

powders in one dose. The doctor shrugged his shoulders and—altered his practice.

"Well," said Dr. Guild, as Concho sank down exhaustedly in one of the doctor's two chairs, "what now? Have you been sleeping again in the tule marshes, or are you upset with commissary whiskey? Come, have it out."

But Concho declared that the devil was in his stomach, that Judas Iscariot had possessed himself of his spine, that imps were in his forehead, and that his feet had been scourged by Pontius Pilate.

"That means 'blue mass,'" said the doctor. And gave it to him—a bolus as large as a musket ball, and as heavy.

Concho took it on the spot and turned to go.

"I have no money, *Senor Medico*."

"Never mind. It's only a dollar, the price of the medicine."

Concho looked guilty at having gulped down so much cash. Then he said timidly:

"I have no money, but I have got here that which is fine and jolly. It is yours," and he handed over the contents of the precious tin can he had brought with him.

The doctor took it, looked at the shivering volatile mass and said, "Why this is quicksilver!"

Concho laughed. "Ye, very quick silver, so!" and he snapped his fingers to show its sprightliness.

The doctor's face grew earnest. "Where did you get this, Concho?" he finally asked.

"It ran from the pot in the mountains beyond."

The doctor looked incredulous. Then Concho related the whole story.

"Could you find that spot again?"

"*Madre de dios*, yes—I have a mule there; may the devil fly away with her!"

"And you say your comrades saw this?"

"Why not?"

"And you say they afterwards left you—deserted you?"

"They did, ingrates!"

The doctor arose and shut his office door. "Hark ye, Concho," he said, "that bit of medicine I gave you just now was worth a dollar. It was worth a dollar because the material of which it was composed was made from the stuff you have in that can—quicksilver or mercury. It is one of the most valuable of metals, especially in a gold-mining country. My good fellow, if you know where to find enough of it your fortune is made."

Concho rose to his feet.

"Tell me, was the rock you built your furnace of, red?"

"*Si Senor*."

"And brown?"

"*Si Senor*."

"And crumbled under the heat?"

"As to nothing."

"And did you see much of this red rock?"

"The mountain mother is in travel with it."

"Are you sure that your comrades have not taken possession of the mountain mother?"

"As how?"

"By claiming its discovery under the mining laws, or by pre-emption."

"They shall not."

"But how will you, single-handed, fight the four; for I doubt not your scientific friend has a hand in it?"

"I will fight."

"Yes, my Concho, but suppose I take the fight off your hands? Now, here's a proposition: I will get half a dozen *Americanos* to go in with you. You will have to get money to work the mine—you will need funds. You shall share

half with them. They will take the risk, raise the money and protect you."

"I see," said Concho, nodding his head and winking his eyes rapidly. "*Bueno!*"

"I will return in ten minutes," said the doctor, taking his hat.

He was as good as his word. In ten minutes he returned with six original locators, a board of directors, a president, secretary and a deed of incorporation of the "Blue Ma a Quicksilver Mining Co." This latter was a delicate compliment to the doctor, who was popular. The President added to these necessary articles a revolver.

"Take it," he said, handing over the weapon to Concho, "take it; my horse is outside; take that, ride like h—l and hang on until we come!"

In another moment Concho was in the saddle. Then the mining director lapsed into the physician.

"I hardly know," said Dr. Guild doubtfully, "if in your present condition you ought to travel. You have just taken a powerful medicine," and the doctor looked hypocritically concerned.

"Ah—the devil!" laughed Concho, "what is the quicksilver that is in to that which is out? Hoopa la Mula!" and with a clatter of hoofs and jingle of spurs, he was presently lost in the darkness.

"You were none too soon, gentlemen," said the American *Alcalde*, as he drew up before the doctor's door, "another company has just been incorporated for the same location, I reckon."

"Who are they?"

"Three Mexicans: Pedro, Manuel and Miguel, headed by that d—d cock-eyed Sydney Duck, Wiles."

"Are they here?"

"Manuel and Miguel, only. The others are over at *Tres Pinos* lally-gagging Roscommon and trying to rope him in to pay off their whiskey bills at his grocery."

"If that's so we needn't start before sunrise for they're sure to get roaring drunk."

And this legitimate successor of the grave Mexican *Alcalde*, having thus delivered his impartial opinion, rode away.

Meanwhile, Concho the redoubtable, Concho the fortunate, spared neither *riata* nor spur. The way was dark, the trail obscure and at times even dangerous, and Concho, familiar as he was with these mountain fastnesses, often regretted his sure-footed "*Francisquita*."

"Care not, O Concho," he would say to himself, "'tis but a little while, only a little while, and thou shalt have another *Francisquita* to bless thee. Eh, skipjack, there was fine music to thy dancing. A dollar for an ounce—'tis as good as silver, and merrier." Yet for all his good spirits he kept a sharp look-out at certain bends of the mountain trail; not for assassins or brigands, for Concho was physically courageous, but for the Evil One, who in various forms, was said to lurk in the Santa Cruz Range, to the great discomfort of all true Catholics. He recalled the incident of *Ignacio*, a mulcteer of the Franciscan Friars, who, stopping at the *Angelus* to repeat the *Credo*, saw Luzbel plainly in the likeness of a monstrous grizzly bear, mocking him by sitting on his haunches and lifting his paws, clasped together, as if in prayer. Nevertheless, with one hand grasping his reins and his rosary, and the other clutching his whiskey flask and revolver, he fare on so excellently that he reached the summit as the earlier streaks of dawn were outlining the far-off Sierran peaks. Tethering his horse on a strip of table land, he descended cautiously afoot until he reached the bench, the wall of red rock