

had never received a kind word or look. Raceca alone tolerated him, for Raceca could use him.

Marston halted at the bank, and sent Mateo for the horses. When he returned with them, he looked up, his bleary eyes expanded, and he gasped a little. On the steps of the bank stood the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. In her light riding-habit, the lithe, strong curves of her figure stood out; her hair was brown, bleached by wind and sun to a golden tinge in places; her eyes were brown, too. Mateo caught in them, as they rested upon him, an amused light, but a kindly one, and he stared steadily.

"Mateo!" Marston said sharply. "Ride behind!"

The ride through the rolling country, across the dry flats, by the peculiar earth formation known as *La Santita*, to the hacienda was quickly made.

There Mateo began to gather the information that would serve José and incidentally began for the first time to really live.

A few days passed, and in them Mateo learned much that was important. Marston had money. There was no doubt about that. He was rapidly making the old, neglected estate into an attractive place. On rides with Miss Marston down the Quivino Road, Mateo listened to her friendly chat, and went through the novel experience of being treated as a man.

Marston gave him an automatic revolver of high grade make, and taught him how to use it. Mateo forgot he was the "Dog" as he had been in Andres.

But he remembered.

One afternoon, while dozing in the corner of the ranch-house, he heard Marston say:

"I agreed to have the money here to-morrow morning for Morales. I agreed to pay cash for the land. I'm simply sick, and I'm going to send you in to the bank to get it. Mateo will go with you. Start back as soon

as you can after the heat. I shall worry until I see you, but I don't see any other way to get the money here now. I expected to be stronger before—"

Mateo heard her clear, cheery laughter interrupt her father. "Cheer up, pater, old top. You're getting better every day. Mateo and I will go and get back!"

Mateo was smiling to himself and thinking of the pleasure of the ride, when he was seized with a sudden trembling that made him sweat. Raceca, José, and the others! It would mean death for him if he did not tell them of the opportunity at hand; he had been sent out there for a purpose—to be a spy! Mateo shook in the shadow of his corner. He was afraid, mortally afraid. He remembered the night that Savas had died—the fall of José's hand, the thud—and the wrenching and gagging of the dying man in the little room in which he had been trapped.

Mateo scrambled to his feet, whispering "*Jesus Maria!*"

Fifteen minutes later, with his very soul aqiver within him, he rode away from the corral with the girl. Only one thought was in his mind: to see Raceca and tell him what was on foot.

She was cheerful and happy. She looked over as they rode along.

"Mateo, you don't seem very cheerful!"

"No, senorita, my life has been one of sorrow."

She smiled with amusement at the gloom in his voice.

"Weren't you ever in love?"

He shook his head.

"Well, I am," she answered, "in love with life! I'll race you to the ridge."

Mateo's heart chilled as he rode in answer to her challenge. She was beautiful—and there was José.

In a back room of the inn Mateo explained to Raceca and José the girl's errand in Andres; and he listened as José, his lean face hardening with