

Not when you reflect that I am engaged to marry Miss Wentworth."

"Huh!" I barely suppressed the utterance of amazement and disappointment. Then there was no hope for me in that direction? It was rather a sorry mission I was undertaking for a distinct rival. However, I summoned up all my manliness and started on my journey.

It was late the next day when a shot halted me. It came from a thicket. My horse fell and before I could get out from under him a brawny Mexican, wearing the insurrectionist uniform, was at my side, his carbine leveled.

He had the drop on me and it was sure death to make a move to resist or escape. He bound my arms with a belt, tied a lariat about my waist, and, making me understand that I was a prisoner and considered a spy, and bound for his camp ten miles ahead, he mounted his horse and I had some rough tramping to do.

It was well on toward dark when we came to a little settlement. My captor, boastfully parading me, rode up to the general store and celebrated his heroism by being helped to half a dozen strong drinks. Supplied with a bottle of the stuff, he resumed his journey. We had not gone two miles when I noted his drooping pose. Overcome with the strong liquor, he was asleep in the saddle.

The horse halted to browse and his rider slept on. It was my chance. At a standstill I could work with some system at my bonds. Soon I was free. To dispose safely of my captor was an easy task. I took his hat, his jacket and his weapons. Then it was that I laughed exultantly, for there was only 25 miles between myself and Pulza.

I passed no habitation, met nobody during the first five miles of my ride. I had fancied I knew the route perfectly, as I had traversed it before, but at the end of an hour began to be confused. I lost the trail and did not catch it again until I came in

sight of a lonely little cabin. It held a light. I was desperately thifty, and, glancing in at the open window, I noted a water pail on the table and the only inmate of the desolate place, a little, undersized Mexican lad, about 5 years of age. He was seated at the table eating porridge. As I stepped through the doorway he sprang nimbly to his feet and faced me.

I almost laughed outright. The shrewd, impish expression on the face of the youngster was absolutely irresistible—as instantly he threw up both hands.

Then, his keen eyes looking me all over, he uttered two words:

"Sandoval Muerte!"

I nodded my head. He was reassured. He went back to his porridge like one who has a duty to perform and had received a safe-conduct. I drank at the pail and left the hut, turning the queer incident over in my mind as I rode along. Suddenly, in Mexican:

"Halt! Who goes?"

It was an inspiration that came to me, looking down the barrel of a leveled carbine. At once there flashed a thought through my mind. The parents of the Mexican lad had tutored him for a critical occasion—nonresistance and the password. I gave it now.

"Sandoval Muerte."

"Pass on—to the left. You are for the town?"

I grunted an assent. Again I laughed—this time to drive away a shiver, for I had met a narrow graze.

The hour was late when I reached Pulza. At once I visited the Wentworth domicile and had Mr. Wentworth out of bed, explaining matters. He looked serious and decided on immediate action. It was wise, for a few hours later the entire district was under insurrection domination.

"My daughters," he introduced a little later, when he led two charming young ladies into room, who had hastily dressed at the tidings.

My Miss Wentworth came forward