

José Vaca

cañon, alert for a surprise. The wounded man, Vaca, was known to him. He was but one of the bandits. Ramon, Vaca's nephew, was not of their kind, but had been led into this journey by Vaca that the bandit might ride wide when approaching the ranchos and send his nephew in for supplies.

The pack on Ramon's saddle rode too lightly to contain anything heavier than food. There was nothing tied to Vaca's saddle but a frayed and faded blanket. Yet Waring was certain that they had not cached the gold; that they carried it with them.

At noon they watered the horses midway up the cañon. As they rode on again, Waring noticed that Vaca did not thrust his foot far home in the stirrup, but he attributed this to the other's condition. The Mexican was a sick man. His swarthy face had gone yellow, and he leaned forward, clutching the horn. The heat was stagnant, unwavering. The pace was desperately slow.

Despite his vigilance, Waring's mind grew heavy with the monotony. He rolled a cigarette. The smoke tasted bitter. He flung the cigarette away. The hunting of men had lost its old-time thrill. A clean break and a hard fight; that was well enough. But the bowed figures riding ahead of him: ignorant, superstitious, brutal; numb to any sense of honor. Was the game worth while? Yet they were men — human in that they feared, hoped, felt hunger, thirst, pain, and even dreamed of vague successes to be attained