

The Land of Broken Promises

A Stirring Story of the Mexican Revolution

By DANE COOLIDGE
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Illustrations by Don J. Lavin

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CHAPTER XXIII—Continued.

"Now she strikes it!" he announced, as the rumble turned into a roar; but the roar grew louder, there was a crash as the trucks struck a curve, and then a great metal ore-car swung round the point, rode up high as it hit the reverse and, speeding by as if shot from a catapult, swept through the yard, smashed into a freight car, and leaped, car and all, into the creek.

"They've smacked my demerol!" said the roadmaster, starting on a run for the sheds. "Who'll go with me to put in another one? Or we'll loosen a rail on the curve—that'll call for no more than a clawbar and a wrench!"

"I'll go!" volunteered Bud and the man who stood guard, and as startled sleepers roused up on every side and ran toward the scene of the wreck they dashed down the hill together and threw a handcar on the track.

Then, with what tools they could get together, and a spare derrick on the front, they pumped madly up the canyon, holding their breaths at every curve for fear of what they might see. If there was one runaway car there was another, for the rebels were beginning an attack.

Already on the ridges above them they could hear the crack of rifles, and a jet or two of dust made it evident that they were the mark. But with three strong men at the handles they fled behind them. They rounded a point and the open track lay before them, with something—

"Jump!" shouted the roadmaster, and as they tumbled down the bank they heard a crash behind them and their handcar was knocked into kindling wood.

It was a close call for all three men, and there had been but an instant between them and death, a death by the most approved fighting methods of the revolutionists, methods which kept the fighters out of harm's way.

"Now up to the track!" the roadmaster panted, as the derrick swept on down the line. "Find some tools—we'll take out a rail!"

With frantic eagerness he tumbled up the hill and attacked a fish-plate, and Bud and the young guard searched the hillside for tools to help with the work. They fell to with sledge and clawbar, tapping off nuts, jerking out spikes, and heaving to loosen the rail—and then once more that swift-moving something loomed up suddenly on the track.

"Up the hill!" commanded the roadmaster, and as they scrambled into a gulch a wild locomotive, belching smoke and steam like a fire engine, went rushing past them, struck the loose rail, and leaped into the creek bed. A moment later, as it crashed its way down to the water, there was an explosion that shook the hills. They

Every Sign of War But the Dead.

Every Sign of War But the Dead. crouched behind the cut bank, and the trees above them bowed suddenly to the slash of an iron ball.

"Dynamite!" cried the roadmaster, grinning triumphantly as he looked up after the shock; and when the fall of fragments had ceased, and they had fled as if by instinct from the place, they struck hands on their narrow escape. But back at the big house, with everybody giving thanks for their delivery from the powder train, the master mechanic raised a single voice of protest. He knew the sound. He knew that dynamite had not been responsible for the crash that smote the ears of the anxious listeners.

"'Twas no dynamite!" he yelled. "Powder train be damned! It was No. 31. She was sour as a distillery! She blew up, I tell ye—she blew up when she hit the creek!"

And even after a shower of bullets from the ridge had driven them all to cover he still rushed to those who would listen and clamored that it was the train.

Being practically out of ammunition he did not stand on the order of his going, but as his pelones peled past the superintendent's house the reorganized miners, their belts stuffed with cartridges from their own private stock, came charging up from the town and rallied them in the rear.

Trained by American leaders they were the only real fighting force to be depended upon unless the Americans themselves should take a hand in the game, and that they could not do without the possibility of serious international consequences, a chance they could not take except as a last resort to save the women and children and themselves.

In a solid, shouting mass they swept up the hill together, dropped down behind the defenses, and checked the astounded rebels with a volley. Then there was another long-range battle, with every sign of war but the dead, until at last, as the firing slackened from the lack of cartridges, a white flag showed on the ridge above, and the leaders went out for a parley—one of those parleys so characteristic of Mexican revolutions, and which in reality mean so little, for both sides know that the words uttered are meaningless, and should one of them ever result in a surrender the terms of that surrender would not be regarded, once the victims were in the hands of the victors.

Properly speaking, Del Rey was in command of the town, but neither the federalists nor the miners would recognize his authority and the leadership went by default. While they waited to hear the rebel demands the Americans took advantage of the truce to bring up hot food from the hotel, where Don Juan de Dios stood heroically at his post. Let bullets come and go, Don Juan kept his cooks about him, and to those who had doubted his valor his coffee was answer enough.

"Why, my gracious, Mr. Hooker," he railed, as Bud refreshed himself between trips, "ain't you going to take any up to those women? Don't drink so much coffee now, but give it to the men who fight!"

"Um-pum," grunted Bud with a grin; "they got a skinkful of mescal already! What they need is another carload of ammunition to help 'em shoot their first rebel!"

"I thought you said they wouldn't fight!" twitted Don Juan. "This is the battle of Fortuna that I was telling you about last week."

"Sure!" answered Bud, "and over there is the dead!"

He pointed to a riot of mescal bottles that marked the scene of the night's potatoes, and Don Juan gave him up as hopeless.

"A pile of bottles usually represent the casualty list in a Mexican fight," added Bud as Don Juan moved away.

But, just as he would, Bud saw that the situation was serious, for the foolhardy Sonorans had already emptied their cartridge-belts, and their guns were no better than clubs. Unless the rebels had been equally reckless with their ammunition they had the town at their mercy, and the first thing that they would demand would be the refugees in the big house.

Before that could be permitted the Americans would probably take a hand in the fight, for, while the great majority of the women in the house were Mexican, and they would be protected regardless of international complications, but Gracia Aragon was not an American, and she could not claim the protection of these countrymen of his.

The possession of the town; the arms of the defenders; food, clothing and horses to ride—none of these would satisfy them. They would demand the rich Spanish landowners to be held for ransom, the women first of all. And of all those women huddled up in the casa grande not one would bring a bigger ransom than Gracia Aragon.

Bud pondered upon the outcome as the emissaries wrangled on the hillside, and then he went back to the corral to make sure that his horse was safe. Copper Bottom, too, might be held for ransom. But, knowing the rebels as he did, Hooker foresaw a different fate, and rather than see him become the mount of some rebel chieftain he had determined, if the town surrendered, to make a dash.

Riding by night and hiding in the hills by day he could get to the border in two days. All he needed was a little jerked beef for the trip and he would be ready for anything.

So he hurried down to the hotel again and was just making a sack of food fast to his saddle when he heard a noise behind him and turned to face Aragon. For two days the once-haughty Don Cipriano had slunk about like a sick cat, but now he was headed for Gracia's big room, and the look in his eyes betrayed his purpose.

"Where you going?" demanded Hooker in English, and at the gruff challenge the Spaniard stopped in his tracks. The old, hunted look came back into his eyes, he seemed to shrink before the stern gaze of the Texan, and, as the memory of his past misdeeds came over him, he turned as if to flee.

As for the Mendozas and their Sonoran miners, they were properly chagrined at their waste of ammunition and swore by Santa Guadalupe to fight it out with hand grenades. Even as their leaders wrangled the Mexican powder men were busily manufacturing bombs, and all the while the superintendent was glancing to the south, for swift couriers had been sent to Alvarez, the doughty Spanish hacendado of the hot country, to beg him to come to their relief.

Twice before Alvarez had met the rebels. The first time he spoke them well and they ran off all his horses. The second time he armed his Yaquis and Yaqui Mayo rancheros against them and drove them from his domain, inflicting a sanguinary punishment.

Since then he had been itching to engage them in a pitched battle, and when the word reached him he would come. Two hundred and forty Yaquis, all armed with repeating rifles, would follow at his back, and even with his boasted thousands Bernardo Bravo could hardly withstand their valor. So, while the rebels parleyed, demanding a ransom of millions and threatening to destroy the town, the defenders argued and reasoned with them, hoping to kill the time until Alvarez should arrive.

In the open space in front of the house the refugees gathered in an anxious group, waiting for messengers from the front, and as Hooker walked among them he was aware of the malignant glances of Aragon. There were other glances as well, for he had won great favor with the ladies by ditching the powder train, but none from Gracia or her mother.

Bud would not have admitted that he resented this lack of appreciation on the part of Gracia. In fact he hardly knew that he did resent it, but he watched anxiously for any sign of approval from this girl who was to be his pardner's bride should he conduct her safely to the border.

From the beginning the Senora Aragon had treated him as a stranger, according to the code of her class, and Hooker had never attempted to intrude. But if Gracia still remembered that she was an American girl at heart, she forgot to show it to him. To all she was now the proud Spanish lady, thrown with the common people by the stress of circumstances, but far away from them in her thoughts.

The conference between the leaders dragged on and messengers came and went with the news—then, after hours of debate, it broke up suddenly in a row and the emissaries came back on the run. Even at that they narrowly escaped, for the rebels opened fire upon them from the ridges, and before they could get back to cover the dandy, Manuel del Rey, received a bullet hole through the crown of his hat.

A grim smile flickered across Bud's face as he saw the damage it had wrought, for he knew that Amigo was in the hills—and a bullet shot down hill goes high! Some trace of what was in his mind must have come to Del Rey as he halted in the shelter of the house, for he regarded the Ameri-

can sternly as Aragon spoke rapidly in his ear. But if they planned vengeance between them the times were not right, for a rattle of arms came from the lower town and the captain was up and away to marshal his venge to the defense.

So far in the siege Del Rey had kept under cover, patrolling the streets and plaza and letting the volunteers fight, but now the war had shifted to his territory and his rurales were running like mad. For, matching treachery against deceit, the rebel leaders had sent men around to slip up near the town and at the first fusillade from the hillside they came charging up the creek.

Then it was that the ever-watchful rurales proved their worth. As the rebels appeared in the open they ran to the outlying houses and, fighting from the flat roofs, checked the advance until the miners could come to their aid.

But in the confusion another party of rebels had rushed down the gulch from the west, and while the fight was going on in the lower town they found lodgment in a big adobe house. And now for the first time there was fighting in earnest—the house-to-house fighting that is seen at its worst in Mexico. While women screamed in the casa grande and the Americans paced to and fro on the hill, the boom of a dynamite bomb marked the beginning of hand-to-hand.

If there was to be a casualty list in this long-looked-for battle of Fortuna, the time was at hand when they could begin counting the dead.

With a fearlessness born of long familiarity with explosives the Sonoran miners advanced valiantly with their hand grenades—baking powder cans filled with dynamite and studded with fulminating caps. Digging fiercely through wall after wall they approached unperceived by the enemy and the first bomb, flung from a roof, filled the adobe with wounded and dead.

A dense pall of yellowish smoke rose above the town and, as bomb after bomb was exploded and the yells of the miners grew louder with each success, the stunned invaders broke from cover and rushed helter-skelter up the gulch. Then there was a prodigious shouting from the Sonorans and swung his can of giant powder by the sling and let it smash against the hill in a terrific detonation.

In the big house all was confusion. Soon the cheers of the defenders heralded victory and, in spite of all efforts to restrain them, the wives of the miners rushed into the open to gaze upon the triumph of their menfolk.

On the hilltops the ineffective rebel riflemen rose up from behind their stone wall to stare, until suddenly they, too, were seized with a panic and ran to and fro like ants. Then, around the curve below the concentrator, a tall man came dashing up on a pure white horse, and behind him, charging as he charged, came the swarthy Yaquis of Alvarez, their new rifles gleaming in the sun.

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GEN. FRENCH REPORTS ON DESPERATE FIGHTING IN BATTLE OF THE AISNE

London.—The official press bureau issued long reports from Field Marshal General Sir John French detailing the operations of the British expeditionary force in France and their progress from August 22 to October 18.

This covers the retirement of the British from Mons southward to the Seine and the advance back to the River Aisne and the first stage of the desperate encounters along the line of that river. It was September 5 when the allies took the offensive.

The report contained this startling information: "It is a fact that between September 12 and October 8 the total of killed, wounded and missing among the British expeditionary force has reached 561 officers and 12,980 men, proving the severity of the struggle in which our troops have been engaged."

Following is the statement issued by the press bureau: "Sir John French's first report, dated September 17 says: "In spite of very determined resistance on the part of the enemy, who is holding in strength and with great tenacity a position peculiarly favorable to defense, the battle which commenced on the evening of September 12 has so far forced the enemy back from his first position, secured passage of the river, and inflicted great loss upon him, including the capture of over 2,000 prisoners and several guns."

The dispatch gives details of the retreat on August 23 and 29. Generals Gough and Chetwode, with the Third and Fifth Cavalry brigades, covered the retreat, repulsing the Germans with great loss.

German Pursuit Vigorous. "The pursuit by the enemy," continues the report, "was very vigorous. Some five or six German corps were on the Somme facing the fifth army; on the Oise at least two corps were advancing toward my front and were crossing the Somme east and west of Ham; three or four more German corps were opposing the Sixth French army on my left."

"On September 5 General Joffre decided to take the offensive, as he considered conditions very favorable to success."

Field Marshal French believes that about noon on the 6th the enemy recalled that a powerful thrust was being made against the flank of his columns moving south and east and began the great retreat which opened the battle.

This battle, so far as the Sixth French army, the British army and the Fifth and Ninth French armies were concerned, was concluded on the evening of September 10, when the Germans had been driven to the Soissons-Reims line, with the loss of thousands of prisoners, many guns and enormous masses of transport.

On the 8th both the First and Second army corps made large captures and took some guns. On the 9th after forcing the passage of the Marne, they inflicted a heavy loss in killed and wounded on the Germans, while the Second division took some hundreds of prisoners and a battery of eight machine guns.

Field Marshal French's second report, dated October 8, concerns the operations of the British forces since the evening of September 10. It reads: "Early in the morning of the 11th three corps crossed the Ourcq, further pursuit of the enemy being practically unopposed, the cavalry reaching the line of the Aisne, two brigades south of Soissons and three brigades at Couvillers and Carzeuil, on the afternoon of September 12."

Battle of Aisne Opens. "The Fifth division approached Misy, but were unable to make headway. The west army corps reached the neighborhood of Vauxcres without much opposition. In this manner the battle of the Aisne commenced."

"The position of the enemy was very strong either for delaying action or for defensive battle."

"On the morning of the 13th I ordered the British forces to advance and make the passage of the Aisne. The first corps and cavalry advanced on the river. The first division was directed on Chauville, via the canal bridge at Bourg."

Checked by Artillery. "In the approach to Misy, where the Fifth division eventually crossed, there is some open ground, which was swept by artillery fire from the opposite bank. The Thirteenth brigade, therefore, was unable to advance, but the Fourteenth, directed to a less exposed point, was rafted over, and at night established itself on the left of Sainte Marguerite, where later, with the Fifteenth brigade supported by the Fourth division on their left, it succeeded in repelling heavy counterattacks on the Third corps."

"On the morning of the 13th the Third corps found the enemy established in strength on Vregny plateau. The Twelfth infantry crossed at Venizel, but the bridge was so damaged that the artillery could only be manhandled across it. Meanwhile the construction of a bridge began close to the road bridge at Venizel."

"At 2 p. m. an infantry attack in the direction of Chivres and Vregny had made good progress, but at 5:30 p. m. the enemy's artillery and machine gun fire from the direction of Vregny became so severe that no further progress could be made. The positions reached were held until dark."

"The Third corps made an attempt to throw a heavy pontoon across the river late in the afternoon, but gave up because of the heavy howitzer fire of the enemy."

"In the evening the enemy retired at all points and entrenched himself on high ground about two miles north of the river, along which runs the Chemin des Dames."

Build Pontons Under Fire. "During the night of the 13th and on the 14th, and following days field companies incessantly worked night and day, throwing eight pontoons and one foot bridge across the river under a generally heavy artillery fire, which was incessantly kept up on most of the crossings after their completion."

"The action of the First corps on this day under the direction and command of Sir Douglas Haig was of so skillful, bold and decisive a character that he gained positions which alone would have enabled me to maintain my position for more than three weeks of very severe fighting on the north bank of the river."

About 1 p. m. the enemy obtained a footing between the First and Second corps and threatened to cut the communications of the latter. General Haig was hard pressed and had no reserve in hand. I placed a cavalry division at his disposal, part of which he skillfully used to prolong and secure the left flank of the Guards brigade. Some heavy fighting ensued, which resulted in the enemy being driven back with heavy loss."

General Advance Ordered. "About four o'clock a weakening of the counterattacks by the enemy and other indications tended to show that his resistance was decreasing, and a general advance was ordered by the army corps commander."

"Although meeting with considerable opposition and coming under very heavy artillery and rifle fire, the position of the corps at the end of the day's operations extended from the Chemin des Dames on the right through Chivy to Le Cour De Scuir, with the First cavalry brigade extending to the Chavonne-Solsons road. On the right the corps was in close touch with the French Moroccan troops of the Eighteenth corps, which were entrenched in echelon to its right rear. During the night they entrenched this position."

"Throughout the battle of the Aisne this advanced and commanding position was maintained, and I cannot speak too highly of the valuable services rendered by Sir Douglas Haig and the army corps under his command."

"On the morning of the 15th I became convinced that the enemy was making a determined stand. Reports reached us from the French armies on my right and left clearly indicating that the enemy was occupying a strongly entrenched line along the whole Valley of the Aisne."

"General Hamilton, with the Third division, attacked vigorously and regained the ground lost on the 14th."

"I was compelled to change my plans when I learned that further advance of the First corps would have dangerously exposed my right flank; and further also learned from the French commander-in-chief that he was strongly re-inforcing the Sixth French army corps on my left, with the intention of bringing up the allied left to attack the enemy's flank and thus compel his retirement."

"On the 17th, 18th and 19th the whole of our line was heavily bombarded. The First corps was constantly engaged. The enemy was ultimately driven back with heavy loss."

"On the 18th information reached me that General Joffre had determined to attack and envelop the German right flank."

Night Attack Repulsed. "On the evening of the 19th the enemy became active. After dark he continued his attack on the Second division, only to be driven back. Our losses in these two days were considerable, but the enemy's, as obtained, vastly exceeded them."

"On the night of the 21st another violent attack was repulsed by the Third division, the enemy losing heavily. On the 23d four-inch howitzer batteries from home arrived. They were brought into action on the 24th with very good results."

"On the 23d the action of General de Lasteyne's army on the allied left developed considerably and withdrew considerable forces of the enemy from the center and the east. Until the 25th it appeared as though the enemy's position in our front was weakening."

"On that day, however, a marked renewal of activity commenced. "Renewed counterattacks were delivered and beaten off during the day, and in the afternoon a well-timed attack by the First division stopped the enemy's entrenching."

"During the night of the 27th and 28th the enemy again made determined attempts to capture the trenches of the First division, but without success."

"Patrol attempts were made all along our front up to the evening of the 28th, when they died away and have not since been renewed."

and to all other persons holding corresponding positions in his majesty's service afloat—for distinguished conduct in war in cases where the award of conspicuous gallantry medals would not be applicable.

"His majesty has further approved of an award of the conspicuous service cross, to be designated in the future as the distinguished service cross, to all officers below the rank of lieutenant commander in addition to the officers previously eligible for this decoration."

ONE PHASE OF MARRIED LIFE

Seeming Unhappiness Most Probably Due to Lack of Something to Talk About.

It is the eternal tete-a-tete of married life that most critics of that blissful condition find fault with. From it spring boredom and dull, sodden silence, assert these cynics. Therefore, a hint for escaping this one depressing quality of marriage should have our best attention.

To illustrate, you will see it frequently on the trolley, when a man and his wife are sitting side by side—it is almost perpetual silence. They have nothing to say to one another. Perhaps the wife will emit a cheerful peep, but the husband will respond with a nod of the head or a hesitating yes or no. It is most always that way. No common interest observed. In fact, it looks as if they are mad at one another; as if they were bored. A young man or woman looking on the couple would be apt to say: "O, you married life."

But they are not mad. Let some charming lady acquaintance come in and sit down by the husband and he is all smiles and has plenty to say. Then he is a cordial companion. He is a changed man. And the same it would be