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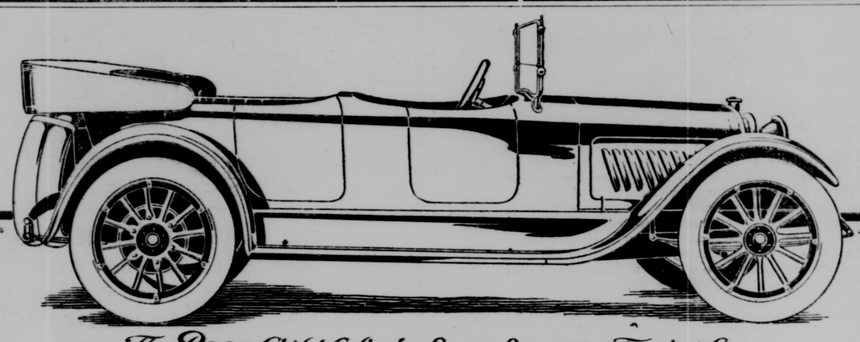

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"ROUGH ON RATS" ends Rats, Mice, Bugs. 25c.

Bereaved

A Drama of Mexico

By F. A. MITCHEL

Ever since the revolution in Mexico that deposed Porfirio Diaz that country has been in a state of ferment and has kept the people of the United States in a fever of anxiety. During the rule of President Huerta I, being of an inquiring disposition, concluded to go down there and see for myself what kind of people the Mexicans are.

Passing over the border line of Texas, I entered rural Mexico and moved on southward, intending to visit the capital. There were then the Huerta, the Carranza and the Villa factions, all struggling for the upper hand. The frightful condition of the country did not prevent the people from enjoying such amusements as they could get. I stopped one evening for the night in a little cluster of houses—it could not be dignified by the name of town—and, hearing that a dance was to be given in the dining room of the tavern where I put up, I was curious to see how people could make merry while their country was in a state of anarchy.

When the dancing began I took a chair on the veranda where I could look through an open window upon the dancers. The effect was heightened by the picturesque costumes of both the men and the women. The merrymakers came from the country round about, being made up of all sorts of persons, from the hacendado, or farmer, to the soldier, who made his living by fighting for some one of the factions struggling for the supremacy. Not only was the soldier present, but his wife and his daughters, for an army in Mexico is accompanied by the families of the soldiers.

I was much interested in watching these people. Among the better grade I noticed a young couple who, it was evident, were lovers. The man was a handsome fellow dressed in the costume of a hacendado, composed of tight trousers with a row of buttons on each leg, where a soldier's stripe is usually placed; a fancy waistcoat and a short jacket, also having a profusion of buttons. The girl wore the Mexican skirt of many colors, the Mexican bodice and the jacket decorated with gold braid.

I could not help contrasting the happiness beaming in the faces of these two young people with the cloud that hung over their country. They danced every dance together. While I was watching them a man came up behind me, and I felt that he was looking over my shoulder. I moved aside not to obstruct his view and at the same time turned my head to have a look at him.

I judged that he was connected with one of the various armies or bands which were sucking the lifeblood of Mexico. A more villainous face I never saw on a man. His eyes were following the couple that interested me, and as he watched his frown deepened. He stood only a few minutes looking at them, then went away.

At the end of each dance a number of the dancers came out on to the veranda to be refreshed by the cooler air outside. During one of these intervals a sharp report suddenly sounded at the other end of the veranda. I saw those who were inside start for the exit nearest to the point from which the sound came, and those on the veranda turned and hurried in that direction. I, too, arose and went to see what had happened.

A crowd had gathered about something or some one, but I could not see beyond the onlookers. When finally I succeeded in doing so I saw lying on the floor the young man I had been observing within, while the girl with whom he had danced was kneeling beside him moaning piteously. He had been shot and was dying.

Within half an hour the dance had been resumed, and, judging by the gayety, one would not have suspected that the life of one of the company had been just snuffed out. I turned away from the scene, went as far from it as I could and waited for the house to become quiet that I might go to bed.

I did not get away from the place the next day. I had come to Mexico from curiosity, and I did not like to move on without learning more of the tragedy a part of which I had witnessed. I inquired who had done the shooting and was informed that a man who belonged to a Villa force in the neighborhood was the culprit. The young farmer who was killed was an advocate of Huerta. This is all the information I could elicit, but I inferred much more. I believed that the murderer coveted the girl who had given her heart to the farmer.

I lounged at the tavern during the day, uncert in as to just when I would move on southward. During the afternoon, while strolling among the houses that composed the place, I met the man who had looked in at the window at the dancers. I knew him to be the murderer and was surprised to see him still near the scene of his cowardly act. But I was destined to still further surprise. I saw him approach a house and walk up and down under a window.

They have a custom in Mexico called "playing the bear." When a man wishes to court a girl he takes position under her window and walks back and forth till either he gets a sign from her or gives up his attempt to win her. If he receives encouragement he proceeds step by step till he forms her acquaintance and makes formal application for her hand.

I had read of this custom, but had never seen an instance of it. I surmised that the man might be wooing according to the Mexican custom. I could see him from the tavern veranda, and, going there, I took a seat in order to observe what would follow. While doing so the landlord came out on to the veranda, and, pointing to the walking man, I asked him what he was doing.

"He is the man who shot the hacendado last night. The girl who was robbed of her sweetheart lives there. The man is probably trying to see her and ask her forgiveness."

An hour had passed from the time I had first seen the man walking under the window when a figure of a woman appeared within the house. The walker stopped, and I saw that he was speaking. The woman came to the window, and, the sunlight falling upon her, I recognized the young girl who had been robbed of her lover. I wondered if the murderer could obtain forgiveness so soon after the tragedy.

The two talked together for some time; then the man held his hand up to the window. After some delay the girl took it, but I fancied I could see her shudder. A few more words between them and the man went away. He passed the veranda near where I sat, and I saw an unmistakable look of triumph on his face.

Interested in the drama which was being enacted before me, I determined to remain where I was till the last act had been played. I wondered if the girl, actuated by religious motives, had felt constrained to forgive the slayer of her lover. Had it not been for the triumphant look on the man's face as he passed me I would not have dreamed of anything more than this. But I had discovered that the Mexicans are a strange people, and one cannot in any event tell what a woman is going to do. Was it possible that this man, like King Richard III., would win her whose lover he had slain?

I had seen no sign of a burial of the first love and did not think it possible that the girl could take another until the body had been laid away. What, then, was my surprise when just before dark I saw the murderer approach the house where the bereaved girl lived and stand under her window! Presently she came out of the door, joined him, and they walked away together.

I confess that, though by this time I was prepared for almost anything in Mexico, I could not believe what my eyes revealed to me. I wished that I might follow the couple and see what occurred between them, though I shrank from witnessing a girl throwing herself into the arms of a man who had only the night before shot down in cold blood the man she loved.

I lit a cigar and sat smoking on the veranda. The twilight faded; the stars came out. All about me was so peaceful that I could not realize I was in a country torn with anarchy and a great part of it in the hands of robber bands; that within twenty-four hours I had witnessed an instance of the desperate condition of the country. But my mind was ever on the couple I had seen go out into the darkness. I thought of the lover of the evening before, a smile on his handsome lips returned by one on those of the girl he loved, now lying cold in death in one of the houses within the range of my vision, while the girl he loved had gone with his murderer.

It was quite dark, 9 o'clock perhaps, when, tired of sitting, I arose to stretch my legs. I walked down a roadway on which the two persons I had been watching had disappeared. Suddenly a figure, a woman's figure, flitted by me. She was moving rapidly, and I got a glimpse only of something white. And yet I was impressed with the idea that it was the girl who had lost her lover. If so, where was the man with whom she had set out?

Believing that nothing more of the drama which was unfolding would be revealed to me that night, I returned to the tavern and went to bed.

In the morning everything about me was still peaceful. The inhabitants of the place went about their daily vocations as usual. If there was war in the neighborhood it was too far distant to be heard. Still I refrained from leaving the place without more information as to what interested me. I determined to remain where I was until the climax.

In the afternoon occurred a simple funeral of the murdered man. The chief mourner was the girl who had been bereaved. The murderer was not in evidence at any time during the day. The poor girl was supported by her mother and attended by a few friends. I went into the tavern and asked the landlord what had become of the soldier.

"He was found this morning, not far from here, stabbed to the heart," was the reply.

"Who killed him?" I asked.

The landlord shrugged his shoulders and said that this was not known.

The climax to my drama had been played. Whether any one knew who had killed the soldier I do not know to this day. One thing I know. I saw him go out into the darkness with the girl whose life he had blighted, and I saw her come back without him.

The curtain had fallen; the audience—myself—had seen the play. There was nothing more for me but to move on. The death of a man shot down in the interval between two dances had not ruffled the tranquillity of the hamlet, nor had the finding of the body of his murderer twenty-four hours later any noticeable effect. What were these two lives in a land where bloodshed is the order of the day?

My curiosity as to Mexico had been satisfied. Instead of going on down to the capital I turned about and journeyed back toward home.

A PROPHECY.

CARRIAGES without horses shall go,
And accidents fill the world with woe.
Around the world thoughts will fly
In the twinkling of an eye.
Waters shall yet more wonders do,
Now strange, shall yet be true,
The world upside down shall be,
And gold shall be found at the root of tree.
Through hills men shall ride,
And no horse nor ass be at his side,
Under water men shall walk,
Shall ride, shall sleep, shall talk.
In the air men shall be seen
In white, in black, in green.
Iron in the water shall float
As easy as a wooden boat.
Gold shall be found 'mid stone
In a land that's now unknown.
Fire and water shall wonders do,
England shall at last admit a Jew.
And this world to an end shall come
In eighteen hundred and eighty-one.

—Mother Shipton, 1486-1560.

LABOR LOST.

YOU may write a lot of verses
That you'll never see in print;
You may tell a bore you're busy,
But he'll never take the hint.

—Selected.

Daisy's Hero

He Proved, Too, He Was a Real One

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Mrs. Howard glanced apprehensively toward the row of steamer chairs where her pretty daughter, Daisy, was engaged in animated conversation with a good looking, athletic young man.

"Daisy is so imprudent," murmured Daisy's mother as she neared the chairs. "There is poor Hal eating his heart out, and that naughty girl is devoting herself to young Pearson!"

She smiled coldly at Ben Pearson as he arose promptly at her approach and arranged her chair. When she was seated and the rug tucked about her feet Mrs. Howard glanced significantly at Daisy.

"My dear, did you know that Hal was waiting for you? You promised to play accompaniments for him."

"Oh, mother, I forgot all about it!" cried Daisy as she arose and settled the blue cloth cap on her bright hair. "Mr. Pearson was describing the great Yale-Harvard game—you know he was halfback on the football team!" Daisy cast an admiring glance at Pearson's broad shoulders.

Mrs. Howard smiled perfunctorily, and she was nettled to observe that Ben Pearson accompanied Daisy in her search for Hal Denison. Just as she was congratulating herself that this Mediterranean tour, with all its pleasant intimacy of ship life, must bring about an engagement between Daisy and Hal Denison, the son of her old friend, why, who should appear but this football hero, Ben Pearson, and promptly put poor Hal out of the running.

Why they called Hal Denison Poor Hal one could not tell, for, although he was not big and brawny like Ben Pearson, he was not frail looking unless one especially noted the intellectual face which had a certain delicacy of feature and expression. Otherwise, although Hal Denison was small in stature, he was wiry and strong. He had never gone in for athletics. He was a musician, and even now there came the dreamy strains of "La Serenade" as he played on his violin to Daisy's sympathetic accompaniment.

Later the music ceased for awhile, and then Pearson's deep bass voice was heard booming forth popular songs.

Dusk was settling down over the sea when Daisy came along the deck quite alone and slipped into her chair with unusual quietness.

"Hal played beautifully, my dear," murmured Mrs. Howard sleepily.

"I suppose so, mother," returned Daisy; then, hesitatingly, she added, "You don't like Mr. Pearson, do you?"

"I don't admire him, my dear, but I cannot say that I dislike him," returned Mrs. Howard.

"I like him very much," said Daisy simply.

"Not better than Hal?" demanded Mrs. Howard, throwing caution to the winds.

Daisy hesitated, and that instant's hesitation told Mrs. Howard that the girl's love was wavering beween the two men. Which would she choose? There was little doubt, for Daisy was a hero worshiper, and she plainly admired the burly football player.

"Oh, mother," she cried impulsively, "you know I'm fond of Hal, but he's—more like a girl, don't you know—quiet and dreamy and fond of simple things. One could not imagine Hal doing anything heroic, now, could one?"

"Some people rather thought it was heroic for Hal to give his cousin Ned three-quarters of their uncle's estate, when the uncle had purposely cut Ned off in a moment of anger; that's an example of moral courage. It was courageous of Hal to submit to a transfusion of blood in an effort to save his brother's life three years ago. In my opinion, Hal Denison is a hero."

"But, mother, dear, that is all very well, but that isn't the sort of courage I mean. There is a certain charm in physical courage, don't you know. Jeopardizing one's life to save that of another. I couldn't imagine Hal doing that."

"How about giving his blood for his brother? He has never been as well since then."

"I know, but the kind of heroism that I mean is born of an impulse, the sort that leaps to stop a runaway horse, that plunges overboard to save a drowning person. Oh, you know!"

Mrs. Howard smiled.

"A spectacular heroism," she said dryly.

"I can't imagine Hal doing anything of that sort," went on Daisy. "He is so deliberate in all his actions. He would want to stop and think the matter over—whether there might not be a safe and sane way of accomplishing the end. Do you know, mother, that Mr. Pearson has saved eight people from drowning in the past ten years?"

"I didn't know it, Daisy, but I am sure it is a very creditable record. Did he tell you of his acts of heroism?"

"Now, Mother Howard!" Daisy laughed rather shamefacedly. "He did tell me, but only because I urged him to do so. I love heroism."

Mrs. Howard arose and prepared to go below.

"Come, dear; we must dress for dinner. Remember, Daisy, that there are more unrecorded heroes in the world's history than otherwise."

And Daisy, still doubting her mother's judgment, went down to dinner quite unconvinced that there could be any lurking heroism in the quiet personality of Hal Denison.

For several days after that there was bad weather, and many of the passengers were compelled to remain in their staterooms. Among these latter were Mrs. Howard and Hal Denison, who declared himself a fair weather sailor.

But Daisy Howard and Ben Pearson braved the inclemency of the weather and the rain swept decks, and each day found them pacing to and fro, discussing a thousand and one topics, but usually swinging back to that most interesting one, absorbing alike to the young man and the girl, the heroic adventures of Mr. Benjamin Pearson.

There came a day when the party landed at the island of Capri to visit the famous grottoes. Somehow Ben Pearson had attached himself to Mrs. Howard's party, and it had become customary now for Ben to escort Daisy Howard on these excursions, while Mrs. Howard and Hal Denison followed in the rear.

Pearson had visited the island the previous year, and he had much to relate of an adventure that befell the party of which he was a member. He told the story modestly enough, but it had the invariable ending. A child had fallen from one of the rocks into a deep, silent pool. He, Pearson, had plunged into the icy depths and restored the child to its mother's arms.

"This is the very spot," said Pearson, pointing before him.

Daisy looked. She glimpsed the dark blue water, still and icy. A glance over her shoulder showed that the other members of the party had gone on to another grotto. Only her mother and Hal Denison were near. Daisy turned her head toward Pearson, and her lips parted in a dazzling smile.

At that moment her foot slipped, and with a little cry of terror she caught herself, stumbled and then plunged down into the icy pool.

As she disappeared Ben Pearson rushed frantically up and down the brink of the pool and roared for help.

Mrs. Howard swooned away, and Hal Denison, tossing aside hat and coat, poised on the edge of the pool and then dived down. When he came up he brought the girl with him, dripping wet and shivering with cold, but quite conscious.

Hal's face was white and stern as he disdained Pearson's hastily offered assistance, and somehow he scrambled upon the rocks and bore Daisy to safety.

His shouts brought the guide and other members of the party, and, having administered restoratives and borrowed a steamer rug from a rheumatic old gentleman, he wrapped Daisy in it and, lifting her easily in his arms, bore her to a fisherman's hut on the shore.

Mrs. Howard, having been restored to consciousness, followed on the arm of one of the men, and soon she was assisting her daughter to dry her garments before a roaring fire in the fisherman's cottage.

Daisy was very pale and silent, and Hal Denison was equally reticent. Mrs. Howard, noticing that Hal was dripping wet and shivering with cold, insisted that they return to the tourist steamer at once, so that the young man might be put under the care of the ship's doctor. As for Daisy, she appeared in her normal health when she was arrayed in the picturesque gala attire of the fisherman's daughter. As for Marta, the slim, dark eyed girl, she wept with delight over the gold pieces which Mrs. Howard had given her in exchange for the garments and declared that they would buy her wedding clothes.

Once on board the Celeste, Mrs. Howard placed Hal in the care of the doctor and was relieved that he would suffer no more than a severe cold as a consequence of his heroic deed.

As for Mr. Ben Pearson, he had quite disappeared from the view of the Howard party, and it was several days afterward that Mrs. Howard espied him gloomily patrolling the deck alone.

Daisy was below in the library, reading to Hal Denison.

Presently Ben Pearson approached Mrs. Howard with unusual diffidence in his manner.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Howard," he said quite humbly, "but I would like to make an explanation."

"Yes?" asked Mrs. Howard coolly.

"About the other day at the grotto."

"Indeed?"

"I suppose you were quite surprised that I did not jump in and rescue Miss Howard at once. You may have observed that I'm hard hit with Miss Daisy. I think there's no one like her, and I'd like to believe that she owed her life to me. But"— He reddened uncomfortably and looked over the side at the swiftly rushing water.

"But?" prompted Mrs. Howard kindly.

"But, you see, I can't swim a stroke!" he confessed.

"Oh-h-h!" It was Daisy's voice in horrified wonder. She had come up just in time to hear his confession.

"It is true," he said doggedly.

"Then the eight lives you saved that summer—and"—

"All bunkoism!" he interrupted, turning on his heel and walking away.

Daisy's eyes filled with tears. "Mother," she said humbly, "he's not only a coward, but he is a liar as well! I tumbled into the pool to prove to you and Hal that my hero was a hero indeed. But what a poor hero! When I opened my eyes and saw poor Hal's face and felt his arms bearing me out of that icy water I realized that here was my hero, modest and unassuming, but ready when the supreme moment came."

"Where is your hero now, dear?" asked Mrs. Howard quietly.

"Down in the library, mother, waiting. I have promised to be his wife, and he is waiting for your blessing!"

THE NATION.

WHILE many a foreign accent, which our God can understand,
Is blessing him for home and bread in this free, fertile land.
Yes, when upon the eastern coast we sink to happy rest
The day of Independence rolls still onward to the west,
Till dies on the Pacific shore the shout of jubilee
That woke the morning with its voice along the Atlantic sea.
O God, look down upon the land which thou hast loved so well
And grant that in unbroken truth her children still may dwell!
Nor while the grass grows on the hill and streams flow through the vale
May they forget their fathers' faith or in their covenant fail!
God keep the fairest, noblest land that lies beneath the sun,
"Our country, our whole country and our country every one!"

—George W. Bethune (1806-62).