

# The Missourian

By Eugene P. Lyle, Jr.

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## CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

With wrath, with admiration, Driscoll faced round on Don Anastasio. "Oh you pesky, shrewd-up gorilla!" he breathed. He was no longer amused. This accounted for Murguia's borrowing his flask the night they were in the forest. It accounted for Murguia and Rodrigo plotting together in the court. The Missourian was not a tool like King Canute, who ordered back the waves. "Hurry up," he said, the prisoner had hidden out alone at Tampico. Yes, yes, the tide, anticipation chilled more than the dawning day itself.

The tide seemed not to wait. It rolled right on, nearer and nearer. Murguia was hit to his feet. He was remembering already what Lopez had told him about his daughter and Maximilian, as Lopez had said he would. The American's easy, stalwart form in gray filled his blurred eyes. Here was a Confederate emissary come with an offer of aid for that same Maximilian. Such had been Murguia's suspicion from the first, and now it moved him with venomous hate. Yes, he would testify. Yes, yes, the prisoner had hidden out alone at Tampico. Yes, yes, the tide, anticipation chilled more than the dawning day itself.

"But why, Don Anastasio," asked Tiburcio purely in fantasy, "did you bring such a diabolical man to our happy country?"

"That will do," Lopez interposed. "The Senator Murguia could not know at the time that this fellow was Rodrigo's agent."

"And," Murguia added eagerly, "I was helpless, there at Mobile. The Confederates had come with their boats, and he held an order from Jefferson Davis."

"What's that?" cried Tiburcio, his heart suddenly leaping. "What's that, an order from Jefferson Davis?"

Tiburcio was a new interest, now. He possessed a mind as crooked as his vision, and being crooked, it followed tortuously the devious paths of other minds. So, though he had a tool of him, Rodrigo and Murguia wanted the Gringo shot to help the rebel cause. And he, Tiburcio, of the cunning ways, had just sworn away, not only the Gringo's life, but the possible salvation of the Empire. Coming from Jefferson Davis, the Gringo with his mission could mean nothing else. Then there was Lopez, Tiburcio did not love the changing Mexican who had not been the Benito's Old friend, but a man of the Republic. Tiburcio, a loyal Imperialist, read the finger posts as he smiled down the crooked path.

Yes, and here was Lopez, traitor on the final touch. Here he was, putting, pronouncing the death sentence, and poor innocent Don Tiburcio gnawing his baffled rage, as one would say of a villain. The execution was to take place the very next morning. His Majesty the Emperor would be asked to approve, afterwards.

## CHAPTER XXIII.—

### A Curious Pagan Rite.

"E un peccato che se ne va con l'acqua benedetta!"

—Machavelli.

The Storm Centre looked round, about and above. He was as a fly in a bottle. A massive rough-hewn door, jammed tight, sealed him within adobe walls two feet thick. There was a window, cross-hatched, as high as his chin, and only large enough to frame his head. They had brought him to the cellar, or dungeon, of the hacienda, where ponies were confined to decency. A wide masonry bench against the wall approximated a couch, but it was as blocked ice. By the flickering of a lone tallow dip, Don Tiburcio noted these things with every sense delicately attuned to strategy. But his verdict was unpromising.

"Tough luck!" he observed.

The adobe was built among the stables that bordered on the pasture, and when not needed as a calabozo, it served snugly for the administrator's best horse. From the one stall came a tentative whinny. Driscoll jumped with delight. "Demijohn! Why, you good old scoundrel, you!" he cried, before he remembered he had sworn before the Gringo he would not betray him. He was a traitor to the bone, and it haunted him unaccountably to find his horse, if only, he could have his pistols told. Ever since the Federals had cut him off from his lurching horse, those black ugly naves were next to the nearest in his affections. The nearest was the buckskin charger. And now, only the buckskin was left, which simply made the dilemma more poignant. The condemned man gazed critically at the walls, the rafters, the ground, and shook his head. Supposing a chance for escape, could he bring himself to leave Demijohn behind? He got his pipe to going, set down, and frowned ruefully at the candle.

"I don't want to be shot!" he burst out suddenly, with a plaintive wailing. Then he grinned. The day still in him had prompted the absurdity. And the thought of the Gringo's fate, and the thought of the other's fate, the boy flushed recently at the veteran's contemptuous grunt. His eyes still had the boy's naively ingenuitous greeting to the world before him. Next, quite abruptly, the warrior knew a bitter agony himself. If he could, but once, whisper as he had about to be suddenly strangled! He took no pride in his irony, nor in his hard indifference to the visage of death. How far, how very far, had the few past years of a wife carried him from the youngster who used to gaze so eagerly, so expectantly, out on life!

First, he was home from the University, from the pretty, shady little Missouri town of Columbia. But the vacation following he spent in bloody helping to drive the Jayhawkers back across the Kansas line. And soon after, when the fighting ended up officially, and he State, at the start, had more of it than any other battle ground, how many hundreds of times did he lie beside by the next throw of fate? During one cruel winter month he had lain with other wounded in a hospital dug-out in the river's cliff, and there, wanting both quinine and food, he would peer through the reeds, only to see the mercurial Red

Legs prying about in search of his hiding place.

And then there was the wild, badly dangerous life with Old Joe's Brigade, with that brigade of Missouri's young firebrands. Once, streched on the prairie, where he had dropped from exhaustion and hunger and loss of blood, the Storm Centre awoke to find a Pin Indian scalping over him for his scalp. On that occasion the deft turning of the wrist, from the waist outward, with the stripping of the pistol's hammer simultaneously, had enabled him later to restore to relative safety other scalp already dangling from the savage's girdle.

And now here he was in an adobe with walls two feet thick, and numerous adobe colored crevices proposing to shoot him first thing in the morning!

"I'll be blessed damned," he drawled querulously, "I object!"

It was the warrior who spoke now, and with him the boy joined hands. They became as one and the same person. The common foe was without. They would see this through together, with grim stoicism, with young-blooded dardervilery. The door opened, and one of the common foe, bearing a tray, came within.

"Well, Don Ernesto, how goes it?"

"With a pang of homesickness the Missourian thought of darkness who carried trays."

"Juan Bautista, at Yr. Mercy's orders," the Dragon cornered, came on, "how is whack?"

"Buen, señor, bien."

"Any theory as to what you've got there?"

"Yr. Mercy's supper. The Senator Coronel Lopez does not desire that Yr. Mercy should have complaint."

"Oh, none whatever, Johnny, except what I'm to die of. Set it down here on the feather bed."

There were a few native dishes, with a bottle of water and a jar of wine. Driscoll tipped the bottle to his lips. The wine was dark, contained poison, though the poison of ink, and as he drank, he pondered on why water should be an antidote for the poisons that lurk in whiskey flasks.

Then he wondered why such foolish conceits at such times persist in shouldering death itself out of a man's thoughts. And, as he thought, there stood the precursor of his end, in the emblematic persons of a very brown John the Baptist. The fellow's gorgeous red jacket was unbuttoned, revealing a sordid dirty shirt. He was officer of the guard, and had a curiosity as to how a Gringo about to be shot would act. He waited calmly, lantern in hand. But he was disappointed. There seemed to be nothing out of the common place. Some condemned Mexican, though not a murderer, family quarrels, would yet have been more entertaining.

Driscoll looked at him over the bottle. That earthen bottle had not left the prisoner's lips. It had stopped there, poised aloft by an idea.

"See here," Driscoll complained, "where the rest of the water I'm to drink?"

"Of what water, señor?"

"For my bath, of course. Don't I die tomorrow?"

"Yes, but this wine is too new for me. Drink it yourself, if you want."

"Many thanks, señor, with pleasure. But a bath? I don't understand."

"No? Don't you Mexicans ever bathe before you die?"

"We wash for the padre."

"Oh, that's it. And he spiritually washes your sins away? But suppose you couldn't get your padre?"

The Indian shrugged. "Ai, Maria purissima, one's soul would go to everlasting torment!"

"There! Now you can understand why I count so much on abolition. It's absolute!"

The native readily believed. Like others of his class, he thought all Protestants pagans, and not Catholic but a Mexican. "Must be something like John the Baptist's day, verdad, señor?" he said. "On that holy day, once a year, we must all take a bath."

"Quite right, too," Driscoll returned soberly. "A man should go through most anything for his religion—have'st not noted my here there, have you, Johnny?" The guard pricked up his ears. "Of course not," Driscoll went on, "you're worrying about my soul instead. Well, so be it. You know, you know, save your yearly baths for one big solemn final one, just before we die. And if I don't get mine tonight, I'll be wanting you to get mine tomorrow. Mexicans hereafter, and that would be pretty bad, wouldn't it? It's what made me think of my horse there. That horse, Johnny, has been my soul. He's most too heavy to wash away. Now I'm not going to tell you that I actually stole him, but just the same, if a good man can't take him, after I'm gone—why, I'd feel that he was washed off pretty well!"

The Mexican's sympathy grew more keen.

"But the other sins," Driscoll added, "they'll need water, and a great plenty, too."

Juan Bautista was feeling the buckskin's knees. Driscoll longed to choke him, but instead, he drove again at the weight. "Another thing, I'll have to be all right. He took up the tray, and opened the door, yet without a word. Driscoll's fist doubled, to strike and run for it. Then the fellow spoke.

"Does Yr. Mercy want soap too?"

The fist unclenched. "No," came the reply, almost in a joyful gasp, "this is for, for goodness only."

"One jar, señor?"

"Bless me, no! Two big ones, bigger'n a barrel!"

With a parting glance at Demijohn, the guard stole forth to gratify the heathen's whim.

"I'll give him enough to buy a horse," Driscoll resolved.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

The Man Who Did Not Want to be Shot.

"A horse and a man is more than one."

—Taming of the Shrew.

"Now Berthe—why, what in the world—"

Jacqueline began.

It was her second morning to awake in the hacienda house, and the little Berthe, brought tripped into her room under a

starchy mountain heaped high. "Clothes, madam," she replied.

"He said—"

"They were made yesterday by some of the rancho women. Madame will look?"

"Cholito! Granda diest!"

There were two dresses, one for each girl. The native seamstress had easily taken stock of mademoiselle the day before, only to discover that a "stump" took from Paris was a formidable thing to duplicate. The marchioness smiled, and the maid also.

"But, for example, Berthe, who inspired this?"

"He did."

"The American monsieur, of course."

"Oh, the American monsieur, of course! So, monsieur, permit me to observe, that I need a wardrobe? But you, Berthe, you are sure?"

"Oh, no, madam! I knew nothing till just now, when the woman brought them. The monsieur ordered them yesterday said. And naturally, madame, if I could have found better material, I do not doubt I would have complied."

"There, child, I'll not be reproached by you when you're thinking it necessary to decide."

And madame will see, too, that they will do nicely." She spread the frock on the bed, and began slipping here and there with the scissors and taking stitches everywhere. "By letting it out this way—voilà, if madame will kindly slip it on."

"Berthe, you can't mean—Oh nonsense!"

None the less the skirt was passed over her head, and the maid's deft fingers kept on busily. "And why not?" she asked, as she worked. "Unless one likes rage better. And who will see? Only men. Poor, those citizens do not know perale from a Pinafore toilet."

Jacqueline began to wax angry with the quiet tyranny of it. She looked at the horror and shuddered. Then with both hands she pushed the skirt down, gathering up her own lawn skirt instead. It was a rather wretched brown lawn skirt. She gazed ruefully at the maid, and the maid, her mistress' fury, and the maid tried not to laugh, at which Jacqueline stamped her foot. "Berthe," she cried, "shall I slap you?"

"Madame, and madame, I was thinking, what he says if you do not wear it?"

"Jacqueline gave her a keen look. "Child, you're excited," she exclaimed, "you seem to imagine that whatever he wants—"

"Oh, madame, I think you can try it on again now, please."

And madame submitted petulantly. But to herself she had to confess the magic of Berthe's fingers. The fresh, rapid effect, yet on her slender figure there was witchery in it.

An orderly knocked. He was one of her American escorts, come to say that everything was ready for departure. She gladly hailed the chance to escape this house of mourning. All night long old women in the death chamber had mumbled incantations, and the droning was in her ears as she slept. It was not nice. Because she could not but out the inevitable shock of ugly mortality, in very self-hate she yearned to get away. The evening before, even while she leaned over the bed, she had been seized by the throat, while she pressed down the icy eyelids, she wondered—obstinately wondered, despite herself, what the dead girl could have thought, what she could have felt, during that horrid, thrilling second of flight downward, and what, in anticipation of the second after, it was gruesome, this being always and always the spectator. Yet Jacqueline knew that, had it been she herself plunging into the tower, she still would have been that spectator. Too well she knew that she would have analyzed and felt. She would have rated even the second before eternity in its degree as a prison; and, no doubt, would have been aware of a voluptuous ecstasy, while anticipating the second after. She hated herself, and she hated too the smart, ultra-refined life that had brought her to this. How much of those past years, of the years to come would she not give to shed a few tears without interrogating them!

Ney met the two girls under the colonnade. At the steps was the coach and eight mules left by Maximilian for their use, and drawn by the pair of old horses. Jacqueline called to the Frenchman, the little lady in blue-flowered calico and a rakish Leghorn hat returned the salute with a smile.

"Where are the Dragons, Michel?" she asked.

Ney did not know. But a Mexican with a mustache, and a black pistol in a silver-velveted scabbard. He had been waiting for her, he said. There was time. Otherwise he would have forced his way to wherever she was.

"Indeed, Monsieur Farceur," said Jacqueline.

She recognized that most sinister of jokers, Don Tiburcio. He was eying her narrowly, and there was a vigilance in the baleful gleam, as though of a man who might have been deceived by his fellowmen.

"But," he coolly proceeded, "only a few minutes are left now."

"My good man, whatever are you talking about?"

"And after the few minutes, we'll have the shooting. I came to invite your Mercy."

"Shoot whom?"

"There is but one prisoner."

"You mean Senor Murguia?" The American was acquitted. "I believe."

"It's the other way, senorita. They were both tried over again, and then, the American was condemned."

"Mademoiselle," ejaculated Ney, "you are deadly."

"I am not," Jacqueline protested furiously. "It's the powder."

But Berthe knew better. Her mistress used it not, for all the rougher frolics on her nose-tips. Tiburcio, too, was satisfied as to her sudden pallor. She would save him the American, he decided. "Your Mercy had best hasten," she urged her frantically.

Jacqueline ran to the end of the portico, from where she could see the pasture, within a platoon of red jackets were filing toward the corral.

"That scoundrel Lopez!" exclaimed Tiburcio, "he has advanced the time off!"

Only for an instant did Jacqueline wince her hands.

"Michel, your horse!" she cried. "Quick!"

quick! Now hold the stirrup!"

But Tiburcio was the quicker. He bent his knee, on it she stepped, and up she jumped, and kicked her heels as a spur. The charger leaped, and down the road clattered girl and horse, eyes away, legs perilously.

"It was a hundred yards to the pasture gate, and as much again to the adobe inn. When her horse rose in his gallop, she caught glimpses over the wall. The Dragons were drawing up before the corral. Sentinels tugged at the huge wooden door, and Lopez gazed them on. He saw her coming, and would have it over with before she could interfere. He believed an order, and the shooting squad threw up their guns aim. They would not wait. They would fire on their victim the second the door opened. The heavy oak began to give. But that moment, when the door was open, the black adobe wall for all its two feet of thickness, she beheld a man on a great-bellied yellow horse, both man and horse plunged mid a sudden cloud of dust, plunged before, playing with the light of day. The dumfounded shooting squad had flared crazily against the half-open door, and for the critical quarter minute following, their weapons were harmless. Other Dragons ran wildly into the pasture, and as wildly fired at the horseman. Only the sentinels had happened to be on the side of the magic exit, but as the solid wall dissolved into a powdered cloud and the yellow horse and rider shot forward, down upon his head crashed a gigantic water jar filled with earth. He who had sympathized with pagan abortions at the time of his wife's death, and who had been having a hand in this, he knew.

Jacqueline wheeled to Driscoll's side as he dashed toward her. He was coatless. His woolsen shirt was open at the neck, the sleeves were rolled to the elbows. He saw her, he flattered, and flattered against the grim. She had never seen a face so buoyantly happy.

"Morning, Miss Jack-keen! Race you to the river!"

They galloped through the gate together. He was for turning down the road, but she was for the river. Do you? During a second the flight was stopped.

"I'm in a hurry just now," he panted, but made no effort to get by her.

"Up that way!" she cried. "Up that way, past the House!"

"But those pretty boys—"

"The Americans? They'll not stop you. I promise."

"Then it's our move. Careful, little girl, don't fall!"

Jacqueline, waving her arm, signaled the Feathers and Furs to make room, and Tiburcio and Ney saw to it that they did. Man and girl raced through them.

"Where's Michel?" called Jacqueline, leaving Ney still with thumb to cap at salute. Tiburcio gazed after them.

Lopez ran across the pasture to the colonnade. His red face was redder than ever before. Tiburcio ardently regarded him. Lopez glared at Ney.

"Up that way!" he said in pursuit, he demanded hoarsely.

"And I, and I! Who are you to question me, senor? Every girl has been cut!"

"Carabana, mi coronel," cried Tiburcio in dismay. "You don't say so?"

"And it will take ten minutes to tie up the cords, while you, Senor Frenchman, you stand there, your men mounted and ready! Once I tell you!"

"Can't," said Ney doggedly. "Against orders."

"Where's those orders?"

"Of Mademoiselle la Marquise, monsieur."

"Who runs away with a convict. A fit commander, por Dios!"

Off came the Frenchman's gambit, but he paused in the gesture of striking. Too quick at this, and not enough at wit, he might ruin her scheme. "As an other who lets prisoners escape, I advise Monsieur the Colonel to look to his girths."

Ney met the two girls under the colonnade. At the steps was the coach and eight mules left by Maximilian for their use, and drawn by the pair of old horses. Jacqueline called to the Frenchman, the little lady in blue-flowered calico and a rakish Leghorn hat returned the salute with a smile.

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Missouri girl from the very whites of their eyes. How he had loved to tease her! He could not help it; she was so daintily prim. That he should thus think of his sister, the while gazing on the one-time sister, butty-butter, to say the least, it was a perfect comment on the transmitting magic that lurks in blue flowered percale.

They slowed to a trot.

"Monsieur is my prisoner, yes," said she in her wonderful English.

He took the other meaning. "I don't know—yet," he returned soberly.

She laughed, and he realized that he had spoken aloud.

He turned on himself in dismay. "What's the matter with me? I'm muttering. I think, monsieur," said Jacqueline demurely, "that I have the goods."

"You haven't—you can't guess either! I don't know myself."

"Just the same, I wish I knew so well my chances for heaven."

"But you're mistaken, I tell you. I'm not!"

"Not what, monsieur?"

"In—m—w—in love."

Jacqueline's laughter was the merriest peal. In the end he felt grained. Little by little he was trying to convince the little witch! He had much to do convincing himself.

On the farther slope of a hill where coffee grew and they passed at a trail that had the road, and where Honorable soldiers while her father played France's diplomacy with grown-ups. That accent of hers, then, was as broad as Mayfair, and to the Missouri doubly foreign, and doubly alluring.

"I cannot understand," she said, "why it is the Dragons have not followed you immediately."

"Tibby's the reason, I reckon. That Tibby is a deep one."

She made him explain, and he told her. The blackmailing humorist, Tiburcio, had paid him a visit at the dungeon window during the night. Being chief witness for the prosecution, Tiburcio could pass the sentry unchallenged.

"Come for your money?" Tiburcio had inquired, and Tiburcio seemed hurt.

"What's the matter," Tiburcio demanded, "with pointing a revolver at the Senator Americano right now, and making him deliver?"

Driscoll had not figured on what the objections might be, but he reckoned some would materialize.

"But," said Tiburcio, "I'm not doing it, and why? Simply because I want to know if you care to become?"

"Why?" returned Driscoll, "I'll think it over, and let you know in the morning," at which lack of confidence Tiburcio was much hurt than ever.

"What's the use," Driscoll objected, "they'd catch me again?"

"Not if I fixed their walls, and if I do, will you promise to get out?"

And thus the bargain had stood, and she said. But the lines in her face had vanished.

"Of course I mean to see you back to your friends," he explained.

"Merci bien. But you will not. You will have this river straight to Tampico. I say yes!"

She turned her horse as she spoke, whereas he started to remount his own.

"I think, sir," she began humbly. "The road is free."

"Oh, why have you to be so, so quarrelsome?"

"The temptation, I reckon."

"You really will go back with me?"

"I might be going back along about the same time. It's a public trail."

"Then I will stay, and you must! I will not permit you to go back there now. I will see that you do wait here so long until Lopez has the time to start to Mexico after you. Then you will be behind him. Have the goodness to hold my bridle. I think I shall take me a rest a little also."

Together they sat on a huge live-oak root and watched the sluggish Panuco flow by.

"No hurry now," Driscoll observed comfortably. "Our earliest unpolished colons won't get away for years yet."

Years, at least, were in his wishes, years in which to provoke her quaintly inflected English, and its quaint little slips. She had learned it in London long ago, and he had learned it in London long ago, while her father played France's diplomacy with grown-ups. That accent of hers, then, was as broad as Mayfair, and to the Missouri doubly foreign, and doubly alluring.

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thus it was fulfilled, though at the last the anxious Tiburcio had called in Jacqueline to help.

"Now," said the marchioness, setting herself for a treat, "I must know. Time for me the miracle, explain it. I cannot longer hold my curiosity. But it was time—exquisite—however you have done it!"

"Veren't they a surprised lot, though?"

"But the miracle, monsieur! The miracle!"

"Well, it was this way. Being on the evening brink—as old Meagre Shank, friend of mine, would say—I figured it out that lacking in goodness, I'd try to get the next best thing."

"That I'd try to get a bath."

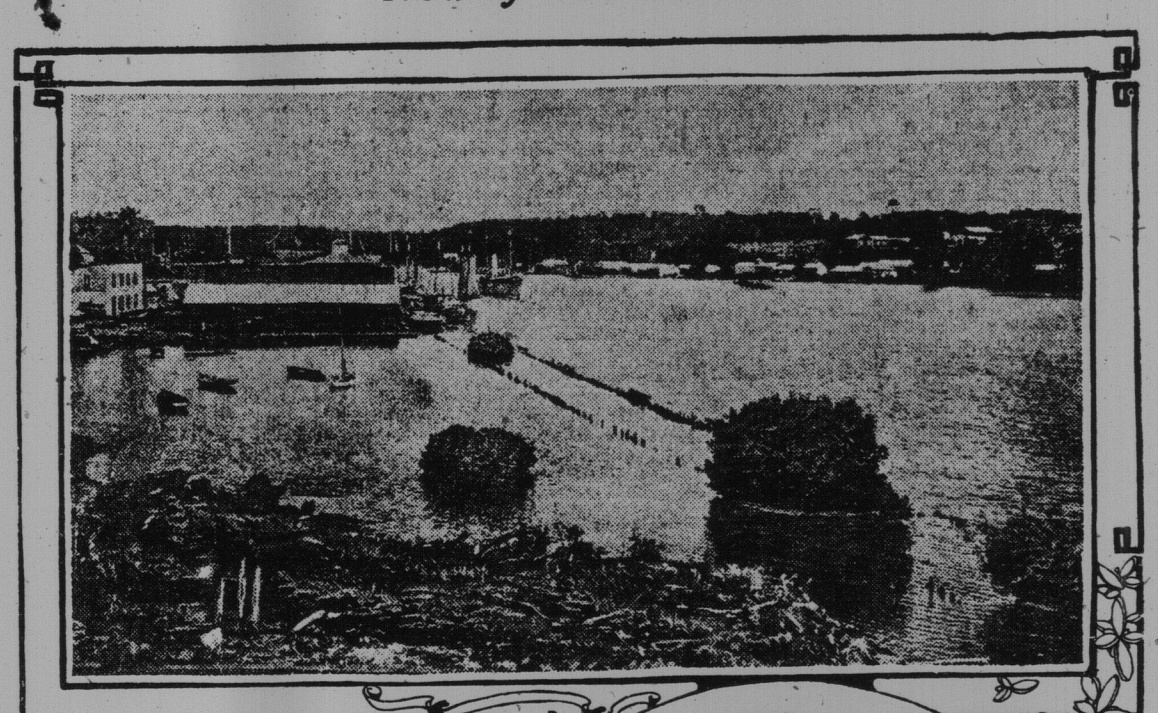
"Of dust and mud, for example?"

"At that Driscoll ceased all miracle taming and brushed himself off. But, putting him back into his dungeon, one will recall how he plotted to obtain two jars of water. This water he used simply to soften the hard, sun-baked adobe. First he hung his coat under the window. A suspicious guard naturally wanted to know why, and Driscoll appeared at the bars stripped to the waist. To keep out the cold air while he bathed, he said, and his teeth chattered. Then he went back to work. He handled his precious water with desperate economy. He began at the exposed end of one adobe brick, soaking it as need, and digging it out with a chip of earth-ware knocked off one of the jars. The wall was two adobe lengths in thickness, but after he had gotten out his first brick, it was easy, by tugging and kicking, to tear out the others of the inside tier, since luckily they did not dovetail in with the outer ones. Soon after he had an arch-shaped niche in the wall almost as high as his head when mounted on Demijohn. The really tedious part remained, and it was an all night job. To deepen the niche without breaking through, he had to scrape it out piece-meal, wetting the dried mud as he toiled. He measured carefully just how much of the thickness to leave, because the weed stalks in the adobe could not be trusted to hold too thin a crust, and also he had to take care that the water did not soak entirely through and make a tell-tale blot on the outside when daylight should come. It was an infinitely tedious task, and even with completion at last, there was yet the question—would break first, bone or masonry?"

"But he would learn when he should dash his horse's skull and his own against the shell that remained. He saddled Demijohn, filled an empty jar with the soft earth of his excavations, and waited. His dramatic appearance at the instant of the door's opening was not a coincidence. It was minute calculation. Already mounted, he faced the wall, with the heavy jar poised over his head in both hands, his stuns down back to strike."

(To be continued.)

## Seat of Dominican Government Which Was Nearly Overthrown



Santo Domingo Harbor. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The 15-Corps of Dominican Republic have every reason to congratulate themselves that their capital city was not brought crumbling down after their heels as a result of the stirring times that culminated in the overthrow of President Morales and the elevation to the chief executive office of General Ramon Caesars, the former vice-president. Outside of those who played the leading parts in the chief event few persons here knew of the facts, as no publication of them has been made and the stories circulating throughout the republic do not convey an accurate idea of how serious they were. There were three United States men of war in the harbor—the Olympia, the Des Moines, and the Scorpion, and for a time it seemed as though they would be compelled to train their guns on the city. Calm courage in the presence of an angry mob brought about a peaceful solution at a time when bloodshed seemed inevitable.

Government Palace in Santo Domingo City

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