English translation of the Mexican novel, "San Gabriel de Valdivias" by Mariano Azuela, with an introduction "The present agrarian problem in Mexico"

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An English Translation of the Mexican Novel

SAN GABRIEL DE VALDIVIAS

by Mariano Azuela

with an Introduction

THE PRESENT AGRARIAN PROBLEM IN MEXICO

BY

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Approved:

[Signatures]

Chairman of Board of Examiners

Chairman of Committee on Graduate Study
MARIANO AZUELA

Mariano Azuela was born in Lagos de Moreno, in the state of Jalisco, on January 1, 1873. His parents owned a small hacienda near that town, and his youth and early manhood were spent in the heyday of the Díaz regime. In spite of the modest circumstances of his parents, he received a good education, first in Lagos, and later in Guadalajara, where he obtained an M.D. in 1899. Azuela was married the following year and to this union there have been five sons and five daughters, none of them following in their father's footsteps, either in medicine or writing. Dr. Azuela began practicing medicine in his native Lagos that same year. In the following years leading up to the beginning of the Revolution, Azuela held various governmental jobs, among which were jefe político of Lagos and later Director of Public Education of the state of Jalisco for a brief period (1914-15) while the Villa government was in power. When the Carrancistas took Guadalajara he was forced to flee with a band of Villa's men, serving as their only doctor. Then followed retreat after retreat, moving ever northward, through Aguascalientes and the state of Chihuahua, to El Paso, Texas, where Azuela finally took refuge. This was in 1915. It was during his retreat that he conceived and wrote Les de Abajo, his masterpiece. This first appeared in print as a serial in the

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1Jefferson Rea Spell, Contemporary Spanish-American Literature, pp. 66-67
columns of a Spanish newspaper in El Paso.

Azuela returned to Guadalajara the following year and later moved his family to Mexico City where he has lived ever since, practicing his two professions, medicine and writing. He lives in an unpretentious district of the city and does not give one the impression of a man who has written such realistic novels of the Revolution as he has.

Azuela is not a professional writer. In his own words: "Le juro que no soy un literato." (I swear that I am not a literary person.) But he is a born novelist and ever since his student days he has been keenly alert to the passing scene. He has kept a minute set of notes, taken from the human drama he has witnessed, and it is from these notes that he has drawn his characters and theses. He himself says that he only writes when strongly moved by injustice or suffering among his fellowmen.

His first published literary effort was a series of seven short sketches, published under the pen name of "Beleño" while a student in Guadalajara. During the first decade of the twentieth century he published five short stories and three novels—María Luisa, 1907, Los Fracasados, 1908, and Mala Yerba, 1909. These early works reveal Azuela as a friend of the common people. They show his concern for the oppressed and the poor. This is substan-

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2 John E. Englekirk and Lawrence E. Kiddle, editors of Mariano Azuela's Los de Abajo, p. xiii
tiated by the fact that he was radically anti-Díaz and readily espoused the cause of the Revolution which overthrew the tyrant.

Three urban novels, employing the Revolution as a background, followed his removal to Mexico City. These were: Los Caziques, 1917; Las Noces, 1918, which also contains two short stories, "Demitilo quiere ser Diputado," and "De come al Fim lloré Juan Pablo;" and Las Tribulaciones de una Familia decente, 1918. The next three—La Malhera, 1923; El Desquite, 1925; and La Lución-maga, 1932, are novels depicting the low life with which the author came into contact while a physician in the capital. Since then Azuela's trend has been toward novels with a rural setting, with emphasis on contemporary social problems. Pedro Moreno, el Insur- gente, and Precursores, 1935, are the only novels to come from his pen which do not deal with times contemporary with their writing, both of them being fictionalized biographies. Mariano Azuela's latest novels include El Camarada Pantoja, 1937; San Gabriel de Valdivias, 1938; Regina Landa, 1939; Avanzada, 1940; La nueva burguesía, 1941; La Marchanta, 1944. Another biography, El Padre Don Agustín Rivera, was published in 1942. A volume entitled Teatro, 1938, contains dramatized versions of Los de Abajo, El Desquite, and Los Caziques.

Azuela's urban novels are psycho-analytical and subjective to the extent that the elliptic and enigmatic style sometimes spoil the story. But the author is at his best when writing stories of
the soil. The language is rich, colorful, idiomatic, and the story moves fast. Character alignment is quickly made, and the thesis is ably brought out through both dialogue and soliloquy of the characters.

Amuelã is the dean of Mexican Revolutionary novelists. He has the ability to select characters at random and through them transmit to the reader his theme of social injustice or the miscarriage of the ideals of the Revolution, at the same time presenting a gripping and interesting story. Therefore, Amuelã's novels have an artistic value as well as a sociological interest. He was able, at various periods throughout his own life, to analyze the motives which gave rise to the conflicts about him and penetrate to the depths of the souls of the contenders. The poetic quality of Amuelã's fiction is its most distinguishing characteristic. This is best exemplified in his masterpiece Les de Abajo. No other writer has pictured the Revolution in so many aspects. He has seen it approach; he saw its destruction, and when the sky had cleared, he found that little of its gigantic force had been expended for the betterment of those who most needed help—the Indian and the "underdogs" of Mexico. In his eyes, their problems are still unsolved.³

³Spell, op. cit., p. 100
THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION OF 1910

In 1519 Cortés marched inland from Vera Cruz and after two years of bloodshed and heroic statesmanship succeeded in changing Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital, into Mexico City. Thus New Spain began her colorful colonial career down a path three centuries long.

The colorful colonial period was one of relative peace, during which the blood and culture of Old Spain were fused with that of the Indian, creating a new ethnic and cultural pattern that was definitely Mexican in spirit. It was necessarily a period of peace due to the unity produced by the imposition of a transplanted medieval Spanish feudal system that centralized all political, spiritual, and, most important—economic control—under church and state, all administered from distant Spain through a viceroy. Such a system did, however, permit much of the Indian way of life to survive.

Eventually a caste system evolved. At the bottom was the pure blood Indian, followed closely by the mestizo, or mixed-blood. At the top of the caste was the criollo, the colonial of pure Spanish blood but born in Mexico. He too, was subject to the tyranny of the gachupín or peninsular Spaniard who was appointed by the crown to rule the other three groups for the glory of Spain and his own personal gain.
Padre Hidalgo made the first outcry against this foreign rule in 1810. In 1821 the Mexicans consisting of the three classes named, succeeded in winning their freedom from the gachupín. But the colonial way of life continued. The inexperienced criollo and upper-class mestizo were now in power, and consequently Mexico began her independent career with the same weaknesses and defects she had suffered as a colony. The spiritual unity against a common enemy was gone, and there arose an intense rivalry among the social groups.

For the following fifty years, Mexico battled within herself over conservative and liberal principles of government. The greatest struggle was between church and state. The church had supported the gachupín during the wars of independence. Furthermore, during the colonial period the church had amassed great wealth and landholdings—a factor which was to influence later reforms. By virtue of this wealth and land the church had a stranglehold on the nation's economy.

Mexico began her troubled career as an independent nation under the autocratic rule of Iturbide, the self-appointed Emperor Agustín I. Following his overthrow in 1823, the political scene was dominated for the next thirty years by Santa Anna. There were many presidents, each heralded by a military uprising, but Santa Anna

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4 Engelkirk and Kiddle, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxiv-xxxv
was the chieftain-in-power. Mexico was beset with trouble from within and without. In 1824 there was put into effect a constitution modeled after that of the United States. It decreed that the state legislatures should vote for two presidential candidates and that the one receiving the highest number of votes should be president and the other vice president. This resulted in trouble, because the victors at times belonged to rival political factions. The Roman Catholic Church was made the church of the State, and no other religion was to be tolerated. The states, unused to the degree of power given them by the constitution, desired even more and showed a disinclination to cooperate with the national government. The new clerico-military congress of 1834 proceeded to draw up a new constitution to their own liking. It provided for a complicated centralized government with an aristocratic basis. This constitution proved unpopular to all groups concerned. The conservative element felt that it did not go far enough and the clergy felt that it did not guarantee their privileged position. Loss of local power brought resentment from the states.

The most serious trouble during Santa Anna's regime, however, came from Texas. Texas was being settled more and more by Americans from the southern states. The Mexican government began to put more and more restrictions on the Americans in Texas. The Texans finally revolted and declared their independence in 1836. In 1845 Texas was formally annexed to the United States. A series of mutual
grievances growing out of the annexation of Texas resulted in war with the United States in 1846-48. Mexico lost New Mexico, California, and Texas. There was even a strong Mexican minority who wanted their entire country to come under the American flag, for they were discouraged by the political floundering of the previous twenty-five years.

The next five years of Mexican history were marked by political and civil disorder. Santa Anna returned from exile in 1853 and regained control of the government. A revolution began by those who wanted a federal republic rather than a dictatorship broke out in 1854. These Federalists demanded removal of Santa Anna and the return of a duly elected congress. This struggle for reform also marked the beginning of participation in government of people of aboriginal blood. The outstanding man in this respect and the "father of his country," was Benito Juárez, a Cazcan Indian. As Minister of Justice he promulgated in 1855 the famous Ley Juárez which struck at the power of the Church. This was followed in 1858 by the Ley Lerdo with the same aims. The promulgation of the Constitution of 1857 resulted in the "War of Reform" between Juárez' Constitutional party and the clerical Conservatives. After much civil strife, Benito Juárez triumphed and became president in 1861.

Juárez was at once beset with trouble from abroad. He had been forced by lack of money to suspend payment on public debts for
two years. As a result, France, Spain, and England by a treaty in 1861 were to occupy Mexican ports and collect custom duties to secure payment of debts owed to those nations. France, under Napoleon III had ulterior motives and soon moved in troops with the idea of establishing a puppet empire. In 1864 he established the idle Archduke Maximilian of Austria and his wife Carlota as emperor and empress of Mexico. They were coldly received by the Mexican people. Maximilian's plans were too progressive for the Monarchists, he refused to restore church lands, and maintained a conciliatory attitude toward the republican Federalists. Napoleon late in 1865 in the face of increasing pressure from the United States and growing European complications decided to withdraw his troops from Mexico. Juárez, bolstered by American moral and material support, gradually gained control as French troops were withdrawn. The Emperor was captured and shot by Juárez' forces in 1867. Juárez was reelected president late in 1867. Porfirio Díaz opposed Juárez in this election and again in the election of 1871. Díaz was an ambitious political figure destined to rule Mexico for the next thirty years. Followers of Díaz revolted in 1872 and Juárez died a few months later before the revolt could be completely suppressed. Díaz was made constitutional president in 1877. He soon began a period of firm rule amounting to a military dictatorship.

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5Russell H. Fitzgibbon, Visual Outline of Latin American History, p. 102
After an intervening term he was reelected in 1884 and by successive elections served as president until 1910. Assuming the role of dictator he "smothered the hitherto chronic revolutionary strife as the price of stifling individual liberty and the continuation of a benighted peasage akin to serfdom for the masses of the people."  

Mexico under Díaz enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity probably unequalled by any other era in her long history; but it was a peace based on the suppression of the democratic political aspirations of a theoretically free people. It was a revival of Mexico's colonial period. During the Díaz regime Mexico forgot all she had learned of self-government in the strife-torn years since independence.  

The prosperity of Díaz' dictatorship was achieved, without regard for human values, by inviting in foreign capital under bread concessions to exploit natural resources of the country and to organize its economic life. Two billion dollars—half of it from the United States—poured in by 1912 for the development of petroleum, power, railroads, and agriculture. The policies of Díaz organized many of the economic resources of Mexico, but the mass of the benighted people remained as badly off as before. There was practically

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6Mary Wilhemine Williams, The People and Politics of Latin America, p. 476  
7Englelart and Middle, op. cit., p. xxxvi  
8Emis, op. cit., p. 540
no progress in education, in sanitation, in public welfare. 9
Brigandage was eliminated by the activity of a very efficient system
of rural guards. Large amounts of land passed into the hands of
foreigners and the aristocracy. Indian villages were often deprived
of the ejidos or communally owned lands through unwise and unjust
laws. For example, a law of 1886 required all landowners to prove
title. The humble illiterate Indian could furnish no documentary
proof of ownership of his communal holdings which had been handed
down from one generation to another. Consequently thousands of
acres fell into the hands of an unscrupulous few. The governor of
the State of Chihuahua, Luis Terrazas, came to own six million
acres alone.

The loss of their lands usually forced the aborigines to be-
come hired laborers on the haciendas which they formerly had owned.
Their helplessness and ignorance caused many of them to sink into
debt slavery. 10 Illiteracy, encouraged by the Church as well as by
the landowner who desired to keep cheap labor, also was a seed of
the Revolution. Had Díaz opposed the Church and landowners, had he
allowed a fair degree of self-government through allowing literates
to vote freely, it is probable that Mexico would have been spared
the revolutionary period that followed Díaz' regime. Don Porfirio

9Ibid., pp. 541-42

10Williams, op. cit., pp. 435-86

11Ibid., pp. 486-87
had given his country order and prosperity at the expense of liberty. Such a system was not destined to last. Díaz was growing old. Sentiment against him was beginning to increase. There was increasing opposition to his plan of presidential succession.

In 1908 by an interview which was later published in Pearson's Magazine, Díaz let it be known that he felt that Mexico was now ready for democratic government and that he would welcome an opposition party and would turn over his power to its candidate if the latter were legally elected. Francisco I. Madero took advantage of this statement to publish his book entitled La Sucesión presidencial en 1910. Madero was a member of a rich and influential family of northern Mexico. In his book he mildly but insistently criticized the Díaz regime and demanded free elections in the forthcoming campaign of 1910.

Madero became the candidate of the anti-reelectionists and the center of a revolutionary plot. His arrest and imprisonment by Díaz followed. While Madero was in prison Díaz was reelected for another six-year term. Shortly after the election Madero was released. On October 5, 1910 he issued his revolutionary proclamation known as the Plan of San Luis Potosí. The plan demanded Díaz' resignation, electoral reform, and the redistribution of lands. By previous arrangement, revolts broke out in various parts of the country the following month. The revolutionary spirit had spread. Díaz undertook the belated reforms but it was too late. The following
year Madero's army captured Ciudad Juárez on the northern border. Rioting took place in Mexico City. Aged and broken in health, the old dictator was forced to resign and flee the country.

Madero was elected president in November, 1911. He was an unfortunate choice. He proved to be an idealistic dreamer, inexperienced in the ways of government. His had been a purely political revolt, without any preconceived program for social reform. Madero had no idea of how to go about redistributing the land. Emiliano Zapata came up from the south with the magic cry of "Tierra," to set up the first sharply-defined issue of the social revolution toward which the country was drifting. He headed a movement that resulted in the seizure and division of large sugar haciendas in the state of Morelos. Madero was unable to withstand the pressure. The reactionary General Vitoriano Huerta, in command of the federal forces, forced Madero to resign and after ten terrible days of street fighting in Mexico City, assumed the presidency. Madero had been promised safe passage to Vera Cruz in order to leave the country, but he was murdered while being taken from the national palace to the penitentiary in Mexico City. Historical sources disagree, and it is not known to this day whether he was killed by Huertistas or Porfiristas. Huerta denied all responsibility, but he was held at least morally responsible.

Revolutionary forces soon united to drive out Huerta. The bloody years of the Revolution had begun. Three more figures now
famous in Mexican history appeared on the scene: Venustiano Carranza, Alvaro Obregón, and "Pancho" Villa. They swept down from the north to aid Huerta but soon each began to feel that he should be the leader of the Mexican people. The country began to drift into chaos. Huerta's tenure was decidedly insecure, especially because of his troubled diplomatic relations with the United States. President Wilson refused to recognize Huerta even as a de facto president. The "Vera Cruz incident" involving American Marines occurred in 1914 and was followed by the expedition led by General Pershing in pursuit of Villa who had been making raids on American soil.

Huerta had been forced to resign meanwhile, and Carranza had installed himself as President in 1917. The period of 1914-1915 was one of confusion. It marked the struggle of various military leaders for control of the nation. In April, 1915, Obregón defeated Villa, but Carranza proved to be the strongest of the three.

In 1917 was drawn up the world-famed Constitution of 1917—a crystallization of the ideals for which the revolutionaries had been fighting. This constitution contained articles providing for the restitution of lands, abolition of peonage, protection of labor, and the restriction of the power of the Church. It marked the beginning of a new era for Mexico—a revolutionary era.

"The major principles of the constitution were agrarian reform: the breaking down of the great haciendas, return of communal lands to the villages, more equitable distribution
of Mexican soil; political reform: abolition of local bossism, effective suffrage, guarantee of constitutional rights; religious reform: more rigid enforcement of the leyes de reforma of the Constitution of 1857; and social legislation: revision of marriage laws, laws improving the conditions of the working classes, an attempt to undo Díaz' sell-out of Mexico's natural resources.  

In 1919 Zapata was murdered, and in the following year President Carranza was murdered. That President Carranza was not too favorable toward agrarian demands, however is recorded in the death of Zapata which is generally attributed to Carranza.

Obregón was elected to the presidency in 1920 and therewith began a return to normalcy. Reconstruction was started. The revolutionary principles were beginning to be carried out. Support was given the growing labor organization, CROM (Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana.) An educational program was begun which would fit needs of the lower classes. As far as foreign relations were concerned Obregón's first term in office marked a temporary settlement of grievances with the United States. Subsoil rights obtained by American companies before 1917 were restored. Americans losing lands because of expropriation to secure soil for the landless were to receive fair compensation. Special commissions were set up to adjust claims against Mexico. Formal recognition was given to the Obregón administration in 1923. Arrangements were made prior to this to fund Mexico's foreign debt, totaling about $700,000,000.

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12 Englekirk and Kiddle, op. cit., p. xxxviii
The revolutionary program under Calles, elected president in 1924, was pushed harder than ever before. Land and labor reforms were more generally applied and local conditions were improved for the more prompt use of the apportioned lands. Irrigation and road-building projects were started. A general education program was inaugurated. Public health conditions were bettered. Calles had trouble however, with the United States concerning oil concessions. This dispute over expropriation of oil lands was finally settled in 1927 due mainly to the diplomacy of the new American ambassador, Dwight W. Morrow.

The church problem became quite critical during Calles' administration. In 1926 Calles had caused to be enacted several laws for the enforcement of the religious provisions of Articles 27 of the Constitution of 1917. The parochial schools were ordered to be closed. In protest the Catholic clergy went on strike. The Cristeros or Church supporters repeatedly started disturbances, but the administration was strong enough to quell them, and their movement was a failure.

Obregón was reelected president to succeed Calles in 1928 but was murdered a few days after his election. Lázaro Cárdenas was elected president in 1933. A six-year plan was begun. With the support of the powerful PNR (Partido Nacional Revolucionario), the social reform program of the nation was hurried along as never before.

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13 Fitzgibbon, _op. cit._, pp. 105-106
Calles was still dominant in politics. The religious question flared up again, but after Calles' voluntary exile to the United States, the tension was lessened. Cárdenas now continued to pre-malgate his social reforms. His sympathy for farmers and labor groups became well known. He made many trips about the country, unannounced, talking personally with the "little" people in an attempt to understand their problems and get at the root of the agrarian problem. Cooperatives were organized, and more estates were broken up.

All Mexican railways were expropriated in 1936, as were oil lands shortly after. Foreigners were to be reimbursed for their holdings. Mexico was asserting herself and she was attempting to educate the world in regard to Mexico. The Pan-American highway between Laredo, Texas and Mexico, opened for travel in 1936, further served to strengthen Mexican-American friendship.

In 1940 Avila Camacho was elected president and has in general continued the program begun by Cárdenas. 1946 will see another presidential election.

The history of Mexico shows that the spirit of revolution has pervaded the Mexican people ever since their colonial days. The fact that they were held in subjugation during a long colonial period by an antiquated feudal system of peonage was a contributing factor to that spirit of revolution. Sudden independence thrust upon an illiterate group of people, wholly uneducated to the ways of democratic
government, kept the revolutionary spirit alive. After a long struggle to find the right kind of constitution, they entered into a period of reform, followed by a long dictatorship. False prosperity and suppression of liberty rekindled the spirit of revolution and there began what the Mexicans call The Revolution—the only true revolution—the one that is spelled with a capital R. Starting in 1910 as a political revolt it was soon seized upon by the idealists as a battle ground for the promulgation of social reform. After a clash of ideals and personal greed, civil peace came to the Mexican people. Any failures in the social revolution have been due to one of man’s oldest failings—personal gain and glory at the expense of his fellowmen. Mexico’s problem is to fit an Indian communal way of life into a democratic system of economy in such a way that the nation may prosper and take its place in the brotherhood of nations. The ultimate success of a democratic form of government will depend largely upon the creation of a large class of small landowners.  

Mexico is finding out that a moderated socialistic system within that democratic form of government is best accomplishing that goal.

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THE PRESENT AGRARIAN PROBLEM IN MEXICO

The agricultural conditions of any area are determined by the climate and topography of that area. To understand the agrarian problem of Mexico is to know something of its topography and climate.

The triangular-shaped Republic of Mexico is ribbed by two cordilleras which converge in the south to continue as a single range on into Central America. Between these mountain ranges lies an immense plain, which gradually descends northward from its apex at Mexico City until it merges into the plains of Texas. The outer slopes of the cordilleras with their many spurs descend precipitously to the terrace-like succession of relatively level table-lands, then finally to the tropical coastal plains.\(^{15}\)

The climate of Mexico is determined not only by distance from the equator, but by altitude. Mexico has three climates. They are the tierra fría, "cold land," the table-lands 7,000 and more feet above the sea; the tierra templada, "temperate land," the plateaus and valleys of 5,000 feet; and the tierra caliente, "hot land," the moist, tropical plains. All intervening shades of temperature exist—every 300 feet of ascent accounting for a drop of about one degree Fahrenheit. Rainfall under these conditions

\(^{15}\)Helen Phipps, Some Aspects of the Agrarian Problem in Mexico, p. 7

\(^{16}\)Hubert Herring, Mexico, The Making of a Nation, p. 10
of topography is erratic. The rainy season is during the summer.
If the summer rains could be held in reservoirs for irrigation
during the long, dry winter, Mexico could easily double or treble
her agricultural production.

Mexico is largely wasteland from the standpoint of the agri-
culturist. About 36 per cent of the entire surface of the country
is made up of mountains, rivers, lakes, deserts, and swamps; 16
per cent more of the total area is given to forests; 39 per cent
is in arid lands with scant rainfall and vegetation, good only for
sparse pasturage. Only about 8.5 per cent of the entire area is
cultivated or cultivatable. 17 Mexico is a land in intra-isolation,
lacking transportation systems to connect many rural areas with
the "outside." There are 20,972 miles of railroad and 3,845 miles
of all-weather highways 18 but this combined mileage is still insuf-
ficient to tie the country together.

Mexico's agrarian problem began before the Spanish came.
By 1519 there were six hundred Indian tribes within the present
days limits of Mexico, speaking many different dialects and in
various stages of cultural development. Even today many Mexicans
speak only their native dialects, thus accounting for part of the
"intra-isolation" of the country. Within the middle and southern
zones of the central plateau were the three allied "kingdoms."

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17 Ibid., pp. 10-11
18 Ibid., p. 11
México, Acalhuacán, and Tlacapán, and several other smaller groups. The peoples of the arid regions to the north were nomadic and had little or no conception of real property or its possession. Here again is seen the effect of nature on the advancement of man; the best favored were the most advanced. However, even to those most favored, individual ownership and even communal ownership meant nothing aside from actual occupation.

The smallest unit of social organization and land tenure was the calpulli or kinship group. The total of the tillable land of the villages was called the calpulalli or lands of the kindred. The management of tribal land was left to the "elder" of the clan who settled disputes. Lands were not to be sold or mortgaged, and family rights were protected. But this communal system became a victim of the Aztec feudal system. There developed an aristocratic class—the "elders," the clergy—who had to be supported by the rest of the tribe. There were too many parasites—from emperor on down to village politician—who depended on the villagers for their daily bread. The poor villager had to work the aristocrat's land as well as his own. It was said that when Cortés entered Mexico, that Emperor Montezuma's subjects were on the eve of an agrarian revolt.  

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Contrary to popular belief, the Indian land system was not greatly changed by the colonial system of the Spaniards. The result of the Conquest was a combination of two similar economic patterns. It was a fusion of two feudal systems. The Spaniards contributed two things: first, the encomienda which was nothing more than a license given to the Spaniards as a reward for services to develop and exploit a certain area. The Indians were not to be kept as slaves, and their rights were to be respected. The Laws of the Indies was promulgated by Father de las Casas in 1542 to defend the Indian, but "personalism" proved stronger. The encomienda system spread until practically all of habited Mexico was in control of the cacahuate.

The second contribution of the Spaniard was the ajíde, or communal land grant which was given to the Indians. The Spanish sovereigns were interested in the welfare of the natives. In 1573 Philip II ordered the creation of these communal villages upon a pattern partly Spanish and partly Indian. As most of the good land had already been exploited by the more civilized Indians, a sharp conflict arose between the white men and the Indians as to the possession of that land. The plateau Indians had some conception of real property, and it was the king's idea to let the Indians keep what they had to aid and protect them.

\[20\text{Ibid., p. 45}\]
But the king was too far away, and justice was winked at by the colonial authorities. The *ejido* remained, however, and offered the one ray of light for the Indians' "way out," curiously enough the meaning of the Spanish word *ejido*.

Such were the conditions that existed for three hundred years. The Church, which was an integral part of the Inquisition, continued to add more and more land to its already vast holdings. Corruption flourished among the clergy as well as the colonial authorities. Peonage continued to be the order of the day. The masses were kept ignorant for the purposes of peace and exploitation. Spain wanted only to drain the country and added nothing to it. But there were those who had the courage to strike out against the rule from abroad.

Independence was finally gained in 1821, but it did little or nothing to help in the decentralization of landholdings. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the concentration of land was complete. A few *hacendados* controlled the economic life of the country. The Roman Catholic church, which had come over as part and parcel of the Conquest, now owned one-half of the land. Conditions for the working class of people were for the most part little above slavery.

The Reform movement, begun in the 1850's and headed by Benito Juárez, had two aims: opposition to the powerful clergy and a new land program. In 1856 all Church property was ordered
expropriated, and to be distributed to the peasants. The Constitution of 1857 reinforced this edict by declaring corporate ownership of real property illegal. Intended as a blow at the Church, this edict was later used to break up ejido holdings, thus defeating the purpose for which it was intended. Civil war followed and then came the French "invasion" which lasted from 1863 to 1867. Juárez, again back in power, attempted to enforce his agrarian reforms. The Church was stripped of its holdings, but this property went to those already rich with land. The peon got nothing. The 5,000 surviving ejidos were broken up and added to the haciendas. The agrarian phase of the Reform had been defeated.

The long dictatorship of President Díaz completed the destruction of economic liberty for the masses. The country was opened to foreign capital and exploited at the expense of the Mexicanas. Mexico became the "mother of the foreigner" and the "stepmother of Mexicanas." The ejido and the small farmer passed out of the picture. Complete peonage was the order of the day. About 134,500,000 acres, bought for less than 8,000,000 pesos, passed into the hands of the foreigners. There was peace, yes, but at the sacrifice of human liberty and initiative. The peon was always in debt, and the children inherited the debt when their father died. The peon's only law was what the hacendado offered him. Such a system did not tend to increase agricultural production. As the Indian was dispossessed of his land, there were no textile
industries for him to turn to as was the case in England following
the enclosure acts in that country. Revolution was inevitable.
Three-fifths of the population were affected by the decreased standard
of living. Food prices went up, and purchasing power in terms of
maize went down. 21

The Revolution broke forth in all its fury in 1910. It was
headed by the idealist Madero who had in mind political liberty
first and food second. He did not realize that his less fortunate
countrymen would rather have a full stomach and be obligated than
be free and starving. But Zapata understood. He alone was the
true agrarian leader of the Revolution. Strange enough, the
other revolutionary leaders, like Huerta and Carranza, came from
the upper middle class and not the ignorant native class.

The famous Constitution of 1917 formulated during Carranza's
administration contained important provisions relating to the con-
trol of property rights by the State. It confined the Church to
purely religious activities. Article 27 also dealt with Mexican:
lands. It provided for the separation of the subsoil rights from
the title to surface soil. Its power was to be retroactive, which
meant that foreign companies would be required to pay royalties,
rentals, and special taxes. 22 The purpose of Article 27 was to re-
gain Mexican property rights for the Mexicans. It was another step
toward giving the land back to the people.

21 Nathaniel and Sylvia Weyl, The Reconquest of Mexico, p. 26
22 Williams, op. cit., pp. 493–94
which follow. When would be great. We must more cautiously.

The purpose before overcoming small ones, an uninterrupted stage

hurled by 120,000 families. Opposition ends. We must not destroy

opposition distributed about 3,000,000 votes among 622 allies in-

ally. Certain allies about 22,000 more to 190 allies.

Since certain, has been steadily distributed to the

accomplishing the goal under the existing conditions.

and progressing education is proved to be the best means of

tending to be socialized, such a program of communal ownership

goal of the system, plan by democratic government. Although

best accomplishing the transaction. It would mean socializa-

control and a long-range program of educational instruction could

would only tend to complicate the problem. Organized government

ecological, scientific, distribution, buying and selling and so on.

unprecedented to the ways of progressive farming, management, farm

sudden disappearance of small holdings by thousands of people who

all, it would be the disgrace of the community. Scientific, the

of the Great Robinson estates would create many problems. First of

struggling would require a long-range program. The breaking up

Mexico one of the chance to condition under which she had been

For reasoning readers were beginning to realize that to bring
Calles, "strong man" of Mexico and power behind the presidents succeeding him, was determined to accelerate the agrarian program. To him the ejido was a stepping stone to the creation of a nation of small farmers. During his four years, he distributed over 8,000,000 acres to 307,607 families or 1,576 villages, established an Agrarian Credit Bank, and encouraged agricultural education. The program did not fare too well under Calles nor the succeeding three presidents.

As late as 1930 two per cent of all landowners still held seventy-eight per cent of all agricultural land, whereas ninety-eight per cent owned sixteen per cent. Agrarian communities worked a mere six per cent. Land distributed to agrarian communities between 1915–1934 amounted to only about 26,000,000 acres.

Lázaro Cárdenas, the "people's president," took office in 1934. At first backed by Calles, he soon declared his independence. He called for a definite agrarian program. He cited facts: the hacienda still flourished—almost eighty-four per cent of the land was still held by 13,444 haciendas of 2,500 acres or more. There were 1,831 haciendas each consisting of more than 25,000 acres, comprising thirty-five per cent of the total land area. Only 12,500,000 acres had been distributed—two and one-half per cent of the national area. Agricultural employment was little better

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24 Ibid., p. 53
25 "Mexico, Next Door Neighbor", Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, pp. 6–7
than under Díaz. Wages were still low and corn production in 1930 was lower than that of 1910. 26

Cárdenas inaugurated a Six Year Program. He spent much of his time traveling about the country, visiting farming communities, talking with the people, listening to their troubles, and doing something for them on the spot. The National Agrarian Commission, created in 1915, was raised to the status of an autonomous department in 1934. Its sole purpose has been the social attainment of the agrarian Revolution. Its immediate problem has been the redistribution of lands and the creation of agricultural communities in the best farming areas. Such a program has at times necessitated moving large groups of peasants from one part of the country to another. The second great task of the Agrarian Department is agricultural education and development of natural resources. Technicians are needed, dams and irrigation systems are needed. Such undertakings must necessarily be carried out by the national government.

The Banks of Agricultural and Communal Lands have been established. 27 Agricultural education now begins in the rural schools and reaches its climax with the National College of Agriculture at Chipingo, the latter under the direction of the Secretary of Agriculture. Before getting his degree of Agricultural

26 Herring, op. cit., pp. 53-54
27 "Important work in the Agrarian Department," Mexican News Digest, Good Will Edition, 1945, p. 25
Some teachers are excellent who can speak both Spanish and the

To return to the rural areas and teach their fellow countrymen,

One of Mexico's greatest educational needs—people who are willing
to give up a stable profession to coaching and who are willing

to help their fellow countrymen in some rural school. This is

Three-year course in one of those schools he is then ready to return

under the Department of Education. After a student finishes the

education position. There are eleven agricultural schools

expected field for one year. He then goes forth to another

He always, each student must work somewhere in Mexico in the
is the second phase of the agrarian reform begun by Cárdenas. Its result has been increased production on communal lands as well as social benefits.

An intelligently managed Agrarian Department will mean the making of Mexico. It will be a constructive force for transforming the peasant from dependence to independence through a gradual state-controlled socialistic reform. But the agrarian problem is not yet solved. Agriculture is still in a state of transition from feudal methods to modern ones. Farm wages are still low. There is still poverty. Food production is still low despite an increased population. The reason for these ills is the fact that sudden destruction of the hacienda brought on a period of dislocation while a new agricultural economy built around the ejido was getting under way.

The outlook for the future is bright however. Creation of the ejido has given one-fifth of the people of Mexico a sense of joint ownership in the life of their republic. There is democracy within the ejido. The Mexican is being educated so that he can raise his standard of living. He knows there is a poverty of soil. He knows he needs scientific farming and development of water power. He knows also that he belongs to a free organized group of his own kind. Such a feeling gives him a hope for the future. To him land is everything, and he is getting his chance to use land to provide him and his children with opportunity, economic security, and eventual abundance.
NOVEL OF THE REVOLUTION

We are still too close to the Revolution to have much literature concerning it. Prior to the Revolution, Mexican authors followed the European pattern of thought and their writings were on a proletarian level. Because the Revolution centered around the common people—the Indian classes, the pre-revolutionary period writers shied away from this "ungrammatical" crudely Mexican form of novel until public attention was focused on the "discovery" of Azuela's *Los de Abajo* in 1925—ten years after it had first appeared in print.

Much of the information concerning the Revolution is to be found in memoirs, diaries, and day-to-day accounts of those who witnessed and were a part of the Revolution. They are of inestimable value to the historian or one writing of this period.

The early novel of the revolutionary period is full of stark realism. It offers excellent close-ups of the leaders. The authors pick a small cross section of the whirl of the Revolution and show it in all its intensity. After the blood-and-horror theme had more or less run its course, the novelists began to become aware of the more transcendental possibilities of the Revolution as material for their pens. \(^32\) They saw that it had

\(^{32}\)Englekirk and Kiddle, p. xlv

\(^{33}\)Ibid, p. xlv
been (and still is) a social revolution. They saw the failures of it as exemplified by its leaders. They then began to write of the "traitors to the cause" and condemned them for the miscarriage of the ideals of the Revolution. Since 1935 there has been a gradual decline in this type of writing. Mariano Azuela, who began his career as a member of one of Villa's bands, witnessed the beginning of the Revolution in all its barbarity. He gave the world a first hand account of it in *Les de Abajo*. He has continued to write of the Revolution, and alone, continues to write of it. "Les de Abajo" might be the one great title of all his work.  

34 All of his revolutionary novels are stories of the underdog. He paints the picture as it was or is, using characters at random to illustrate his theme and only occasionally interspersing his own thoughts.

Two other outstanding writers of this period are Gregario López y Fuentes who won the Mexican National Literature Prize in 1935 with his *El Indio*, and Rafael Muñoz, whose novel, *Vámonos con Pancho Villa*, has all the characteristics of the Revolution in its pages.  

But the Master is Mariano Azuela and his theme is more and more the miscarriage of ideals in the "social" revolution, and the hopelessness of the future. *San Gabriel de Valdivia*, the story of an Indian agrarian community serves well to illustrate this point.

34 Ruth Donnelly Harris, "The Mexican Revolutionary Novel," p. ix

35 ibid., p. x
THE TRANSLATOR'S PROBLEM

The problem that a translator faces is to reproduce another person's work without creating a piece of literature of his own. A word for word translation would never do. He must translate thought for thought. To do this he must live the story. He must project himself into the picture, experience the emotions of the characters, and, in the case of Mariano Azuela's novels, understand the thesis that the author is striving to bring out.

Azuela writes of the Mexican Revolution. One must know the Revolution and be aware of conditions preceding and during it. San Gabriel de Valdivies is a story of the soil. It abounds with Mexicanisms—expressions found only among the natives of Mexico. It is replete with coined and compounded words which only Azuela could conceive.

Many words have been left in the original and underlined to indicate italics. Examples of these are the names of native plants, woods, and tools. Names of groups such as Callistas (followers of Calles) and Cristeros (members of the Church party) are left in their original form. Fuereños and the connotation behind it, defies adequate translation. Footnotes will explain meaning where context does not.

It is to be hoped that I have translated this novel in a smooth running style of English at the same time that I have retained the vigorous style and color which mark Azuela's work.
Mariano Azuela

SAN GABRIEL DE VALDIVIAS

1938
IDENTIFICATION OF PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS
IN
SAN GABRIEL DE VALDIVIAS

Ciriaco Campos. Son of Señor Dámaso. Just returned from the Army. Is in love with Juanita González.

Cresencia Campos (Chencha). A sister of Ciriaco.

Ramona Campos. Another sister of Ciriaco. In love with Felipe González.


Don Ramóncito. The rural schoolteacher. A drunkard and a reactionary.

Felipe González. A friend of Ciriaco. In love with Ramona.

Juanita González. Sister of Felipe. In love with Ciriaco.

El Chueco Morales. The crippled canteen keeper.


Saturnino Quintana. The agrarian leader of the old San Gabriel de Valdivias community. A revolutionist.

Cirilo Gutiérrez. Unscrupulous henchman of Saturnino Quintana.

Arturo Valdivia. Last of the Valdivias family, former owners of the community.

Don Marte. Old friend of the Campos family. A reactionary, but more discreet than old Dámaso Campos.
Colonel Gonzalo Pérez. . . . . . . . . . . Army officer called in to suppress uprising. Eventually becomes new agrarian leader.

Father Martinez López. . . . . . . . . . . Leader of the Church party or Cristeros who come to incite rebellion in San Gabriel.

El Sultán. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . The Campos dog.
CHAPTER I

The trimotor zooms past, making an automatic jump over the
ruinous walls of the little church, over the incipient settlement
of the Aгрarian Community, over the whitewashed, rectangular
walls of the town hall, and continues its flight.

Scarcely moving, Señor Dámaso lets out a grunt. The same
thing, every day at the same hour. Near him, stuck to the wall,
there appears, like an excrescence of the adobe itself, an enormous
lizard.

Everything is again silent, even the inextinguishable rancer
of the old man.

"Papa, papa, I think the bus is coming this way. Listen."
A sharp, feminine voice within the maguey patch, behind the mis-
erable hut.

Cresencia in a low-cut woolen blouse without sleeves, a
narrow skirt halfway to her ankles, passes in front of the old
man, carrying a small pitcher of water.

"It really is, papa. Look at it."

The lizard loosens himself from a clump of dirt, puffs up,
stretches, and step by step, goes down the road—a little black
bundle that staggers into the hazy distance.

Cutting across immense black sections, lying fallow; across
the gilded and reverberating sea of stubble and tall grass, the
white ribbon twists and stretches, dotted with white spirals of
dust, until it disappears in the blinding maze of the noonday sun.

"Mama, it's him... Papa is already going to meet him."

"Well, all right, leave the metate. Go now. Get those scabs off your arms and wash your face if you will. Ramona, your white muslin petticoat."

"I haven't finished sewing on the ruffles yet."

"Rip it; so it won't happen again. Checha, your new shawl."

"But I haven't braided the ends in, mama."

"Then Santa María's."

"And what are you going to wear?"

"It doesn't matter how the grownups look. Go on, get going. Quick!"

In their bright colored skirts reaching to the heels, adorned with many ruffles and starched lace, the shawls very neatly folded, the petticoats sweeping the dust, the two girls go forward. Señora Martina follows them like a bustling chicken. Her broad, flat feet rebel against the dry, inflexible leather of her flat-type shoes.

El Sultán too. He smells here, makes water farther on, lifts his paw up against trees and stones, questions with his black imploring eyes. He goes from Señor Dámaso to Señora Martina and from Señora Martina to Señor Dámaso. When suddenly he

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*metate—curved stone for grinding maize or cocoa*
senses the bus, pointing his nose toward the highway, he gives a bark and darts like an arrow.

From the other direction come Juan Mendoza; Felipe González; Don Ramacito, the rural schooteacher; and twisted little Morales.

Upon meeting them, the two girls cover their faces because they are ashamed to have people see them so loudly dressed.

For lack of better rouge, Ramona bites her lips; Chenchcha half-opens her shawl and no more. Her shining eyes and little white teeth are for that vagabond of a Juan Mendoza, who comes making jokes.

Limping, Señor Dámaso goes ahead, seeing nothing but understanding all. His sandals splash in the lake of dust. A blanket of dark brown wool covers his broad back and a palm hat, his rough head. His coarse cotton trousers, adjusted to his slight hips, reach his heels.

Within the shoreline of the grove, with drunken lurches, intermittent according to the undulations of the road, jolting harder with every bump, the bus appears covered with white shirts and trousers mixed with blues, and even flowered percale dresses. The broad hats do not allow one to see the black braids or the colored hair ribbons. El Sultán goes ahead, grave and ceremonious, dancing every little while and incessantly wagging his tail.

From time to time Señora Martina, stooping over, with the corner of her apron wipes away her tears of joy. She lifts her
hands to her breast in order to contain her wildly beating heart. Señor Dámaso also feels as if a bird is flapping its wings within his breast; but in his face of stone one can observe nothing.

In a thick cloud of dust the dilapidated passenger bus arrives, describes a violent curve, and before stepping in the plaza, digorges itself like an eggshell full of confetti on the white earth. Men, women, and children, and, among the crowd, the strapping young son of Señor Dámaso and Señora Martina, tall, vigorous and yes, almost arrogant. His teeth and lustrous eyes glisten in his tanned face of metallic smoothness.

Like a granite sphynx, Señor Dámaso extends him his hand, clutched and nervous. Ciriaco humbly takes off his hat and kisses his father's hand reverently.

Señora Martina does not want to loose herself from his arms: she has so many things to tell him. But what? Besides, her tongue has tied itself in a knot and there is a lump in her throat.

Next Cresencia, the quiet little thing, caresses him with her moist eyes, and Ramona squeezes his arms until they become purple.

"Do you really come all in one piece, son?"

Ciriaco's teeth shine like kernels in an opened ear of corn.

"Blessed be God that they left you uninjured!"

"Now me, Ciriaco Campos . . . ."

"Teacher!"

Don Ramencito—the same old cashmere coat, dirty and greasy,
the same patches and the same confused odor under the rays of the sun.

"Ciriace Campos!"

"My teacher!"

A very hard embrace, like that of two comrades who love each other and have not seen one another in many years.

"How were these worlds of God when you left, Ciriace?"

"As usual, teacher."

"News to spare. There are no eyes to see nor ears to hear.
Now we will talk, Ciriace, now we will talk; now you are with your own."

The rural teacher starts to take his road home; but why not settle things? Suddenly he lifts his head and fixes on Ciriace his eyes of a visionary. The bad thing is that at times only he understands these things.

"Brother soldier, brother countryman: Mexico is in your hands."

The first drinks of the morning. Purple blotches on his cheeks of bitter orange rind. And Ramoncito almost cries.

Anxious, El Sultán turns around in a small circle and is the first one to enter the house, choking whisperings of joy.

"Enter, Felipe, don't be scared."

"Felipe González, Ciriace."

Felipe and Ciriace exchange a smile and give a hearty handshake.
The crippled Morales embraces him too, and then begs to be excused because he had left the store unattended.

"Throw yourself on the mat, son, so you will be rested up."

"Rested up from what, mama?"

Crescencia and Ramona now shed themselves of their Sunday clothes; one stirs up the fire, the other sits down behind the metate. The wood crackles, twisting in sudden blazes that lick the greasy, black ceiling. Bent ever, Ramona works the reds: white lumps of dough go rolling into the tub. On her gilded skin shine minute liquid diamonds.

At a distance from the fire and squatting, the men form a circle.

"A lot of fighting, Ciriacos?"

"Little fighting, papa."

"Then?"

"Many of the enemy dead, but from pure hanging and shooting."

"So no more? Without fighting?"

"Where one meets up with them, he knocks them down and breaks their necks on the spot."

"What bad people! Why are they so black-hearted with these poor creatures, Ciriacos?"

"For being Cristeros, mama, for that alone."

"What harm did they cause anyone that the government should be so like a dog with them?"
Ciriaco half-opens his shirt and shows the marks of the rope on his brown neck; then some small puckering on his chest and back.

"If they had known how to make a knot even, I wouldn't be telling you this, mama. They beat me, they hanged me, but it did them no good. Though at times they let the Federales get by, they don't even leave one AGRARISTA alive."

Señora Martina commits to God all the dead and Señor Dámaso redoubles his grunts. Everyone looks with astonishment at the marks of the rope and bullet wounds.

Ciriaco's words are slowly spoken but interesting to hear. His gestures supply all deficiencies. At each horrifying detail, Señora Martina chokes her sobs in her shawl, because Señor Dámaso has already reprimanded her:

"These things don't concern old people."

Illuminated by the flames of the fire, Ciriaco dilates his nostrils gluttenishly at the smell coming from the stewing pan. But the amount of smoke brings tears, and the broad peppers, crackling on the hot coals, puckers up his palate.

"We will go outside a little until it cools off."

In the shelter of a shed, which serves for a pavilion for the musicians on fiesta days, sleeping quarters for drunkards, and a refuge for chickens, Juan Mendoza, Nicolás Arévalo, and Antonio Lagos await the news that Ciriaco brings from the north. Although
Ciriaco does not know the *fuereños,* the introduction is the same as with Felipe: a graceless smile and a handshake. Some of them threw themselves down on their stomachs, others remain squatted. Ciriaco, one leg doubled up, the other one stretched out, massages his heel and begins the conversation.

"And Calles, what do they say about him?" someone asks.

"Plenty of money, my general Calles."

"I have already heard tell of a Santa Bárbara where they say there are *hans* such that only one is worth several rake-offs."

"Two thousand pesos and that's nothing, papa. He has an armored train only for himself and his family and it cost him two million . . . ."

"It cost him? Whom did it cost?"

"To mention Calles to your father, Ciriaco, is to mention a bad enemy."

"Juan Mendoza, Ciriaco, is one of the right-hand men of Saturnine Quintana."

Greek. Ciriaco does not know who Juan Mendoza is nor who Saturnine Quintana is.

"The truth must be said, papa. We have water for our land and enough so that we all have a home. Just because of a dam!"

"With money from the worker in order to make the speechmakers...\footnote{\textit{fuereños}—outsiders who are living temporarily in another locality. The word has a derogatory connotation.}
rich," retorted the old man.

Juan Mendesena lets out a cynical burst of laughter. The old man fixes his wrinkled eyes on him, but flaring still.

"For twenty bucks they take you and bring you from the village like in your own coach," affirms Felipe González. "Before, you had to go on feet, or if things were going well with you, on burroback."

"Bah! ... You too ... Shame is dead in San Gabriel! What would the dead Jermin González say if he heard you?"

Turning over in the mud, a pig grunts; the chickens, half insulted, their beaks open, stretch their wings and feet; the old man grunts, mute to the new ideas, until Señora Martina, with a sharp and penetrating little voice, calls the men.

"It's all past now," Juan Mendesena excuses himself; "and you knew very well why. Chenucha!"

In wide earthen cups, the greasy broth is bubbling. Ceresencia, very flushed, showing her teeth that are whiter and smoother than a necklace of pearls, lifts the blistering tortillas with the tips of her fingers from the griddle. Between bites, Señora Martina sees to it that nobody goes without. In the silence strong teeth-gnashing is heard.

Señor Dámaso grunts his satisfaction and El Sultán grunts too, attacking ferociously a meatless turkey rib that the dogs of the vicinity contemplate pitifully, almost weepingly. From time to
time at the door, Ramona, with a firebrand keeps them at a distance.

Ciriaco is homesick for the famous pulque of the San Gabriel de Valdivias ranch, and Señora Martina, far-seeing mother, at once brings out from a hiding place a big-bellied red pitcher, that allows a fluff of foam to escape between the spent and the disc of money that covers it.

In one of so many rounds of drinks, Señora Martina feels like singing, and in another, she feels like crying, remembering her youth. Señor Dámaso, past that stage, gives her a stiff kick and sends her sprawling when the old woman comes to him to share the feelings of her heart.

The boys are overflowing with joy. Felipe González, who is devouring Ramona with his eyes, is the only one of the group who should like never to leave.

"Now then, let's go outside and cool off a little bit."

A pretext for leaving the old man with the women.

Ciriaco, sleepy-eyed, his brown cheeks reddened, is the first to get up. They go toward the arroyo, to get some fresh air near the brakes in the shade of a large willow.

"Good . . . ."

Cirilo Gutiérrez greets them. Another one of the fuerzas, the right hand man of Saturnino Quintana.

Now Juan Ramírez with Pedro Dávalos. Companions of work and play when they used to take care of the cows and calves or in the
corn fields.

3 As the sun sets and natives in harmony. Like all people whenever they are not concerned with work.

Sunset catches up with them in their idle chatter; and when the shadows have already become long, and the chatter of the birds in the groves becomes silent, they hear the muffled roar of an automobile on the road from Venado.

"It may be Carlos Valdivia's."

Cirilo Gutiérrez watches. A cataract covers one eye and he sees only with the right. A grim-looking eye, bilious and always askew. Cirilo Gutiérrez never looks straight ahead, nor ever utters a sentence without a slur.

"It may be Saturnino Quintana."

"He would have warned us by now."

"He likes to catch us when we aren't looking."

"But that can't be, because now he is taken up with that gossip that the Deputies bring out again about the Cristeros."

"They say that General Calles gave fifty thousand pesos for the organ of Our Lady of Guadalupe."

"That's potatoes. It's a trap, to see if they fall."

"What I say is that the priests are getting excited again and then we shall be the ones who have to pay for it. Saturnino comes. 'Order from the President: I need a hundred men from San Miguel.'

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3As the sun sets—people from the lowlands; "flatlanders"
The ranch remains deserted. The rainy season passes and when they bring us back... not even stubble. And here we go to clean out our neighbors."

"You're still very reactionary, Felipe González."

"I never have lived by robbery."

In order not to aggravate the dispute, one of the natives stands up.

"It is a new car. Now I know it. It's Don Arturo Valdivia."

"Young Arturo? Do you remember young Arturo, Ciriano?"

"My body is still frightened when I remember him."

"What a disgrace! A month later I was still picking thorns out of my rear and back."

"I'm for playing him the same trick, hey boys?"

Ciriano protests. Too many dogs for one bone.

"He carries a pistol and we are clean handed."

"A tesis... to see who takes him."

A tostón⁴ leaps into the air, in a metallic ring, from the rough fingers of Ciriano Campos.

"Heads!... Felipe González... Heads!... Juan Mendoza... And to me by right, Ciriano Campos."

And the three men run to hide among the brakes, on the edge of the road where the car is coming.

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⁴tostón—Mexican fifty centavo piece of silver
CHAPTER II

An outcropping of boulders from one side clear to the bottom of the abyss; a jutting-out of gigantic rocks from the other side reaching out to the billowing and frothy clouds that enclose the canyon. And at each moment the rocky curtain, bare and burning, where one feels the imminence of an accident, and the sharp and abrupt curves made by Sacramento, following the serpentine highway to again face another wall and another abyss.

Don Arturo and the engineer smile with those sinister smiles of youth in the face of danger that is scoffed at; but the old man, the color of wax, sitting on the back seat, chooses to close his eyes.

"Without so many curves, Don Carlos, we would make this run in ten minutes."

"And we've been in this hell half an hour."

They relaxed on a straight stretch of road.

"Four years ago we had no more means of communication with the railroad than a path so narrow that only one man or beast could walk abreast."

"Which means that when corn was worth five pesos a hectoliter in any other part of Mexico, in San Gabriel it didn't bring half that price."

"You're telling me! In San Gabriel I never bought it from the farmers at more than a peso for a fanega."

\footnote{Fanega—unit of measure, about 1.60 bushel}
"Not all that the revolution has brought us is as black nor as bad as they tell it, Don Carlos."

The old man became livid.

"What do you mean to tell me?"

The engineer bit his lips, Don Arturo began to sing a song from Agustín Lara and the old man stretched out again in his cushioned seat, in silence.

Thanks to the inaccessible hill of Venado, in the heart of the Mesa Central, San Gabriel de Valdivias found itself a virgin to revolutions; but now four years before, the drowsy eyes of the natives had seen, like a thing from another world, a coach that ran by itself. In separate pieces and on muleback it had arrived with a gringo\(^2\) and, in less than a half a day, that bobtailed coach was running around like a bug. But if the old people were astonished, crossing themselves, to the younger ones it seemed funny and awoke in them a vehement desire to climb into it. One day, then, in which young Arturo was driving it out, Ciriacco had said to the other calfherders:

"I want to know how it feels to sit in that coach. I'll bet we don't get in it!"

"I'll bet we do!"

They crouched down in the brakes and, when the coach passed them, five jumped on the splashboards.

A profanation never seen on the ranch of San Gabriel! But Don

\(^2\)gringo—name given to any North American
Arturo, in order to apply a fitting punishment, knew how to contain himself. He even pretended that the trick had been a funny one. So when he saw them happy and confident, he gave his car a violent turn and threw them all on their noses in a cactus patch.

No more than four years have passed since this incident and how times have changed! Now even bald-headed gentlemen are driving cars. There is Señor Don Saturnino Quintana, for those that doubt it, in San Gabriel itself.

"This highway cost the nation five million pesos," said Don Carlos at last, coming out of his lethargy. "Five million subtracted from the purse of the unhappy contributor, only in order that an unfortunate boot-black may come and go from the ranch of which he robbed us and transport easily the products of his robbery."

"Nevertheless, friend Don Carlos, it is a road that benefits all of us," said the engineer.

"And do you know how many of those millions the robber kept in his own hands?"

"He has put at the service of the revolution what he has. Only thus is it explained that he may have risen from a bootblack to a millionaire. But you can't deny me, Don Carlos, that in more than a hundred years the Valdías family did not even dream of planning this road or irrigating these lands."

"We respect the human life that is worth more. You do not know dynamite killed thousands of unfortunates like flies."
The question is open without any resolution for the worker.

For the leader and the rest of the workers, the matter of making a report that is getting up the ground after having eaten is long overdue of to restore that you have been to our consideration. As our consideration has the decision of the words that you made

"Our consideration as if the decision of the words that you made the decision that we have given back to them.

Our consideration that our consideration really don't know what to do with the preface written with their mistakes who might put them in the paragraphs of the matter.".

"The words for you, don't confuse, it the leaders of our country.

Month is filled with words.

Carried to early morning with words, by strange accretions. His no one has done as much harm to Mexico as have the theorists.

Don't careless get up, putting like a mad bull.

The execution shortly of the instantaneous have been greater.

No taken into account that the number of those who have succeeded to,

"Confuse expecting sentiment, friend, hesitantly, you have
taxes, exactions, injustices and iniquities of the rulers. Meanwhile the true people do not have enough to eat for lack of work, the damned lineup of so-called politicians raised from the drags of the people, surfeit without more duties than to maintain themselves in the disgraceful role, behind official masks."

Impassable, the engineer waited until Don Carlos would listen to him calmly. They had reached the highest elevation of the road, when the sun began to descend, tinting in blood the outcroppings of rocks, enormous gaint-like locks of hair. With intermittent voracity the golden light was swallowing the foothills in bluish waves, and the small white farm community of Quintana, formerly San Gabriel de Valdivias. Small stains fresh and clear in the immensity of the plain marked the cattle in the stubble fields in the vicinity of the dam, a motionless sheet of glass. A frostwork of silver, the river wound its way, covered over completely in places by the green bank.

"Leadership," said the engineer, "is a fault and a force. Like dust and steel. But when our people finish opening their eyes they will know how to cast out the leader from the lands, easier than they did you."

Even Don Arturo gave a start:

"Did those ragged beggars throw us out?"

"Between Arturo and me we made a dozen of those lousy devils run like hares."

"They never ran us out of here."
"When we left the ranch alone, the government took possession of it."

Exalted at the sound of their own words, father and son exaggerate, they talk and talk, they confuse their voices; one shouts to make himself heard and the other shouts louder. Their eyes and teeth glisten.

Moreover, they have to grab onto the first thing in front of their hands in order not to plunge headlong over the precipice, because Sacramento has suddenly put on the brakes upon taking a very sharp curve.

Don Carlos is like marble and Don Arturo has a revolver in his hand.

"Take it easy! It's the boy from the spring who comes to meet me. I regret the scare, gentlemen and friends, and many thanks; so long, Don Carlos. Be seeing you, Arturito."

The engineer climbed on his horse and disappeared up a path, accompanied by the rancher.

"He's really a joker, papa!"

"He's no joker; he's a downright humbug."

The descent began in an embarrassing silence. Sacramento himself shook his head from time to time, shameful for having placed his bosses in disagreement without any real motive.

When across the dry foliage appeared the grey walls of Las Vegas, the only part that the agrarian leader Saturnino Quintana had assigned
I'll be right there.

"I feel it's too soon to speak.

"Sleep sound and you will wake up feeling fine.

"God be with you and return soon.

She sat

in her

room.

Don't lie to that empress for me; that causes me to Cortex.

and go for a short walk. I'll stay here for a while or two.

I go alone well with everybody.

folded, ascertain, any with any paper. If I don't come back this

I know the road and my way so well that I could come back.

some deck ten feet thousand.

"You go ahead. Let ascertain take you; but if it is possible,

"We will go back if you want it, there is still time.

"As if I had been given a day." You feel bad, paper.

Get out.

To the corner proprietor or can get your, the car stopped and they
blood.

Don Arturo still carries the air of a cacique in the marrow of his bones; but he understands and his eyes see that which those of Don Carlos will never see. New people, new things, a new world. Certain it is that the "penniless will hate all his life the one whom he sees living in plenty"; but only while he is penniless. Examples by the bushel: generals, governors, deputies and people of still lesser rank. He can understand that the farm hand is as much a gentleman in his house as the bishop is in his. And admitting it suffices to break many dikes, to smooth out the rough places and to live in harmony with everyone.

The descent is pronounced and the speed increases. The "bumblebee" zooms louder at each curve. Now the pines are so close together as not to allow a sign of an open place.

Don Arturo is wilted with the heat. His shirt is open, revealing his chunky white neck. The wind blows, flapping it about over his strong and hairy chest.

He longs for a cold beer. Even a second if the first has already been taken. And if the little González girl is here, perhaps he will have that pleasure until Chueco closes his insignificant little shop. Juanita González! Her name does not resound as much as does the memory of her; a little silver bell. He is twenty years old, of good appearance, unaffected manners and naturally affectionate. Spendthrift besides, when it suits him. Indeed even the ranchers do not look at him badly, the girls
swarm around him like a bee to the source of honey.

His chest puffs up, his eyes shine. Fifty kilometers! San Gabriel in the enchanting light of the setting sun. Rather, Quintana Community, weak and decadent, rooting in the ruins of the dead San Gabriel. It appears joyful and even a little crazy with many blankets, much percale, many straw hats.

Now neither hot nor cold. Neither the black-green pine grove nor the bare crag; cactus groves, thickets in clear open air. Behind, the mountain that is jumbled together little by little in skyblue tulle. And a magnificent lethargy as of one who swings on soft cushions and heavy tires. All is united in effect, as if offering excuses for not having defended itself in due time.

The story went that there were more than a dozen, and that the sparkle of knives was seen. A lie: Felipe González, Ciriacco Campos and a pure meddler, Juan Mendoza, that had nothing to gain, but liked to one everyone. If the automobile stopped, therefore, up among the nopales it was on account of the inexpertness of Felipe, made a driver by necessity.

"What's going on, boys?" shouted Arturo.

One had jumped on one side, another on the back, and another on the front. There remained no other recourse than to cast it off as a joke.

"Don't be frightened, little Arturo, it's only us!"

Juan Mendoza, the strongest, picked him up by the belt, without
further ado, in order that Felipe González might take the wheel.

"Well, then, what the devil do you want?"

"Don't be angry, little Arturo, it's only a joke."

"Do you remember, my dear Arturito, that on this same road we hid ourselves several years ago in order to find out how it felt to be in your car?"

"Is it you, Cirioce Campos?"

"Do you remember, little Arturo, that in this same cactus patch you threw us out on our faces in the thorns and you went away laughing your insides out?"

Too late to defend himself. There wasn't even any need of taking from him his pistol. One picked him up by the collar, another by the arms, and the other by the two legs.

"One."

"Two."

"And three."

When Don Arturo sat up, bewildered and well stuck with thorns, Cirioce, who from compassion had separated himself from his companions in order to come and give him a hand, heard a list of curses.

A hand slap would have been sufficient answer; but Cirioce felt very disgusted and angry with himself even. And when, heaped over with insults, he opened his mouth, it was only to answer with an unheard of calm:

"Little Arturo, he who owes must pay."
CHAPTER III

"I feel as if I’m going to be sick, papa."

The old man does not move. Huddled up against the wall, he sometimes mumbles his statements, other times grunts or nods.

"I feel weak and weary all over."

"It must be from the cursed road, son," answers Señora Martina.

Twice more she directs her words to the father and twice more she remains awaiting an answer.

Ciriaco had arrived very late that night. Inside the hut there is no more light than that which filters through the scattered reeds by the door.

When the old man begins to snore, Señora Martina drags herself toward Ciriaco, who, stretched out on a sleeping mat, is not able to sleep, and says to him very quietly:

"What you did with young Don Arturo is like a poison."

Ciriaco says nothing and she returns to her miserable bed.

Ciriaco hears the roosters crowing a second time. And they have scarcely quieted down when the irritating voice of the old man calls him:

"Ciriaco! Get up; we must be in Las Vacas before sunup."

Ciriaco stirs himself, mumbles an insulance and turns over to go back to sleep.

"Ciriaco . . . you, sir, must make an apology to master Don Carlos for the dirty trick you played on little Arturo yesterday."
When Señor Dámaso speaks to any of his children in the "usted\(^1\) form of address, it is because he is burning with anger.

The boy opens his eyes laboriously, then sits up, and plucking up heart, follows his father at once.

The birds are still quiet in the branches and the stars are shining palely when the two set off in the direction of Venado.

"It is a disgrace for my family to have a traitor in the house."

"Me a traitor, papa?"

"You heard me. A traitor. Something you must have learned in the army!"

"Don Arturo owed it to us . . . ."

"If you had any shame, in place of answering me you would have shut your mouth, even though it were with a plug of cane."

"Papa, don't speak to me so."

"Isn't your face burning? Don Arturo had more courage than you. He alone against five of his size. And you had to wait four years in order to get even, together with two other good-for-nothings."

"Father, you say the pure truth and for that very reason I haven't been myself since last night. In the days that God may give me of life, I will never again give another mortification like this!"

The old man hastens his step in order not to soften with the explanations. And neither one any longer opens his lips. The sun

\(^1\)usted—formal address of "you" in Spanish
is streaking the gables of the house when they arrive at the ranch of the Vacas.

"It is us, Sacramento; I come to look for the master."

"He came home feeling bad last night and so he isn't up yet."

"We will wait for him, Sacramento."

An hour passes and Señor Dámaso begins to come to his senses.

He thinks: "Ciriaco has come from the soldiers. Ciriaco has lived four years with the troops." It is clear what has been done with little Arturo; but not that which he wants Ciriaco to do about Don Carlos.

"Get out of here; wait for me outside," he orders, softened at last.

But Ciriaco only hides himself behind a large cart in the patio of the house.

Another hour passes and Señor Dámaso becomes impatient.

"What's going on, then, Sacramento?"

"The master and little Arturo who also came home feeling bad last night, are talking. I heard them complain a lot."

Señor Dámaso feels his face grow warm and as if little spina were sticking him all over his body.

Finally a window half-opens and a pale face appears, wasted, furrowed by deep wrinkles, crowned by white and disheveled locks. One would have to hear the voice in order to recognize him.

"Master Don Carlos."
"What do you want here? What are you looking for?"

"Master Don Carlos . . . ."

Señor Dámaso comes forward, his triple soled shoes advancing heavily.

"You must know, sir, my master, that yesterday my son Ciriacó . . . ."

"Get out of here, bandit . . . ."

"Just a moment, master . . . ., surely not that . . . !"

"Haven't you glutted yourselves enough with that which belongs to me?"

"You know well, sir, that we, the Campos, although poor . . . ."

"The same as all, thief, or you wouldn't be living with them."

Old Dámaso becomes quiet. Ciriacó straightens up, resolved to take part in the dispute. But the window is closed, and so brusquely that the panes rattle as if they were going to shatter.

"Forget about it, papa!"

Señor Dámaso feels his jaws tighten. Indecisively he advances toward the door, but withdraws then, resolved to leave things as they were.

Sacramento, feigning indifference to it all, continues irrigating the orchard.

"Look, Sacramento, the master is very mistaken. No one, among those that call me anything at all, has ever called me a bandit. You are a witness, Sacramento. I have never gained anything from anyone
that has not been with my plain hands. Ah, how sentimental I am, for sure! By my God which is in Heaven, I have only the goodwill of the master at heart . . . and if I do not praise him . . . it is because I really pity him . . . because he is in poverty like you and me, Sacramento,"

Unexpectedly the door opens and Don Arturo in pajamas cracks a mule-breaker's whip across the back of the oldest peon of San Gabriel de Valdivias.

Ciriaco suppresses a violent desire and stops like a panther about to make a tremendous jump from his hiding place.

"Be quiet, Ciriaco."

The cavernous voice of old Dámaso restrains the closed fist and the dagger returns to its sheath.

The color of a dead man, Don Arturo withdraws, enters and closes the door with a deafening noise.

"We shall see each other again, Sacramento, and tell the master that we will certainly be on hand."

Two hours of walking and silence. Ciriaco, without lifting his eyes, goes along feeling the awful shame in his soul that his father carries in his back. They arrive at lunch time.

"Hook up your yoke and go work some of that laziness off."

"Don't be like that, Dámaso. Ciriaco will become all played out."

"Don't you say anything, mama."
It is thus. Because we have come to the time when the women pick a quarrel with their husbands and the children with the mothers. The fear of God is finished and with that everything is finished.

Fondling the state in his uncalloused hands, Ciriac caresses it like an old companion and friend. His muscular arm scarcely checks the tug of the bay oxen that shine with fat. They go at a trot, giving brusque shakes of the head, because the yoke straps, which for many months have not been fastened to their heads, are new bothering them.

The clumsy hands of Ciriac know more about a rifle than a plow handle; but, little by little, they succeed in moderating the impetus of the oxen and the yoke now hold their gait better, so much so, that the plow, now cutting a full furrow, turns over the light seed evenly. Upon flanking the Casa del Pueblo, he meets up with a dozen filthy looking children, legs and arms bare, coming from class. The teacher is coming also. His eternal, doleful silhouette, steeped by many years, is shaky from many drinks of brandy. His eyes are reddened by the first drinks and the first joys of the day.

They recognize each other:

"Ciriac!"

"Teacher!"

Don Ramoncito offers him his hand, rather let us say, the small bottle that by the art of the Devil he has taken out from who knows where. Ciriac is now a man and Don Ramoncito is now only another man.
"For the beat." Giriacce accepts, and in one swallow half drains the bottle.

"Continue your way, boy. I am going along here with you a ways. You have become a good boy, Giriacce."

Giriacce lifts the plow handle, pokes a stick at one of the oxen and moves forward.

"Why have you left the army, Giriacce?"

"Because my papa says it is time to settle down, teacher."

"Land and a wife: I understand. But your papa has kept straddling the road and he does not understand what he is looking at."

Don Ramoncito throws himself at arm's length from Giriacce and detains him:

"It is not yet time," he tells him in a voice very low and mysterious. "It will not be time so long as your boss is Saturnino Quintana, for example. Because neither will your wife be yours, nor will your land be yours. Understand?"

Even tragedy provokes a smile.

"Brother soldier, brother countryman; listen to me . . . ."

In his vague glance a flame is burning. His wrinkles twitch:

"I tell you it isn't time. Have you killed many Cristeres, Giriacce?"

"Enough for sure, teacher."

"You have stained your hands without honor."
"Teacher!"

"He is not a friend of the people who assassinates his brothers. He is not a friend of the people who closes eyes with bullets or extinguishes their light with a rope around the neck. The people need light . . . , much light and, always light . . . ! nothing more. You understand?"

His lips have become dry, his words stick to his palate and never has another bottle of mezcal been more justified. And he brings out that other. Now he alone drinks. Ciriacos refuses and Dem Ramoncito thanks him. He drinks with gratification, corks the bottle very well, cleans his lips very carefully. His eyes brilliant again, his cheeks burning, he glows all over with a singular beauty.

"Brother countryman, you have finished with landholders, now you must finish with the leader!"

"You are really very witty, Dem Ramoncito . . . ."

Ciriacos is sweating profusely. He pulls the plow out of the ground with one pull; with the stick at a slant, he forces the point into the rambling roots which have held the plowshare, until the steel is exposed, clean, brilliant and burning.

"I really am soft yet, teacher."

"Do you know, Ciriacos, who are, day by day, the true friends of the people?"

With comic seriousness, with infantile emphasis, the teacher beats his chest soundly and his extended right hand points to the
Casa del Pueblo.

The plowshare buries itself again in the sun-hardened crust, opens a deep furrow, and from one side to the other are opened hills of crumbled earth and hard black clods with bunches of tangled roots.

"What a lot of grama grass, teacher!"

Of what importance is it to the teacher whether Ciriacce understands or not? Five years as a rural schoolteacher has given him an unquenchable faith and the firm hopes of the sewer. Seed scattered to the four winds is lost by the millions in the rocks, in the mud, in the sand. So what? Not a single handful of noble earth will fail to be crowned by creps in his time. If Ciriacce's ears are today covered over, tomorrow he will have them more alert than those of a hare.

The drunkard goes along behind, talking and gesturing, very content because a flock of thrushes have lit and are intermingling lazily around his feet, picking worms and small roots.

Half way up the furrow the labor is so heavy, that the oxen, their necks stretched out, their noses up, are pulling with all their might, causing the tugs to creak with whines of impotence, until they stop. With a dirty wrist Ciriacce cleans his forehead and cheeks, and, panting, stops to rest. Don Ramoncito continues with his:

"Brother countryman, you have finished with the landholders; now you must finish with the leader. That Saturnino Quintana here and that Casa del Pueblo there, and all the..."
His strength recovered, Cirisco starts the yoke again and plows. Without looking up he runs out the furrow to the end, finally pulling out of the field.

"Yes, now, teacher, it appears that it's coming back to me. But I'm very soft and I'm going to knock off for now."

He unhooks the oxen, turns them loose, and, in the shade of a large willow, the two stretch themselves out on their backs.

"Why, then Don Ramoncito did you come to be here?"

Don Ramoncito could be forty years old or he could be seventy. That depends on soap, water, the barber and the tailor. Because though his beard may come off every Fifty of May and Sixteenth of September, his dirty heavy old threadbare coat is flesh of his own flesh. Without his cassimere suit the color of an old rat, Don Ramoncito would cease to be Don Ramoncito. Therefore he never takes it off even for sleeping.

"I am a revolutionary, Cirisco, but of good quality. When the revolution came to my town, I was almost a respectable person; servant to a first class official, dismissed for being a Maderista at the beginning of the uprising. I served as a guide to the first party of rebels who entered my village. With the most noble enthusiasm we looted the Municipal Treasury, the Post Office, the Parish and the Government House; then we ran onto the hiding place.

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3 Mexican days of Independence, comparable to our Fourth of July
of the political prefect and the police commandant, and in accord
with the wise counsel of the experts, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth
for a tooth', we fulfilled the biblical sentence. Once provided
with arms, an armory and supplies, we finished the day's work with
a heap and a heller and a 'God bless you', without caring a fig
that at some few kilometers from the town could be found a govern-
ment force, about to recapture the plaza, nor that we heard the
first shots of the reserve corps. Until then, too, Maderistas of
a sort, we understood well enough what we had gotten ourselves
into. No way out of it then, sir. Instead of remaining to become
partners of the Huertista authorities, now with their black tongues
hanging out, suspended from the beam of the old municipal palace,
we kissed the tails of those who offered us freedom, who were
leaving on their horses in joyful flight, as if that had been one
of the most amusing episodes of the game. Holed up in their dens,
new away from the threat of the federal mausers, the chief made a
recount and asked if anyone was missing. 'The little schoolteacher
isn't here,' answered the poor devil that had been carrying me out
on the back of his horse. My horse went out from under me and he
was lost in the same field. 'I don't know if it was from pure
drunkeness or if a bullet got him.' 'Son of a dunghill, right now
you're going back, and I don't want to see you here without him,
dead or alive.' There are people that really have good will for
one, Ciriacio! To such a little thing I owe my life! Because the
truth is that I didn't find out either how that happened. When they lifted me from the ground without a scratch, I was very happily asleep and snoring. And as always, Don Ramonesite wants to put a final period here.

"Teacher, that's what you always tell in school; but how did you come to stop at this ranch?"

He who suffers, suffers. And there are things with which one cannot make literature. With resentment that blurs his sight and makes his throat hoarse, Don Ramonesite briefly adds that when the revolution was won, while his colleagues got for themselves haciendas, haughty mansions, great public positions, he never obtained payment for his services to the cause other reward than that of being an eternal and insignificant schoolteacher, implying as an indisputable fact that he would not do for anything else. Then came the disaster of Adolfo de la Huerta, which he didn't yet understand and without his knowing why yet; the Great Family had simply expelled him from the table.

"This may have been because of pure talkativeness alone, Cirico; because with that gift I was born and with it I must die. Without my old friend and companion, Don Marte, who consigned me to this destiny at a peso a day, I would have died from hunger long ago."

Courageously, he suddenly changes the conversation, because a word and even a simple glance of pity, would have wounded him at
such a moment.

"Did you ever see such a dam, Ciriacce! For Saturnino Quintana!"

"Who is this said Saturnino Quintana, then teacher, that is already hovering over me like a kite?"

Don Ramoncito breaks out in ironical laughter; draws himself up and cuts a heavy brake that will serve him for a walking stick.

"Don't be impatient, there is time and more ever to find out who he is."

He moves away. His weak silhouette, poor and insignificant, is soon lost in the grey dust of the highway that the setting sun is beginning to gild.
very sorry to throw away the axle, and the cogs of the dial.

"I, in Gothic, papa."

diverge up from all else. Amen.

and lead on not the conformation
daylight in the dimness of the trees. Get gone, 1, 2, 3.

we exercise our doorknobs. Citrine, get gone, 1, 2, 3.

diverge up from all else. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

If the white and blue opalescence are interesting about the distance, why, a plane connects to shine on the song of the hypothesis, may not half conceivings to shine on their planes. Therefore when the boxes, prosciutto, and plane on their planes, there are up on the model. Do that as it may, today, very extra, everyone has begun.

the door being full, no one to go, to speak more this teaching.

sustaining condition, see that there is no God, and what with

extra about.

contrary methods extended and those that were tossed about.

and began to please God. The peasant that was penned up in the

the metal earth. and looking seemed the way, gave shots of sunlight

sawed in in the direction of the shining sun. The people nodded during the affirmation, a thunder showed before one in the door.

now known with all the appearance of ghastly terror. Reckonably,

not many days the terrors have been breaking out with little

CHAPTER 11
fedder against the noses of the cattle is still heard.

The murmur of the Lord's Prayer and the rattle of the rosary beads continue.

That the women continue doing the household tasks and outside work the same as when he, Ciriaco, was in the troops is not good. That fact and the small speuts of light that are now entering through the reed-grass and the adobe of the hut causes him to give a jump and land on his feet.

Crescencia has already tied up the cow. Crescencia is very able. Hair well combed and brushed, skin ash-colored and clear. Short beside and with knees knotty from praying. And do not tell me what kind of a worker she is. A busy ant waits until the sun comes out and quits when the sun sets; but Chenchy does not have hours enough for her work. Therefore Don Marte has cast his eye upon her. With her and the estate of Señor Dámaso he would end up with a chile field and a family. For her quietness and industry she is the pet of Señora Martina. They say that now she goes around stuck on one Juan Mendez, one of the vagabonds that Saturnino Quintana brought in, when the natives of San Gabriel were still turning up their noses at the division of the lands of the Valdivias.

But how it is to affect him . . . ? Who knows?

Leading the calf, that no longer pays any attention to sucking and is bulging out like a spring, comes Ramona. Swarthy, with eyes dark and round like tomatoes, she is very quick and fastidious. She
has much grace besides. The people like her because she is very open and equal with everyone. There are no corners in her heart because she has nothing to hide. Liberal and spendthrift; there is no Christian who seeks anything from her that leaves her house with his hands empty; either a fistful of beans or corn, or a pitcher of milk or some fresh cheese; he will carry away something. She is refreshing for Señor Dámaso in his old age and it is he who defends her from Señora Martina whom her liberalities vex so much.

Ciriaco is already hooking up the yoke.

"Hey, you Ciriaco! What are you doing? How goes it?"

Among the cacti growing red with blooms, a close-bearded face, already grey, and a frank and cordial smile.

"It's you, Don Marto . . . ! As you want it! What a pleasure . . . !"

"I just found out last night that you were back, son."

"What are you doing here, Don Marto?"

"I only come to see if they will lend me an ox. For the week. One of my steers is down with a stone bruise in his hoof and the rainy season is hanging over us."

"Come on in here with my papa; he'll lend you an animal, Don Marto."

Don Marto. Because he had two plots of ground, one little adobe house, two two-year old steers and a grizzled mare. But when Madero was in, the affair of Villalobos went to his head, he
took down his rifle, saddled up the mare and took to the hills.

Five years without information or news of Don Marto. And when everyone had him put six feet under, here he came along, minus his boots, but with his same frank and cordial face. The devil had taken everything from him, including the Don. Not for Señor Dámaso who does not understand those new ideas of comradeship and companionship. Don Marto he was called when there were true people in the world and Don Marto he will continue to be called in his home.

"Chencha, here is our friend Don Marto. Some tunas\(^1\) for Don Marto."

Thus, without hypocrisies nor dissimulation. Señor Dámaso approves of Don Marto for his daughter Chencha and that doesn't concern anyone else. But the women nowadays are very different. Chencha, the quiet little one, the little worker, the good one, says to her sister Ramona:

"With Don Marto . . . ? Go along now!

The phrase is accompanied by a frown of the mouth and nose that tells all.

Don Marto thinks that such a good little worker is not found even in the book of Lavalle.

Chencha comes, then, with the basket of tunas, gives her hand to Don Marto more by compulsion than by desire and greets him with words through her teeth that she does not even hear herself.

\(^1\)tunas—fruit of a form of cactus
"What is that, Chencha? You say hello like a stranger."

"Well, who knows . . . ."

Well, who knows. Neither Don Marto nor Señor Dámaso knows why, exactly because they know it all. That devil of a Juan Mendoza has to stick his nose everywhere.

"Don Marto, how goes it?"

"What are you doing, Ramona? How are you this morning?"

Ramona, yes, with her eternal holiday face. Passing and casting a funny glance at Chencha, who now is angrily peeling the tunas.

Señor Dámaso pulls the scrape off his head and sits down on the little stone seat at the side of the house and opens his woolen shirt so that the sun can bathe his chest and belly.

The pure face of the child Chencha deceives Don Marto but not Señor Dámaso.

"Let's see, lend me the knife and go see about your chores."

Chencha accepts his word and returns to the kitchen. As if the cagging that her father had given her had not been for that trouble connected with trying to marry her to the old man.

She was walking along, picking up scraps for kindling, by the edge of the fence; Juan Mendoza was perched up above, when Señor Dámaso came by without making a noise and when it was least expected, wham! with his walking stick, he left her seeing stars and with a sizable welt on her back that is not gone yet.

The tunas are truly delicious. Between one tuna and the other,
and in the absence of the girls, the conversation falls on Juan Mendoza. A brick-face good-for-nothing with sorrel-colored hair.

"He's an abejito; look at his turned-down hat and Indian-red boots," said Señor Dámaso that first day. Boots, in effect, that would hold two Juan Mendozas.

"He may be good looking, but so much a talker and a liar that even he himself does not know what mother brought him into this world."

"Some say that he was a travelling scissors-grinder; and so, he knows how to handle a grindstone very well."

"What I noticed was that the day they gave him the equipment for hooking up the yoke, he didn't know what to do with it."

And Señor Dámaso and Don Marto remember with silent rancor that in a fandango Chancha met him and since that day has Don Marto lost the little gem and it has put this suitor selected by the family in a very bad position.

"That vagabond is working here now to get the people on the side of Saturnino who is coming at noon in his tri-motor."

"Hail Mary the most Holy Virgin of the Asylum!" ejaculates Dámaso.

"And do you know the rumor that is around?"

"To take the herd to Don Rubio even though it is not for the slaughterhouse."

"Don Rubio is in the saddle now, Señor Dámaso, and to the devil with what they need of us."

"Then let them come to the fiesta of San Bartolo."
"By what caviling I have run onto and from what I've heard from the school teacher, whose voice, when he is drunk, sounds like an old guitar, Saturnino wants to take our lands away from us this year to seed them for his own account with the water from the dam."

"Take away our lands?" exclaims Señor Dámaso with a strange joy, jumping up.

"Our lands are in the very heart of the dam . . . ."

"Well, if they take them from us, they are well taken."

The hands of old Dámaso tremble with emotion, Don Marto looks at him and listens to him, still without understanding.

"Well done, Don Marto, they have taken your work?"

"Neither his work nor his money . . . ."

"But neither yours nor mine . . . ."

"They are lands that the government gave us . . . ."

"And that Saturnino, who is the government, takes from us. Well done; a thief who robs a thief has a hundred years of pardon."

Only he who carries the sack knows what he carries in it. When the agents of the government came to divide the lands of the hacienda of San Gabriel, they called the neighbors in order to notify them Saturnino Quintana had been designated for them as president of the agrarian community, as reward for his confirmed love for the ideals of the revolution and for the people. A thundering applause of the multitude was the reply. The only one that grunted his eternal discontent was Señor Dámaso: 'the same horse of another color. And a
little bit worse, because if the master Don Carlos is a gentleman here and in a wild Indian country, the said Saturnino Quintana does not even have the face of a man.' Some laughed; others said that he was crazy, and those that still held him in some esteem, excused him, affirming that he was a dotard.

And now you have the prophecies fulfilled. Therefore Señor Dámaso has swelled up with pride, majestic as Moses of Holy Thursday, savoring in silence his triumph. The land question makes no difference because since it had been stolen he had neither much nor little affection for it.

Don Marto, who does not know or wish to find out, says that he already is late and that he should like the favor of receiving the oxen.
CHAPTER V

Careful, gentlemen, the devil is on the loose! Today is the day of San Bartolo, and not even the power of Saturnino Quintana himself, small boy of San Gabriel, an agrarian leader and deputy of the P.N.R., 1 the most by his own admission, has been able to affect the tradition and custom of the ranches which have San Bartolo for a patron saint, after the Archangel San Gabriel, that is.

In order to square himself and in vindication of his soul, Saturnino has had brought in several jugs of pulque of the kind that is found in the outskirts of the settlement to convert the religious festival into a drunken revelry. A simpleton! As if he himself had not seen the first light in the ranch of Rincon de Valdivias, just over there on the other side of the hill. In the tradition and customs of the village and ranchers, pulque, brandy, and holy water always go together.

There is no soul of God in the vicinity that today remains at home. The plaza is bursting with people, the corrals are full of horses and burros and still the thread of those that come by roads and paths is not cut. The lazy ones tie their animals to the branches of the trees or hobble them so they will not run off very far. Big carts and little carts are lined up indiscriminately next

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1 P.N.R.—Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party)
to the fence. The dusty and vile busses arrive exploding scandalously, giving drunken lunches, and like mad, return at once for more people from Rincón de Valdivias.

The daughters of Dámaso Campos, very showy in their rose-colored satin skirts, their four petticoats of starched lace, their stiff shawls of iridescent thread, appear and disappear in the sea of blue and white cloth, cambric, loud colors of wool, silk, and percale, under the burning rays of the sun and the clouds of dust that sprinkle their indistinct grey mantle over everything.

Vigorous shouts soon dominate the deafening voices of the crowd:

"Long live Saturnino Quintana!"

"Long live . . . !"

The shouts come from near the hangar, on the other side of the Casa del Pueblo. He is shackling his sorrel-colored colt that cost him ten thousand pesos. Now Cirilo Gutiérrez, on his knees, is taking off his spurs.

"Long live Saturnino Quintana!"

The people gather. Everyone is fighting for a rough handshake, a word, or even a greeting.

"Don Arturo Valdivia with Saturnino Quintana?" exclaims Don Marto, rubbing his eyes. "Seeing is believing!"

"And the longer you live the more you see. As they say, the cat plays with the mouse."

They embrace each other, they drink from the same bottle, and
after a little they even begin to "tu"\(^2\) each other.

"They like each other a lot, because they even smile at one another."

"Since Don Arturo no longer wants cheese but to get out of the rat trap."

Which presents no obstacle, for when Saturnino Quintana passes near them, they open up a way for him and acclaim him with bravos.

A miserable role, that of young Arturo. To look up to the one who left him without a shirt. But that is not an exception but the rule. The Valdivias had not learned how to fall like men even! One is accustomed to everything now.

One can only take a step laboriously. One must stoop and even bend over double under the curtains of the stalls among the crowded ant-hive of people, bewildered by the shouts of the merchants. An uncontrollable multitude that overflows from the plaza through the narrow street up to the foot of the chapel, now a living coal of sparkling gold and a refuge of old men and women.

The hubbub increases because here comes Juan Mendoza. Rather, he is carried bodily between two helpers and the manager. One like a match stick, the second with legs that open and close like scissors, and the other with nothing more to do than to cup his chin in his hands at each curse and insult.

"It is your fault that I live as a drunkard."

\(^2\)tu—familiar form of address
Between clawings at his shirt and boots, the bronze and sweating body twists. Now shouts of courage, now the most rejoicing laughter. It is his way. But it is not consoling to Chencha, who covers up her face in order not to look at him compassionately or mockingly.

"It is your fault that I may die a drunkard."

"Oranges from Atotonilco, girls."

"Gala from Jaral de Valle, gentle people."

"Fresh limes from Silao... take some."

And bolts of cotton, wool and silk, ready-made clothing, notions, pies, sweets, and fresh water; the famous little boxes of jelly from Celaya, and the fancy ranch bread, smelling of cinnamon and anise, from Rincón de Valdivias.

"Red hot, girls. Six for five... six for five..."

The syrup of the candy twist is boiling in the shiny copper kettles, and men with chests and arms bare and sweaty, stir the mixture, twist it and retwist it, making niches in the bark of the trees in order to facilitate cutting the candy.

The disconnected voices of a song and the laments of a bass viol are heard.

Tell me, then Arturito, "How was that bath they gave you in the cactus patch?"

The comedy that Don Arturo and Saturnino want to make of their friendship convinces no one. Therefore not even Don Ramoncito,
I'm not convinced when I have already got gone with.

Hoo, the hoo, was always the priciest gesture of the audience.

"Do you know, don't Anthony, what expression get you into that mess?"

with neither rhyme or reason.

of expatriated morose, and like all saddle-bearded intellectuals, he takes

brilliant, squatting Gone and come from the hanger to the canteen.

his back strength, his legs still solid, his expression at all and
dung. With the inappropriately joke of squirming everything he said.

Many hours have passed since Don Anthony has known what he is

seems to keep from laughing out loud.

bemused, cilla dizzler, and horse's arrestra, nearly choke them

arresting, its result in a gesture so irresistibly comical, that the

sustaining site down and put up his inner leg, interesting them

Trombone with eulogy and pseudocyte to hide his insincerely. Where

never learned: the tragedy of the new role, seem humblygerty, over.

All those little things that are important or unimportant but that are

larity with interpretors, metaphorically, nevertheless, share the discretion.

especially, the bourgeoisness of a hand, or agent models of the

only one be here: Anthony's manner of a young gentleman of the

experience, squirming gesture neatly proceeds to depart him on the

because of young army especially serious attention to receive him

but a game of make-believe.

at last, always there of a revolutionary library, the round and feeding

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"That hasn't cost you much effort."

"In the devil's face, I noticed the scourge that his father carried on his back. But I didn't get the others."

"Whoever they are and no more, Arturito. Say no more."

Saturnino Quintana speaks with lukewarmness; he has never dreamed of adventures of this size.

And a close embrace is given as a sign of tacit agreement.

The church bells appear to have been caught in the general revelry too. Señor Dámaso is trying to be quiet; but his mania for criticizing will not let him. He is off at a distance with Señora Martina, on the porch, near the hangar, because the sun is strong and dangerous for the older people. He says that it is a shame to see the way the people are carrying on. In place of the white of the native cloth they substitute the dirty blue of the gringo cloth that the abajenos have put in style. For the leather vests, those horrible rat-colored sweaters, for the buttons of concha and bone, those buckles and brooches of yellow tin. Where does one see now a piece of chamois; those cowhide trousers with the rows of buttons down both sides, split half-way up the leg? But enough of that: hear the people tell about how Felipe González is the best catcher for the Whites and Cirilo Gutiérrez is the best pitcher for the Blues. Do you understand? This place that was our bull throwing ring (those were the real horsemen, ains!) is now called a landing field and here is where the people come together every Sunday for football and base-
bell and all those Protestant triflings. Would that my judgment
day had come already!

Evening is falling and the people from the near-by ranches
begin to leave San Gabriel in full fuss and drunkenness. A refresh-
ing little breeze is blowing through the murmuring tree tops. The
fiesta will end with a fandango in the open, near the Casa del
Pueblo, where the natives are now going, grouping themselves with
the vendors of the sweets, pies, stews, and drinks.

"Why have you become so thoughtful, Arturito? If you don't
want there to be any scandal, let's gradually let them get away
from the party and then we'll give them the works."

"No; that's going to be man to man, because tomorrow I don't
want anyone calling me a criminal or a traitor."

"Boy, I didn't think you were so romantic!", exclaims Saturnino,
truly surprised.

"I'll stop calling myself Arturo if this very afternoon I don't
give them a beating with my fists."

"Fistfighting ... ? Ha, ha, ha ... ? Then you aren't
romantic, but a born fool."

And they are tangled up now in a heated discussion. From time
to time, a new round of drinks stirs it up, and the goads of Saturnino
become more aggressive each time.

"Oh, well, brother, let's quit the joking, because it isn't
important to me; but certainly what you need is courage. Leave it to
me for my post card collection."

"I'm a man, not a murderer."

Did he say murderer? Drunken ramblings. But already it was late for repenting. Don Arturo saw something like a sulphurous and instantaneous light in the igneous pupils of his friend. To clear this up or let it go? He would have ended up by making things worse. One had to face the music.

Numerous groups have congregated themselves in the vicinity of the dance, some at the foot of the maguey trees, others atop the fences. Fresh and luminous headpieces, muslins, percales, salt-and-pepper clothing and capes. The musicians arrive tuning up their instruments, and with the people, the bottles, the clubs, the knives, the machetes, and maybe even a firecracker or two for whatever occasion might offer.

A circle is formed, the men standing and the women seated on the well-swept ground, taking care not to rumple their starched clothing, and watching their children in turn. Little dolls five years of age are already walking about with their percale skirts reaching clear to their heels.

At the first chirp of the violin couples begin to stir themselves and the voice of the crowd allows nothing else to be heard. The pulque puts sparks in the eyes of Ciriaco who comes very clean and well-pressed, wearing a straw hat with a black leather band with many tassels and braiding. The chin strap limits his hard male mask.
Making the porcelain-like whites of his eyes roll and opening his mouth wide, he lets out a shout:

"The only one that is going to have anything to do with Juanita González from now on is me."

Swaggerings. Cirisco Campos had gone away to the army and since then it had scarcely rained here.

Juanita González comes with her brother Felipe. The red of her short skirt burns, sparkling with spangles, her necklace of beads gleams like pomegranate seeds, and her teeth are shiny and white.

Juan Mendoza, who is out of jail already and is starting his second revelry, becomes very enthusiastic and goes to meet her:

"Juanita González . . .! Everyone looks at you . . . because you have a pretty face . . . , because you have a cute little mouth . . . ."

Juan Mendoza is so puffed up and frivolous that even Felipe González does not become peeved. Everyone applauds him. In recompense, Juanita González disappears with him among the excited beehive of the dance.

"He is all right," thinks Cirisco, "Juan Mendoza is a friend."

He doesn't appear so to his sister Crescencia. She is black with fury because the villain does not even notice her.

"Don't pay any attention to him, Chenchua, you know what he's like already," Ramona assures her.
and reads her to the middle of the stage. 

Elegant looking young fellow who introduced her from her seat and inviting them astoundingly, she please to dance with a rather

"Gentle, now it with you."

"Gentle comrades, now go and a

God's, granting a half turn, and then comes toward Governor With such merriment interruption, Giraffe canops three over the

Good one on the Jew."

What that detail need be a man that knows how to cap him a

"The kids."

Look, see how his feet appearing is like a turkey's feet

Born now, remember eyes quickly."

Don't pay any attention to her, Governor. She's backing up.

Don't pay any attention to her, Governor. She's backing up.

Over her head, stabes her neck and turns her back on them.

In place of exclaiming the answer, Giraffe thơrows her sheet on

"On, I won't even say, good day to him."

Though! but if it looks bad to you, I promise you, from this day God's truth that I danced with Juan Menendez without bed

"Don't be empty, Governor. Roman Intemperance."

Tongued and is talking about all the women.

"I don't want to see him another, Governor. He's very loose-

Did you see starvation qualitative year?

Precisely between Giraffe's esteem, Governor says to her:

But when the water is tumbled and laughter come to sit
That's Juanita González! Terracotta of Guadalajara, just out of the oven. Dark and well textured skin, the reflection of fire still in her lips and in her eyes; slender, small boned, not skinny, and well formed curves.

"Mother O' mine!" exclaims Don Ramoncito in ecstasy, looking at Ciriaco who stands like a statue of salt. "Look at what eyes! Ciriaco Campos! I present the type to you, Diego Rivera, that from the epigraph I myself have been warning:

"You have killed the landowner, now you must kill the leader."

It is not yet time, Don Ramoncito. They are all shouting 'Hurrah' to the leader. The leader is now the Divine Providence. Some are fighting for the right to shake his hand; others have the great honor of patting him on the back or putting his spurs on for him.

"Who then divided our lands for us? Who has brought us rifles in order to defend ourselves?" thinks Ramoncito.

But to the teacher it is never important whether they understand him or not. His inebriety, past the half way mark, is a monologue that is never ended. Now Ciriaco repeatedly refuses the glasses of pulque that his friends offer him. And his eyes roll like spools of thread, hanging only on Juanita and her partner.

"A symbol, brethren," continues Don Ramoncito enthusiastically; "Mexico, put it to the proof!"

Naturally no one pays any attention to him.
CHAPTER VI

With applause and whistling, shouts and laughter, the waltz ends and Juanita comes to sit down again between Ciriaco's sisters.

"Why didn't you dance with my brother, Juanita?"

"Quiet . . . I know my own affairs . . . ."

Ramona likes Juanita very well, but the former does not understand the latter's malignant thought.

Ciriaco comes again, step by step. The musicians are warming up for another piece.

And again he asks the same question:

"Juanita, will you dance with me?"

"I have it given, Ciriaco . . . ."

"You mean that . . . ?"

"I mean that young Arturo beat you to it . . . ."

At the name of young Arturo, Ciriaco scratches his ribs; but a large hand immobilizes him:

"Careful, friend; don't poke your nose in something that doesn't matter to you. That's my affair."

Ciriaco turns, very surprised, hearing the voice of his father and seeing him as animated as if he were only twenty years old.

Señor Dámaso had accepted the first glass of pulque from the hands of his friend Don Marto and afterward pulque and anisette from the hands of whoever might come along. His legs were lighter, the wrinkles were smoother, and the tongue looser. But the drunkenness
of Señor Dámaso was good and the wine made him very joyful. Therefore he did not pay any attention to Don Arturo, for his inquiring about his friend Don Marto.

He is without penitence; he neither looks for it nor gives it a place in his mind. His well confirmed fame that he knows how to take care of his own business, defends him, besides, from any lack of respect. And it is pleasing to see the old man who goes and comes and in every group gets himself mixed up in a dispute. His gesture has become frank, his little eyes shine and his mouth never stops working.

Pulque, yes, now much pulque, until it seemed that the mountain is all pulque. Cirisaco left the fandango much concerned about Juanita, carrying a bottle of wine and stretched himself out in the pile of hay, at the edge of the arroyo. Señora Martina, a little bit drunk again, helped him out with a spuming pitcher. They drank and embraced each other and kissed and ended up crying together.

The pulque mixed with the brandy has made everybody half-crazy, when, crazy also, Cirisaco returns to the dance. Now he drinks from whatever bottle they offer him and dances with any girl he runs into. But the more they cajole him, the greater is his resentment against the inexplicable Juanita González.

In the canteen of crippled Morales, the leader of the agrarians very conceitedly is showing his famous collection of post cards to young Arturo. A diabolical light shines in the eyes of the assassin;
the blood is burning in the cheeks of the inveterate drunkard. Don Arturo remains quiet with his lips puckered up, resolved to deny to his confreres any satisfaction of disgust, horror, or of nausea that the latter always seeks with his sinister collection. The leader takes the elastic band off a large billfold of very fine leather with silver platings and his monogram in gold. The photographs spill over the bar and many of them fall on the floor.

Cirilo Gutiérrez, Nicolás Arévalo, Juan Mendoza and some others of those most faithful to the leader group themselves around him. Their glances, more idiotic than cruel, follow the grimaces of Don Arturo with malignant curiosity.

"Here is number twenty-four. The first Cristero that I took care of. You remember him, Cirilo Gutiérrez?"

"It must be Señor Cipriano Torres, the chaplain of the Lord of the Ransom."

"Imagine, Arturito, that when the priest of the church came to me to disturb my men and at the head of the procession, the old sodger came to receive me unarmed. Imbecile!"

The disjointed head hung like a squash on its dry and willowy stem. Impossible to distinguish lines or planes; hair, blood, and dust made a single blur that covered the forehead and ran down over one cheek. But upon examining it more closely one could discover the marvelous expression of that destroyed face; as if the eyes were closing slowly, blissfully; with the lips turned up at their
point of contact with the most stupendous smile. One would say that
death overtook him in a most pleasant and quiet dream.

He who had the patience to look for such an expression invented
a legend at once. Señor Cipriano seemed present in spirit every time
that Saturnino Quintana made a speech. Señor Dámaso was the first
to take note that the tone of Saturnino's perorations was the same
as that of Señor Cipriano when the latter guided the rosary and the
prayers in the chapel. They spoke of it so much, that one day it
came to the ears of Saturnino himself. At first he became serious
and pensive; but suddenly, bursting out in laughter, he said:

"These coarse ranchers have never been to the House of Deputies.
That singsong that you lay on to me—everyone has it there."

It was true; the political orators of those days had had no more
tutelage than the priests or chaplains of their ranches.

From the rough hands of Saturnino Quintana the postals pass one
by one to those of Don Arturo and from him to those of the ruffians,
who, although they know them from memory, always take pleasure in
looking at them again with their piggish eyes and their thick lips
hanging down, in ecstacy.

Don Arturo has not only succeeded in seeing without looking, but
even in hearing the most cynical and impious, without becoming greatly
concerned.

"Fifty-two. Word of honor that I do not even remember this one
or his name."
"Why did we put him to sleep, Cirilo Gutiérrez?"

"Wasn't he the one that made trouble with the governor about the lands of Ojo de Agua . . . ? Refugio Campos . . . . ."

"Another idiot. He went to the governor to complain because we took away his land just in order to add it to the hacienda of the chief. We had an account with him for sure. The other common-landers remained silent and ran off scurrying one by one, like dogs that have eaten soap."

"Thirty-five. A young student that came to make speeches too, without asking my permission. The worst was that he liked Juanita González and what was there to him . . . ! Seven . . . Forty-five . . . Seventy-nine . . . I don't remember those two anymore either, but they did me some harm; because I don't like to harm anyone just because of himself, Arturito."

His wild cat-like eyes shine like sulphur. Heroically Don Arturo is holding up under the trial. Few photographs remain. Furthermore the unchangeableness of his expression ends by frustrating the desired effect. Pictures of busts are few because the dagger stab is not the rule; curly heads with great gaps in the face or skull. Eyes popped out, noses broken, mouths open, horribly contracted, showing large, dirty teeth. Terrified looking eyes in a final expression of terror, anguish, resignation, anger, and even simple stupidity. It is the collection of a criminal court.

"Man, Arturito," suddenly exclaims Saturnino, gleefully. "The
best pea was still in the bottom of the pod!"

He pulls out a photograph and by the light of the lamp that the crippled Morales has just lit, he thrusts it under the noses of those that now are giving him affectionate slaps on the back:

"Your uncle Don Lorenzo Valdivia . . . ! One of your family, Arturito . . . ."

Even the good-for-nothings on whom a smile has become a mask, lift their heads in surprise.

"You know about it? It was the day we attacked your ranch of the Vacas. Your poor little uncle! He certainly lived in good times. He was so fat that even the bullet had a hard time entering. You see now how much at fault he was." Quintana's efforts have been so brutal that finally Don Arturo opens his eyes. He gives himself a perfect account of the miserable role that he is playing there, only for the sake of a wicked revenge.

"I'm going home Saturnino."

"What? You're going now . . . ? Ha . . . ha . . . ha . . . ! You get scared over nothing."

Fully satisfied in his great vanity as a butcher, Saturnino Quintana wants to prolong the scene in order to enjoy it better. He wants to frighten the sky here; to throw himself upon him with the ferocity of a hunting dog; to sink his fangs in him when he least is expecting it.

With false indolence Saturnino stops Arturo, caresses his soft,
blushing cheeks and says:

"Arturito, I'd like to add your head to my collection."

The ruffians rub their hands in delight. At least they have got things started. But Don Arturo turns half way around and starts for the door. Saturnino Quintana stretches his leg out like a spring and plants such a hard kick on Arturo's buttocks that he falls unconscious to the ground. With the help of lots of brandy and cold water, he soon comes to, in the midst of an outburst of laughter. Everyone has made a joke of it.

The poor devil gets up, forces a half-hearted smile and says:

"You're very prankish, for sure, Saturnino."

He covers his rump with both hands and saves his life by escaping through the rejoicing crowd that now has filled the shop, but with such bad luck that he runs into Cirioaco Campos.

"Just wait. I'll get even!", Arturo shouts.

"And who's that one . . . ." Saturnino Quintana, standing in the door, asks his friends, his hat pushed back on his head.

"Oh, that guy is Cirioaco Campos," says one.

There is a moment of expectation. If in the eyes of the Callista politician sparks are flashing, in the almond-shaped eyes of Cirioaco Campos there is burning the most intense ferocity of his race.

"I come from the soldiers. I know many lands, and I have spoken with many people . . . ."

"Look at them, look at them . . . ! God creates them and they
get together of their own accord," exclaims Don Ramoncito, rubbing his hands in delight.

The crippled Morales, already experienced in these affairs, silently closes his door and bars it with a stick of mezquite.

Torches of ocote give the appearance of a forge to the white mantas, to the broad hats, to the dark brown and tiger-colored blankets, to the bronze of the arms and legs in agitated movement.

Soon two groups define themselves: one, the natives, eyes ovoid and porcelain-like, sparse beards, flattened curves, nervous, but steady; the other, a hotchpotch of Whites, Indians and mestizos, the agrarians that come from who knows where--Saturnino Quintana's men, brought there upon the division of the lands, abhorred as fuereños whose strength--which they boast so much of--they do not carry in their hands nor in their hearts, but in their stooped backs that the government itself takes care of. It is sordid and concentrated hatred that only on solemn occasions breaks out in a fanfaromade.

"The natives of San Miguel do not strike from behind nor have we ever left a poor person in disgrace."

From one group to another go the passive ones, those that today are with Saturnino Quintana because he is carrying the stick and is in command; tomorrow they will be with whoever may succeed him. They are the throng.
But the fact is that Ciriacq now is lost to us. From the first
moment of expectation a murmur of half-choked laughs, of suppressed
curses arise, until Saturnino Quintana sets off the torch.

"He went to hide in the kitchen," Quintana says. And his voice
is like the largest bell in the temple.

Shouts of laughter break out and the injuries of one party for
the other commence. The shrewd ones avail themselves of the oppor-
tunity to escape the confusion with honor; but those that truly like
the noise hold firm, faithful to the son of Dámaso Campos.

He is a chip off the old block. Without making them wait very
long, he jumps into the middle of the melee, his chinstrap across
his face, a broad machete in his right hand, and his sarape bundled
up in his left hand. They are not shouts but true screams that come
from those who get in his way.

The pebble striking against the sidewalk make sparks which in
turn make a circle. Hats are flying around and sabers are seen
flashing overhead. What have you done now, Saturnino Quintana?
There is no time to make amends, but then that makes no difference
to anyone anyway. Some women escape with their children and others
bravely enter the maelstrom in order to pull their men out. Vain
task, because started by men it will be finished only by men.

White silhouettes, blue shadows, heads covered, faces that
glisten, muscular arms, curved or extended, strangling ropes, sabers
and machetes on high. By the livid light of the ocole torches is
depicted the grotesque and tragic entanglement. Curses, insolences, and protests of the most barbaric kind.

Soon no one knows who is hitting whom. With the dispersion of the blaze of the torches the night begins to reign. The drunkest, from pure drunkenness, fall first; then others, finally played out, and not a few with their heads bashed in.

One hears only the panting of the last valiant and the rough noise of their machetes. Those that are groaning on the ground form a chorus with excited dogs that are barking in the distance. A stray spark starts a blaze in a pile of dry straw and then one can see very well the only two combatants that are still on their feet. One fat and squat, very skillfully stopping the blows with the sarape well wrapped around his left hand; the other tall, robust, making a shield out of his straw hat, already cut to pieces by machete blows. A gust of wind clearly illuminates their faces and they recognize each other at the same moment, put down their arms and give a shout of joy:

"Well, is it you, Cirisco?"

"Well, is it you, papa?"

And they embrace each other proudly.
CHAPTER VII

The afternoon becomes grey with a buzzing of wind and wings. Flocks of birds rise noisily from the tall willows, scurrying in full flight from the sparrow hawk that is swooping down from above, making spiral after spiral in ever diminishing circles and each time reaching flush with the ground. He comes from the highest peak of Venado, with his talons wet with blood. The chattering of the flock is no longer heard; instead only the bewildered mourning dove remains motionless on its branch, crying for its mate.

Ciriaco pulls his yoke of oxen out of the furrow and starts up the hillside toward home. Four tasks very well done and in those four, his acreage cleaner and more ready than a piece of material ready for needlework. His soiled blue sleeve passes over his cheeks and brushes his eyebrows and whiskers. A square of black upturned earth, crumbled little piles of dirt, dry grass, and roots turned up to the air. Ciriaco is no longer tired; having finished his work, his oxen in full sweat, he climbs to the skirt of Venado to peel tuna rinds.

While he is eating rinds from the leaf of a nopal, a whistle coming from above him causes him to turn his head. He sees a small object that seems to blend itself with the brambled ground. By appearance, by the manner of moving, and, by God's truth! by the very feelings of his heart—it is she. What devilment is she up to now? After the grief she has caused him!
He squats down, fixes his attention on a leaf crowned with red
tunas. With one of his sandals and the edge of his knife, without
removing the spines, he continues knocking off tunas and eating them.

Juanita armed to the teeth with a desire to see him, he like
one who hears it rain and does not get wet. We shall see who comes
out best.

She is the same untamed filly of that other afternoon. Neither
the bundle of firewood that she carries on her back nor the gourd
full of magney juice that she carries in her hands hinders her. She
comes along jumping from one rock to the other. How pretty Juanita
is for sure!

"I saw you, you rascal!"

The laughter resounds from one crag to another. Ciriaco could
have lost himself in the brambles; but she has just discovered him
in a sheepfold, so to speak. She is so close to him that if he
wants to lift his eyes only a little bit, he can see her whole person.
But Ciriaco is stubborn by birth and he gives no signs of life until
Juanita's laughter stabs his ears.

"Well, are you still sulking?" she asks.

"You put me in bed with everybody."

"Liar! The one that put you in bed was him. Don't you know
that where Saturnino Quintana speaks, even the flies are quiet?"

There is another burst of laughter although rather inappropriate.
They have spoken to Saturnino so much with their mouths like a carna-
tion and their teeth like two rows of tender young corn in a husk.
"Good, enough of this joking. I come to tell you . . . . " She cups her hands together and brings her lips to them in order to warm them with her breath.

"He is coming around here and they say that I brought on all this fighting for you . . . . Worse, don't make that face at me, you! I know now that you can do it all right; but you don't know what kind of a criminal this God-forsaken Saturnino is . . . . Well, now you know it. My word that only for this did I climb the hill!"

And in order to prove that last statement, she unties the bundle of firewood and scatters it over the rocks, then picks up the gourd in both hands and lifts it to her mouth, draining half of it in noisy little swallows.

"Your mouth is only watering . . . . Come on, wet it, to see if you burst with the mixing of tunas and water."

And she extends him the gourd, wet still from her lips.

Although the shadows do not sufficiently establish the silhouettes in the bottom of the brake, at the sight below of the curious gossipmongers there that see not, invent not, they begin to descend, hand in hand.

"Hey, you, look who's going down there by the arroyo! My brother Felipe with your sister Ramona . . . ha . . . ha . . . ha!"

It was like an incentive to stretch himself to see still more.

* * *
Blowing out large mouthfuls of smoke, a large cigar between his teeth, Felipe González comes with Ramona Campos. Their regular rendezvous is not there in the arroyo, but a little farther on, there at the Ojo de Agua, where she goes down every day to sun herself. Blended among the jarales, he usually waits her at a curve of the path, suddenly jumps at her from behind, covers her eyes with his rough, warm hands and says:

"Joy, joy! Will you give me a kiss, or do I take it?"

Ramona gives it to him with a body-shattering embrace. "I have everything I want," thought Ramona, when their meetings became more frequent and expressive. But Felipe is all a man. He has not reached twenty yet and he has all the maturity of a man of forty.

"Señor Dámaso has never done me any harm; Ciriaco continues to be my defender, and I'm not going to give them any worry. It is good that there is confidence among the people, but not the abuse of it."

Ramona, therefore, is surprised that now Felipe does not try to startle her. Standing, he awaits her, and very serious says to her:

"You're going to see to it that you keep Ciriaco in your house and entertain him."

"What's the matter, Felipe?"

"Nothing is the matter, but Saturnino Quintana is running around very drunk and hurling insults about what happened last night."

Ramona becomes alarmed.

"Why don't you climb up and get him yourself? Spy on him at
the slope of the hill and with some hoax lure him to the house; it's easier for you to deal with him."

"I'll take up the fight, Ramona."

A new handshake, a new embrace, and a "so long". "For the sake of the Lent that comes, if it pleases God."

* * *

The men were not long in meeting each other near the arroyo. "What are you doing here, Felipe?"

"I come to meet you, Ciriaco."

Enough to anger a saint, Felipe has said nothing, but in his straightforward manner, Ciriaco guesses it all. It is well. Felipe is the brother of Juanita and a good friend at any rate.

"Do you know that Saturnino Quintana is running around here?"

What need to answer him?

"You do not know Saturnino Quintana, Ciriaco."

And so on and so forth, as they have all been saying.

"Don't let's talk about that, Felipe."

Ciriaco visibly contains himself, looks at his dark, brawny hands. Then, like one who dislikes doing a thing, he seeks courage and finds it. He holds his temper and does not seek trouble. So what, then?

The two companions are in rude contrast to each other. One is violent in his resolutions, the other lackadaisical. But if Ciriaco has had to repeat many times for what he has done, Felipe, who puts
all his faculties into what he decides, displaying an energy without equal, always says that it is a deed well done.

With their pants rolled up as far as they will go, their sandals in their hands, they cross the current of the arroyo that is rolling along raising white-caps and wooly-looking foam and carrying reddish and turbid water. At a distance Juanita, who has left Ciriaco just a short time before, is also crossing the stream, and she shows her mahogany-colored muscles.

Certainly Ciriaco is no longer thinking of her. His mind has become so incensed with Saturnino Quintana, and his resentment with the girl so alleviated, that the former is imposed upon his mind totally and absorbingly. Lord, even if he were the devil? And if he were, what of it? Because Saturnino Quintana had said that Ciriaco Campos had gone to hide in the kitchen and while Ciriaco Campos does not demonstrate that he ever hides in kitchens, they still have unfinished accounts to settle. The twisted tuft of hair hanging down and the forehead scarcely the width of two fingers had prevented him from understanding the significance of the glances with which his friends had greeted him the day following the fracas. "If they look at me thus, isn't it only to find fault with me because of a few men?"

Distraughtly and already chatting about something else, Felipe accompanies Ciriaco to the latter's house. Seated on broad flagstones in the patio, in the cool of the evening, Señor Dámaso and
Don Marto are holding an animated conversation. The two boys greet them and sit down near them.

"You act as if you had worms, Ciriaco; come in and take on a taco," says Ramona, standing on the doorstep.

But Ciriaco does not even turn around. Disinterestedly, he stands up, and step by step, slides away toward the back of the house and disappears.

Upon entering the plaza, he again runs into Felipe in front of Morales' canteen.

"If we were rivals we would have killed each other by now, Ciriaco. Let's go to my house. Do you want to?"

"Yes, to your house and quick, so that no one may see us or smell us even."

He casts himself free of Felipe and causes him to pass precisely through the doors of Morales' canteen, where Don Arturo and Saturnino appear again, together, because when the boa succeeds in fascinating the rabbit, he never lets go of it.

Ciriaco Campos, center of attraction, passes so close to them that he almost grazes their faces with the brim of his hat.

"This devil is looking for a fight," pronounces Don Arturo, truly frightened.

"What is happening to me that tonight I seem to be watering your chickens, Arturito?" exclaims Saturnino Quintana, black with anger.
From a facing hut, Juanita spies it all. She puts out the light and can see without being seen. When Ciriaco and Felipe pass by and their shadows are lost in the silvery light of the moon, she makes a very devout prayer and hangs on her bedpost the shot gun, loaded with powder and shot, with which Señor Damaso hunts foxes and rabbits.
CHAPTER VIII

"Up with Saturnino Quintana!"

"Hurrah!"

The suffocating embraces, the dislocating handshakes, the
confusion of shirts and white trousers, of mixed-colored blouses,
of cotton sweaters, of colored ponchos, of knickers and sandals,
and in the midst, Baschus is sparkling.

"This is my old pal Tanino . . . ?"

Let others say what they want of him, but he has never owed
a cent to Morales. The latter always makes twenty centavos out of
every seventy.

His neck twisted by torticollis, feeble, and stooped, he goes
and comes and multiplies to himself, in order that everyone may be
satisfactorily served.

"Drinks for the house, Crippled One."

For one to know Saturnino well, one must see him drunk. Then
he removes that mask that he has taken to wearing and cursed be
what it has done to him. In his drunkenness are gathered together
all the qualities that were known in him before he became a leader,
and that are now recognized in his drunkenness. Little remains of
them, because with the revolution, the people of today are not the
one of yesterday. Saturnino Quintana is the big boy with the in-
genious smile, the credulous expression, the contagious and over-
flowing joy! He who knows how to make jokes as weighty as the one
he has just given to his friend Don Arturo, without letting every-
thing pass as a joke. The very one who on a night of carousel can
take to the government a thousand men for a demonstration or for
barracks rights.

Don Ramoncito does not want to know this because it aggravates
his rancor. He alone knows and proclaims that Saturnino Quintana
began his political career as a bootblack to the officials and
small-time politicians that passed through San Gabriel de Valdivias;
the same one that today, with a Texan sombrero at a rakish angle
over a surly look of hair that almost covers one eye and obliges
him to look askant, is done for, as far as any future is concerned.

"He made himself such an important farm hand that he came to
be a ruffian. But really, Ciriaco, he's not the lion they paint
him."

Don Ramoncito is right at the ear of Ciriaco, who, since enter-
ing, has draped himself over the bar and now disdainfully pushes
away the drink that Morales offers him.

"You only like to get your blood up, teacher. Don't believe
it, Ciriaco," comments Felipe González, who, although he is dis-
posed to whatever is offered him does not like to precipitate
incidents. "The teacher has the fault of talking about people
behind their back."

One only has to consider Saturnino Quintana's manner of clothes
to find out his true nature. If they don't pay any attention to him
now, it is because Mexico is plagued with his kind. Fine, well fit clothing, accessories calling to high heaven, his elegance according to the latest style, make contrast with his little beady eyes, his strong expression of a simian, his loose-hanging lips of cavernous cruelty, his burnt cheeks—victims of the Gillette, and his bushy head, impossible to comb. And his gesture? Is he a Stalin? Is he a Galles?

But it is only that Ciriaco comes from the soldiers, he has seen many lands and has talked with many people.

"I have seen better ones and at this moment . . . . They aren't to be found any more, brother." The cannon, the grapeshot, and the pick had not left a stone unturned in the hacienda of San Gabriel; but they had stopped before the pressed adobe walls of the Crippled One's canteen. A bulwark of many generations, it is now mute testimony of the many uprisings from Don Porfirio the Great to this unlucky Don Pascual that governs them now. Its large square window, its broad basement of adobe where there extends a white napkin of red drawn-work, and there also the fresh jar of pulque with its satellites of glazed clay mugs. Morales keeps the same shade of maguey spines and leaves, so that the clientele may defend themselves from the sun, water, and dew.

Without a word, without a gesture, Ciriaco pushes back the second glass that the Crippled One offers him. His eyes are white and inexpressive. He appears like a varnished piece of clay, for
sure.

The most serious part of it all is that Saturnino Quintana does not want to admit that Ciriacio Campos is the center of attraction.

Felipe González is filling his mouth with wine and is quietly spitting it out.

"Be careful, Ciriacio."

The atmosphere is becoming very tense. Don Marto, who has entered without making any noise, is watching from a distance.

Upon Saturnino's orders glasses of wine and bowls of pulque are served. But Ciriacio drinks only the one that he pays for himself, drawing the nickels, dimes and pennies from his blue sash.

Expressions of joy, aggressiveness and worry—according to their temperaments, tastes, and inclinations. In any event the rating of Saturnino is visibly down and in an astonishing manner. Nicolás Arévalo leans up close to his compatriot Andrés Martínez and says:

"What was the matter?"

"Nothing, friend. Where there is fear courage is lacking!"

They are equal in strength. Because although it is the custom that in the revels of Saturnino for each native there are found ten fureños, each native feels confident to meet the ten fureños in front of him. They are careful in presuming it, but are quick to show it. Saturnino, who, even when he is drunk has
cobwebs in his eyes, feels it.

In the tepid air of the quiet night the tumult and uproar of the drunkenness carries to the farthest houses and excites the packs of dogs.

The canteen is overflowing with people. Only the oldest people on the ranch have seen Saturnino as happy as he is tonight. That was before he got himself into politics. He embraces everyone and lets everyone love him. There are many that presume to be his friends and call him by his first name Saturnino and he does not become offended.

"What's happening to the chief now?"

"Nothing; his wine is like that of a carnival, while Ciriac's is like that of a wake."

Cirilo Gutiérrez, the bad enemy, discreetly approaches the chief and whispers to him what even those of his party are beginning to murmur.

As if carried by the crowd, Saturnino Quintana suddenly finds himself behind Ciriac and only a step away.

"Now indeed, the fat is in the fire" thinks the old rural schoolteacher, at the same time sneaking away and then scurrying off.

Slowly and parsimoniously, Saturnino lifts his glass, looks at the pulque against the light, makes a sign that he is going to propose a toast in order that everyone may become quiet. His gesture is known and so is his discourse. It is known by heart. Nevertheless
it is a thing that custom demands, and everyone grows quiet.

"We'll see now," exclaims Juan Mendoza, very quietly, among a group of fueranos.

It appears, then, that the only thing the chief has proposed is to fix well attention on his person. He carries the glass to his lips, but he scarcely kisses the wine, then lifts it slowly and with a quick movement, throws it over his shoulder directly into Ciriaco's face. By custom and even by instinct, he instantaneously turns on his heels and with the same rapidity draws his pistol from its holster.

"What happened to you, Tanino Quintana?" Almost nothing: little stars and colored globes in a gloomy depth, then the awakening with the disagreeable feeling of an eye and a cheek that are visibly swelling up.

Surrounded by Saturnino's ruffians, Ciriaco cannot take a step. In his bewilderment, Saturnino does not clearly take into account that the knives that are already glistening are worth more than the revolvers of his henchman. Don Marto and Felipe by a great effort open a way through the crowd and are in front of Cirilo and Nicolás Arévalo. The lust for blood is burning in the faces of all. But Saturnino knows how to do things in proper form. With a sharp and strident voice, the terror in it even strange, he cries:

"Turn him loose. He's hit me like a man."

And in place of emptying the seven bullets in his pistol, he
quietly replaces it in his holster.

Everyone is stupefied; but Saturnino very prudently thinks that the one who has struck him in the face is not to be killed off like an old cat. His time will come. Things are never done better than when they are thought over.

Ciriaco leaves the canteen rubbing his swollen eyes. He arrives home between Felipe González and his friend Don Marto. He falls on a mat and in a little while begins to snore.

No one believes that the incident will close without further strife and so they neither sheathe their knives nor put their pistols away. Señor Dámaso paces nervously back and forth and holds on to his shotgun continuously.

"The best thing would be for this boy to get out of here for a while," opines Don Marto.

Despite his drunkenness Felipe González has sobered up in a hurry. Steps are heard and the old man snaps back the hammer of his gun. Felipe quiets them:

"It is my sister who is bringing us the news."

"Ciriaco here? You have made fools of yourselves!"

The reflection that Juanita makes is so just that the men are surprised at not having done something about it sooner. With difficulty they succeed in awakening Ciriaco and again between Don Marto and Felipe they carry him along, practically a dead weight. Juanita goes on ahead, to observe if anyone is spying on them. They
escape by way of the maguay corral at the back of the house and lose themselves among the nopales. A black object comes out into view at the edges of some mezquite, which causes Felipe to quickly draw his knife.

"Careful, Felipe. That will be Don Ramoncito who is waiting for us. Because Juanita knows how to do things up well."

With the fresh air, little by little, Ciriacao gradually comes to himself. But then a more dangerous struggle begins. He wants to know where they are taking him.

In order not to call attention to them as a group they decide to divide themselves, staying at a small distance from one another.

*  *  *

Two hours after the incident, Saturnino came to himself. He realized he could not see with one eye, rubbed his tender knuckles and let out a curse. He gave some directions to his more faithful and, snorting, left the canteen.

The star-lit night not only permits one to distinguish objects, but even to identify them at a distance. They go straight to the house of Juanita González. Someone comes to the door and Cirilo Cutilerrex gives a leap and points the pistol at his chest. Nicolás Arévalo and Juan Mendoza enter and tie the man's hands, drag him to the ash tree in the middle of the patio and fasten him securely to it.

Are they going to shoot Felipe González? Who knows? Now the one that is in the house is Saturnino Quintana. The shouts of a
woman are heard, the struggle of a body to body fight, slaps upon
the face, blows, furniture being knocked about. The building itself
shakes as if it were falling to pieces. Cirilo Gutiérrez heed the
call of his chief:

"Help me drag out this . . . she-devil!"

The others heed too. Juanita comes out twisting in their arms
like a hissing snake. Saturnino Quintana has blood and scratches on
his face.

In an outburst of insolences, cries, and bursts of laughter,
Saturnino Quintana, aided by the three ruffians, and in the presence
of Felipe González, brutally satisfies his vengeance on the warm,
convulsive body of the sweetheart of Ciriacco Campos.
CHAPTER IX

It is scarcely two weeks since Saturnino Quintana went to Mexico City and already two dead are accounted for. First it was Nicolás Arévalo who turned up stiff and cold in a plow fellow, with a knife wound in his back, and now it is the aforesaid Juan Mendoza, found near the house of Dámaso Campos, with a stab in the heart.

Nobody knows how the latter happened. Chencha Campos, who moments before had been chatting with him, tells that she heard the cry of "Ay! I'm dying!" and stepped out again but could only see something like a colored flag among the nopales, which, almost flying over them, quickly disappeared.

There are only visions of Chencha Campos. They say that from that night on she is unbalanced. Aside from Cirilo Gutiérrez who swears that she knows all, no one pays any attention to her.

Cirilo Gutiérrez, the one that has the most to say when Saturnino is absent, is now up to his neck in indignations. One would never have thought it, but the same day that these outbursts of indignation began, as he was returning home that night, someone shot at him from close range from a thicket. But as a bad thing never dies, he escaped death and in a little while reached home dragging himself along with an old scythe handle. If he insists that he had been able to distinguish white trousers among the shrubs and not colored petticoats, it is not to belittle himself
nor to laugh at his slanderers. There is, then, so much misgiving among the people about these things, that the worst sinners have hidden their faces, and the lesser ones let their women take the beasts to the river, go for pasturage for the herd, and bring the firewood down from the hill. There are even fights among the women. One day one turned up with an ear bitten; another day the daughter of Nievitos with her nose smashed in, and there are any number who have been beaten, or slightly wounded. This finally makes the men ashamed and, although committing themselves to the Heavenly Court, they go out to their labors—"one day and another the next." The natives pretend to make themselves bold, in order to hide their fear better; the _fuerenos_ go with their tails between their legs, but casting glances that are outright curses.

To call a spade a spade truly makes the natives want to get even with the _abajeños_.

As Saturnino Quintana makes no attempt to find out who the assassins of Nicolás Arevalo and Juan Mendoza are, the lesser-known members of the P.M.R. are called together and Cirilo Gutiérrez says:

"In plain truth, it would be good if we got ourselves and our belongings together and got out of here."

"Yes, but what's the matter with Saturnino Quintana?"

"Three charges against him, brother. Did the wall answer you, Antonio Lagos? Well, that's the way that he answered me . . . ."

"Well, it would be a good idea to invite a commission to have
a word or two with him."

"That's just what I was going to tell you."

That same night three men left San Gabriel so silently that they were not even missed in their own homes.

They spent three days in Mexico City giving everybody the devil, because they did not succeed in speaking for even a moment with Deputy Quintana.

"This devil has betrayed us," said the boy Antonio Lagos, who being a boy, was excused for saying such a thing.

Their suspicions were finally confirmed when the leader at last consented to grant them an audience:

"Comrades, materially it is impossible to take myself to the scene of events. The commissions that the national representation have conferred upon me are of such vital importance for all the people, that it would be to betray my revolutionary ideology, to abandon the country in these solemn moments of political and economical crises; the religious question, the agrarian problem, the work law . . . . . . Because you will know that the reactionaries . . . . ."

A discourse at close quarters. And not a little like the aforesaid tone of a priest that old Dámaso had previously denounced him as having.

And this drivel about the commission.

"You understand, of course, that until the period of regular sessions of this legislature is closed, I cannot abandon my tasks."
But you may rest assured and tell your comrades that Colonel Gonzalo Pérez, my great friend, is going from the garrison in a little while to Rincón de Valdías and I am giving him full instructions in order that everything may be arranged to our desire. Have no fear, then, and _hasta la vista_. We shall soon see each other in those parts."

A patent effort to maintain the tone of comradeship and cordiality with which he had always treated them. So much so that Antonio Lagos said:

"This devil now talks very pretty; but soon he will be like our bosses of before."

"The fisticuffs of Ciriaco Campos," observed the other with rancor.

Only Cirilo Gutiérrez, his ears bent down as always, abstained from any comment.

They returned to San Gabriel abated and disconsolate, with the same vigilance with which they had left. Cirilo Gutiérrez kept the secret that his chief had confided to him in an off moment:

"I am working my candidacy for Governor of the State and Calles is giving me his support!"

1 In the _ejido_ of Quintana the only business that was going on was that of the late Juan Mendoza who was apparently still very much

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1 _hasta la vista_—until we meet again

2 _ejido_—communal land—here the land owned by Quintana
alive. It seems that the first one he spoke to was little Chencha Campos. The poor thing became so frightened that she fainted, receiving a violent contusion when she fell, and the dead one could not say anything to her.

"Some order that she is to fulfill of a hidden treasure."

"If that were me, I would tell him what I think. They say that one makes himself very formal and asks the departed spirit:

"Brother, on the part of God, I beg of you that you tell me if you are of this world or the other." And then the disillusionment, friend."

The rumors were put to an end with the scare that a herdsmen received. He returned one night aghast, saying that he had very clearly heard the voice of Juan Mendoza and a joyful laughter resounding upon the hill. The flock had stampeded as if a coyote had come down upon them.

And the wandering soul of Juan Mendoza was the topic of conversation until the hour and moment in which Colonel Don Gonzalo Pérez presented himself in Saturnino Quintana's own automobile.

The natives are furious and the fuereños appear more valiant than ever. The Colonel is a good boy and brings a smile on his lips.

"Don't be scared to look at him. He has the cute little face of a Chihuahuan dog," said Nievitos.

"He is not a spider who bites," observed Felipe Campos.
Juanita González, who has become moody since the disgrace which had befallen her, cautiously approaches Dámaso's house and very quietly says to the old man:

"For sure he doesn't have hair on his chin and he never stops smiling; but tell Ciriaco to keep out of sight and wait until I make my investigations. May God deliver us into calm waters."

"Come in and greet the family, daughter," Dámaso answered, interrupting her. "Since Ciriaco has gone into hiding he is only occupied with praying."

Then an unexpected and strange scene took place. Since Juan Mendoza was killed, Chencha Campos spent both night and day huddled in the kitchen, without speaking to anyone. But that time, upon hearing the voice of Juanita, she gave a cry and threw herself upon her. Without giving her time to defend herself, she caught her by the skirts and tore them to shreds, leaving her like God brought her into the world.

"Chencha, daughter, what is it?"

"For God's sake, Chencha, leave her be . . . ! It's Juanita González . . . ."

The infuriated eyes of Chencha had met with those of Juanita in such an expression of fear that now nobody could tell which one of the two was the crazy one.

In vain Señora Martina and Ramona wanted to separate them. When Chencha extricated herself, conquered at last by a nervous
attack, her last words were hardly deciphered:

"It was her . . . it was her!"

Señora Martina and Ramona looked at each other, without understanding. Old Démaso, who had already left for the sake of modesty, commented:

"The affairs of these women! They live in such a mysterious manner! Who pays attention to them . . . ?"

It cost a great deal of effort to take from Chancha's jaws a scarlet shred of cloth that she had pulled from Juanita's skirt with her teeth.

* * *

The Colonel called the congregation of Quintana to a meeting at the Casa del Pueblo. In place of making himself unpopular with the natives because they stayed away, he himself went to seek them out in their homes that they might come. Even Démaso was not able to refuse and limping and hobbling, he hastened to the meeting. Don Marto the same—'he that owes nothing, fears nothing'. The others, not wanting to appear over-anxious, arrived at the second call punctually, and the room was jammed full. It was a tense moment with the two factions facing each other. The fuerenos exchanged monosyllables and smiles of understanding that the natives extinguished with only a hitch of the belt.

Don Gonzalo may be loyal or not, but with the abajo todos everyone knows what he is up to.
and or become an atheist's response, open by those of the par.

They read their way out with a realization that binic the soul.

The first year of saving Cambridge, proportion.

No one this duty came to us to play the violin.

What then, is he up to?

The exclusive known pastime.

Do remember forever the national and the appraise breaks one.

end national presence.

the body and soul to the satisfaction of the inner that is our time

putting horses in petty pretenses which get him more, dedicated

to the country. The bed in the earth, and that in place of

to grow the work, the end up exteriorizing the nation that takes

and ball with that name.

interests to your mutual benefit and to the benefit of cooperation.

"I know you to leave off with your green, sometimes your

of the party.

contemporary of the nation. With the change in the second of the words that soon he gather the

much contemporarily in the second of the words that soon he gather the

ears of the office. There is so much fineness in these ears and so

not one immediately with Clarkie contemporarily dedicated himself to the

meet or honor, he speaks to the people from the edge of the platform.

Colston does not like form or practice, without accomplishing the

room and a pot of water complete this platform. It appears that the

or into galleries who was born a dog be nowDining around with
"In place of finding out who killed Juan Mendoza and Nicolás Arévalo, he brings us speeches."

When his companions have finished expressing their anger, disconcertedly as always, Cirilo Gutiérrez says:

"Well, maybe it's better that we stay."

There is no doubt: Cirilo Gutiérrez is of the hardest wood of our great statesmen. To his brute-like obstinacy he adds a perfect duplicity. His words say yes when he means no and vice versa.

Surprised, his colleagues reprimand him to speak like the people. And Cirilo Gutiérrez answers them:

"Fools, don't you see you have to soften them up first!"
CHAPTER X

Meanwhile the dead Juan Mendoza continued cracking the whip. Ramona denies that he had appeared to her sister; Señora Martina alleges that it was impossible for the dead man to have spoken to her, since Chencha had never left the kitchen for anything since she saw him carried away on the stretcher.

Chencha, so efficient about the house before, now does everything badly and in a bad mood, and when her tasks are done she wraps her head up in a shawl and secludes herself in the kitchen, refusing to speak to anyone.

"She is in deep grief," Ramona explains to her friends. "How much she liked the dead one and she could not cry for fear that mara would give her a purring. She is eating her heart out and so you see she's like she is!

Don Marto, a reliable man in whom one can trust, asserts that two or three days ago, upon passing by the house of Señor Dámasco, he heard a very sad lament where Juan Mendoza was found dead.

The natives swear that it is the soul which wanders around in grief and that if Saturnino Quintana knows it, being a man that does not believe in God, in an unexpected moment he speaks to the dead one and he will be the one who keeps the treasure.

But a new incident causes Juan Mendoza to desist from scaring the people. A tale that puts everyone in suspense. The priest of Rímeda de Valdivias comes incognito to stir up people for a revolution.
Gonzalo Pérez, who has maintained himself so serene and conciliatory, takes the thing to heart and it even appears that he has begun to make his investigations about the assassins of the two fuerros.

"He may not be such a wrench in the works after all," says Antonio Lagos, reflecting that the Colonel, in place of keeping in contact with his own party, goes about sticking his nose into the affairs of the opponents.

* * *

Chatting of land, cattle, and weather (one eye like that of a cat and the other like a grappling hook) Don Gonzalo does not lose sight of little Chencha, who wrapped up as ever and like a knot in the corner, gives no signs of life. And so successful is he in his enquiries, that like rain in a dry season, Doña Francisca, sister of Don Marto comes in saying good day. Chencha sees the colored petticoats and jumps on her and tears them to pieces. Observing all this, Don Gonzalo, very wisely, thinking that the poor thing is crazy, casts aside the malevolent insinuations of Cirilo Gutiérrez concerning Juanita González.

From there he goes straight to the house of Don Marto and without preamble, broaches the subject:

"Friend Don Marto, I have news that a priest came here to stir up the people."

"Maybe yes, maybe no, Colonel. Let it be known that they never confide their affairs in me."
"For that reason I have procured him, because I know that he has never betrayed our cause."

Don Marto allowed an enigmatic smile to escape his lips. When he heard those 'dandies' say "our cause", those that call themselves revolutionists for the sake of filling their stomachs, for whom revolution, thievery, and cowardly assassination are the same thing, he felt a deep and profound nausea. It was only that with many years wisdom and prudence had come to him and he had ceased to be the blow-hard of former times.

"And about Dámaso Campos, that friend Don Marto tells me?"

"He is a sickly old man that is good for nothing."

Don Gonzalo stopped for a moment, looking fixedly into Don Marto's eyes.

"He can't be so sickly from what they've told me about him."

"Ciriaco Campos can tell you, for sure, Don Gonzalo; but I'll answer for Ciriaco," answered Don Marto, evasively. "Those that are afraid of him paint him blacker than he is."

The indignations were shattered meanwhile by the impenetrable muteness or the clever ability of the natives, and Colonel Gonzalo Pérez found out at last concerning the curate Martínez López only what he had already known before starting his investigation; that an unknown person had arrived at the ranch and had taken lodging for a night in the hut of old Dámaso, disappearing at dawn the following day.

* * *
It was then, that late one afternoon, a man approached the corral of the Campos house, asking for a pitcher of water. Dámaso came in person with a small pitcher in his hand, his head bare as had been his custom of years gone by. It seems that this gesture did not surprise the traveller, that he drank the water, also taking off his hat.

"Many thanks, my good man."

"May God keep you, sir."

"Why do you call me thus?"

"Because I see in the person of this traveller Our Lord God."

"May He fill your house with blessings. Tell me where I can find an inn to spend the night."

"There is no inn on this ranch, but he who calls at this door will always find lodging, though it be only in a corner and with a mat to sleep on."

"I give thanks unto God that there are still men in the world like you."

"Your Grace only tolerates this poor house."

"Why do you speak to me in that manner? Are we not all equal?"

"Your Grace wears woolen shirt and pants and a vest of leather, but in your hands and in your manners I see well that you are not a farm hand."

The stranger, also old and grey-bearded, smiled with satisfaction, then drew a bronze crucifix from the pocket of his vest and gave it to Dámaso to kiss.
"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost . . . ."

"Amen," responded the rancher on his knees, receiving the benediction and the kiss.

From the dark corner of the kitchen the women saw everything and their female curiosity was whetted when the two old men entered and, at a glance from Dámaso, the women had to withdraw in silence and leave them alone.

When the roosters crowed at dawn, the traveller got up and Señor Dámaso as the previous evening knelt and received his benediction and again kissed the crucifix. They left taking precaution not to awaken the women. The head of the house returned home, reciting his rosary and fervently chanting his prayers.

What was this business of his long conference all about? Conjectures and talk, nothing more, because when it was necessary, Señor Dámaso knew how to be as quiet as a tomb.

Cirilo Gutiérrez carried this gossip to Don Gonzalo. And Don Gonzalo, strangely irritated, said to him:

"I am going to recommend you to the Police Inspector of Mexico City; you have very brilliant qualities for that office . . . ."

And Cirilo, overcome, added:

"Well, it may also be true that twenty men have joined up with Ciríaco on the hill of the Venado."

"You go there right away today and bring me all the news you can."

"How many men and arms will you give me?"
"Go to Rincón de Valdivias and ask of the Captain in my name all that you may need."

What began as a quarrel and the joke of a busybody ended up in a very serious way. Because in the head of Cirilo Gutiérrez there was no place for jesting. At the end of the week he returned with more news than the Colonel had hoped for. It was certain; Ciriacco Campos had twenty men with him. The neighboring ranches have given them food and lodging.

"I looked for the Valdivias; but as I only met up with one of their servants, I brought him here tied up, to see if you can get something out of him . . . ."

It was Sacramento. Dried-up and willowy, with his thighs and buttocks bloody and the mark of the rope in his flesh.

"Why did you resist authority?"

"I didn't resist anybody. Why?"

"Then why those bruises on your face and those bumps on your head?"

Sacramento, his head hanging, did not answer. The stoicism of his race told all. So much so, that Cirilo Gutiérrez felt constrained to give an explanation:

"Because he doesn't want to tell the truth . . . the devil . . . . But you can give him a better scare . . . . If you want, leave him to me for a little while and I'll make him sing . . . ."

"Go to your house, friend, and you, Cirilo Gutiérrez, you make
me tired with your chattering."

"Well, that may not come to a good end for Saturnino," replied the ruffian calmly.

Disconcerted, Don Gonzalo, in order to dissipate the anxiety which the threat had caused him, began to speak incoherently. But as soon as night fell, he went to seek Don Marto.

Don Marto, the old fox, did not want to compromise himself with him.

"I assure you, Colonel, that what Cirieco Campos is looking for is a way to get out, like a trapped coyote. The story about the twenty men with him is a pure lie to take men and money from you and end up with him only because they fear you. Do you want me to tell you the truth? The abajitos are so many stalks of straw that eat like pure gluttons what they gain off you and the government, but not by their own work. It is the plague of the locust that Saturnino brought us when he commenced to divide up the lands. And therefore the people around here cannot bear to look at them.

The Colonel fully confirmed his suspicions. For the secret plans that they had brought him, the frank confession of Don Marto was worth much.

"Tell me more, friend Don Marto. Word of honor that I will always be on the side of justice!"

"They live off their clownish jokes in the elections and manifestations of the government, but they are only puppets. For them the best lands always, but as they do not know how nor have desires for working,
when the harvest comes they don't pick up the stubble even and they
rob us of ours and eat up what we have sweat for."

"It is certain that many natives have left San Gabriel and are
now running around on Venado."

"You know Saturnino. After the trouble that Ciriaco gave him
and the death of Nicolás Arévalo and Juan Mendoza, his cohorts, no
one on this ranch is sure of his life . . . ."

"And if they aren't careful . . . as the saying goes: 'from
the street will come the one who will throw you out of your house'."

An insinuation with tons of dynamite in it. But so well im-
bedded in the natives that each one assimilated it as his own
affair and forgot all about Don Gonzalo. It appeared so unlikely,
on the other hand, to the fuereños that no one believed him capable
of expressing it.

One of them said to Cirilo Gutiérrez:

"How are things going on the outside?"

"The bread is ready for the oven, brother."
CHAPTER XI

Saturnino Quintana arrived at San Gabriel when he was least expected. To start things off he went on a drunk with his friend the Colonel, which lasted three days. Innocent up to a certain point: the musician who started to become offensive because they persisted in converting the drumhead into a sieve by means of bullets, received one in his buttocks which left him a cripple. Curious about the squabble, Juanita González, wrapped up in the blanket of her brother Felipe, came to see. With much precaution, although it was already dark, she made a large circle from her house to Morales' canteen, hiding among the nopales, clinging to the adobe walls and zacate, crouching among the chaparros until she came to the back door, to see and listen through the window bars.

'Discussions, fights, disagreements even with those of our own ideology . . . Calles . . . the organ of the Basílica . . . insults against Morones' mother . . . Calles and his wife . . . the villa of Guadalupe . . . we hog-tied Lombardo . . . the priests . . . the reactionaries.'

Total—nothing. Juanita's eyes were already closed with boredom when Cirilo Gutiérrez began to change the record:

"You must know, chief, that we had a little visitor around here. The priest Martínez López of Rincón de Valdivias."

Saturnino, half understanding, frowned.

"According to what they say, he stopped at the house of Dámaso
"You told me nothing about that, Gonzalo," the leader exploded, fixing his eyes on the light.

The Colonel pretended to be drunker than he was. Cirilo, encouraged, drove his needle deeper:

"He comes to gather people with Ciriaco Campos, who is now running around on Venado, making war."

Neither the silence of Don Gonzalo nor his inebriety explains him. Saturnino, to the great satisfaction of Cirilo, begins to act like a snake. For only a few short moments; something that he learned in the Legislature. In place of stirring up the dispute or demanding at least an explanation, he held back his anger that was buzzing in his sharp and rapid speech and exclaimed:

"Go home at once and this very night sober up. We'll talk about it tomorrow."

What they were talking about only God and they might know. The Colonel, without saying goodbye to anyone, left hurriedly for Rincón de Valdivias. But those that saw him go say that in his habitual smile, he is wearing a mask of malice and scorn, which was the final insult for the abajefnos. Meanwhile the natives remained sad and disconsolate. Saturnino said nothing about the matter and began to make preparations with the people about the seeding.

"The fisticuffs of Ciriaco Campos," commented one of the fuereños.

And there were others who thought it would be better to go to
the hills with Ciriacco who "really is a good man".

"He's a changed man, for sure, Don Marto. Talk with him and you'll be convinced."

"That remains to be seen, because I, like Saint Thomas, have to see to believe."

Don Marto saddled up his horse then and went out to find the leader at his labors. He found him behind the dam, making adjustments on a grain drill.

"It looks like it's on us for sure. The rainy season has come. Good day, Saturnino."

"My people will all start seeding Monday."

"I heard tell something about that but I did not believe it."

"Why? Just as sure as that machinery is piled up that you see there. A hundred thousand dollars cash."

Stupefied, Don Marto blinked his eyes.

"It's certain, then, that the lands are to be taken away from the natives?"

A winding blue vein sticks out on the burning forehead of Saturnino.

"I've got my fill of politics and gossips. We're all going to work now. I have a job for whoever wants to come, and what they have told you are inventions of the reactionaries."

Don Marto remained with his glance fixed on the ground, silent, in order to give Saturnino time to calm himself.

"All that happens, friend, is that with the water from the dam
I am going to recover something from those who benefit by it. The government has given you people the lands but this work has cost me money."

"That's what I say and it seems just to me," exclaims Don Marto, joyfully, feeling himself freed of a false situation. "But how is it going to work out?" he asks.

"That with a few pennies that I will make in the harvest, everything will be paid for."

"With all justice, Don Saturnino."

Full of optimism, the old Maderista exclaims:

"But, are you going to work the lands with this hodge-podge of people? It's a pity with so much water and such good guarantees. One nearly dies laughing just to see this coming and going of the abajadores with their droves of oxen. Look at them, they don't even know how to hook up!"

He dismounts, ties his horse to a nopal, and with short bow legs, he gets down to shake hands with the man.

"Come here, friend, you must have been a student. Let me see, show me your hands ... hairless from pure fright! Look how the life line joins with the marriage line . . . ."

Not exactly students, but aviators of the House of Deputies, turned out by the change of legislature and officially commended "Because we are going to be the first ones to demonstrate the revolutionary ideology for the good of the whole . . . ."
When Don Marto returns from giving his reading, Saturnino, his eyes and ears all for his machinery, is going about oiling a drill.

"Look, Don Saturnino, if you really want to do something good and right, only tell me . . . I'll bring you people that know all about this business . . . ."

"I have work for all, I already told you."

As it is not life to sleep in the kitchen day and night, clinging to skirts and petticoats, or to go about the hills expecting to be killed, the news of Don Marto was accepted with great rejoicing. They began to go out with a certain fear in little groups, well armed and ready to defend themselves from the *fuereños*, if the latter wanted to continue looking at them like dogs in a stranger's house.

Then the lands of San Gabriel were reanimated as in the best times of Don Carlos Valdivia. The noise of people working, the moaning of the beasts, the creaking of leather and of roots torn out by the plow, the singing noise of the women with their babies, bringing lunch out to the men, and the buzzing of the grist mill in the burning May sun.
CHAPTER XII

"In the seventy years that God has given me of life, never have I seen such goings-on," says twisted Morales, the only one that does not participate in the joy of the worker.

The natives in order to avoid encounter with the _fuereños_, the latter in order to obey positive orders, abstain from meeting at the canteen. Saturnino Quintana, imitating the great Galles, wants to try out the "dry state" in his little isle, because "now we are going to regenerate the masses."

The year ripens well; it rains all night and in the daytime the country is a sea of sunlight. Already the little black canes are thrusting their heads through the virgin soil, in the confines below the dam. The truth is that without certain enigmatic monosyllables of the _abajeños_ and one and another wrathful glance of Saturnino Quintana, confidence would have been reestablished and everyone would be tranquil and content with his labors.

But for those who sought strife there were suggestions of it in certain glances of the leader. When he found out that Juan Mendoza had ceased appearing, from the day on which they found an old dead cat chewed up by dogs, he became red as a tomato and, half eating his words, said that now "those lizards will find out what it's like when they step into poison ivy."

"A barking dog doesn't bite, Juanita González," responded Nievitos, when the sister of Felipe González brought them the news.
Because this devil of a girl by who knows what means, knows not only what Saturnino Quintana does but even what he is thinking. Since her disgrace of a little while back she has become very much another person. She seldom leaves the house, she abstains from talking to the natives, but on the other hand she flirts with the newly-come fueraños. This does not appear well to the people of San Gabriel. If at the beginning they had pity for her and felt as their own the grave injury that Saturnino Quintana had done her, with this strange conduct the men look at her scornfully and the women even refuse to say good day to her.

"It was your fault, because you like to make the pretty face for the men. Don't deny that you were making a play for him."

Juanita would have had much to answer to Ramona Campos, but the public sentiment was so strong that she turned against Ramona, asking God that she need never again set foot in Ramona's house.

Very great, then, is the sacrifice that Juanita makes, skulking around the outskirts of the settlement in search of old Dámaso:

"I come only to tell you to spread the word that Ciriaco is not to give up on account of all this. Saturnino Quintana has the blackest intentions in the world and all that he is doing is a deception for Ciriaco to trust him and come down out of the hills."

She said no more, because at the sound of her voice, Chencha appeared at the door and the same as on the other occasion, she saw the colored petticoats and shouted:
“It was her . . . it was her . . . !”

“Why do you say that to me, Chencha? Why have you picked on me?”

“Witch . . . witch . . . witch . . . !”

This was said as she fell twisting in an attack.

“Get out of here quick,” interrupted the voice of old Dámaso, making the sign of the cross.

“Of the fallen tree, firewood is made.” Juanita, desolate, went away finally to put an end to the scandal.

The rumor now goes about San Gabriel that Juanita González has Chencha Campos bewitched. Around them a legend is built up in which Girisco and the dead Mendoza do the dancing. A puzzle that will unravel itself in an exterminating hatred until one party will leave the country free for its opponent.
CHAPTER XIII

"What horn am I going to blow there . . . ?"

"Let’s go, I tell you. Don't get yourself in trouble."

Convinced by Don Marto, old Dámaso hastened to the appointment. And that was how all the ranch found itself that Sunday in the large meeting room of the Casa del Pueblo. As a matter of curiosity, there were many neighbors and merchants present from outside who carried no candle at the burial.

Saturnino Quintana arrived at five, amid acclamations and applause as always. The room was filled to over-flowing. A kind of popular jury, a farce at any rate. The personnel of the table of "revolutionary affiliation" beyond reproach. The least among them was a murderer. When Saturnino said in a loud voice that he was naming his friend Don Marto as defender of the accused, Don Marto was very surprised and everyone blinked his eyes because no one knew who the guilty one was nor even of what crime he was accused.

"Comrade Cirilo Gutiérrez will present the charges."

"These are styles that he brings from Mexico City," opined Felipe González, speaking with those next to him.

"Who, then, is the accused?" Don Ramoncito asked old Campos.

Poor Don Ramoncito! His place on the platform he always occupies for all the farces of Saturnino Quintana and no one pays any attention to him.

Order is imposed; the noise stops. Saturnino Quintana, standing,
shakes a little bell.

"The session is opened . . . ."

"The what . . . ? the what . . . ?"

"Silence, comrades . . . ."

Saturnino rubs his round and freshly shaven chin, closes his eyes in order to concentrate his thoughts. One could hear a pin drop.

"Companions: the mandate that the people have placed in my hands imposes upon me the sacred duty of looking after the interests of the whole . . . I will speak in a way that you may understand me; here no graceless one gets in my way, because the snake . . . . Good; but what I have to tell you is that in our ranks one has made himself a traitor to the sacred cause of the whole, I say . . . ."

The silence of a great oratorical effect. The natives pick up their ears like surprised rabbits. There is no one who dares to look his neighbor in the face.

Disinterestedly, the natives count and recount the abajefos. So many for so many. Good, let the wheel turn. And each one has his hand on his belt.

"But as this case is going to be heard all over Mexico, comrades, we are going to proceed in a legal manner, we are going to subject the guilty one to a judgment in order to send him then to the capital where the government of the republic will know how to apply a fitting punishment."
Saturnino allows the room to break out in a polite applause, because he believes that the moment is opportune for it.

"Cirilo Gutiérrez, step up here and tell everyone what you know."

The coarse shoes resound as if he were alone in the room.

"What did the teacher say yesterday in his class, Cirilo?"

The ground opened up for Don Ramoncito. Worse still, it opened up and did not swallow him.

"Comrades, you are going to hear. If this is what is taught to the people, it would be better to close the school. Me, although I put myself in bad for saying it, never learned to spell and cursed be what that did to me. You see it. You would like many that have a diploma even. I have become Deputy and if things go well, tomorrow, I will be governor . . .."

The abajanos redouble the ovation and, inconsistently, the natives do likewise.

His mat of hair standing on end, Cirilo Gutiérrez now takes the stand of the accusation.

"I ask to be recognized," interrupts one of the jurors from his seat, an ex-aviator of the House of Deputies.

A point of order. He has not taken his indictment to the accused.

This triumph of oratory embarrasses Saturnino Quintana.

"Let's see, then, Don Ramoncito; tell us your name."

The laughter is general and only Don Ramoncito does not hear it
because to a certain extent he does not know if he is in this world or another. And he has to climb up on the platform dragging his weak and trembling legs.

"I ask to be recognized," insists the pedantic juror, conceited with his triumph. "The accused is new to this and should not have to stand on his feet. By humaneness, let him sit down."

But has Saturnino Quintana lost so much prestige that even an unhappy ragamuffin is permitted to lend seriousness to the ceremony?

"Repeat word for word, the lesson that you gave to the pupils yesterday."

An impossible demand for one who scarcely knows what is going on from day to day. Don Ramoncito declares that he does not teach his classes from memory nor does he carry notes. But he says it with such dullness, that he becomes confused with his words and everyone is mixed up. Enchanted, Saturnino Quintana questions him:

"Is that all that you have to say?"

Sadly, the old man bows his feeble head.

"Now you speak, Cirilo Gutiérrez."

The presence of the ruffian on the platform produces such a rumble of discontent that Saturnino, only by standing up, puts it down on the spot. The accuser is sweating profusely. His ramblings are more intricate than those of the teacher. And it is Saturnino himself who has to put it in a form to picture it for the jurors. The teacher has said that first it is the revolution and then the
bandits that exploit it and by its protection have enriched themselves and continue enriching themselves; that the countryman, the only pure element that remains in the country, is called upon to purify the country of the rascally organization that is sucking it dry. That the dawn of a true social revolution is now breaking and it is for new men to realize it and put it into effect.

"And how did this traitor finish, Cirilo Gutiérrez? Tell the last words of his lecture, just like you told them to me."

"He said: 'Brother countryman, you have finished with the landowner, now you must finish with the leader.'"

"No, no, he didn't say it that way," interrupts Saturnino Quintana angrily, "he said: 'brother countryman, you have killed the landowner, now you must kill the leader.' Kill ... kill ... kill ... !"

By one of those mistakes that frequently happens in a crowd, the room broke out in roaring applause, and with wild shouting, that by its unexpectedness left Saturnino Quintana stupefied, causing the blood to run again through the veins of the poor teacher, despairing now of hope.

"I accuse the teacher of the rural school of San Gabriel," thundered Saturnino, livid, "of personal assault and intent of homicide."

Then happened what no one had expected. Old Damaso Campos, now on his feet, shouted from his seat with all his might:
"I am witness and I have something to declare."

Saturnino shook the bell intending to quiet him, but he was not able to restrain the shouting.

"Let Dámaso Campos speak!"

"Let him get up on the platform . . . ."

"That's not necessary. If what he wants to say is that the teacher comes to class every day, dragging himself in, drunk, it's something we all know."

"It's something else I want to say."

"Up! Up with the old man!"

The shouting is deafening. The abajeños themselves contribute to the disorder. Among them are educated men and their leader well understands that he would make himself look ridiculous if he tried to stop them now. Aside from this, if the old man has such a desire to speak, nothing will come of it, since he is one of his least formidable enemies. But when he decides to suspend the meeting, Dámaso Campos is already on the platform, facing the assembly.

"What I have to say is something that we all know but which seems like many of us have forgotten. What the teacher said, he said it being drunk; but that very thing Saturnino Quintana said according to rule and order the day he distributed the rifles:

'These are to defend yourselves with and to defend the land that we have given to you from anyone who may try to grab it from you.'"
Again the applause and the "hurrahs" broke out, and for the first time in his life, Saturnino Quintana was failing as an orator. Without any display of audacity whatsoever, he used to come out on top. Was it possible that his sun was beginning to set? Had his contact with the Deputies done him harm? In four months his prestige had dwindled, and of that there was no doubt at this moment. A suspicion passed through his imagination like the blackest shadow. Since the day that Calles promised him the governorship of the state, many of his colleagues had showed their hostility toward him or a manifest disdain. "Because there are always many dogs for the same miserable bone. That's gratitude for you! I sent for Colonel Gonzalo Pérez to straighten out the people here and in a little while they are the ones who ordered him to have me thrown out."

"Comrades, I hope that our minds may become more settled so that we can deal with this affair at a better time. For now the meeting is adjourned."

Don Ramoncito, who did not believe in miracles, said that Señor Dámaso had performed one and that he was a saint or at least his guardian angel. On the other hand the murmurings of the fuereños against their chief were increasing.
CHAPTER XIV

It was said that Saturnino Quintana had settled his affairs.
When Cirilo Gutiérrez frisked the house of Juanita González, no one
knew what to make of it.

Don Ramoncito was hidden exactly where there was the greatest
danger, and at the same time where it would not occur to anyone to
look for him. A week shut up in the home of Dámaso Campos, listen-
ing daily to the sermon that the old reactionary thrust at him for
the unburdening of his sins. Ramona, out of pure sympathy, defended
him one day:

"Papa, don't mortify this poor man any longer. After all, he
can see those down-fallings too, or he wouldn't be wearing patched-
up shoes!"

With a bitter smile and an expression of sheepish tenderness,
Don Ramoncito agreed with his defender:

"No, Señor Dámaso, we shall not defraud ourselves of the benefits
of the revolution because we have done many bad things and do not
deserve anything . . . ."

Old Campos stamped his foot on the floor:

"Hang your revolution! Frankly you are people for whom there
is no hope. You have the rope around your neck and still your
revolution doesn't fall out of your mouth."

"How to make a fossil understand," thinks Don Ramoncito, biting
his lips resignedly. Then Juanita González appears like a shadow.
Juanita has no fear of the devil, but in front of Chencha Campos she begins to tremble. She comes to look for the teacher. Outside Don Marto is waiting for them. The old man takes leave of the family with a clear eye. The escape is easy: a hurricane wind has been blowing since dusk and everyone has taken refuge in his own home.

"Lucky you, Don Ramonsito," says Juanita González taking leave of him. She is able to say no more because the flood of tears is choking her.

The rustling of the wind is heard in the pines, the croak of the frogs in the pools and the song of the waterfalls.

The Casa del Pueblo is serving as a shed for the machinery of Saturnino Quintana. There is no news about the old reactionary teacher. Who cares about school? Saturnino Quintana had said:

"In order to be Deputy, Governor, or Minister, the least he has to know is how to read and write . . . that's old fashioned!" Aside from this, everyone suspects that Don Ramonsito has gone to join up with Ciriaco Campos in the hills.

Juanita González passes the hours and days without hope. She takes her little old mother out in the sun daily. She weaves on her frame cushion, and absorbed, meditates while her long slender fingers slide over the fiber threads, meeting and crossing to the soft time of the wooden bars, weaving an airy luminous fabric, that appears to be as light as the web of a mountain spider. She stops
when two large tears run down over her pinched cheeks.

The unheard of news arrives that Cirisco is in San Gabriel. Antonio Lagos swears that he has recognized him notwithstanding the disguise that he is wearing. Señor Dámaso is so upset when they ask him about Cirisco they hold no doubt that he is hidden there.

"Cirisco Campos can do it," exclaims one of the fueraños, truly admiring him. "During his lifetime and as long as the chief still lives, I would not leave this land."

"Saturnino is very rich now and wears his pants below his 1 heels," explains another.

When Cirilo Gutiérrez brought him the news, Saturnino Quintana left his coffee half-finished, finished his bread in a bite or two while standing and with his hat already upon his head. He said he was going to work on his machinery. Heavens, he still needed some parts and it was urgent that he go to Mexico City for them!

"Reinaldo, get out the car and fill it up with gas and oil."

While Reinaldo is doing that job, Juanita González enters Morales’ canteen where there are three fueraños.

"A five cent bar of soap, Crippled One."

"Come in girl, and get it out of the box."

A pretext to exchange some rapid words with her, so that the merchants would not suspect them. 

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1 Inferring that the poor wear shorter pants
"Saturnino has his eye on you. Be careful."

The Crippled One truly likes her. Because "she has a pretty little mouth . . . because she has a pretty little face."

"Thanks a lot, Crippled One."

Outside, Saturnino is dictating his last orders, with the engine already running and ready to go.

"She's a great one, that gal! The dust that Saturnino's car raised isn't even settled yet and she knows the whole story."

Her tactics have been well-aimed and easy; she tells a funny story to the newly-arrived _fuerros_ and they spill everything.

So she goes running to old Dámaso's house, despite the fact that she swore she wouldn't return to that house.

"Cirilo Gutiérrez, Crisanto Torres, and Antonio Lagos are going to meet at Cañada de Rícos tonight . . . ."

The flower, the élite of the _pistoleros_ are in the pay of Saturnino. Señora Martina's eyes are like saucers, Ramona begins to shake as if she has the chills and Chenchá does not even have time to curse Juanita because she only passes by her eyes like a streak of lightning.

But what deviltry has Ciriano Campos been up to? They say to fulfill his duty. To convince the father and the women that the old man should leave the ranch without delay, if his family doesn't

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2 pistoleros—pistol men, Saturnino's henchmen
Ciriaco has sent them many messages in vain. Señor Dámaso says no and no it is. Impassive as a thousand year old oak that feels the axe and does not even shudder. "In Rincón de Valdivias I was born and my bones are going to stay in Rincón de Valdivias."

Gancha, departing from her aberrations for a moment, swears that only death will they take her from San Gabriel. Ramona cannot abandon the ranch and leave Felipe González behind. And Señora Martina, astonished, has neither voice nor vote.

At nightfall Don Marto, Felipe González, and Nievitos with two other confidants approach, one at a time and very warily. Well wrapped up, their rifles are scarcely seen protruding from their ponchos. Night closes in and the six well-armed men leave the Campos house, with no one daring to stop them. Only Ciriaco has to be careful in skirting the pass of Cañada de Ricos, where the ruffians are awaiting him.

An hour later, Don Marto upon his return announces that Ciriaco is safe and in the protection of his own group. But he is not finished telling about it even when there is heard the barking of dogs in the direction of Venado. The people become alarmed and one cannot say how those in old Dámaso’s and Felipe González’ house feel. The disturbance is of short duration and everyone goes back to sleep, when the barking is again heard and also a deafening volley of shooting. No doubt! Whoever has a firearm loads it and who
only has a *machete* puts it at the head of his bed. That night no
one closes an eye, and the next day, very early, Cirilo Gutiérrez
and his companions come down from the mountain mournfully, with
Antonio Lagos stiff between two *quinte* poles with some *varaduz*
leaves stretched across them to form a stretcher.

Felipe González sees them pass and very respectfully takes off
his hat. Another martyr to the cause.

Many said "God be blessed!" and many hastened to burn a candle
for the hero. Now try to stop the unfortunate reactionaries that
now are so infuriated with Saturnino and his Great Family!

Solemnly installed in the Casa del Pueblo, Antonio Lagos
received the respects of his comrades in the form of a noisy
revelry mixed with many curses and shouts of vengeance.

Therefore no one leaves home today and even the ovens are cold.
The canteen of crippled Morales takes on the appearance of Holy
Friday. But it is there where the watch word of the happening is
given. "Ciriaco Campos and the justice of God!" Juanita's heart
has grown wings; but she dissimulates, because it is in the "court"
of the Crippled One; it is referred to without the least commentary.

Well, sir, the story comes out that Ciriaco Campos, after having
made some *santiaguitos*\(^3\) to Saturnino and his *pistoleros*, has grazed
them a few times and left Antonio Lagos with a bullet through his

\(^3\) *santiaguitos*—battle cries
brain. No one hastened to stop Cirisco Campos who left at nightfall, escorted out of town by Don Marto and his friends. Naturally, because that entered into the plan of Saturnino. Five determined men against one unforewarned is not even a game. But later when they thought they had him corralled alone, the rebel roused them with the whistle of a bullet from the top of a rock.

"The soul of Juan Mendoza!" exclaimed sarcastically the leader, drunk with joy, because he had a target in sight and a revolver in his hand.

In less than a second a shower of bullets, a groan and the heavy fall of a body.

"We got him! Up, boys, and surround him so he won't escape us."

They separate and at the same time spread themselves out in a circle and gradually close in until they completely surround the pinnacle where Cirisco has disappeared.

"What happened?"

The reply was given from above with a full volley.

"Cirisco Campos' people!"

Terrified, each one escapes as best he can, and if there is anything beautiful about the flight it is the form of Saturnino Quintana.

It has been told without commentaries.

The burial in Rincón de Valdivies is unusually solemn and pompous. The bugler of the troop detachment in the village heads
the procession. Saturnino and Cirilo Gutiérrez give the "farewell" in words heavy with threats for the "reaction."

The following day, an urgent appointment. At noon the entire Quintana Community is to be present in the Casa del Pueblo, bearing whatever arms they may have.

The natives look at each restlessly; those that are ambitious enough to go to work, have to grumblingly give it up. Don Marto even curses the day he was born. This is no longer life. The land is just right for the plow and along comes this "shower" and not even the oxen can get through the mudholes. This isn't a ranch any more but a hell of gossip-mongers and petty politics.

Señor Dámaso, very quietly, swears that those laws do not concern him. He hasn't asked the government for anything and it doesn't owe him anything. His shotgun cost him seven pesos at the market price and the lands that they gave to Ciriaso, Saturnino has taken away from him. Here we are then.

But, who is going to give advice if everyone wants advice for himself? Let the old man do as he pleases. As for the rest no one would bet on his life, not even centavos against pesos.

Like a slow-moving pilgrimage the natives advance. Without confidence, but decided to sell their lives dearly. Don Marto comes forward and is the chief, without anyone having named him or anyone disputing his position either. Unnoticed as always, but very much the man, Felipe González follows him without presumption or arrogance.
A native gets up and announces that the *fueraños*, armed to the teeth, are hidden behind the hangar. Don Marto turns as red as a ripe chile pepper.

With his Texan hat pushed back on his head and his right hand on his revolver, Saturnino Quintana awaits them. He strolls about outside the Casa del Pueblo, cursing to himself.

His eyes flaming, his jaw braced with courage, Don Marto separates himself from the group and steps forward, his hand also on his pistol:

"Well, Don Saturnino, what is all this funny business coming to?"

Valiants always lose by exaggerated confidence. As an assassin and a thief, no one gets the best of Saturnino and when Don Marto draws his pistol, Saturnino puts a bullet through his chest, causing him to fall headlong. This is what is called knowing how to get the drop on the enemy! Saturnino does not have time to laugh; he makes himself scarce and disappears in a moment. By a miracle a bullet escapes Felipe González. From that minute on everything is in an uproar. The *fueraños* did not attack, it was the natives that began the shooting from their hiding places.

A lot of shooting and much scandal for such a little thing. Two dead in the refuse, another in the cactus patch and many wounded so badly they were unable to get home. Tracks of blood, for sure, blood in each path leading to a hut and even to the hills. On the hill with Ciriacco Campos, Felipe González heads them up.
Noon having passed, San Gabriel de los Valdivias is quieter than a cemetery. When some of the more bold venture to go out in search of the absent ones, they still find a pretext for exchanging machete blows.

No one knows who came out the worst in this fight. No one knows anything of Saturnino Quintana nor of their friend Don Marto who was the first to fall. He is not among the dead or wounded; but neither is he to be found in his house.
CHAPTER XV

The Quintana Community is entering the shadows when along the highway comes a group of armed people on horseback.

Without interrupting his rosary, Señor Dámaso crosses himself. He, formerly so serene in the face of the worst squabbles, feels such impulses of the heart that he is obliged to get up and walk back and forth about the room. The unravelling of the story seems to have no end.

"It may be government soldiers coming to put an end to all this fighting," says Señora Martina, more frightened than the men, but putting in her voice all the bravery she has left, because she has a presentiment that the actors in this little drama are being changed.

In a squatting position, without lifting her eyes from the ears of corn that she is shelling, she responds to the Our Fathers and Ave Marias of the old man. At her side Ramona is helping her with her eyes about to overflow with tears. Who does not know that Felipe González is now joined up with Cirico Campos?

A black bundle of nerves, holed up in the kitchen, Chencha is blinking with the diabolical eyes of an owl. No one bothers about Chencha. She does as it pleases her to do. Better said, she does nothing.

A repercussive clap of thunder is heard. A flash of lightning floods the hut in a bath of light. Huge drops fall upon the roof and night closes in. The effort to escape the cruel and imminent
reality is tiring and the silence is tormenting. When the steps of someone approaching are heard, the old man gets up and grabs his shotgun. A head appears: Nievitos, of Villalobos, who brings some news:

"The troops are coming. There is an order to search the house. Hide yourselves, Señor Dámaso."

"That's all beside the point, Nievitos. It won't happen unless God will it!"

By the weak light of a tallow candle that Señora Martina has just lighted, shine the dilated eyes of Chenchia Campos.

As if pushed by the wind, the pile of brambles that serves as a barricade is pushed aside brusquely. Her hair on end, her nostrils dilated with fear, Juanita González interrupts them rudely.

"Everyone get out . . . Saturnino is coming to finish us . . . . They already killed the little Crisanto Torres boy . . . a baby . . . !"

She is trapped. In the noise of the storm that has broken loose, her voice is scarcely heard. The flashes of lightning tragically illuminate the panicky faces of the women and the granite-like faces of the two men.

A noise is heard, a horseman stops and dismounts. Nievitos unsheathes his knife and places himself behind the door. He leaps at the entering object and withdraws with the blade red and dripping. A corpse lies sprawled across the threshold.

Lightly, Señor Dámaso kisses the cross of his rosary, puts it
around his neck and throws the shotgun to his chest.

The women have taken refuge, huddled up in a corner near the chimney. Ramona has just made an opening in the bramblework and goes outside to join Nievitos. They pick up old Dámaso by force in order to get him through the eye-of-a-needle opening; but his heavy body and twisted limbs impede them. Now the shouting of the people is heard in the patio of the house. When the crowd runs into the dead man, they let out some horrible words. Again old Dámaso crosses himself, kisses the cross in his fingers, and pulls back the hammer on his shotgun. A recoil against his chest upsets him at the same time and the shot escapes through the roof.

The crowd enters milling around as much as they can. With insolences and blasphemies they ask for Ciriaco Campos.

"Bring him out to me dead or alive, you old devil, you son of a so and so, or I'll pull you out by the hair."

Señora Martina recognizes him by his voice and throws herself at his feet, kisses his hands and embraces his knees:

"Little father, as sure as God is in Heaven, I swear that Ciriaco is not in the house. Don't do anything to my old man, who owes you nothing . . . !"

Saturnino frees himself of her with a kick, rolling her up against the wall.

Chencha straightens up slowly, and thrusts back her sticky hair from her cheeks and forehead. Her thin face is as yellow as a candle. Sitting on her heels, she takes in the scene as if it were
totally strange to her. Her eyes are glowing and suddenly she exposes her white teeth, white as the bones in a bone yard, in a chilling smile.

Juanita withdraws, terrified by the feel of breath upon her neck.

"Witch!" shouts Chencha.

And what the others cannot do, the bewitched one does: in crazy flight, Juanita, agile as a snake slides out through the opening of brambles at the door and disappears without the thin hand of Chencha being able to stop her.

"The witch . . . ! It was her . . . . It was her," cried Chencha.

No one follows her. What for? Even by the light that remains among the reed-grass, a witch can escape. Saturnino Quintana does not believe in God, but he has a deer-like fear of dreadful things and of witches. And so with the disappearance of the witch, this scene, momentarily stopped, takes up as before.

By the uncertain light of the candle, the figures are intermixed and confused. Now a luminating ray hovers over some rough lips, now lights up an enormous jaw, piggish eyes, wolfish teeth, barrels of pistols, and the blades of knives.

"Tie up his hands and feet . . . ."

Saturnino Quintana at the door of the hut. Without rancor or hatred. He has satisfied his cavernous appetite beforehand. The globulous body of the old man is battered about among the sandals,
white trouser legs, and blue pants. His weary breathing is extinguished in the shout of oaths and curses. The vengeance of the fuereño filled in the defenseless old man.

Then they roll him up in a ball, carrying him along among their feet. The wind puts out the candle. It has stopped raining, but the night is an impenetrable blackness. Shouting and laughing, they get on their horses. The whir of a rope and the noise of a firecracker is heard and at the same time a most horrible groan that is instantly choked in the throat. Then the frantic gallop of the horses and the tearful cries of the women that follow after them.

Cresencia sinks her dilated eyes in the abyss of the night, lets out a sharp and penetrating cry and also runs after the savage cavalcade.

The sky has now cleared. The moon rises, bathing the black nopales and the black pines and the immense spread of the flooded fields.

Step by step come the soldiers of Colonel Gonzalo Pérez. One of them turns toward the house of Campos. He enters and listens a moment:

"Nothing. Empty house."

And they go on, asking for arms and supplies.
CHAPTER XVI

Juanita González gets up brusquely like a bull goaded by the pike; she snorts and bends over that forehead opened up like a pomegranate. There, on the litter of the patio, the body of the crippled one, trampled by the beasts, with her mouth open and her eyes glazed and dry. She emptied her heart in a flood of tears. The end! She gets a blanket and covers the inert little mother. Hatred for the earth, hatred for the heavens. Liberation too.

The black pine grove swallows her up. There she is lost in her tragedy, guided only by instinct, which is all that remains to her in this world. Her clothing is in tatters, her feet are bleeding. But she is all eyes and ears. She is seeking some refuge in the crags of the mountain, some human voice in her blind course. Nothing. The pine grove is a mass of steel that blends itself in with the steely night air from above. Suddenly, among the underbrush, as if it has escaped by making an opening through it, a coyote appears. More terrified by the surprise than by the animal, she freezes against a tree trunk. Her hands search her waist in vain; who would have thought of a knife, a pistol, anything? The animal disappears. She bends over and picks up a couple of sharp, pointed stones and advances once more. Suddenly she comes to an opening in the forest which is crowned with a setting of stars. By the pale light she can make out the caravan of blankets and hats. In pursuit of what she is looking for too. Juanita González places
two fingers upon her lips and utters a sharp whistle. She redoubles her efforts, climbing over the brambles, scratching her legs and breaking her nails. She has recognized them; it is they, the ones who have escaped the carnage of Saturnino Quintana. They recognize her, admiringly.

"And your mama?"

"They finished with her."

Her sobs allow her to say no more. But no one has heart enough to question her more, nor to speak evil of her, nor to curse her.

"And my brother Felipe?"

"He's on ahead with Don Marto . . . ."

"Don Marto is alive?"

"Very badly wounded."

When morning comes Ciriacoo is already with the people, saddling up. At the base of a rock wall is Don Marto, covered with a sarape, spitting blood and shivering. Felipe González, squatted on his haunches, is at his side. Juanita wants to speak to him but she says it all with her eyes and Felipe covers his face with his dark hand. Ciriacoo's face is like stone. One only has to look at Juanita to guess her catastrophe: from those beautiful eyes is gone forever the mischief and grace; from that "pretty little mouth" is gone the irresistible attraction of the sex; the little crystal-like jingle is gone; if any resonance remains, it will be like that of
the whistling bullet or of the steel that clashes.

"Felipe González, you stay here with your sister to take care of our friend Don Marto. We have some other business to take care of." Ciriaco now speaks with the tone and finality of one who knows how to command people.

Those who have just arrived, fatigued from climbing the hill, now have to follow Ciriaco without knowing where. But nobody says no, because life is very dear.

Ciriaco and Felipe carry Don Marto between them on their backs. This Don Marto is such a little man! So that they will not hear him groan, they put the corner of a blanket in his mouth and he bites down on it with all his strength. They climb over many rough places, scramble over high rocks, leaving pieces of cloth and skin on them. And when they scale the bare pinnacle of a gigantic rock, they recognize it as the same one at whose base they had been a few moments before.

"Here, fella . . . ."

They lower Don Marto; then they put him on his side between two points of rock and in a crack that scarcely is wide enough for a man to step through.

"Good."

Don Marto has ceased to complain. In the dark recess of the cave there is a straw bed that they recognize by the touch. They carry the wounded man there and lay him down.
"Hey, you, Juanita, I thought you'd died already."
The girl lowers her cheek to the mouth of Don Marto:
"No. I'm alive yet. I must have only fainted."
Meanwhile, Ciriacó, who has lighted a torch, is approaching.
"He has color in his nails. A little bit of brandy would be
good."
"There is some. Just like we were in our own store."
Ciriacó takes a bottle corked with a corn cob.
"You're stronger, Felipe. Rub his arms and legs."
Juanita, her hands dripping blood from climbing over the
rocks, gives her place to her brother. The light blue eyes of
Don Marto half-open; his colorless lips begin to move.
"Water!"
"What do we do about water, Ciriacó?"
"One looks for the water hole."
God's truth that neither one of the two leave the cave with
evil thoughts. But with all that has happened and the state of
affairs that things have come to, tell me, what would you have done?
Good. It was just for their own pleasure and may St. Peter bless
them!
Felipe was not long in returning because there was no guessing
as to where the water hole was.

After a swallow of brandy, Don Marto's thirst was quenched and
he began to complain again. When Ciriacó and Juanita returned the
color of his feverish cheeks blended in with the burning torches.
His eyes shone with tears of only who knows what; but that is
neither here nor there.

"With the supplies that there are here we have enough to eat
for a year. But we'll be back inside of a month. Nobody knows
this hole and you can be sure of that, let them climb where they
may. We will cover the mouth of the cave with those branches.
You will know that if you don't hear from me in a month, you will
have to leave and get a long way from here. Goodbye, Don Marto.
Goodbye, Felipe. Don Marto, we'll see each other again."

With her heart on her sleeve, Juanita goes to say goodbye to
him. They seal their compromise with a hard embrace.

What a livewire this Ciriseo Campos is! He lowers himself by
a crag or jumps a fence or comes out on the side of a mountain.
Ciriseo makes himself a part of the crag and the will of the one is
the will of the other.

"Arf ... arf ... arf ... ! That damned Sultán. We left
the dog in the cave and now he has followed us. If he returns, it
is dangerous, but Juanita will know how to quiet him."

"Now boys, let's go to Rincón de Valdivias to visit the
government offices and the big business."

They are thirty, but of these ten are very tired and without
arms. But with twenty there is more than enough to sack a town of
a thousand people.
Everything is done methodically, without notice, nor even great trouble for the neighborhood. Colonel Gonzalo Pérez left, they say to give his hand to his friend Don Saturnino Quintana who has returned like the mother of scorpions.

Ciriaco is sad and pensive. Don Ramoncito asks his permission to celebrate the success of the journey with a good round of brandy, but the former does not even answer him.

"Business is closed and the way it looks, no one wants to open up."

"Small matter, Nievitos; we'll open up and wait on ourselves."

Ciriaco wants no wine and gives orders that no one bother it.

At the same time a little vagabond, one of those that fears neither God or the devil, approaches them:

"Let's rent that one there for a little while."

He says it in a low voice, at the same time indicating a door with the end of his nose. A dry and wrinkled hand beckons to Ciriaco from a door scarcely half opened. Don Ramoncito, as curious as an old woman, digs his spurs and is the first one to go forward.

"Tell the chief to get off and come in. I have a little breakfast here for him."

And old hag of a white woman, who makes a pretense at being clean. Mistress of the keys, a priest's niece or something of the sort. Her eyes are frank and harboring.

"Let the two come in quietly, so we can talk the matter over."
A good breakfast, after such privation, is never to be disregarded. Ciriacio dismounts and hands the reins to the vagabond. Followed by Don Ramoncito, somewhat distrustful, they make their way into the house. Father Martinez Lopez, with a saintly face, greets them cordially. Ciriacio takes a step back, alarmed.

"How ingenious you are, son! Do you think that if I would want to harm you, I would pick this moment in which you are master of this plaza and can do with us whatever you please?"

Without further ado, at the first cup of chocolate the priest proposes to enroll them under the flag of King Christ. Ciriacio frowns obviously troubled.

"With your dead father, may God rest his soul, I spoke much concerning this business. Why are you surprised?"

"It's that we," the teacher hastens to help Ciriacio, "are concerned with other affairs."

"You don't have any arms, supplies, nor money. In less time than it takes me to tell you, the Federals will get you."

Don Ramoncito does not hear him. He is concerned with devouring the smoking pasties that they have just brought out in some flowered porcelain ware. Ciriacio eyes Don Ramoncito carefully; if they leave him alone, he'll make off with all the provisions.

"Poor little fellow! It is a pleasure to see him eat. The hunger you all must have suffered," exclaims the little old woman in ecstasy.

"We must talk with our companions about the business that you
propose to us. But whatever help you want to give us, we will ac-
cept at once. Right, Ciriaco?"

"Saturnino Quintana comes and tells me to close the store and
he has given me twenty-four hours to leave the village, boys. The
best thing we can do is to scatter quick. Then when Colonel Gonzalo
Pérez is convinced that he has no enemy to fight, you will receive
arms, equipment and money."

He asks for pen and paper and writes. He gives the letter to
Ciriaco. In the skirt of the Venado, outside of Rincón de Valdías,
in the jurisdiction of Chayotillos, there is a small ranch that is
in sympathy with this cause. In case of necessity, presenting this
paper will give them protection.

"We have got ourselves in a fine mess, teacher . . . ."

"You speak well, Ciriaco; but now we are receiving and not
questioning. Now we shall see how we untangle ourselves from this
mess."

Now it is time to join the other people. The brandy had made
them very happy and nobody remembers yesterday's bloody journey. A
better reason then for abandoning the plaza.

What a rainy September! The ruts are pools of water and the
horses' hooves splash in the miry places. Wandering clouds pass
by in dense, petulant shadows over the fields of corn shoots, over
the luxurious meadows of sweet-smelling flowers. Chickens with a
metallic sheen to their plumage, turkeys of coral scarlet, wander
around in the hay fields.
"Let’s go now, boys."

They cross a plain. Farther on extend fields and farther still a deep forest which encloses them in a semicircle. The telegraph wires make their final pattern of steel before disappearing in the warm green depth of the cedars. Goodby to the black pines, to the mountain of slate and to the liberty of men. Just within a month, companions, in Cañada de Ricos, in the deep of the night . . . and confound the mother! Let her split herself . . . ! Now everybody has to look out for himself.

The silhouette of Ciriaco is outlined against the top of the fence, a snake of stone that twists and winds over a flank of Venado until it blends itself in with the copper-colored rocks and with the black and enclosing green. Above, the abrupt rock, below, the uninhabited slide rock area, and finally, the maguey stretching its aggressive prongs to the sun.

"Where are we going, then, Ciriaco Campos?"

"Well, we aren't going up there any more."

Because up there a little ways he has left his soul, his life and his heart.
CHAPTER XVII

Skirting the Venado, now very far from Rincón de Valdivias, Ciriacó continues gaining ground, rock by rock. And Don Ramoncito, like his shadow, follows him push by push.

"Well, Ciriacó, where are you taking me?"

The flop-brimmed hat pulled down over his ears does not permit Ciriacó to hear the teacher's words. Don Ramoncito, good or bad, makes up his mind, goes forward, stops Ciriacó's horse and says:

"I should like to know what difficulty you are getting into, son. My word that it is not good; you have promises with us and you must fulfill them."

"I have never failed in my word, teacher. It is only a matter of leaving me in peace. For the life of my mother! Tomorrow, before sunup, I will return to wherever you want to wait for me."

Then he turns his eyes, in an uncontrollable desire to flee to the highest peak of the sierra.

"Felipe González is the worst one of them ... and it might happen ... ."

"What might happen?"

Ciriacó brusquely pulls on his reins and stops his horse.

"Don't get mad over such a little thing. What I want to say is that this is not good. Felipe is a friend and relative . . . . And you want to play a dirty trick on him . . . . Wait a little while and Father Martínez López will make it all right for you," advises
Don Ramoncito.

Ciriaco, thoughtful for a few short moments, lifts his head:

"Teacher, drunkards and children tell the truth."

At such an indiscreet evocation, the eyes of the old teacher shine and he sticks out his tongue to wet his dry lips.

"It's really the diet that torments me most in this business."

With such a pitiful and grieving accent, that Ciriaco breaks out in hearty laughter.

"Would you have the heart to abandon me in these lonely places at the mercy of the howls of the coyotes?"

"We'll undo, then, in an afternoon, what we did in a morning."

A docile boy, he reins in his horse and starts down without saying more. But by a different path.

Wet with sweat, jaded, and with tongue hanging out, El Sultán reaches them. He leaps, exhilarated, and licks the legs and chest of Ciriaco. A good sign. Don Marto is alive and there is nothing new on the hill.

When the sun has descended and in the sky are rowing little white clouds that like foam loose themselves endlessly, there below shine the walls of a little white house with an ash tree in the middle of the patio. A small black object is outlined against the maguey patch. By its appearance, this is the little ranch that Father Martínez López has recommended to them.

"Have we arrived, teacher?"

The broad hat of dark brown felt is as one with the curly and
woolly head and balances the long stride of the teacher's old worn-out horse. Trees and cliffs fade into the background and now only are seen plains and tilled fields. The sun is setting and the cedars outline themselves in miniature against the skyline of the sierra.

Six lean dogs give them a noisy reception. But while El Sultán entertains them, the teacher draws some rumpled papers from the inside of his coat.

The owner of the house has also come out to meet them with his rifle ready. Because those times of "Hail Mary in this house . . . . Without the original sin of conception" are all over. We have become civilized; in place of food and lodging, the traveler may run into a bullet.

"Let's see, Jesuita, stick the candle here . . . ."

The man makes an effort to decipher the tangle of the writing that Don Ramoncito gives to him.

"Here, daughter, you have good eyes, what do these chicken scratches say?"

"A letter from Father Martínez López, daddy. That the gentlemen are people pursued by the government."

How well they might have spent the time in the house of Jesuita without the dullness of the teacher! So well did he learn how to express himself at the dinner hour! One of those gentlemen who should be in the Senate. Well, sir, when the rancher, enchanted at hearing him speak so well, begged him that being more read and
wise, he might guide them through the rosary and prayers, the teacher, who had not crossed himself in more than twenty years, mixed up the Creed with the Commandments and finished up with 'My Lord Jesus Christ'. Surprise and consternation. The rancher grunted innumerable scoldings, sent them to bed and remained to pray with Jesusita.

On account of which, the following day, the first thing Ciriaco did upon arising was to bridle and saddle his horse.

"Many thanks for the lodging, we'll be on our way. Teacher, hurry up; the sun is already very high."

"May God not permit it," exclaimed the rancher raising his hands high. "What would the Father say of me?"

"For lodging and food for one night . . . ."

"Until you find out what the people are doing in San Gabriel and Rincón de Valdías, you will not leave this house, gentlemen."

"The man is very right, Ciriaco. Don't be impertinent."

The warm light is licking at the comal and the butter is melting in the crocks; the dough like a puddle of cream upon the metate. Outside, Jesusita is milking the cow with the big udder. The chickens are clucking in the corral and the birds from the highest branches of the ash trees are filling the house with joy. Damn the thought of leaving here so soon!

"Teacher, how do you think you are going to get out of this?"

---

1 comal--flat earthenware pan used to cook maize cake
"These are wise people, Ciriaco; be glad of the opportunity we have without complaining about it."

They had stepped out to get a little sun and Don Ramoncito was petting Ciriaco's back as if he were caressing the back of his old nag.

"You mutter about nothing, son . . . ."

And thus passed a week. In order to earn his bed and beans, Don Ramoncito fed the hogs, carried water to the chickens, gathered the eggs and did other tasks in proportion to his scarce physical possibilities. Ciriaco cleared off the maize field, piling up the straw. The owner, although maintaining a rather unsociable silence, found everything justified. And one morning he surprised them with some news:

"Now, gentlemen, the priest has sent me a messenger. The people of Saturnino Quintana are busy dehorning and the soldiers of Don Gonzalo Pérez sleep sprawled out in the barracks."

"A parrot doesn't sing any clearer, teacher. Fill the manger with feed as we'll be leaving tomorrow at dawn."

Don Ramoncito overslept and it cost Ciriaco no little effort to get him started by noon, which he did, thanks finally to El Sultán's howls that awakened him.

"It's twenty days yet until we join up with our companions," exclaimed Ramoncito in a resentful tone. "Why have you become so anxious, son?"
And as he was becoming more and more pathetic, Ciriaco, angered, dropped the reins brusquely:

"Well, teacher?"

"Were we not eating at our own hours and sleeping at our pleasure with our two jars of pulque . . . ?"

Ciriaco's anger was broken like a soap bubble. He mumbled an oath and broke out laughing.

"You have become very forward. You don't have any consideration for me. What are we going to do in the hills so soon?"

"Eat fresh chaveñas and roast dove that make my belly feel good, teacher."

It is well. Who orders, orders. And so they travel until dusk. El Sultán has disappeared. Either he took off for San Gabriel or else climbed to the top of Venado.

"And that isn't good, because it may be a good clue for those that are pursuing us. We'll have to get him out of the way."

They scout around the skirt of the sierra in the thickest brambles and pine groves, hunting little animals to eat and familiarize themselves with favorable points of fortification. They sleep wherever night overtakes them.

A few days later Don Ramoncito begins to complain and every little while gets down off his horse.

"What's the matter, teacher? Are you getting weak from hunger? Why do you get off and walk so much?"

\[chaveñas--\text{pearl-shaped fruit that grows wild in Mexico}\]
"Because if those roast birds agree with you, they have griped me so much that I even feel pains in my soul. Oh, what a belly! How well Jesusita took care of us!"

"Let me go on ahead then. I'll bring you sufficient food."

"Don't leave me until we are all together. Don't trust the silence of Saturnino Quintana. This place has got us in a trap and we don't know where to go. It would be better if we went down to San Gabriel to see if we can find out something from someone we know," responded Don Ramoncito.

It is not for food but for bad news. Saturnino Quintana has gathered up all the horses of the natives in order to distribute them to the abageños that are continuing to arrive. The latter go out daily to seek work at the other ranches and everything is getting under the control of the agrarian leader and his gang of thieves. There are masons repairing the granaries: A harvest such as the Valdivias gentlemen have never seen! Diked lands, water for the asking and the work of the natives; those are not ears of corn but bags of pesos.

"My mother!" swore Ciriaco gritting his teeth. "We'll harvest this corn or we'll all die there."

They took leave of the muleteer, climbed the mountain again, anxiously awaiting the day on which they were going to meet their companions.

Exhausted, played out from dragging himself over the rocks like a mad dog, Don Ramoncito begins to ration himself on water and tunas;
but with such bad luck that if a providential and opportune happening does not start him to run, he will burst right here. It happened in this manner: He is sitting on his heels, his cheeks flushed, poking at the ground with a little stick, when he comes upon a human track. Forgetting for a moment his painful task, he shouts:

"Ciriaco, come see what this is. Get off, quick. We're in danger." Ciriaco, who has cornered a rabbit, after a half hour of tiring pursuit, let out a curse. At the shout of the teacher, the animal, picking up its ears, gave a jump and disappeared.

"This is a huarache track, Ciriaco. Look. Just as I feared, we've got ourselves in a trap."

Grunting his anger still, Ciriaco dismounts. Throwing himself on the ground, he puts his ear to the rocks. Like a stake, Don Ramoncito waits for him to confirm his suspicion, when at the same time he hears a cry:

"Who goes there?"

"Your mother, you son of a . . . ."

A shot. Another. Don Ramoncito exhales a sigh and topples over on his back.

"Did they burn you, teacher?"

He hastens to help him; but the injury that he received in his eyes and nose forces him to mount his horse at once, while the teacher, giving thanks to God for such an unexpected end, painfully sits up, his boots in his hands.
"We've done it now, teacher!" Ciriaco shouts to him a short distance away. "Come."

"It's a Cristero, son!"

Perched on a bramble, a rifle between his legs, many medals and scapularies on his chest, his eyes and mouth open wide.

Painfully, Don Ramoncito, searches his clothing, relieving his suffering with a little bottle full of brandy that he finds in the back pocket of his trousers.

"Look, Ciriaco!" he exclaims with impudence in his eyes and light in his heart.

"But teacher!"

"Don't get yourself in what doesn't concern you."

And then they have to throw themselves breast to breast, because they have started a tirade of shots from above them a little way. The broad hats appear at the edge of a crest of rock, dark faces emerge and rifle barrels shine.

"We've done it now for sure, teacher!"

The latter, lying on his stomach and hiding himself, painfully takes off his coat, tears off his shirt and with his hands hoists it up as a white flag on a long stick. They cease fire and six long-bearded men, finely dressed, with many medals, scapularies and carrying rifles, approach.

"He was the first to open fire. We had no recourse other than to defend ourselves," explains the teacher, now standing up, with his
lips white and dry.

"Who are you?"

"Let us go to your chief to give an explanation."

"The best explanation that you are going to give us is going to be from the branch of that fir tree, unfortunate agrarians."

"The government is pursuing us and we can prove it," argues Don Ramoncito, now very animated.

Then the oldest one asks him many insidious questions, which the teacher hastens to answer, not giving Ciriaco time to open his lips.

"Antonio," said the old one, "tie them up well. We'll see what is to be done with them up there."

And he himself began to tie Ciriaco by the elbows, who did not offer the least resistance.

Thus they slept with the sentinel. The next day one of the better dressed Cristeros came to greet them.

"You smell to me like pure agrarianism, although they may say you are not. Only because Don Casiano likes to put everything in his spoon. For my part you would now be in the company of the dead, you sons of the revolution."

"It'll do you no good to wait," commented one of the guards indolently, very concerned with picking the fleas off from under his belt. "The priest is coming, and I deserve to be the one that breaks you in two."
"Father Martínez López?" exclaimed Don Ramoncito with a
lightened soul. "Our very dear friend and comrade."

That "comrade" could have turned out regrettable and definitive
for the prisoners, but exactly at that moment the priest just arrived
and with the news of the happening, he came to identify the alleged
agrarians.

"You here already, sons? Antonino, untie them. There has been
a mistake that we must all regret. Neither we nor they are at fault.
Recognize them as companions that came to fight for our same cause.

The father of Ciricco Campos, a good Christian and honored man
if there is one. For his death as a martyr to religion, let us hope
that he is enjoying the Kingdom of God."

He referred to the form in which the leader Saturnino Quintana
had caused the death of the septuagenarian. Ciricco, who was maintain­
ing himself gloomy and silent, gave off a vague reflection of the halo
of a saint.

When they left them free, Ciricco, much intrigued, said to Don
Ramoncito:

"Now we certainly are compromised."

"Not so much as before he came, son. Don't worry, because there
will be time and more tomorrow to untangle ourselves from this affair."

Love does miracles. Ciricco's tongue was untied.

"Little father," he said, calling the priest aside and in a voice
that no one might hear, "I am very thankful not only because you spared
our lives but for the good excuses that you have made for my father."
I want to show you a little hiding place that I might be able to offer you tomorrow or the day after."

The priest moved his eyes curiously and not without a lack of confidence, but the teacher quieted him:

"Our roles are cast now, Father. And I tell you the same as you told us in his house: if we should want to do him some bad, it would not be now nor in this place because he has us in his hands."

"This devil of a little teacher is dangerous," thought Father Martínez López; but smilingly he ordered Don Casiano to saddle his horse while Cirico and Don Ramoncito were bringing theirs.

"The hiding place is so near," said the teacher, "that you have seen us from where we are right here and even have heard us talking."

"It isn't possible!" exclaims the priest, astonished, lifting his head and looking all around.

The mountain closed in on their step, reducing it to a very narrow trail over an inaccessible terrain.

They rounded that enormous peak in about half an hour, tied up their horses and toilfully climbing, holding on to the branches and the cones of the pine trees, at last reached the top. The escarpment permitted them to remain entirely hidden from those that were below, and whose voices, true enough, were heard distinctly.

"Without this half hour detour, we would have got here in two minutes."

Then they came upon Don Marto who was wrapped up in a blanket,
enjoying the sun.

"This cough still hasn't left me and I feel I'm lacking blood; but I have enough desire to eat and spirit enough to mount any nag.

Felipe, come here a bit and bring Juanita. I ask the hand of your sister for my godson Ciriaco Campos. Father Martínez López is coming here to marry them."

First came El Sultán with a rough halter, punishment that had been imposed upon him for his indiscretion, slavering over Ciriaco from feet to head; then Felipe, half confused, and finally Juanita González like a young shepherdess.

Enchanted, the priest inspected the hiding place, promising dutifully to keep the secret. In respect to the memory of the dead Cristero, the marriage was postponed until the following day.

But not all were confident: Don Casiano and Don Antonino went to sit down opposite the priest, who stretched out on a rough bed and, fanning himself with his hat, was resting at the foot of a pine. With his shoes of red sole leather and shiny still, his new woolen trousers and pleated shirt, they gave one to suspect at once that far from being people of arms, his people were very rich towns- men, dearly defending life and money.

The priest heard them:

"Don't be so trusting and impatient, sons. Let us continue to hope that we will all be joined together and we will know how to rely on each other."

"Or let us go in another direction and let them do their own
fighting here."

"I won't do that, Casiano," answered the priest with finality and looking distractedly at the peak of the sierra.

Meanwhile Don Marto had called Don Ramoncito aside:

"Listen, teacher, what's going on? I don't go for the idea of going along with the Cristeros."

"Neither do I; but I advise you to review very carefully the Creed and Commandments for which one may offer himself."

Don Marto did not like jokes. He left Don Ramoncito and went to look for Ciriaco:

"I ask you to go with me to hunt some quail for the priest's lunch."

"And I'm going with you," said Juanita at once, looking for a shotgun.

"Only in Venado quail are as scarce as hen's teeth," said the girl, laughing to herself, when they were far away from the encampment.

"What I want to know, Ciriaco, is why you have joined us with these Cristeros?"

Ciriaco remained looking at Juanita, perplexed and without responding.

"You have no confidence in your wife and that is a good thing in a chief like you. But I give it you to know that she is more of a man than many pretenders that are up above there. So that you may know once and for all: it was she that threw the hoop around
Saturnino Quintana . . . ."

"And if I have left the catch unfastened," continued Juanita calmly, "it is because that devil of a Cirilo Gutiérrez defends him . . . ."

"Was it really you, Juanita . . . ? Nicolás Arévalo and Juan Mendoza . . . . You little devil, no wonder the late Chencha was not able to catch you!"

Ciriaco explained to Don Marto, the necessity and the purpose. Everyone had been united.

"Well, we've put ourselves between the sword and the wall. And for me it is a trap of Saturnino Quintana. A lapse of time to get us all in the same rat trap. We put ourselves under the flag of the Cristeros and goodbye forever to our lands. Have you opened your eyes, Ciriaco?"

Yes, yes, he has them very much opened, but to more immediate and sure things.

"Next week," he answered with his eyes fixed on the white clouds that are lingering in the sky, "frost for sure. And we have to harvest our corn."

In place of quail, the priest lunched on doves, but fried and soaked in a little wine that the master Don Casiano was carrying, and was overjoyed.

"How many men are we going to be able to count on for sure, Ciriaco?"

"I'll tell you that within ten days, no more, when we get
together in Cañada de Ricos."

The deal completed, Ciriacco came not only with the ones who had committed themselves and who knew how to give honor to their word, but with five or six more who had cast their lot with them.

"These ones don’t suit me because we don’t know their habits; but there is no way out now," said Don Ramoncito to his friend Don Marto.

"You say well, teacher; but I have much experience in this and I shall know how to feel them out."

The people of Father Martínez López accepted them coldly and reservedly; but no one paid much heed because some unknown ones had also joined the ranks of the Cristeros. Don Ramoncito, a man of gratitude, upon recognizing the rancher, the father of Jesusita, ran to give him a hearty embrace. But Ciriacco recognized also another who gave his heart a sudden jump:

"Don Arturo Valdivia!"

"This gets worse and worse, Ciriacco," Don Marto said to him, looking at him from under the brim of his hat.

"Don’t get excited; we’re off to a good start now. With these twenty greyhounds we can make ourselves known."

"Now then, the one who will spend the pennies is Don Arturo Valdivia," said Don Marto in a low voice and with a candid air to the priest.

"Not exactly," said the latter disconcertedly; "I say that here
we all help each other as the good Christians that we are, some with his money, some with his speeches, and some, like ourselves, with the strength of our arms."

And in order not to get himself into a blind alley of difficulties, he decided, in place of explanation, to make the division of arms and supplies at once.

The simpleton of a Don Antonino was crossing himself, committing himself to the Three Divine Persons; but Don Casiano, more decided, spoke:

"Do you not see, Your Grace, that these people will never be good friends with us? Only hear them, Your Grace, how they say bad prayers and dishonest words, without being mindful of the old people or of the priest himself."

"Have faith, Casiano, have faith. They are the stray sheep, that like those of the Lord, it is up to me to bring back into the fold."

With which Don Marto went to interview one of the unknowns that had arrived at Cañada de Ricos:

"How do these people seem to you that our chief has joined us up with?"

"It's all right," the suspected one answered dryly.

With that and knowing that he was a deserter from the guard of Gonzalo Pérez, Don Marto finished confirming his doubts.

"My son, for the better success of our holy cause," the priest was speaking to a numerous group that were forming a circle around
him, "we must put ourselves in one accord to recognize a single
chief, because if we are going to be at odds and lose courage . . . ."

"Our chief is and will be Ciriaco Campos," old Don Marto inter-
rupted him decidedly, incapable of sustaining any longer such an
embarrassing and false position.

The priest bit his lips:

"I do not handle arms and badly would I be able to aspire to
another command than that of the spiritual leading of the people,
son."

The ability of the priest brought up a movement of discontent
among his group; but Don Marto brought forth his explanation:

"What I hear very clearly is that some come here to fight for
one thing and others of us fight for another . . . ."

"That certainly isn't good," the deserter breathed in Marto's
ear, "because Saturnino Quintana will make shreds of us if he finds
us divided."

Don Marto reconciled nothing with the Cristeros; but he no
longer held any doubt that the deserter was a spy. He approached
Ciriaco Campos and said to him:

"Be very careful with that bird that came from Rincón de
Valdivias. Our business is very serious and I am going down to
talk to my friend, Colonel Gonzalo Pérez."

Don Ramoncito, for his account, having lost his fear, was com-
mitting his intemperances. Bored by the hymn of Christ King, of
praises at all hours, of prayers every minute, he approached the
lieutenant of the priest and said:

"Master Don Casiano, you are very good people, in truth, but you even cross yourselves in order to make water."

What faces, sir, what faces! Don Antonio wanted to eat him up. This Don Antonio was a rancher with a crooked nose, a frowning eye and much gold in his teeth, of dress boots, a coffee-colored persele blouse with frets of orange-colored silk.

"Listen, teacher, you like a little drink and I do too, for that matter. Come over here where the boys won't see us and help me with this gourd that is running over with "San Luis" that they just brought for me. You come, too, Antonino. If we take care of it there will be enough for the three of us."

"Charma of my life, my masters Don Casiano and Don Antonino, we're going to open the gourd and praised be the Lord."

An innocent revelry. They wanted to ferret out secrets from the teacher and the teacher did not have any. But the deserter ran to give the news to Ciriaco Campos:

"They have wanted to poison him at the order of Father Martínez López. Keep an eye on him, chief, for when we render accounts."

Ciriaco heard him without paying much attention to what he was saying. His fixed idea was to go down to San Gabriel one morning and give Saturnino Quintana a bad scare.

"We have to take care of our work, Felipe."

"Let's give it to him, we've talked enough about it."

The day was set, the hour and even the distribution of the people.
All made their appearance; but Don Marto, smoking his long cigar, in order to kill his troublesome cough, remained silent and left them when they finished the discussion.

"Poor old man! I like him a lot because he and my father were flesh and blood, with all their differences. As the result of a bullet he doesn't follow us and so he leaves us . . . . You, Juanita, it will be up to you not to lose sight of the deserter from Rincón de Valdivias."

Absorbed in the dispositions of the assault, Ciracso and his men form groups, coming and going in violent confusion. The sun, the air, and the dust have impressed their grey film on hats, leather jackets and blankets. The same grey color covers the palms, likewise the rough locks of hair that are stuck to their tanned foreheads and that somewhat pale the deep bronze of their muscular arms and legs. Don Ramoncito is no longer Don Ramoncito; he has had to shed his braided hat, converted into coarse frayings, and jam on a ridiculous straw one, a cast-off of the priest, which contrasts with the pinched crowns that are swarming about him.

At midnight Felipe González awakens, stretches out an arm and feeling his way, finds the shaggy back of his horse, awake and with his ears on end. Silence. The silence of the sierra populated with noises; the water of a cascade, the wind in the branches, the crickets in the grass, and the frogs in the pools. In the sky, the stars and the moon which is beginning to come up. He seeks positions and gets
his bearings: The Three Marias, The Eyes of Santa Lucía, The Three Kings, The Seven Little Goats. He can sleep for a little while.

But when that little while passes, Ciriaco Campos on one of the best horses of Saturnino Quintana, fantastically gargantuized by the light of the moon, goes about waking the people. Confused masses stir about under the black pines. Lazily and rather grumblingly the allies begin to saddle up also. They are committed to their destiny beforehand and not to the will of man.

Silent groups descend step by step. Father Martínez López has thirty men with him. As many others have elected to group themselves with the army of Ciriaco Campos. If there are signs of rivalry among the people, Ciriaco Campos is loyal to the old friend of his father.

Before setting out he goes to look for him and in front of all his Cristeros begs him not to jeopardize himself and to confide in him. With vague allusions that the old man then understands he invites him to take refuge in the place where he may be secure and he may have need of nothing in case of an unexpected defeat.

The full moon bathes the edges of the palms, at the black, comb-like edge of a fence of organ cactus and nopal. They leave the mountain and the dim silhouettes bobble at a long trot, in the dust of the highway. The clink of the bridles is heard and more and more the puffing of the animals.

"Where is Don Marto, Juanita?"
"He will be coming along here a little ways back."

So that Ciriac0 will not be angry. Since last night no one has turned to look at Mart0's face. "A pity for such a truly good man! But tuberculosis is eating him up."

"You take care of my godfather for me, Felipe."

"I don't need a wet nurse yet," protests the teacher, indignant for sure.

A cloud comes up and engulfs the moon. A light drizzle begins to fall which chills the bones. Those that are carrying ponchos undo them gropingly and put them on, others keep going, dauntless, and many stop under a ruinous roof of rotten straw, shelter for charcoal makers.

When it clears, the white walls of the Casa del Pueblo appear over the sinuous line of a mass of trees.

Two Cristeros arrive with a stranger who is identified immediately and satisfactorily as a native of San Gabriel and recognized by all. Good news, besides. Last night Saturnino Quintana left with all the people to join forces with Colonel Gonzalo Pérez. He is attempting to surprise Ciriac0 and his group and Father Martínez López with his and not leave a single one alive.

"Boys," exclaimed Ciriac0, joyfully, "we have to hurry now. We can make the harvest by day now. Let us not be getting ourselves wet for nothing; whoever wants to may go to see his old mother."

But the native warns him to go carefully, because Cirilo Gutiérrez has remained behind with some abajefos.
Upon hearing that name Juanita González became quiet. But she did not bite her lips. Shortly after, no one would be able to say whither or where she had escaped. Ciriaco did not remember her either, except when he took leave of Señora Martina and his sister Ramona promising them to return soon and not to worry.

The sun was gilding the undulating lines of the hills and white gables of the Casa del Pueblo, when he came in search of Juanita. A flock of snow-white birds was arising from the "Saturnino Quintana" dam; sprays that opened themselves up into a fan and spread out until they disintegrated in the distant grove. The men of Ciriaco Campos appeared to be in miniature, now returning to the Venado, the cavalcade with nets filled with ears of corn.

"What information do you give me of Juanita, teacher?"

"The women are gossipmongers: she must be gadding about down there. Stick with your men. I promise to give you news of her soon."

Ciriaco dug his spurs into his horse and Don Ramoncito, very worried, decided to look for Juanita.
disadvantages the sun, nor the everlasting light guarantee the completion
aborted, the need down. He does not look at the white sands that
reflected in the remaining cataract. The teacher is now at the rear,
the tension concentrated by the frustrated little breath out in
we'll soon catch up with him, Jonathan congratulates.

"There is gone through those preparations. Spur your mare and
the other guy.\]

Outraged: "In zero and three are still three. We only need
down in a pool of blood. You are badly wounded, Mr. To
durst not from the one who put an end to you. On his side and mouth
blood preceded by a well-farmed battle, this gave s from and his
in a huge can. Her Godfather concentrated to look the same. It
identity reached bred, nor the turkey that spreaded the feathers
see the stony countenance that they are crossing, nor the bill-
more. Stillness, twenty years of our revered revolution. He does not
Her role is the threating, but don Remington's lips are trembling
hands, that's all."

"Nothing is Gone, Godfather. I just got off to wash my

"What's Gone, Jonathan congratulates."

instant disappeared.

upon her, the steel blade shone for an instant but in the same
she was wading a little deeper in a pool when the old man came

CHAPTER XXII
of the cold grove. Nor the transparent mantel that slides ever so quietly over the rusty rocks that the rain washed last night. 'We are unprepared and content, when very silently come the three bells of San Pascualito. And life, which is bitter, entangles itself'.

"Teacher, why don't you talk?"

"Are you getting worse, godfather?"

Juanita González! Her eyes, her cadence and her grace "because she has a pretty little face". Neither the singing noise of the pools of water, nor the vision of the peaks and valleys that unfold themselves soaked in the brilliant sun, say anything to her heart.

They come again to the bare and burning crags. And young Arturo returns from Rincón de Valdivias, telling his troubles:

"Last night Saturnino Quintana searched my house and found the arms and supplies that Colonel Gonzalo sent me."

Stupefaction. Gonzalo Pérez?

"Yes, godfather," observed Ciriaco, "when I was with the Federales, pursuing the Criisteros through Michoacán and Jalisco, many chiefs did this 'little business.'"

"And Gonzalo Pérez said to me: 'return to Venado, Arturito, if you don't want Saturnino Quintana to add you to his collection of postals. Go see Ciriaco Campos or I won't be responsible for your head.'"

"And of this, godfather, what do you say?"

"That Don Marto saw better than we and did well in going down . . . ."
Ciriaco jumped from his horse and shouted:

"Get down!"

They perk up their ears like frightened hares and in an instant everyone puts himself at his horse's flank.

The thundering is heard from the direction of Cañada de Ricos. Ciriaco stations himself on a crag and accepts the glasses that Don Arturo offers him.

"They have a machine gun hidden in a thicket and are hitting the Cristeros pretty hard. If we don't go down to help them they'll finish them off."

"And that would be better and then we'd be through with our compromise."

Ciriaco does not like for the deserter to give him advice, and without paying attention to him asks for two men who will volunteer to go down to fortify them and keep them covered from above.

"I for one."

"And I too."

"You? Are you crazy, Juanita González?"

"Bravo, indeed, let Juanita González go down!"

The teacher applauds furiously and not jokingly. He knows that Juanita will not be cured of that homicidal fever that is burning her up while blood is still running through the veins of the cowardly violator.

"Let her go down, yes, let her go down!"

And like one who is disposed to enjoy the supreme spectacle, the
worn out rural teacher makes himself comfortable at the foot of some organ cactus that form a large crown over him. Stretched out on his back, he resolutely lights a cigarette and places within reach of his right hand a bottle that has not yet kissed his lips. The music of the fusillade is a caress for his ears; his eyes shine with joy; his wrinkled cheeks are flaming. But, motionless in his position, only his arms appear to want to open, as if they would like to embrace everything which may come into view: enormous crags with long vertical clefts; gilded cornfields like undulating rugs, motionless trees, immense bronze candlesticks. My mother! The attraction of the earth, budded with who knows what of hidden caverns; perhaps reminiscences of past lives that fought for survival. At any rate full participation in the cosmic serenity. Ecstasy.

When Don Antonino arrives blowing out his soul and his lungs with:

"Cirisco Campos, we are done for," and falls dead without a single scratch on his body, Cirisco listens, surprised, to the departing speech on the lips of another dying one:

"Poor little things; it's not their fault, nor yours!"

His godfather now with his eyes glassy and his teeth fully exposed, incrusted with the roots of the cactus.

Lightning in the fury of the storm. Vainly Cirisco tries to restrain his wife. Like a doe, jumping over the rocks, she takes the quickest road to her brother Felipe.

It is not necessary to provoke the enemy, who encouraged by his
triumph, comes like an avalanche upon the people of Ciriacó Campos. In vain their chief intends to hold them back. The drunkenness of blood blinds them and deafens them. In order not to be swept away, Felipe and his sister fall back. The enemy passes like a windstorm. The one who is shouting to restrain them finally comes and at a good distance from them. By his almost black horse, by his braided hat, by the national emblem embroidered in gold lace and even by the accent of his voice, Juanita recognizes him:

"It is him, Felipe of my soul!"

"Now!"

Through the back. He falls headlong over his horse's mane. Horse and man go down, the former runs away to join those on ahead; the latter remains writhing among the rocks.

Up above all is shouts, howls, whistles, bullets and confusion. But the assaulters have turned tail and now are going with wings on their feet. May the devil overtake them!

It becomes silent and a sharp noise is heard. Juanita is bellowing like a trained calf.

"Don't hurry so much, sister, or you'll make splinters out of your feet."

Seeing her so pale, her lips dry and with a perturbed expression, Ciriacó lets out a string of curses. People come to lift her up on a seat formed by their hands, but she resists and with her hand stretched out, trembling, for lack of voice which she has lost, she anxiously points, with desperation at an object that like a snake is
fleeing into the protection of the pines.

Ciriaco himself stops him. Blood and mud disfigure the fugitive's face; but feeling already lost, he brushes the hair from his face and identifies himself.

"Son of a hundred thousand . . . I am going to drag you over the hill like you did with my father . . . ."

"Ciriaco Campos, don't be so disgraceful! Look at me how I am! Shoot me and it will be good . . . ."

It is well. Thus it is that men should die. Ciriaco, now without the least resentment, nor hatred, nor anger, draws his pistol. But a voice stops him:

"That rooster is mine, Ciriaco Campos . . . please . . . ."

In an armed fight there are always new things to see. Ciriaco tranquilly holds his pistol and waits.

"Do you remember, disgraceful beggar, your collection of postals where you have my uncle Don Lorenzo Valdivia? Do you remember, you liar, dead with hunger, that you would like to have had my head for your collection? I am the one that is going to complete it with yours."

His eyebrows contracted animal-like, Ciriaco awaits the end of vengeance, which is the least that he expects. At the flash of the revolver of Don Arturo the jackal of San Gabriel falls heavily; but at the same instant a shot breaks the neck of the last of the Valdivias, who joins his blood and the rattlings of agony in his
throat with those of his sworn enemy.

"Who . . . ?"

The deserter of the guard of Gonzalo Pérez. His revolver smoking in his right hand, he pretends only to have anticipated the order of his chief. Stupefied, Ciriaco Campos allows him to do it.

With the help of two men he suspends the body of Valdivia from the branch of an evergreen oak. Catching on, others do the same with the bloody body of Saturnino Quintana.

"Tie that one up," Ciriaco grunts sordidly, and unsheathes his pistol.

Terrified, the deserter protests his innocence.

"Who has sent you here? Hang him by the fingers and leave him there until he sings."

He does not wait for the torture. He only wants to confess to Ciriaco alone.

"Don Gonzalo commissioned me to have Father Martínez López and Don Arturo Valdivia disappear."

"It is well. But as the priest is gone already, I commission you to join the company of those two, you talebearing son of a . . . ."

At Ciriaco's gesture, in cold blood is repeated the rapid handiwork that they had just done with the dead ones, lifting him up also to the air.
CHAPTER XIX

A brusque, curt whistle alerts the small group that has remained with Cirisco. Under a fleecy sky in this month of December, the first rays of the sun are like a soft caress for the limbs stiff with cold.

Mievitos, from the peak of a bare rock, announces:

"Two men coming up from Cañada de Ricos."

Cirisco climbs over a peak and explores the landscape with the binoculars, a remembrance of the dead Don Arturo, whom God may have pardoned.

"If my eyes don't lie to me, one of them is of us."

And without saying where he is going, he suddenly enters the pine grove and disappears.

"Little father," he exclaims entering the cave where Father Martínez López is hiding, "some people are coming and we will have to fight them ourselves. I advise you that Colonel Gonzalo Pérez has given orders that they shoot you wherever they find you. Go then, lose yourself from these lands and lose even your name."

In less than a quarter of an hour he reappears in the small encampment.

"One of them is the friend Don Marto," Felipe González says to him joyfully.

Cirisco jumps over a rock, observing again, without presenting a target. The binoculars are not now necessary to recognize them:
"Father Martineau will also be under the ground," said Girteo.

"Permit me?"

Into Don Marceau's heart took him forward and showed him the three.

First of all, what your greater Martineau and Don Arturo had in

With deadly hidden impetuous, the Colonel wanted to know.

Talk with Don Consuelo, who is waiting for us down there a ways.

"Recover our troops and work them as before. . . . Come and

And what are we going to do then?"

Girteo screeches en rage:

"conditio non tenetur up your arms and supplete."

with. You are to surrender with all your people, without any other

up with堡里in we were your plan and all would have been over

our side and is our friend. You owe your satisfaction to him. Join

"It is certain that which I told you, son. The Colonel is an

shoulders and lugubriously what they want.

Girteo Carmemset who has come out to meet them, sings his

"Good Heavens! Surrender quidnunc and Don Arturo Valdetera!"

having and smiling in a cheerful in the presence.

advances without haste and suddenly stop, surprised. Three men

while the Colonel diminished and stood up the horse. The old man

people accompanying them. He watches old Don Marceau advance alone.

Here in reality neither the face of the other soldiers nor of any

Don Marceau and Consuelo Pretel, but he instantly surrounded the surroun
"The priest too?" emphasized Don Marto, his voice cut by an overwhelming suffocation that purpled his cheeks and obliged him to light a cigarette.

Eluding a reply that would certainly contradict him, Ciriacio asks the conditions for surrendering with his people. Don Gonzalo has become so pleased that he promises to return their arms to them as soon as all return to their labors. The Colonel embraces Ciriacio and takes leave.

"Within a week all the scattered people will be together in the camp."

"I am going to leave the Colonel, Ciriacio, and bring you some medicine for Juanita."

They have already taken their respective paths, when Don Marto stops again at a new unforeseen and doleful scene. The rural school-teacher stretched out under a crown of organ cactus, his mouth intact and surrounded by turkey-buzzards. Don Ramoncito, whom even Ciriacio had forgotten.

Grief-stricken and remorsefully, Ciriacio with his own hands digs the grave of the visionary, his old friend.

A fiesta very talked about is that of the surrender of the rebels of San Gabriel de los Valdivias or the Quintana Agrarian Community. The whole ranch has come out at the meeting of the soldiers and the surrendered peasants. They come down in joyful
comrades from Cañada de Ricos, and the crowd, down there below, looks like a shifting and swarming sea of blankets, percales, and shawls in the gold of the corn shocks.

A week ago they brought down from Cañada de Ricos the mortal remains of Saturnino Quintana and Don Arturo Valdivia. They were modest and silent burials.

"What a difference from yesterday to today, son . . . ." 

"Because nothing has happened here," said Colonel Don Gonzalo Pérez with the tone of one who gives a countersign.

"Put this worm that's biting me to rest, Ciriaco. What really happened to Father Martínez López?"

"I put him in safety. He already knows that the Colonel did not need to show his face in the sale of arms."

Don Marto gave himself a slap on the forehead:

"Quiet, man, I hadn't thought about it again! So then you had nothing to do with Don Arturo in this?"

Ciriaco lifts his forehead, and in his eyes the old man clearly sees his innocence, and moved, he gives him a fatherly pat on the back:

"Pardon me if I might have judged you badly, son. You would not be the son of Dámaso Campos! That old man never did anyone any harm. May God keep him in peace."

The arrival of a sergeant interrupts them.

"We have to bring all the people of the community together in
order to give them a statement from the chief. Everything in your favor, you natives, is due in the end to the Colonel."

Neither Don Marto nor Ciriaco answers. But as soon as he retires, Don Marto, looking askew at Ciriaco under the broad brim of his hat, asks:

"What do you say about this, Ciriaco?"

The bluish whites of his shining boy-like eyes roll incomprehensively. Thus the old man understands him, spurs his horse and moves on.

With his habitual laughter, the Colonel comes forward, joyful with his officiousness. Some sing, others shout, Ciriaco comes last, closing the column, at the side of the stretcher bearing Juanita González. From time to time, he approaches, lifts the blanket that protects her from the sun and asks her how she is. The girl has learned much from friend Don Marto: in order that no one hear her complaining, she bites with all her strength on a corner of her apron.

The Casa del Pueblo now appears to be reverberating in the full sunlight. Nearer one can distinguish the multi-colored crowd that two musicians are heading. Women with white and red flowers in their black tresses, old women with silvery-smooth hair, boys with tanned faces and shiny eyes, many perceales of lively colors. The huts and the houses are adorned with their most colorful blankets that form curtains. They have put much
foliage in the Casa del Pueblo and as many flowers as they have been able to gather from these frosty fields. The Crippled One improves his opportunity, dispensing by the dozens pitchers of pulque, in his shop adorned with flags of china paper.

Don Marto is already returned, head down and coughing much:

"I know it all now, Ciriaco. What your father said: 'The same horse of another color.' So I come and say to him: 'Say, Colonel, how is it that you are going to be our Deputy?' And he tries to act innocent. 'I shall only accede to the will of the people, friend Don Marto.' The tune we know backwards and forwards. 'Listen, Don Gonzalo, how is it that you are going to be the chief of the Agrarian Communities?' And he says: 'I have my appointment in my pocket.' You understand, son?"

Silent with thought, Ciriaco conjectures confusedly the iniquitous comedy and lets out a curse accompanied by a huge spat.

"Throw me a cigarette over here."

Don Marto takes out a little sack from his shirt, and a handful of dry corn husks, takes one between his coarse fingers, wets it with the end of his tongue, rolls it up and fills it with tobacco, absent-mindedly and without lifting his head.

There is heard the obstreperous cornets and trombones and the clash and boom of the cymbals and drums. The odious geometry of the walls rising over the rusty ruins of the chapel dissolves itself in the burning rays of the sun. The fireworks crackle in the
sky, leaving a bluish and fading trail. In the middle of the plaza rises from the little castles of dust, the framework of reed grass which will be set on fire during the evening.

They are now in the Quintana Community, in the midst of their friends who surround them on all sides.

Their hats pulled down over their faces, Don Marto and Ciriacos do not want to see anyone, nor have anyone look at them. They are alien to the ingenuous joy of the others, to those that look only for the old mother that is awaiting them with tear-filled eyes, to the wives with their arms outstretched, to the chattering children that hug their legs. Or he that thinks of his full-udderred milk cows, of his fat oxen, of the granary full of cane and corn.

And as if he were continuing a dialogue that has never started, old Don Marto, his neck doubled down over his dry and incommunicative chest, overwhelmed by that cough that never leaves him for a moment, shakes his head with infinite despair and mumbles:

"Ah, what a deception, Ciriacos...!"
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