

ready coin; his *costales* were all emptied of their treasure.

This, however, delayed the game no more than temporarily, until, at his commands, the hidalgo's servants had fetched the bales of merchandise that composed his other mule-loads, which, one by one, he staked against their value — and lost as fast as the layouts could be made and the cards drawn.

Did it feeze him? Not in the least. Smiled like a four-time winner, did the don, and ordered brought his horse and pack-mules, their saddles and his arms — and played them off as cheerfully as he had lost his first bet.

Only toward the finish did he reduce his bets to lower units, as if seeking to extend the period of play in desperate hope Dame Fortune might deign to smile on him, all unmindful of the fact, that should have been obvious to even as mad a gambling fiend as he, that the dealer held Dame Fortune a throttled subject of his will.

Stripped of his beasts and equipment, the hidalgo's face fell grave for the first time. For a few minutes he sat silent, as if in study.

Then, politely excusing himself for five minutes, he rose and entered a neighbouring house — to return almost instantly, it seemed, a man externally transformed, scantily clad in the dirty, ragged blanket, the loose cotton trousers, rawhide sandals, and the frayed and greasy sombrero of a peon.

On his arm he bore his magnificent, spangled costume, complete from boots to hat, and on his face he wore the same disdainful smile.