

THE WAY OF THE FATHER



BY MATHRYN JARBOE

THE brown sun-baked earth stretched in every direction as far as the eye could see; the brown sun-baked adobe mission was hardly discernible from the brown sage-covered hillocks save for its open cloisters where sepi shadows lay, save for its belfry tower that held aloft a gaunt redwood cross. For many weeks the north wind had blown incessantly, hurdling across the land a fine, brown, impalpable powder that rose and fell in the shimmering heat waves. A group of feathery pepper trees, drooping above an empty water tank, languidly shook their pendent leaves, but had not force enough to free them from the brown dust that covered them. The scarlet cactus plants had showered their flaming petals upon the ground, their stark dust-begrimed arms throwing weird shadows on the mud walls. A flock of pigeons were huddled in the eaves of Padre Antonio's door, their beaks wide open, their wings hanging loose. Above and over all brooded sullenly a dun, copper-colored sun, seemingly as loath to shine upon the land as was the land to receive its rays.

Stretched at full length on the belfry steps was Pedro, the padre's boy, half in the shadow, half in the sunlight. So long had he been there motionless that a brown lizard was sleeping on his naked foot, unmindful that the hot flesh was not an integral part of the hot bricks.

Pedro was not asleep, neither was he awake. With indolent, half open eyes he was watching for the shadow of the cross on the ground outside the belfry door. When the shadow appeared it would be time to ring the bell that called the handful of natives from their hot, sun-baked hovels to worship on the cool flags of the mission chancel. This was the one labor of the day that Pedro loved. He neither knew nor cared that the bell was cracked, that it sent forth, over the valley, a jarring, tuneless sound. He knew only that it was noise, lawful, permissible noise and this he loved. And he loved, too, his own importance in the act. Was it not he that summoned the lagging worshippers? If he did not ring the bell could even Padre Antonio, himself, call his congregation to hear the services in the mission?

But even while the indolent, half-open eyes watched for the shadow of the cross they rested with indolent, half-awakened curiosity on a spot far out under the eaves. It was not a long crimson lizard. Pedro knew all the lizards for miles about and not one of them was that color. It was not a butterfly caught in the leathern thicket that held the beams, not a blossom blown there by the wind, not a red-winged blackbird resting from its labor of mercy.

Suddenly a long, red tongue flashed high into the air and Pedro knew that it was fire! Fire under the eaves! Fire bursting from the roof of the sacristy! Fire enveloping the wooden joists! Fire and not a drop of water! Fire and no one but Father Antonio and him to fight it!

Ah! But he, he could summon them, those others! Not slowly, languidly to worship, but hurriedly, quickly, in haste, to save the mission! The bell rope hung by his side and he pulled it, not slowly, methodically, as the padre had taught him, but clashing and clanging the iron tongue against the bronze sides of the bell.

I
In his cell Padre Antonio had been kneeling almost as motionless as Pedro on the belfry steps, almost as unmindful of the passing day. But his thoughts were not idle. He was waging a mad, wordless battle with Fate, reviewing the long, fruitless years, rebelling against the long empty years to come. In his consecration to the church he had dreamed of peace and power, place among people, power in the world. And he had found only isolation and oblivion, only a score of Indian worshippers, with two score Indian boys. It was a one-sided battle, fought for the thousandth time, and Fate would win as she always had.

The shadow of the belfry cross was creeping slowly down the belfry roof. Padre Antonio knew that he soon would hear the bell that would summon his congregation. Even before he heard its sound his nerves shivered in anticipation of its cracked, harsh note, even before he saw the congregation his soul withdrew from the empty, sordid faces it would find there. If he had made but one step of progress! If he could but see one glimmer of consciousness of aught else save gratitude for creature comfort!

Padre Antonio's head was bowed low over his desk, when louder, harsher than ever before the bell clanged its discords. A deep groan from the padre's lips was its echo. For this broken bell had grown to be the expression in his mind of his own broken life. Again and again in hurried measure the bell clashed and clamored. A



THE PADRE FELL ON HIS KNEES AND IN THE INCENSE OF HIS OWN BURNING ALTAR HIS PRAYERS FLOATED UPWARD.

resentful anger burned for a moment in the padre's heart. Pedro was the one creature upon earth that the padre loved even as the padre was the only human being to hold all of Pedro's devotion. And was not Pedro, in spite of counsel, in spite of exhortation, in spite of commands, playing with the bell even as he would play with the love the padre had given him?

Slowly the priest rose from his knees, slowly he passed between the long line of empty cells that should have been filled with converts and ever as he walked the bell clashed and crashed. Not until he had entered the chapel itself did he hear the shouts and cries of the Indians as they ran toward the mission, not until he had thrown wide open the chapel doors did he realize

that there was unusual commotion. With the draft of the opening doors rushed a cloud of smoke, downpouring from the eaves. Following close upon the smoke came hissing, greedy flames. One hurried glance at the burning thatch of the roof told the padre that the mission was doomed, for not a drop of water was there in the mission tanks. Turning back into the chapel,

he hurried toward the altar. Perhaps it might be vouchsafed him to save some of the holy emblems there! Perhaps it might be vouchsafed him to die at the foot of the cross. Only half way to the altar had he gone when the roof of the sacristy fell. An overwhelming, dense mass of smoke filled the chapel. The padre fell on his knees and in the incense of his own burning altar his



prayers floated upward.

III
It was days, weeks, before he came to himself, before he could hear the story of his rescue. Then Pedro told him slowly, a little at a time, how the Indians gathered together in front of the chapel, had seen him turn back into the church; how they had massed themselves, fought their way to the spot where the beloved father lay and carried him out.

Days later, when the bandages were removed from the padre's eyes, the first thing he saw was a Madonna that had hung above the altar. Blackened and marred, the frame no longer held the picture, but the holy Mother's steadfast eyes looked down upon him as calmly and serenely from the walls of the Indian hovel as ever they had from the altar of his chapel. Under the picture on a rough shelf stood a golden halloo.

The padre's eyes filled, and Pedro, standing near the cot on which the priest lay, saw the tears, and softly wiped them away before he spoke.

"It was all that I could save, mio padre. You had told me that you loved the picture, no? The cross is but this bit of metal." He held out a dark mass of melted lead and gold. "But the picture will make a new altar. We can build a new altar for the blessed mother and her child."

Padre Antonio did not answer, and Pedro went on.

"The bell I might have saved, but I rang it and rang it until I could stay in the belfry no longer. It has fallen under all the tower. They may dig it out, though. It may still ring."

Antonio groaned aloud, and Pedro wondered if the father's love for the bell was even greater than his love for the golden altar cross. He had not groaned when he saw that the cross was destroyed.

IV
The ruins lay just as the flames had left them until Padre Antonio was strong enough to superintend their removal, to build again from the very beginning a new chapel, a new sacristy, new cloisters, new dormitories. All had been destroyed, utterly and absolutely.

But the reconstruction of the mission was not the first work to which Father Antonio turned. He devoted days to a letter to his superior in Spain, begging for relief, begging for release. And not until a courier had been dispatched down the coast with this appeal could Antonio give his attention to a new mission. With every beam that was raised, with every brick that was laid, a prayer was raised, a prayer was hid that he might be building for his successor, not for himself.

Impatiently he waited for his answer, so impatiently that all his duties were only irksome details of the day; and as the time came near when he might confidently expect his letter the days themselves were mere fragments of time piled one upon another.

V
Christmas came that year born in a dawn of silver and blue, a silver fog lying low under a limpid azure sky.

But there was no Christmas joy in Padre Antonio's heart. His superior's letter lay before him and it offered no release—no return to the world of place and power.

"That you have my sympathy, believe me, my dear son," the latter ran, "but I know that in refusing you your request I am granting you your desire. You tell me that you have won no souls to your church. Have you won them to yourself? Have you thought of the limitations of the people you are working for? Have you thought of their lives and opportunities? Win them to you through love. Then win them to the church through the same love. For love is supreme. Love is all powerful. Love reigns over all human life and passion." There were pages of close, fine writing—pages that seemed to Antonio like senseless platitudes, and the letter ended with the words: "I am not writing to you as your superior. I have not placed your application with the church authorities. I am writing to you as if you were my own son, to shield you from a lifetime of regret for a duty shirked."

The letter lay on the padre's knees as he sat in the door of his hut looking down toward the new mission building. It was nearly finished; already its soft, creamy walls rose high and straight; already the arches were supporting patches of thatched roof. Here and there on the ground squatted groups of brown figures, all looking more or less indolently at the result of their labors. But of what use was any of it? What did any of them gain from it? What did it mean to any of them except easy flour, easy warmth, easy existence?

As these bitter thoughts were passing through the padre's mind he saw that the groups of figures were rising to their feet—that they were gathering together in one mass, that they were coming toward him. He glanced at the shadows to see if it was already time for the morning service, but it was not, and a faint wonder crossed his mind. Had they some request to make of him? Extra fruit, extra flour, extra wine?

Padre Antonio led them, but he did not speak until all were gathered about the padre. Then, acting as interpreter and spokesman for the others, he explained.

The padre had told them that in some places, on Christmas day, friends gave presents to each other; the padre had told them that when the Christ-child was born all brought presents to him. Now, that the new chapel was so nearly finished, was it not right that they should bring gifts to the chapel? But because they loved the padre they wanted first to give gifts to him that he might give them to the church.

Slowly, one by one, the Indians brought their offerings and laid them at the padre's feet; a rough cross, carved from a madrone tree; a prayer desk, cut from the same wood; a footstool and candlesticks, all shaped with infinite patience; white cloths for the altar, coarse and rough, but woven and interwoven with love. Something each one brought, each one save Pedro, and Pedro himself had disappeared from the group.

For Pedro had found the bell not only uninjured, but made perfect and whole in the fierce flames that had annealed the crack in its bronze side, and Pedro's gift to the padre, Pedro's gift to the chapel was the bell that, quite unknown to the padre, had been hung in the belfry tower.

Overcome by his own emotion, Padre Antonio stood silent for a moment. Had not love won? Was not love triumphant? Was it not their love for him that made them rescue him from the burning church? Was it not their love for him that made them bring their offerings to the new mission? Would it be hard to bring them, through this love, to the loving heart of the church?

He raised his hand to give them the blessing of the church before he spoke his own personal words when suddenly, floating down from the new belfry tower came a note clear, pure, sweet and true. Tenderly, softly it called, again and again, symbolizing the love that had answered the padre's prayers not in his own way, but in the way of the Father whom he served.

Various Kinds of Grafters.
Phonografter—A grafter who tells everybody the same thing and keeps all the money.
Telegrafter—A grafter who depends upon his knowledge of the wires, and rarely takes anything "collect."
Paragrafter—A grafter who confines himself to two or three lines.
Cinematografter—A grafter who works with a screen and gives you a poor explanation of the things he shows you.
Autografter—A grafter who thinks you ought to come to the center as soon as you hear his name.
Aerografter—A grafter who uses lots of air—hot air.

HIS VICTORY AT SEA

By Anna Warner

(Copyright, 1908, by T. C. McClure.)

DURANT lay in his chair. The three seats next to him were vacant. They were labeled, in order, "Mrs. Gabelle," "Miss Gabelle," "Miss Susan Gabelle." Beyond the three chairs came the chair of an Italian lady who had a baby. Durant looked across the vacant seats and saw the baby and blessed the intervening space. The Italian lady thought that he wanted to admire the baby and held it up high on purpose for him to see. But his gaze fled out upon the wide ocean beyond, and he did not recall it until he was ready to open his book and read.

In the middle of the afternoon a pretty girl in a red Tam O'Shanter came up and stood by the rail. Durant found himself looking at her over the top of his book and wishing that she might be Miss Gabelle. After a while he had his wish, for she came across and sat down under her name. The Italian lady was delighted; her baby had cried so hard that a kind-hearted somebody had taken it to walk and left the mother free to enjoy society. Durant had been three chairs away, but Miss Gabelle was only half that distance removed. Mrs. Italia leaned over and addressed her at once.

"She sees so goodood, mill baybee! Ill neffarrre haff anny trooble weez her. All see laydees looff mill baybee—all seee laydees tend mill baybee!"

Miss Gabelle looked so disgusted that the Italian was disconcerted, and seized the trivial pretext of seeking her infant to rise from her seat and

view life from the lee side. The instant that she was out of sight the young girl sprang from her chair and, halting a passing steward, "Take these three chairs and carry them down to the other end of the deck," she said, pressing his hand to some purpose, "and do it right off, will you please?"

She went inside directly she saw him bearing off the first chair, and Durant lost not a minute in detaching himself from his rags to the end that when the steward returned he might say, with an imitation of the initiative proceeding:

"Take mine, too."

The steward grinned and took his chair, too.

When Miss Gabelle reappeared she looked prettier than ever, and as she at once opened a book and became wholly absorbed in it, Durant decided that the best thing for him to do was to go to sleep with his face turned in her direction, and so he was able to look at her all that he wanted to. After a while he decided that she was the prettiest girl that he ever had seen, and that he must know her somehow. Presently she closed her eyes and soon after her fingers relaxed their hold of the book and that slipped onto the deck. He vaulted over Mrs. Gabelle's chair, and, picking the book up, smoothed the leaves carefully and laid it back on her lap. But she did not thank him or pay the slightest attention to his polite action. There are naps on deck and naps on deck, and Miss Gabelle had not gone to sleep with her face turned in Durant's direction.

When the first gong for dinner sounded she woke up with a start and flew below so quickly that he only had

time to realize that she was going when she was gone.

The next morning he found her chaired and booked when he got up there himself. The wind had changed and was coming around the corner by the smoking-room in a very trying manner, but he hardly noticed that in his tangled emotions over her proximity and distance.

She noticed it, though, and strove in vain to adjust a bit of embroidered coat collar so as to shut off a growing gale. Her efforts proving futile, she summoned a sailor who was busy lashing something to something else, and, opening her purse:

"Please carry these three chairs out of the wind," she said, smiling on him, and then she went inside.

The sailor grabbed two chairs and clumped away at a gait demanded by the exigencies of the situation.

Durant meanwhile extricated himself from his rags with a sprightliness to be envied by the rheumatic and paralyzed, and was up and waiting when the emissary of fate returned.

"Here, take my chair, too," he said to the man, smiling on him in the stupid way that men reserve for other men. The sailor grinned the omniscient grin that deckhands acquire, pocketed his fee, and the last two chairs went away together in a friendly manner as the first two had done.

After lunch Miss Gabelle occupied her chair and, for the first time, did Durant the honor of noticing his existence by becoming slightly pink when she observed him there in his chair the same as ever. Later Miss Susan Gabelle,

who appeared to be the other's maiden great-aunt, hove on deck and reclined beside her niece for nearly seven whole minutes. At the end of that time a sudden roll of the steamer did her up with great abruptness; she became vividly green, howled pitifully, and the deck steward rushed to the rescue and bore her hastily away. Durant, who was burning to be of some use to the family to the end that he might merit gratitude and an introduction, sprang to the deck steward's assistance and started to bear up the trailing extremities of his lead, but Miss Susan Gabelle yelled, "Don't turn me upside down for pity's sake!" and he had to drop her feet as if they scorched his hands.

But he was richly rewarded for his effort, for the niece became freshly pink, smiled and remarked something about the weather, a species of conversational opening through which, on shipboard, men fall frequently and lose themselves forever. It came on to blow worse soon, and one terrific gust turned their plaid into distress signals and caused the deck steward, who was whirling about just then distributing cakes and tea as if he was a new species of revolving dumb-waiter, to suggest that they would be much more comfortable upon the other side.

"I think so, too," said Miss Gabelle. "After you are through with the tea won't you take our three chairs around there?"

"Geeviss!" said the man, and spun away.

Miss Gabelle drank her tea with great breeziness, so to speak, and then went below to see how her aunt was surviving. She smiled on Durant as she passed and hope foamed high on the surf of his heart waves. When the

steward came for the chairs it was in a voice of the utmost assurance that he was bidden:

"Take mine, too."

When Miss Gabelle came back she seemed not at all surprised at seeing him still one of their party. She even smiled again when he sprang up to install her among her wraps. And then of pillow and plaid he boldly occupied the neighboring territory and as the powers in her case were otherwise engaged no one entered a protest.

And then they talked. How they did talk! Only a seafarer knows how far into a heart-to-heart conversation two may progress by the third day out! To make matters more agreeable, the wind freshened so that even upon the sheltered side a pretty girl required continuous and solicitous retucking.

Toward night it began to rain.

"I think that we must move again," Durant suggested, with a heavy accent on the "we."

"Dear me, so we must," she answered, beginning to prepare to rise. He sprang to her aid; he extricated her from her rags; he hailed a deck-hand and he pointed out his work to him.

"Take those four chairs out of the wet," he told him in such a tone as Nelson used at Trafalgar. "He'll have them all ready when we come up after dinner," he added to Miss Gabelle. She smiled sweetly.

"I'm so glad to have met you," she said as they went inside (together this time). "I've been dreading such a long, lonely voyage."

Durant looked down at her and she looked up at him. They both smiled and she blushed.

Is it necessary to say more? Try and guess the outcome.

who appeared to be the other's maiden great-aunt, hove on deck and reclined beside her niece for nearly seven whole minutes. At the end of that time a sudden roll of the steamer did her up with great abruptness; she became vividly green, howled pitifully, and the deck steward rushed to the rescue and bore her hastily away. Durant, who was burning to be of some use to the family to the end that he might merit gratitude and an introduction, sprang to the deck steward's assistance and started to bear up the trailing extremities of his lead, but Miss Susan Gabelle yelled, "Don't turn me upside down for pity's sake!" and he had to drop her feet as if they scorched his hands.

But he was richly rewarded for his effort, for the niece became freshly pink, smiled and remarked something about the weather, a species of conversational opening through which, on shipboard, men fall frequently and lose themselves forever. It came on to blow worse soon, and one terrific gust turned their plaid into distress signals and caused the deck steward, who was whirling about just then distributing cakes and tea as if he was a new species of revolving dumb-waiter, to suggest that they would be much more comfortable upon the other side.

"I think so, too," said Miss Gabelle. "After you are through with the tea won't you take our three chairs around there?"

"Geeviss!" said the man, and spun away.

Miss Gabelle drank her tea with great breeziness, so to speak, and then went below to see how her aunt was surviving. She smiled on Durant as she passed and hope foamed high on the surf of his heart waves. When the