

A Hacendado's Revenge

A Story of the Mexican Civil War

By JOHN Y. LARNED

Manuel Rodriguez, a hacendado of the province of Nuevo de Leon, Mexico, one morning kissed his wife and children, mounted his horse and was about to ride away when his wife said to him:

"I am afraid to have you go. The rebels are advancing from the north, and I fear you may encounter some of them."

Signor Rodriguez sat in his saddle, thinking not of the danger to himself, but to his wife and children. There were lawless persons in the rebel army, some who had been brigands, and, as for looting conquered territory, their officers often permitted it. He did not wish to leave his family under such circumstances, but it was necessary that he should go.

"Never fear for me. I am well armed and can fight. Goodby, sweetheart. I'll surely be with you again before nightfall."

He bent down and kissed her again, then, urging his horse forward, rode



PALEMO STAGGERED, BUT KEPT ON.

away, turning, after having gone a short distance, to see his wife looking at him with a wistfulness that haunted him during the whole of his absence.

Stopping now and again to make inquiries, he learned that a body of rebels under General Villa were marching toward Victoria. They were to the eastward of him and if they kept to the railroad, which they probably would, they would pass within a few miles of his hacienda. He hurried on that he might perform his journey and return as soon as possible.

Rodriguez, being sadly in need of cash, was going to collect a debt. Reaching his destination he found his debtor in possession of funds. He secured his money, and without waiting even to refresh himself started homeward.

About the middle of the afternoon, on coming to the crest of a hill where he could look down on his hacienda several miles away, he was horror-stricken to see a cloud of smoke arising from among the high palm trees that inclosed his house. With a cry he spurred his horse down the declivity and had covered half the distance when he met a family of Indian peons coming from the opposite direction. Retaining in his horse, he asked them for news of his family.

"They have all been murdered, señor," said the man. "The bandit Palemo, with some of his men, looted your house and burned it down with every one in it."

A few moments Rodriguez sat paralyzed; then he dashed forward more rapidly than before.

Nearing another group of persons he reined in again to ask if Palemo and his men were still at the hacienda and was told that they had gone, taking a road leading in the direction of Victoria. Rodriguez, realizing that if he wished his revenge he must strike before the bandits rejoined the army, instead of going to the ruins of his home, struck into a path that would put him on the road the outlaws had taken. He was turning into it when he met a friend, Jose Penalez, who, having heard of the bandits' depredations, had hastily collected half a dozen of his neighbors and was going to the protection of the Rodriguez hacienda. They were all mounted and armed, and on being told of the news given by the peons joined the bereaved man, and the party, eight men in all, dashed on for vengeance.

Had the bandits ridden on without stopping for more plunder they would doubtless have joined Villa's army before being overtaken. But Rodriguez

and his men passed house after house where the owners were bemoaning the loss of their valuables, and in some instances, where there had been resistance, there were smoking ruins. Now and again they stopped for a few moments to make inquiries.

What robbery might have failed to effect pulque achieved. On nearing a hamlet the pursuers asked a man on the road the whereabouts of the bandits and were told that they were drinking the national beverage in a saloon not half a mile beyond, one of seven houses that made up the town. Penalez, who was naturally cooler than Rodriguez, asked how many bandits there were and was told that there were six. Rodriguez gave this information to his friend, to whom he looked for leadership.

Up to this moment Rodriguez had been so filled with fury that he had considered nothing but an attack on the destroyers of his house without taking into account their numbers or surroundings. A complete change now came over him. Turning a bend in the road, he saw ahead the pulque house which he had been told contained his enemies. A desire seized him to make the house a fire for roasting them alive. To do this he must corral them, and to corral them needed coolness to meet their efforts to escape. He reined in his horse and gave his orders.

The point of attack was about an eighth of a mile from any of the other houses in the hamlet. Rodriguez directed Penalez to take half the men, break to the right through covering trees and, approaching the saloon, deploy and surround it on the west, while Rodriguez with the remaining force executed the same maneuver on the east. The house was on the road at the lowest point between two gently sloping declivities, with scattered trees 200 or 300 yards from its front and rear.

When the two wings of Rodriguez's little army got into their respective positions, each forming a semicircle about the pulque house, the bandits were still drinking within. The first knowledge they had of their danger was the collapse of one of their number, who was standing near a window raising a cup of pulque to his mouth. His fall was accompanied almost simultaneously by the crack of a rifle. Every man started to his feet.

The shot had been fired by Rodriguez, and during the ensuing fight whenever a bandit exposed himself to one of the attacking party the latter would call Rodriguez's attention to the fact and Rodriguez would pick him off. But Palemo, telling his men to keep from exposing themselves, through a crack reconnoitered the field and, though he could see no one, surmised that he was surrounded. But of the strength of those attacking him he was ignorant, for Rodriguez and his men were concealed behind trees or in bushes.

Rodriguez sent a man to one of the houses of the hamlet for kerosene and as much cotton bedclothing and other similar fabrics as he could collect. While his enemies were waiting for this man's return Palemo ordered his men to shoot in different directions, hoping to draw a fire which would enable him to locate the positions of his enemies and to form some estimate of their numbers. But Rodriguez gave orders that not a shot was to be returned. Then Palemo sent four men out by several different egresses, but they had scarcely exposed themselves when one fell dead and two were wounded. The fourth man succeeded in regaining cover.

The messenger who had been sent for inflammables returning, Rodriguez divided the stock between his own and Penalez's division of his force. Gathering oranges, which abounded, the men tied a bundle of cotton fabric saturated with kerosene to the fruit, inserted the end of a stick into the orange and, lighting the kerosene, swung the stick in a circle till the orange flew off and carried the burning mass against the thatched roof of the pulque house. It was not long before sufficient contact had been effected between the flames and the roof to set it afire.

The besieged now saw that they must either be burned alive or sally forth to meet an unknown force. There was no way of reaching the roof from within to put out the fire, and to attempt to do so from without would expose them to death from bullets. Palemo told his men that they would better die from lead than flames. But they were not of the kind to meet death heroically and preferred to wait for the flames rather than face the bullets. The bandit leader stepped forth alone and walked slowly forward. Rodriguez saw him and, directing the others not to fire, sent a bullet crashing into his shoulder. Palemo staggered, but kept on. Rodriguez sent another bullet into the other shoulder. Still the bandit advanced. Then Rodriguez pierced his enemy's brain, and he fell dead.

From that moment the hacendado seemed to lose desire for further revenge. Consenting that Penalez should spare the others if he chose, he mounted his horse and rode to the ruins of his hacienda.

Drawing rein among those who stood about the smoking ruins of his home, one of his friends approached him and said:

"Ah, Rodriguez, I am sorry for your loss! But you came near having a much greater one. Your wife and children are at my house. They fled on the approach."

"My wife and children! Alive?"

"Yes. Come and satisfy them that you are safe. You have been gone so long that they fear you have fallen at the hands of the rebels."

With muttered thanks to heaven, Rodriguez dashed away, and in a few minutes he and his family were locked in one embrace.

THE ROAD DRAG; HOW TO MAKE IT

Department of Agriculture Gives Advice.

INEXPENSIVE FOR UPKEEP.

The Drag Is Recommended For Roads That Have Been Partially Improved, That Have Been Crowned or Drained, but Have No Hard Surface.

According to the United States department of agriculture the road drag, properly used, gives the needed crown to the road, smooths out ruts and other irregularities, spreads out puddles of water and thereby accelerates the drying of the road and makes the surface more or less impervious to water by smearing over the so called pores in the earthy material. The cost depends, of course, upon local conditions and the thoroughness with which the work is done. It is safe to say, however, that it is less expensive than any other efficient system of upkeep.

In its simplest form the road drag consists of an ordinary log split in half



USING A ROAD DRAG.

and the two halves connected like the uprights of a ladder by means of cross sticks or rungs. The log should be about seven or eight inches in diameter and from six to eight feet in length.

It is better to have it of well seasoned, hard, tough wood. The two semicylindrical halves of the log form the runners of the drag and are usually spaced from thirty to thirty-six inches apart. The front runner is always placed with the split surface of the wood facing forward, but the rear runner sometimes has its rounded face in front. This is done in order to increase the smearing action of the drag as it passes over the surface of the road.

The two runners are not placed directly behind each other, but are "offset," as it is called, from about twelve to sixteen inches. This is done because the drag is drawn over the road at an angle sufficient to make the runners free themselves of the surface which they scrape. The amount of this angle or skew depends, of course, upon the condition of the road. By offsetting the runners it is possible to make their ends follow approximately the same line on the road, which they would not do if they were set directly behind each other and the drag drawn at an angle with the road.

In order to provide standing room for the man it is usual to nail two boards down upon the rungs parallel to the runners. Standing upon these, a skillful driver will bear his weight in such a way as to materially aid in the successful operation of the drag.

The drag is drawn by a chain which should be about eight feet long. This can be fastened by eye bolts to each end of the front runner, or one end of the chain can be passed through the hole at the discharge end of the front runner and the other end looped over the rung at the cutting end of the runner. It is important that the hitching link should be so designed that its position can be changed readily. It is also desirable to provide a metal cutting edge for the front runner. This can be made from a strip of iron or steel, and old wagon tires have frequently proved satisfactory.

The cost of such a drag varies from \$2 to perhaps \$10 or \$12. This practically insignificant outlay will secure an implement that will be of great service to the community for at least three or four years. The fact cannot be overlooked, however, that skill in the use of the drag is indispensable.

The angle that the runners make with the center line of the road—the skew angle it might be called—is an important factor. For example, if the dragging is done to increase the crown of the road the drag should be sufficiently skewed to discharge all material as rapidly as it is collected on the runners. On the other hand, the conditions may be such that it is desirable to carry along this material in order to deposit it where there are depressions in the road's surface.

As to the time for dragging, a safe rule to follow is to drag the road when the material composing the surface contains sufficient moisture to compact readily, but is not sufficiently wet for traffic to produce mud.

An Instrument of Providence

By WILLARD BLAKEMAN

I was walking on the beach, watching the waves come rolling in before a gale and throwing up driftwood, when a bottle was tossed at my feet. I extracted a paper from it on which was written:

We are going to pieces. Whoever gets this go to Norman D. Carlisle and tell him he will find my will in my desk in secret drawer.

This was all—no date, no signature, no address as to where Norman D. Carlisle would be found.

That night I went to bed thinking about the message. Suppose it was genuine. Somebody was enjoying property that belonged to another. But it seemed to me that if it were genuine the writer would have given at least the city in which the person for whom it was intended lived. If the perpetrator was doing the thing for sport or to pass the time or because he hadn't any more sense he would have given it.

And yet perhaps that's just what he wouldn't do. He might not like to particularize. On the other hand, a man who is about to be dumped into a roaring ocean might leave something out that he should have put in.

I was impelled to find Norman D. Carlisle. I didn't wish to engage in looking for a needle in a haystack, but I couldn't resist the feeling that it was my bounden duty to do so. There were then some 80,000,000 people in the United States alone. The name was Anglo-Saxon, and the person might be somewhere in the great British countries. Nevertheless when I found that I couldn't let the matter alone I went into it methodically. I put a personal advertisement in one newspaper in every city in the United States whose inhabitants numbered 500,000 or over for the said Norman D. Carlisle. I received several replies signed Norman D. Carlisle, the middle name usually differing. I wrote each of them, asking if he had lost a relative at sea, but they all answered in the negative—that is, so far as they knew.

After six months I put in another advertisement for Mr. Carlisle and received a reply from a Norman D. Carlisle living in a town of about 50,000 people. He had seen the ad. while in the city where it had been inserted. I asked him if he had lost a relative at sea, and he replied "No." I dropped the matter so far as he was concerned, but later he wrote me that he was a lawyer and had had a client who had sailed from Rio de Janeiro in a vessel that was catalogued among missing ships.

After some correspondence he sent me a check for expenses, and I went to see him. He made an engagement for me to meet a lady in his office, and I was introduced to Miss Edith Parks, twenty-one years old and comely. She appeared to be a lady, but was shabbily dressed. I was informed that her uncle had been lost on the missing vessel from Rio. I brought out the paper I had found, which I had carefully kept, and as soon as she saw it she said she believed that it had been written by her uncle. Some of his letters were produced, and all doubt was removed. The message, though scrawled hastily in a trembling hand, was found to correspond with the uncle's writing.

I was then told that Miss Parks had been brought up by this uncle, who was wealthy, he being unmarried and without children. After he had been declared legally dead the courts had set about administering his estate and had already found forty persons who were heirs at law.

Since Mr. Weatherly, the man who had been shipwrecked, had given Miss Parks to understand that she was to be his heir it was likely that the will mentioned in the message gave his property to her. But the desk—where was it? Mr. Weatherly's furniture had been sold a year before. Who had bought the desk? No one could tell.

Since I had gone so far in the matter I did not propose to be beaten now. Advertising having availed, I advertised for the person who had bought a desk at a sale of the effects of Cyrus Weatherly. In due time I received a reply from the purchaser. I wrote him that a niece of the deceased wished to redeem it and asked him to fix a price. He said he would sell it for \$100. Miss Parks had no money to pay for it, so I mailed the man a check for the amount. The desk was sent to me, and, taking it into a cellar, I chopped it into kindling wood. Among the rubbish lay the papers in a secret drawer, and, taking this up, I found one marked "Last Will and Testament of Cyrus Blake Weatherly." I read it and found that he left all his property to his beloved niece Edith Parks.

That same evening I called on Miss Parks with the will that changed her condition from poverty to wealth. She sat like a statue staring at the paper as though she were looking through it rather than at it. I asked her what she was thinking about, but she did not hear me. I repeated the question, and, apparently awakening from a dream, she said:

"It doesn't seem possible that uncle, about to die on a boundless ocean, too wrought upon to give my address, could have reached me among the millions of people of the earth."

I did not tell her so, but she soon came to recognize me as the instrument chosen by Providence to find her. After awhile she rewarded me by giving me herself.

CAPITOL PUNISHMENT.



—Evans in Baltimore American.

Our Query and Reply Department

What star in the heavens is called the wandering star?

That designation is sometimes applied to ARCTURUS, a bright red star of the first magnitude in the constellation Bo-oh-tees, the herdsman. During May and June this constellation is near the zenith and Arcturus is a little south of directly overhead. It is known as the wandering star because for some reason unknown to astronomers, it is slowly drifting and changing its position with respect to other stars. Its change of position is not visible to the naked eye or from year to year, but it has been noted by astronomers from the beginning of the Christian era. Arcturus is the brightest star in the northern hemisphere.

Who was author of the phrase, "Hold the fort for I am coming?"

General Sherman. During the civil war, in 1864, when General Sherman was holding a position at Allatoona, Ga., against greatly superior numbers, Sherman signaled him, "Hold the fort for I am coming," and Sherman's forces got there. The phrase became popular and Ira D. Sankey of Moody and Sankey made it the text of an inspiring hymn.

What are good rules for avoiding accidents in boating or for action in case of accident?

Don't go out in a pleasure boat without being assured that there are cushions or other movable articles aboard sufficient to float every person in case of an upset. A canoe is far more dangerous than a skiff. All persons should be seated before leaving shore, and no one should attempt to exchange seats in midstream or to put a foot on the edge or gunwale of the boat to exchange seats. Where the waters become rough from a sudden squall or passing steamers, never rise in the boat, but settle down as close to the bottom as possible and keep cool until the rocking danger is passed. If overturned a woman's skirts, if held out by her extended arms, while she uses her feet as if climbing stairs, will often hold her up while a boat may pull out from the shore and save her. A non-

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Blacksmithing

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And

General Repair Work

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The Leader leads, but never follows.