: "I am very fond of Mexico. I like Mexicans too. And I like *sotol*, *aguardiente*, *mescal*, *tequila*, *pulque*, and other Mexican customs!" They shouted with laughter.

Captain Fernando leaned over and patted my arm. "Now you are with the men (*los hombres*.) When we win the Revolucion it will be a government by the men—not by the rich. We are riding over the lands of the men. They used to belong to the rich, but now they belong to me and to the *compañeros*."

"And you will be the army?" I asked.

"When the Revolucion is won," was the astonishing reply, "there will be no more army. The men are sick of armies. It is by armies that Don Porfirio robbed us."

"But if the United States should invade Mexico?"

A perfect storm broke everywhere. "We are more *valiente* than the Americanos—The cursed Gringos would get no further south than Juarez—Let's see them try it—We'd drive them back over the Border on the run, and burn their capital the next day…!"

"No," said Fernando, "you have more money and more soldiers. But the men would protect us. We need no army.

The men would be fighting for their houses and their women."

"What are you fighting for?" I asked. Juan Sanchez, the color-bearer, looked at me curiously. "Why, it is good, fighting. You don't have to work in the mines…!"

Manuel Paredes said: "We are fighting to restore Francisco I. Madero to the Presidency." This extraordinary statement is printed in the program of the Revolution. And everywhere the Constitutionalist soldiers are known as "Maderistas." "I knew him," continued Manuel, slowly. "He was always laughing, always."

"Yes," said another, "whenever there was any trouble with a man, and all the rest wanted to fight him or put him in prison, Pancho Madero said: 'Just let me talk to him a few minutes. I can bring him around.'"

"He loved *bailes*," an Indian said. "Many a time I've seen him dance all night, and all the next day, and the next night. He used to come to the great Haciendas and make speeches. When he began the peons hated him; when he ended they were crying…. "

Here a man broke out into a droning, irregular tune, such as always accompanies the popular ballads that spring up in thousands on every occasion:

"In Nineteen hundred and ten
Madero was imprisoned
In the National Palace
The eighteenth of February

"Four days he was imprisoned
In the Hall of the Intendancy
Because he did not wish
To renounce the Presidency

"Then Blanquet and Felix Diaz
Martyred him there
They were the hangmen
Feeding on his hate.

"They crushed….
Until he fainted
With play of cruelty
To make him resign.

"Then with hot irons
They burned him without mercy
And only unconsciousness
Calmed the awful flames.

"But it was all in vain
Because his mighty courage
Preferred rather to die
His was a great heart!

"This was the end of the life
Of him who was the redeemer
Of the Indian Republic

And of all the poor.

"They took him out of the Palace
And tell us he was killed in an assault
What a cynicism!
What a shameless lie!

"O Street of Lecumberri
Your cheerfulness has ended forever
For through you passed Madero
To the Penitentiary.

"That twenty-second of February
Will always be remembered in the Indian Republic.
God has pardoned him
And the Virgin of Guadelupe.

"Good-bye Beautiful Mexico
Where our leader died
Good-bye to the palace
Whence he issued a living corpse

"Señores, there is nothing eternal
Nor anything sincere in life
See what happened to Don Francisco I. Madero!'

By the time he was half-way through, the entire Tropa was humming the tune, and when he finished there was a moment of jingling silence.

"We are fighting," said Isidro Amayo, "for Libertad."

"What do you mean by Libertad?"

"Libertad is when I can *do what I want*!"

"But suppose it hurts somebody else?"

He shot back at me Benito Juarez' great sentence:

"Peace is the respect for the rights of others!"

I wasn't prepared for that. It startled me, this barefooted *meztizo's* conception of Liberty. I submit that it is the only correct definition of Liberty—*to do what I want to*! Americans quote it to me triumphantly as an instance of Mexican irresponsibility. But I think it is a better definition than ours—Liberty is the right to do what the Courts want. Every Mexican schoolboy knows the definition of peace and seems to understand pretty well what it means, too. But, they say, Mexicans don't want peace. That is a lie, and a foolish one. Let Americans take the trouble to go through the Maderista army, asking whether they want peace or not! The people are sick of war.

But, just to be square, I'll have to report Juan Sanchez' remark:

"Is there war in the United States now?" he asked.

"No," I said untruthfully.

"No war at all?" He meditated for a moment. "How do you pass the time, then…?"

Just about then somebody saw a coyote sneaking through the brush, and the entire Tropa gave chase with a whoop. They scattered rollicking over the desert, the late sun flashing from cartridge-belts and spurs, the ends of their bright serapes flying out behind. Beyond them, the scorched world sloped gently up, and a range of far lilac mountains jumped in the heat waves like a bucking horse. By here, if tradition is right, passed the steel-armored Spaniards in their search for gold, a blaze of crimson and silver that has left the desert cold and dull ever since. And, topping a rise, we came upon the first sight of the Hacienda of La Mimbrera, a walled enclosure of houses strong enough to stand a siege, stretching steeply down a hill, with the magnificent Casa Grande at the top.

In front of this house, which had been sacked and burned by Orozco's General, Che Che Campa, two years before, the coach was drawn up. A huge fire had been kindled, and ten *compañeros* were slaughtering sheep. Into the red glare of the firelight they staggered, with the struggling, squealing sheep in their arms, its blood fountaining upon the ground, shining in the fierce light like something phosphorescent.

The officers and I dined in the house of the *administrador* Don Jesus, the most beautiful specimen of manhood I have ever seen. He was much over six feet tall, slender, white-skinned—a pure Spanish type of the highest breed. At one end of his dining-room, I remember, hung a

placard embroidered in red, white and green: "Viva Mexico!" and at the other, a second, which read: "Viva Jesus!"

It was after dinner, as I stood at the fire, wondering where I was to sleep, that Captain Fernando touched me on the arm.

"Will you sleep with the *compañeros*?"

We walked across the great open square, in the furious light of the desert stars, to a stone store-house set apart. Inside, a few candles stuck against the wall illumined the rifles stacked in the corners, the saddles on the floor, and the blanket-rolled *compañeros* with their heads on them. One or two were awake, talking and smoking. In a corner, three sat muffled in their serapes, playing cards. Five or six had voices and a guitar. They were singing "Pascual Orozco," beginning:

"They say that Pascual Orozco has turned his coat
Because Don Terrazzas seduced him;
They gave him many millions and they bought him
And sent him to overthrow the government.

"Orozco believed it
And to the war he went;
But the Maderista cannon
Was his calamity.

"If to thy window shall come Porfirio Diaz,
Give him for charity some cold tortillas;
If to thy window shall come General Huerta,
Spit in his face and slam the door.

"If to thy window shall come Inez Salazar,
Lock your trunk so that he can't steal;
If to thy window shall come Maclovio Herrera,
Give him dinner and put the cloth on the table."

They didn't distinguish me at first, but soon one of the card-players said: "Here comes Meester!" At that the others roused, and woke the rest. "That's right—it's good to sleep with the *hombres*—take this place, amigo—here's my saddle—here there is no crookedness—here a man goes straight.…"

"May you pass a happy night, *compañero*," they said. "Till morning, then."

Pretty soon somebody shut the door. The room became full of smoke and fetid with human breath. What little silence was left from the chorus of snoring was entirely obliterated by the singing, which kept up, I guess, until dawn. The *compañeros* had fleas.…

But I rolled up in my blankets and lay down upon the concrete floor very happily. And I slept better than I had before in Mexico.

At dawn we were in the saddle, larking up a steep roll of barren desert to get warm. It was bitter cold. The Tropa were wrapped in serapes up to their eyes, so that they looked like colored toadstools under their great sombreros. The level rays of the sun, burning as they fell upon my face, caught them unaware, glorifying the serapes to more brilliant colors than they possessed. Isidro Amayo's was of deep blue and yellow spirals; Juan Sanchez had one brick red, Captain Fernando's was green and cerise; against them flashed a purple and black zigzag pattern.…

We looked back to see the coach pulled to a stop, and Patricio waving to us. Two of the mules had given out, raw from the traces, and tottering with the fatigue of the last two days. The Tropa scattered to look for mules. Soon they came back, driving two great beautiful animals that had never seen harness. No sooner had they smelled the coach than they made a desperate break for freedom. And now the Tropa instantly went back to their native profession—they became *vaqueros*. It was a pretty sight, the rope-coils swinging in the air, the sudden snake-like shoot of the loops, the little horses bracing themselves against the shock of the running mule. Those mules were demons. Time after time they broke the *riatas*; twice they overturned horse and rider. Pablo came to the rescue. He got on Sabas's horse, drove in the spurs, and went after one mule. In three minutes he had roped him by the leg, thrown him, and tied him. Then he took the second with equal dispatch. It was not for nothing

that Pablo was Lieutenant-Colonel at twenty-six. Not only could he fight better than his men, but he could ride better, rope better, shoot better, chop wood better, and dance better.

The mules' legs were tied, and they were dragged with ropes to the coach, where the harness was slipped on them in spite of their frantic struggles. When all was ready, Patricio got on the box, seized the whip, and told us to cut away. The wild animals scrambled to their feet, bucking and squealing. Above the uproar came the crack of the heavy whip, and Patricio's bellow: "*Andale! Ujos de la Gran' Ch——!*" and they jerked forward, running, the big coach taking the arroyos like an express train. Soon it vanished behind its own pall of dust, and appeared hours afterward, crawling up the side of a great hill, miles away.…

Panchito was eleven years old, already a trooper with a rifle too heavy for him, and a horse that they had to lift him on. His *compadre* was Victoriano, a veteran of fourteen. Seven others of the Tropa were under seventeen. And there was a sullen, Indian-faced woman, riding side-saddle, who wore two cartridge-belts. She rode with the *hombres*—slept with them in the cuartels.

"Why are you fighting?" I asked her.

She jerked her head toward the fierce figure of Julian Reyes.

"Because he is," she answered. "He who stands under a good tree is sheltered by a good shade."

"A good rooster will crow in any chicken-coop," capped Isidro.

"A parrot is green all over," chimed in someone else.

"Faces we see, but hearts we do not comprehend," said José, sentimentally.

At noon we roped a steer, and cut his throat. And because there was no time to build a fire, we ripped the meat from the carcase and ate it raw.

"*Oiga*, meester," shouted José. "Do the United States soldiers eat raw meat?"

I said I didn't think they did.

"It is good for the *hombres*. In the campaign we have no time for anything but *carne crudo*. It makes us brave."

By late afternoon we had caught up with the coach, and galloped with it down through the dry arroyo and up through the other side, past the great *ribota* court that flanks the Hacienda of La Zarca. Unlike La Mimbrera, the Casa Grande here stands on a level place, with the peons' houses in long rows at its flanks, and a flat desert barren of chaparral for twenty miles in front. Che Che Campa also paid a visit to La Zarca. The big house is a black and gaping ruin.

CHAPTER V
WHITE NIGHTS AT ZARCA

Of course, I took up quarters at the cuartel. And right here I want to mention one fact. Americans had insisted that the Mexican was fundamentally dishonest—that I might expect to have my outfit stolen the first day out. Now for two weeks I lived with as rough a band of ex-outlaws as there was in the army. They were without discipline and without education. They were, many of them, Gringo-haters. They had not been paid a cent for six weeks, and some were so desperately poor that they couldn't boast sandals or serapes. I was a stranger with a good outfit, unarmed. I had a hundred and fifty pesos, which I put conspicuously at the head of my bed when I slept. And I never lost a thing. But more than that, I was not permitted to pay for my food; and in a company where money was scarce and tobacco almost unknown, I was kept supplied with all I could smoke by the *compañeros*. Every suggestion from me that I should pay for it was an insult.

The only thing possible was to hire music for a *baile*. Long after Juan Sanchez and I rolled up in our blankets that night, we could hear the rhythm of the music, and the shouts of the dancers. It must have been midnight when somebody threw open the door and yelled: "Meester! *Oiga*, meester! Are you asleep? Come to the *baile*! *Arriba*! *Andale*!"

"Too sleepy!" I said. After some further argument the messenger departed, but in ten minutes back he came. "El Capitan Fernando orders you to come at once! *Vamonos*!" Now the others woke up. "Come to the *baile*, meester!" they

shouted. Juan Sanchez sat up and began pulling on his shoes. "Now we're off!" said he. "The meester is going to dance! Captain's orders! Come on, meester!"

"I'll go if all the Tropa does," I said. They raised a yell at that, and the night was full of chuckling men pulling on their clothes.

Twenty of us reached the house in a body. The mob of peons blocking door and window opened to let us pass. "The meester!" they cried. "The meester's going to dance!"

Capitan Fernando threw his arms about me, roaring: "Here he comes, the *compañero*! Dance now! Go to it! They're going to dance the *jota*!"

"But I don't know how to dance the *jota*!"

Patricio, flushed and panting, seized me by the arm. "Come on, it's easy! I'll introduce you to the best girl in the Zarca!"

There was nothing to do. The window was jammed with faces, and a hundred tried to crowd in at the door. It was an ordinary room in a peon's house, whitewashed, with a humpy dirt floor. In the light of two candles sat the musicians. The music struck up "*Puentes á Chihuahua*." A grinning silence fell. I gathered the young lady under my arm, and started the preliminary march around the room customary before the dance begins. We waltzed painfully for a moment or two, and suddenly they all began to yell: "*Ora*! *Ora*! *Now*!"

"What do you do now?"

"*Vuelta*! *Vuelta*! Loose her!" a perfect yell.

"But I don't know how!"
"The fool doesn't know how to dance," cried one.
Another began the mocking song:

"The Gringos all are fools,
They've never been in Sonora,
And when they want to say: 'Diez Reales,'
They call it 'Dollar an' a quarta'.... "

But Patricio bounded into the middle of the floor, and Sabas after him; each seized a *muchacha* from the line of women sitting along one end of the room. And as I led my partner back to her seat, they "*vuelta'd*." First a few waltz steps—then the man whirled away from the girl, snapping his fingers, throwing one arm up to cover his face, while the girl put one hand on her hip and danced after him. They approached each other, receded, danced around each other. The girls were dumpy and dull, Indian-faced and awkward, bowed at the shoulder from much grinding of corn and washing of clothes. Some of the men had on heavy boots, some none; many wore pistols and cartridge-belts, and a few carried rifles slung from their shoulders.

The dance was always preceded by a grand march-around; then, after the couple had danced twice the circuit of the room, they walked again. There were two-steps, waltz and mazurka beside the *jota*. Each girl kept her eyes on the ground, never spoke, and stumbled heavily after you. Add to

this a dirt floor full of arroyos, and you have a form of torture unequaled anywhere in the world. It seemed to me I danced for hours, spurred on by the chorus: "Dance, meester! *No floje*! Keep it up! Don't quit!"

Later there was another jota, and here's where I almost got into trouble. I danced this one successfully—with another girl. And, afterward, when I asked my original partner to two-step, she was furiously angry.

"You shamed me before them all," said she. "*You*—you said you didn't know how to dance the *jota*!" As we marched around the room, she appealed to her friends: "Domingo! Juan! Come out and take me away from this Gringo! He won't dare to do anything!"

Half a dozen of them started onto the floor, and the rest looked on. It was a ticklish moment. But all at once the good Fernando glided in front, a revolver in his hand.

"The Americano is my friend!" said he. "Get back there and mind your business!… "

The horses were tired, so we rested a day in La Zarca. Behind the Casa Grande lay a ruined garden, full of gray alamo trees, figs, vines, and great barrel-cactuses. It was walled around by high adobe walls on three sides, over one of which the ancient white tower of the church floated in the blue sky. The fourth side opened upon a reservoir of yellow water, and beyond it stretched the western desert, miles upon miles of tawny desolation. Trooper Marin and I lay