

The Valley of Sunshine and Shadow

By Rowland Thomas
(Copyright by The North American Company.)



"She began to find his presence a welcome relief to the length of the day"

FAR up in the northern end of Luzon the cloud-hung cordillera divides to east and west before it sinks abruptly in the sea, enclosing the great valley of the Cagayan. A dim, far-off region it has always been, of which the good folk of Manila spoke with vague words, as old men on the hills of Spain used to talk of Ultramar, that unknown somewhere into which their sons were forever disappearing. And even the people of the valley did not know it. At Aparri on the coast, where in the old days the sales of tobacco were piled like houses along the sandy streets in the shipping season, the busy laborers would tell you that it all came from "up there," with a wide sweep of the hand toward the south. You took a canoe and went southward for days, between gray forests where the parrots screamed and monkeys climbed lazily down the creepers to scoop up water in their tiny hands, and you found tuguegarao sleeping on the bluffs, perched high and safe above the river, and men told you of the wonders to be seen "up there." And then after lazy days and days, poling upward past endless fields of corn and tobacco, you came to Hagan, and the clerks in the offices of the Compañia General told you of the great plantations "up there." And then most men wearied of the journey, and gave up the quest of "up there," before they had gone halfway.

They should have kept on, for the real "up there" is the wonderful place they had heard of, a land of magnificent space, great stretches of plain and rolling hills. And in every little valley is a forest, where deer and wild boars and buffalo hide. And all the reaches of the river and the clear mountain streams, the pina-manau, are covered with clouds of ducks. And everywhere in the big flat-bottomed boats, the barangayans, on the river. There is a stretch of country where it seems the rich, deep, warm soil can never tire of making things grow—tobacco and corn and flowers and canes and grasses and bamboo—so men have called it "La Flor de la Isabel," the flower of the land of good Queen Isabel. It is a very quiet region, but there is a charm in the broad fields, and the hot sunny air, and the wild hunts over plain and hill, and the expeditions now and then in search of gold in the distant purple mountains where the wild men live. The valley grows upon one till one forgets the hills of Spain and the people he knew, and even the nearer delights of Manila, and stays on "up there" till he passes from the world which had already forgotten him.

Sometimes they emerged for a moment, and even came to El Capital for the Christmas festivities, lean, bronzed bearded men who wandered silent through the gay crowds. How should they speak when they knew nothing of all the gossip of the town—the ball of his Excellency, and Don Fulano's promotion, and the match between young Diego and the General's daughter? But let them be seen in a cafe, and they could talk readily enough over the tiny glasses of cognac, though always in that quiet, self-retained way which all men of the open have. "B-r-rgh, it's chilly here; it would not be like this in the valley."—"No, they will be planting now. And the river is rising; the young daredevils will be having great sport shooting the rapids at Alcala. Remember the whirlpool on the west side?"—"Yes, and have you heard that Don Enrique will hold a great fiesta on Shrove Tuesday? Well, he can afford it with this crop. He has covered more thousands this year than you have hairs on your chin, hombre."

Always the valley and the river and tobacco and Don Enrique. For Don Enrique was their lord. The great company back in Barcelona and Madrid might control everything—the lean, silent white men, and the brown, toiling thousands in the fields, and the boats on the river, and the great white fortresses of warehouses—but in the valley Don Enrique was company and king. For him they toiled and died forgotten, from him they thankfully received their meager wage, and when an order came signed in his heavy hand, "Valdez y de las Vegas," all men hurried to do his will. Any one would be glad to serve such a man. For there was a Valdez with every great captain that ever sailed, and a Vegas keeps his hat on with the proudest yet. And since this is a commercial age, and mere family renown can count for little beside wealth, each year brought Don Enrique one hundred thousand pesos, five hundred thousand pesetas, eight hundred thousand reales! Mira, amigo, you could buy your bread and sausage with that, and have a bit left for a little present to the wife, eh?

And then he was no make-believe ruler, this Don Enrique. He knew the valley, every day's journey of it, from lonely Cordon, lying in the threatening shadow of the pass, to the latest change in the bar outside Aparri; knew the capacity of each warehouse to the last bale; knew the shifting channel of the river, and could foretell the treacherous floods. And he knew what each subordinate was doing. No one knew when to expect a visit, and there were few who did not dread being called to ride with him. Yet he would dismount at the end of a long day in the saddle with as much calm grace as though he were returning from a canter round the town.

For he was always calm and dignified and silent, as only a gentleman of Castile can be. Not insolent or taciturn or overbearing, but simply closed in himself. He treated all men—all white men at least, for natives do not count—with quiet courtesy, and had neither enemies nor friends. Even the guests who shared the almost princely hospitality of the great house at Echague knew very little of their host.

It was a house, that place at Echague, built four-square and heavy as a fort, of great blocks of sandstone, and back of it was a huge walled garden. Of course, Don Enrique had other houses, three of them, in Hagan and Aparri and Manila. But he was as much a man of the open as any of his world-searching forbears, and loved far-off Echague better than all the rest. Here, when the shipping was over, and the last barangayan lay loaded to the water's edge above the rapids at Alcala, waiting for the first gentle lift of the rains to carry her safe down to Aparri, Don Enrique would retire with a band of chosen companions to hunt and game hard and long. Few men were invited a second time, or wished to be, for with all his courtesy Don Enrique was an exacting host in the hunting season. Long before dawn the hounds would be belling in the patio, the great tiled courtyard, and the sleepy guest, turning on his pillow for another nap, would

lency. "Sit down here beside me, my dear, and tell me how you like Manila."

"It is very good to be with my father again," said Dona Mercedes simply, "and you are all so kind to me."

And then the young officers who had been tugging at their fierce mustaches, and settling their chins in their stocks, came tramping stiffly up and begging for the honor. So it went on for several weeks, until one day her Excellency called. "Valdez," said she, in her straightforward way, "are you going to marry your daughter or not?"

"That, madama," he replied, "depends on—" "Whether you find any one good enough for her, eh?" said her Excellency. "And there is none good enough, is there, Valdez?"—"Not one in the world, madama," he replied gravely, but with the gleam of a smile. Somehow most people smiled when this simple old lady was near. "Not one in the world, madama," said Don Enrique. "But marriage is not a necessity of life; my little girl and I will be happy together for a time, I hope."—"Love of the saints!" cried her Excellency; "he is as young as his daughter. He thinks to keep the bees always away from his honey. Look at their eyes; they are boy and girl together. God grant you may be successful, Valdez. She is a dear, sweet child. But take her away to your kingdom," she added. "They are busy bees, and gay uniforms are bad for little girls who are to love only their fathers—and besides, I can't find an aide to do an errand for me while she is in town."

So Dona Mercedes, having had only a taste of the life most people lead, passed from the lost world of the convent to the lost world of the valley with her proud, dainty ways, and a friendly inquiring smile in her eyes for every one she met. I suppose you can't understand how Dona Mercedes felt; one must step directly from the convent to the world to do that. But, of course, her smile was friendly, for she had never known any one who was not a friend; and it was inquiring, for the world was all one great puzzle to her, and she was interested in all the multitude of people she saw, who were doing so many hard and disagreeable and useless things. Of bad things, of course, she knew nothing.

So Dona Mercedes moved about, learning many things concerning life even in that far-off valley. She was destined to learn the greatest thing of all there, but that came later. I've often wished I could have seen the stately, slender child-woman in those days, with her big, inquisitive eyes—seen her just as the Captain did, when he came tearing into town to see her and nearly ran over her. It was characteristic of Captain Manuel to come that way, forty miles in four hours, when after two slow months the news of her arrival penetrated far into the mountains, where he was happily busy hunting ladrones. It was characteristic of him to gallop full tilt down on the lady he had come to see before he knew she was there. And it was characteristic of him also to rein his horse back on its haunches with one tug, and sweep off his hat with a gesture that would have outdone Don Quixote himself, and insist on escorting the lady to her home, despite the startled grumbling of Tia Maria and a sudden access of staidness on Dona Mercedes' part.

Everything, Captain Manuel did was characteristic, for he was a Catalan. And while no one can foretell what a Catalan may do, it is always safe to say that he will do what he pleases and do it with all his might. And this gray-eyed, fair-haired boy, with the frank smiling face, had chosen to play at living thus far. He was the commander of the Guardia Civil in all the southern valley, put in that unenviable post that puzzled bureaucrats might be safe from his unbounded energy. And he played with the bandits and outlaws and savages, purposely left them undisturbed that they might grow bold, and then went out with a laugh and destroyed them as you would a cage of rats. And when the fighting was over he would come back unweary and amuse himself with wondrous speculations in tobacco, or stake his last dollar on a stroke at billiards with Don Enrique. And the most fascinating of all the playthings he had discovered in his brief life was something he was pleased to call love. He played at that with his usual wholeheartedness, till a score of girls up and down the valley were ever watching for the little figure on the wild black horse, and more than a score of men were breathing threats of vengeance, whereat the captain laughed boyishly, and invited the discontented to step out and settle it once for all with pistol or rifle or knife or spear or bolo or bare hands.

"I'm sorry you couldn't have known Captain Manuel, instead of merely hearing about him from me, for you will get the idea that he was a good-for-nothing young rascal, whereas he was only a gay, good-hearted boy, dissipating his splendid strength in a hundred useless ways, just because he had ever shown him a useful way. But he was a dangerous person, with his ready tongue and tossing hair, to come dancing before the wondering eyes of that bewildered woman-child, Dona Mercedes. Dangerous to Don Enrique's dreams of the future, I mean. For, of course, he fell in love with Dona Mercedes at once. He was quite sure of that before he had walked a dozen steps with the lady that first evening.

With him, to decide that he was in love was to be there; so he beheld the captain of a morning after drill come clanking to the little summer house, all brave in sword and spurs, to sit and regale Dona Mercedes with weird tales of the little fights, till terrified Tia Maria crossed herself again and peered anxiously up into the branches of the old mango, more than half expecting to see a naked head hunter there, ready to leap upon her venerable wig. And Dona Mercedes' poor little stately Mercedes, watched this strange newcomer as she had watched all others, but with a shade more interest, for she felt that she understood him. The frank, friendly smile in his eyes seemed so exactly as she felt it all the world.

Soon she began to find his presence a welcome relief to the length of the days, and missed him when he did not come. Don Enrique should have taken care then. But Don Enrique was careless. In the first place, it was rather a strenuous undertaking to keep Captain Manuel away from where he chose to be. And in the next, any fear that he could move the heart of Dona Mercedes was absurd. Why, he was only a penniless youngster, without a "de" or a "y" or a "Don" to his name, and she was Dona Mercedes, a Valdez, and a Vegas; and, furthermore, she had him, Don Enrique, to fill her every want. So Don Enrique smiled and jested and talked and dreamed of an evening in the great dining room with his little girl, and was very happy. And Captain Manuel laughed and joked and sang in the little summer house of a morning, and was in heaven, or thought he was, which, after all, amounts to just as much for the moment. And Dona Mercedes looked on them all with friendly inquiring eyes.

At last one morning he was holding a skein of silk for her, and Tia Maria had fallen into an uneasy doze through very excess of terror at the latest tale. Several times their eyes met when the skein was tangled—such a tiny skein of golden-yellow silk to mean so much. And each time Dona Mercedes became more stately and more timid, while the captain blushed like

At last one morning he was holding a skein of silk for her, and Tia Maria had fallen into an uneasy doze through very excess of terror at the latest tale. Several times their eyes met when the skein was tangled—such a tiny skein of golden-yellow silk to mean so much. And each time Dona Mercedes became more stately and more timid, while the captain blushed like

At last one morning he was holding a skein of silk for her, and Tia Maria had fallen into an uneasy doze through very excess of terror at the latest tale. Several times their eyes met when the skein was tangled—such a tiny skein of golden-yellow silk to mean so much. And each time Dona Mercedes became more stately and more timid, while the captain blushed like

disgusted at the unseemly disturbance of the established order, and retired with an indignant flip of the tail which nearly lost him that brittle member. Then there was good, grumbling Tia Maria, who found it hard to adjust herself to new conditions.

"How can one live in a country where there are no sidewalks?" mourned Tia Maria, "and where there are monkeys and bats—u-r-g-h—and scorpions and spiders? Spiders big as that, as that, child!" cried Tia Maria, pushing out a sturdy foot from under her limp black skirt.

Then there were the servants, with their eternal cheery smiles and careless ways, who first revealed to Dona Mercedes that she had the family temper. And the women and the little brown babies in the town and the dull men in the fields—Mercedes wondered if it was not very hot and unpleasant to work in the fields, and so smiled most kindly at them, till they forgot their sullenness and smiled back. Then there were the treacherous river, and the great clumsy boats, and the fierce-looking rivermen with their knives, and bright handkerchiefs about their heads. And once she met some wild men in the street—sturdy fellows with great muscles and long black hair, stiff and rough as the mane of a horse, dressed mostly, to her frightened gaze, in shields and spears and head-axes and knives. But when she smiled timidly they responded with wide grins, and tried to sell her little silver pipes and copper betel-nut boxes.

So Dona Mercedes moved about, learning many things concerning life even in that far-off valley. She was destined to learn the greatest thing of all there, but that came later. I've often wished I could have seen the stately, slender child-woman in those days, with her big, inquisitive eyes—seen her just as the Captain did, when he came tearing into town to see her and nearly ran over her. It was characteristic of Captain Manuel to come that way, forty miles in four hours, when after two slow months the news of her arrival penetrated far into the mountains, where he was happily busy hunting ladrones. It was characteristic of him to gallop full tilt down on the lady he had come to see before he knew she was there. And it was characteristic of him also to rein his horse back on its haunches with one tug, and sweep off his hat with a gesture that would have outdone Don Quixote himself, and insist on escorting the lady to her home, despite the startled grumbling of Tia Maria and a sudden access of staidness on Dona Mercedes' part.

Everything, Captain Manuel did was characteristic, for he was a Catalan. And while no one can foretell what a Catalan may do, it is always safe to say that he will do what he pleases and do it with all his might. And this gray-eyed, fair-haired boy, with the frank smiling face, had chosen to play at living thus far. He was the commander of the Guardia Civil in all the southern valley, put in that unenviable post that puzzled bureaucrats might be safe from his unbounded energy. And he played with the bandits and outlaws and savages, purposely left them undisturbed that they might grow bold, and then went out with a laugh and destroyed them as you would a cage of rats. And when the fighting was over he would come back unweary and amuse himself with wondrous speculations in tobacco, or stake his last dollar on a stroke at billiards with Don Enrique. And the most fascinating of all the playthings he had discovered in his brief life was something he was pleased to call love. He played at that with his usual wholeheartedness, till a score of girls up and down the valley were ever watching for the little figure on the wild black horse, and more than a score of men were breathing threats of vengeance, whereat the captain laughed boyishly, and invited the discontented to step out and settle it once for all with pistol or rifle or knife or spear or bolo or bare hands.

"I'm sorry you couldn't have known Captain Manuel, instead of merely hearing about him from me, for you will get the idea that he was a good-for-nothing young rascal, whereas he was only a gay, good-hearted boy, dissipating his splendid strength in a hundred useless ways, just because he had ever shown him a useful way. But he was a dangerous person, with his ready tongue and tossing hair, to come dancing before the wondering eyes of that bewildered woman-child, Dona Mercedes. Dangerous to Don Enrique's dreams of the future, I mean. For, of course, he fell in love with Dona Mercedes at once. He was quite sure of that before he had walked a dozen steps with the lady that first evening.

With him, to decide that he was in love was to be there; so he beheld the captain of a morning after drill come clanking to the little summer house, all brave in sword and spurs, to sit and regale Dona Mercedes with weird tales of the little fights, till terrified Tia Maria crossed herself again and peered anxiously up into the branches of the old mango, more than half expecting to see a naked head hunter there, ready to leap upon her venerable wig. And Dona Mercedes' poor little stately Mercedes, watched this strange newcomer as she had watched all others, but with a shade more interest, for she felt that she understood him. The frank, friendly smile in his eyes seemed so exactly as she felt it all the world.

Soon she began to find his presence a welcome relief to the length of the days, and missed him when he did not come. Don Enrique should have taken care then. But Don Enrique was careless. In the first place, it was rather a strenuous undertaking to keep Captain Manuel away from where he chose to be. And in the next, any fear that he could move the heart of Dona Mercedes was absurd. Why, he was only a penniless youngster, without a "de" or a "y" or a "Don" to his name, and she was Dona Mercedes, a Valdez, and a Vegas; and, furthermore, she had him, Don Enrique, to fill her every want. So Don Enrique smiled and jested and talked and dreamed of an evening in the great dining room with his little girl, and was very happy. And Captain Manuel laughed and joked and sang in the little summer house of a morning, and was in heaven, or thought he was, which, after all, amounts to just as much for the moment. And Dona Mercedes looked on them all with friendly inquiring eyes.

At last one morning he was holding a skein of silk for her, and Tia Maria had fallen into an uneasy doze through very excess of terror at the latest tale. Several times their eyes met when the skein was tangled—such a tiny skein of golden-yellow silk to mean so much. And each time Dona Mercedes became more stately and more timid, while the captain blushed like

At last one morning he was holding a skein of silk for her, and Tia Maria had fallen into an uneasy doze through very excess of terror at the latest tale. Several times their eyes met when the skein was tangled—such a tiny skein of golden-yellow silk to mean so much. And each time Dona Mercedes became more stately and more timid, while the captain blushed like



"Don Enrique was their lord"

except for some words in her prayers. So Dona Mercedes, young woman and little girl, looked into the world with frank, interested eyes.

And she found it a delightful place. There was the great house, with its thick walls and heavily barred windows, and big, dark, cool rooms. And the garden, with the old familiar orange and lemon trees and tinkling fountains. There were strange, sweet, new trees as well, yang-ylang and clove and cinnamon, and a hundred other cool, fragrant, snowy-blossomed things, and poincianas and orchids and palms and great ferns. Best of all, trained up and about her windows were real Spanish roses, big white and red and pink and yellow flows. And at the far end of the garden was a wide-spreading old veteran of a mango, big as a small mountain, and in its shade a little summer-house for her, almost hidden in a tangle of roses. Here she used to sit through the day, embroidering or reading or dozing. It might have seemed like a dull life to you, but then you never knew the quiet of the convent—and the peace of it.

Besides, always she looked forward to the evening. You never knew that either, perhaps—the coolness and delight of the tropical evening, coming after the long glare of the day, when through the windows steals the fresh, damp air, heavy with the scent of flowers and moist earth, and one hears the strange cries of birds and insects, and sees the big, silent, fluttering bats and the fireflies that made a living fountain of every tree, and all these but passing shadows on the background of a dim, happy, sleepy world of darkness.

Most of all, Dona Mercedes was interested in the creatures that worked and played in this huge new world. First there was her father. The long evenings were never too long with him, for Don Enrique cast aside all the gravity and dignity and silence, and laughed and jested and talked and dreamed with his little girl, till the grandfather of all the lizards became

a little boy. Their talk died away to broken sentences, and then the hush of noontide lay over the great cool, fragrant garden, and only the heavy droning of the bees among the roses broke the stillness, and Dona Mercedes put out a fluttering hand to clear another snarl, and Tia Maria popped bolt upright in her chair. "Blood of all the blessed saints!" she cried, "what was that I heard?" And she peered up into the gently stirring leaves of the great tree, and made ready to flee.

"It was a wild man, perhaps," said the Captain with a tremulous laugh; and Dona Mercedes took up the conversation quite as composedly as if she had lived in the world all her life. But when the Captain was leaving she murmured: "You must tell Don Enrique."

Of course, he told Don Enrique at once, and, of course, Don Enrique was quite astonished at what had been going on right under his patrician nose and quite scandalized, and very positive, in his grave, courteous way, that such thoughts must be dropped once for all—positive as only a great man who ruled a valley could be. And Captain Manuel was quite sure that he loved the lady, could not live without her, would win her in the end—sure as only a big, impetuous heart like his could make a man. So Dona Enrique politely regretted that neither Dona Mercedes nor himself could have the honor of receiving the Captain again, and the Captain bowed very low and clanked out under the big gloomy arch of the gateway for almost the last time.

Now I doubt if either Dona Mercedes or the Captain had really been in love. But they were ready to go into it, and forced separation has been a fertile soil for the growth of love ever since the world began. The little girl was very dutiful and sat with her father every evening, merry and smiling and tender as ever; but across the big gleaming table she would sometimes see a vision of a merry boyish face. Don Enrique had seen visions across that same table, you remember. Perhaps in time Dona Mercedes might have watched the vision till it came to be more to her than the great house, and the family name, and the love of her father himself.

And the Captain fell into a very fever of devotion, and for more than a month he stayed in his quarters, writing Catalan love songs on the edges of commissary returns, and gazing gloomily at his sword and spurs. Billiards and cards knew him no more, the black horse fretted in the paddock and looked unamiable things at the frightened groom, and the brown-skinned girls of the countryside lived in peace and amity with their lovers. Perhaps his devotion might have endured, and all that splendid energy of his might have been turned to good and useful things at last.

Those things the little gods chose to keep a secret, just as they had put it into the head of a peasant named Arunado to be priest-ridden no longer; just as they had moved the friars to put to death a young man named Jose Rixal. Outside there had long been rumors of ugly things; sudden secret death, and smoldering insurrection, and killing of priests and burning of towns and terror-stricken people everywhere. And now at last they penetrated to the far-off valley—stories of raids on distant haciendas, and assassinations on lonely trails, and a little army massed in the foothills. It was as if a chill wind swept over the sunny plains, and rolling hills, and busy, treacherous river; and none of the lean, bearded, bronzed men could tell whence it came. Don Enrique, that great man, heeded it not, and when news came of a wondrous big buck seen near Ascaris he insisted on setting out to capture it. "A bit of venison is what you need to put the roses back," he said to Dona Mercedes, standing tall and strong in his boots, and tapping her cheek with his gauntlet. "Insurrection! Nonsense, chiquita, it is but the talk of these poor, foolish Indians. I wave my riding whip at them, and phoo!"—he blew a quick breath, kissed her, and rode off in the gray chill of the morning.

But toward evening a man dragged himself in—old Canuto, the huntsman, cut and bleeding—and told Dona Mercedes how the party had been ambuscaded and had fought their way to a thicket of bamboo, and how they must have help or perish. While she still stood half stunned and helpless calm, Captain Manuel, uncalled, and said simply, "I am going to him, Dona Mercedes. He did not tell her that all the country was up in arms that he was going to his death. I doubt if he even thought of it as he stood before her and saw her big, beseeching eyes. All the carelessness and lightness of his nature were washed out as he stood before the lady for whom he was to die. And yet, as he turned to go, a bit of the spirit of old Spain stirred in him, and he bent toward her. "I kiss your hand, my lady," he said. And then Dona Mercedes understood that he was saying farewell, and with a little cry flung herself into his arms. One little moment she knew that all the secret of life was hers—and then she took a white rose from her hair and gave it to him. "My colors for my knight!" she said; and none of her house long been stood more proud and stately to watch their knights go out to battle. And none ever went more steadfast and strong and lovable than that simple boy of the common folk.

There's not much more to tell, of course. The Captain found Don Enrique, and at dawn they went out together, with their men, in one of those deeds of splendid courage that once made their country mistress of half the world. But one of those poor, foolish Indians with a good Mauser, and a firm rest at five hundred meters, and the wrongs of three centuries to right, stopped their poor, proud Spanish hearts.

The few men who were left brought them back to Dona Mercedes, standing pale and stately in the great courtyard, and on Don Enrique's breast was a miniature that might have been his little girl, but was not, and on the Captain's was a white rose dabbled with red. As I said, all this happened long ago, when the world was young. I know, for I rode through Echague the other day, and I saw Dona Mercedes' eyes. They are friendly and inquiring still, but the smile comes from an old, old heart. And yet, after all, why should we blame the little gods? Don Enrique and the Captain are very quiet indeed in the great garden, and perhaps the valley is none the less happy that their imperious wills are quiet, too. The river still runs and the boatmen sing on its long reaches, and the hot, sunny air floats over field and hill and forest with vivifying strength, and you would hardly know that they were gone. Perhaps Don Enrique could never have been reconciled, perhaps the Captain might have changed. There are a dozen perhappes. And now Dona Mercedes has the great house—after all, it is not unlike a convent in its quiet and its peace—and the memory of two strong men who loved her unto death.



"The poor, foolish Indian stopped their proud Spanish hearts"