

Hume Fergus

The Harlequin Opal: A Romance.
Volume 3 of 3



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Romance. Volume 3 of 3

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Fergus Hume

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PROEM

The stone had its birth in the nurturing earth.
Its home in the heart of the main,
From the coralline caves it was tossed by the waves
On the breast of an aureate plain;
And the spirits who dwell in the nethermost hell
Stored fire in its bosom of white;
The sylphs of the air made it gracious and fair
With the blue of the firmament's height.

The dull gnomes I ween, gave it glittering sheen.
Till yellow as gold it became:
The nymphs of the sea made the opal to be
A beacon of emerald flame.

The many tints glow, they come and they go
At bidding of spirits abhorr'd,
When one ray is bright, in the bosom of white,
Its hue tells the fate of its lord.

For yellow hints wealth, and blue meaneth health,
While green forbodes passing of gloom,
But beware of the red, 'tis an omen of dread,
Portending disaster and doom.

CHAPTER I

WITHIN THE WALLS

Circle of stone,
Circle of steel,
Loyalists true,
Pent up in battle belts twain;
Yet we, alone,
Doubly feel,
That with our few,
We shall a victory gain.

Climb up our foes,
Over the wall,
Deep bit the swords,
Fiercely the cannon spout fire;
Yet 'neath our blows,
Downward they fall,
Traitorous hordes,
In torment and blood to expire.

Tim at once took his friends to his quarters, and made them comfortable, but scarcely had they finished a hurried meal, when an aide-de-camp arrived from General Gigedo requiring their presence without delay. As Peter had received a nasty blow on

the head during the *mêlée*, Jack insisted that he should remain behind and rest himself. Peter feebly remonstrated against this arrangement, as he wanted to accompany his friends, but in the end was forced to yield to their insistence. Then Duval buckled on his sword, slipped his revolvers into his belt, and went off with Tim to report himself at head-quarters.

Both of them were terribly alarmed about Philip. In the first burst of emotion Jack had deemed his friend dead; but, on looking at the matter calmly, it seemed probable that he would yet turn up well and unhurt. It was impossible that Indians, in whatever number, could utterly exterminate a body of disciplined troops amounting to a thousand men. Tim's opinion was that if they had been attacked and overpowered by strategy, they had fled to the nearest town for shelter. As he had marched overland with Colonel Garibay from Tlatonac, he knew the country better than did Jack, and proceeded to defend his theory of the reinforcements' safety, by describing the position of the towns.

"It's a hundred miles or more as the crow flies from Tlatonac to this God-forsaken place. Within that limit are four towns, no less – one every twenty miles. When we marched south two weeks ago, we first went to Chichimec, then to Puebla de los Naranjos, which last one is midway. Hermanita is next, and then after dropping in at Centeotl, we came on to Janjalla!"

"Still, if the Indians surprised them by night they might have surrounded and exterminated the whole lot. To my mind nothing

is so dangerous as a despised enemy."

"What!" cried Tim, with great contempt, "d'you mean to tell me that a lot of naked savages could manage that. By my soul, 'tis impossible!"

"But, my dear fellow, the Indians are out in thousands. Cocom told me so."

"They may be out in millions," retorted Tim, emphatically. "I tell you, Jack, they couldn't have killed all these men. A good number of them must have escaped to the nearest town, and, I'll lay my soul on it, that among those who got away is Philip. He wasn't born to be murdered by a lot of howling savages."

"Well, let us hope so," replied Jack, who was beginning to take this comfortable view of things himself; "but, tell me, Tim, when the reinforcements didn't arrive, why did you not wire to Tlatonac?"

"Begad! I couldn't. The rebels cut the telegraph wires some days since. The last message was that you and Doña Dolores had come back safely. Ah, my boy," cried Tim, slapping Jack on the shoulder, "didn't I sing 'Glory Hallelujah,' when I heard that same. But, I knew you'd turn up again all safe."

"I didn't know it myself!" replied Jack, grimly "it was touch and go, I can tell you."

"Dioul! You must tell me all about it. But hold your noise, Jack, and don't be lamenting for Philip. If you returned, so will he."

"I fervently hope so," said Jack, gloomily; "but I own that I

feel doubtful. Are the wires cut on both sides of the town?"

"No! glory be to the saints. I can still telegraph to England by the wires going south, but I expect them to be cut every minute, so I'm hard at work sending all the news I can."

"Did you see the fight last night?"

"Did I not! Whow, my boy! I guessed what was up, but till the dawn we weren't quite sure of the trouble. Begad! *The Pizarro's* gone anyhow."

"Yes. But the other warships and transports are due to-night."

"Then we'll have another fight," said Tim, coolly; "wasn't I wishing I was on board a torpedera! There's a heap to talk about, Jack; how you escaped from that infernal Xuarez, and how you sank *The Pizarro*. I want to wire about that same right away."

"First I must see what the General desires. Oh, here is Garibay. A thousand greetings, Colonel."

"What, Señor Juan! Ah, mi amigo, how pleased I am to see you safe once more. I deemed you were dead."

"Dios! He is a merry corpse, Señor," said Tim, turning his head. "Where's the General?"

"Within yonder house of the Jefe Politico. You also, Señor Correspoñsal, does he desire to see."

"I am at the service of Señor Gigedo. Know you, Comandante, what he desires to speak of?"

"It is that you will convey the glorious news of our naval victory to your gran'diario."

"Dios! That will be done within an hour. I but waited to find

out all particulars from Don Juan."

"Oh! I can tell you everything," said Jack cheerfully, "I was on board *The Montezuma* with Don Rafael, and it was her torpedo which sank *The Pizarro*."

"Viva los Torpederas," shouted Garibay, who was greatly excited over this unexpected victory.

The cry was taken up by a chattering group of officers lounging in from off the General's headquarters, and Jack being recognized was at once surrounded by them. They were mostly young fellows, who were weary of being pent up within the walls of a suburban town, and saw in this sinking of *The Pizarro*, a chance of coming face to face with the enemy. It was all cries of Viva! Bueno! Gracias a Dios! as Duval passed through their midst, and many would fain have detained him, to learn particulars of the combat; but Jack was anxious to hear Gigedo's views concerning the non-arrival of the reinforcements, so entered the mansion at once. Colonel Garibay conducted them both without delay to the General's apartments. Gigedo, cigarette in mouth, was poring over a large map of the country, evidently tracing the line of march from Tlatonac, but on seeing Duval, he sprang up and advanced to salute him, with a pleased smile.

"A thousand congratulations, Señor, on your escape from the hands of Xuarez," he said, warmly; "and still more on your gallant conduct of last night."

"Oh! as to that, General, I was but an onlooker," replied Duval, modestly. "The credit of sinking *The Pizarro* rests with Don

Rafael Maraquando. Have you heard the particulars?"

"Assuredly Señor, Don Sebastian de Ahumada has left me but this moment. He informed me of the affair, and also delivered the instructions from His Excellency. I find here," added Gigedo, striking a pile of papers with his open hand, "that over a thousand men left Tlatonac for the front, four days ago."

"That is so, General. My friend, Señor Felipe, was with them."

"They have not arrived, Don Juan. The troops of Xuarez cannot have intercepted them and I am at a loss to understand this delay. Can you explain?"

"Señor," said Jack after a pause, "before I left Tlatonac there were rumours of an Indian rising. While a prisoner at Totatzine I saw myself the tribes, incited to war by Ixtlilxochitli, the High Priest of the Chalchuih Tlatonac."

"Ah, that cursed opal!" cried Garibay, fiercely; "it is the cause of great trouble. Would that it could be taken from the Indians."

"Rest content, Señor Garibay; it *is* taken from the Indians. Doña Dolores took it from the shrine, and it is now in Tlatonac."

"Dios!" exclaimed the General and Garibay, simultaneously, while Tim was scarcely less astonished.

"Naturally enough the Indians wish to recover this sacred gem, Señor, therefore the rising has taken place sooner than was expected. I fear, gentlemen, that the Indians have surprised and massacred our poor friends."

"Santissima Madre! a thousand men?"

"The Indian forces amount to three times that number," said

Jack, quickly. "It is true that His Excellency, at my request, sent messengers after the reinforcements to warn them of a possible attack. Yet it is not unlikely that these messengers may have been intercepted by the Indians. They might have fallen on the reinforcements without warning, and then – Señor, three thousand against one thousand – an unexpected attack. Alas! it is a terrible risk."

"Our troops may have retreated to one of the towns," said Gigedo, taking the same view of the case as had Tim. "This I would know if the telegraph wires had not been cut. But as it is we can but wait."

"And meantime," remarked Garibay, dryly "Xuarez will land some troops – already two thousand lie before the town – we have hard work, even behind our walls to keep them back. Now we have scarcely five hundred here capable of defending the town. Many are dead and wounded – fever and dysentery prevail greatly. If Xuarez lands more troops and makes an immediate attack Janjalla must fall."

"He cannot land more troops while *The Iturbide* and the torpederas guard the harbour." said Gigedo in a tone of some displeasure; "and even if these two thousand again assault the walls we can hold out until reinforcements arrive. His Excellency tells me that two thousand men are to follow in ten days."

"Hark!" cried Tim, as Garibay was about to reply; "a gun! – another. Señores, the warships are at it again. With your permission, General."

He hastily left the room and went off to the walls where he was soon afterwards joined by Jack, who had been hurriedly dismissed by the General. They looked seaward, and saw the performance of a most extraordinary drama.

It was now about three o'clock, and the ocean like a sheet of glass stretched in an inclined plane upward to the distant horizon. Owing to the elevation of the city walls they looked down, as from the heights of an amphitheatre. The ramparts were crowded with spectators, townsfolk and soldiers. Immediately below was the beach, the rebel camp – then the long pier shooting out into the blue, and beyond the flashing expanse of the sea. *The Iturbide* was lying a quarter of a mile from the shore with her two torpederas, one on each side of her. The cruiser had swung round, and was firing her guns at a slowly approaching warship.

"*The Columbus!*" cried Jack, when his eyes fell upon this vessel.

"True for you, John," said Tim, handing him the glass. "She has come south by herself. I thought you told me the transports were not due here till midnight."

"No more they are. I expect Xuarez, learning through his spies of our departure from Tlatonac has sent *The Columbus* on ahead to join forces with *The Pizarro*. With two warships he hopes to keep our lot at bay till the transports with the *Cortes* are safe in the harbour."

"The sinking of *The Pizarro* will rather upset his plans. *The Columbus* dare not attack two torpederas and a cruiser, single-

handed."

"Upon my soul! that seems exactly what she intends to do, Tim."

A low murmur of surprise arose from the crowd on the ramparts, who were eagerly watching the warships. It seemed as though *The Columbus* was bent on her own destruction, for she came steaming straight ahead for the three ships of the Junta, insolently flying the red flag of Xuarez.

"What the deuce does she mean," cried Tim, in perplexity. "Surely she can't mistake *The Iturbide* for her consort."

"Perhaps she intends to desert," suggested Jack.

The Columbus was now more within range, and though hitherto she had been silent under the fire of *The Iturbide*, she now began to speak in her turn, and a white line of smoke ran along her black sides as the balls came singing over the water.

"Not much deserting about that," said Tim, grimly; "no! the rebels have some scheme in their heads."

By this time Pedraza was thoroughly enraged at the insolence of this one ship attacking him single-handed, and signalled at once to the torpederas. The captain of *The Columbus* saw that the signals ordered the boats to "up anchor," and acted accordingly. In a surprisingly short space of time the rebel ship had swung round, and with full steam ahead was standing out to sea. The ships of the Junta were taken by surprise at their manœuvre, and it was fully a question of an hour before they started in pursuit. Tim shut his glass with a click.

"Jack, I see it all. *The Columbus* wants to get our boats out of the harbour so as to let *The Cortes* and the transports slip in together."

"Rather a risky game, Tim. She'll be overhauled and sunk by the torpederas in no time."

"Not while she can keep them off with her heavy guns! What speed have the torpederas?"

"Eighteen to nineteen knots."

"And *The Columbus*?"

"Well, Rafael says her ordinary speed is fifteen but in case of need she can crack up steam to eighteen."

"Even that gives the torpederas one knot to the good. But she can outsteam *The Iturbide*."

"Oh yes; sixteen is *her* limit!"

"Then I tell you what! *The Columbus*, as I said, has come here as a decoy – she knows the cruiser can't touch her speed, and she hopes to keep the torpederas at a safe distance with her heavy guns. She's off in a bee line straight out, and the other boats are after her. Then she'll dodge them and steam back here to find *The Cortes* and the transports all safe in harbour."

"I believe you are right, Tim."

"Of course I'm right. Look at the way she's smoking through the water."

Jack put the glass to his eyes and saw *The Columbus* was travelling at top speed towards the open sea. After her scampered the two torpedo boats like hounds on her trail. Further behind

The Iturbide with the black smoke vomiting from her funnels was putting her soul into the chase. Pedraza was evidently determined to follow up one victory by another, and over eager to sink or capture the crack ironclad of the rebels, forgot all about the incoming transports. Thus, in half an hour the four ships were mere specks on the horizon, and the harbour of Janjalla was left open for the arrival of Xuarez and fresh troops.

The crowd of people on the ramparts were too excited at the stirring spectacle of the chase to think of such a thing, and yelled themselves hoarse in cheering for Pedraza. Below on the beach the rebels, who had evidently understood the manœuvres of *The Columbus*, were cheering vigorously for Don Hypolito.

"Wait you dogs," cried Jack, shaking his fists at them; "soon shall you sing another tune."

"By all the saints so shall we," said Tim, wisely: "unless the forts keep off the transports we'll have another two thousand troops down there this night, and then – it's wigs on the green there will be."

"I agree with you, Tim – unless the reinforcements arrive."

"Even then, four thousand attacking a town can do a powerful lot, and when the reinforcements arrive we'll only have one thousand five hundred to put against them. However, let us not despair," added Tim, philosophically. "Come with me, Don Juan, and we'll look over the town. Then we'll go and see if there is any sign of the new troops."

Jack assented, and descending from the ramparts they made

their way through the town to the house where Tim had his quarters. The streets were filled with soldiers, who mostly looked smart, and well fitted for their work. Here and there were wounded men, and a few sick with malarian fever from the adjacent swamp, but on the whole it was wonderful how healthy was the town. Twice had the rebels assaulted the walls and twice been beaten back, not without considerable loss of men on the side of the loyalists. Fortunately, provisions were plentiful, and it was the cool season, therefore the troops of the Junta were in comparatively good condition. Despite their small numbers, they were so heartened by the sinking of *The Pizarro*, that it was plain they would fight like fiends to hold Janjalla until aid arrived from the capital.

The townspeople took the fact of being besieged in the most contented manner, and hardly interrupted their daily occupations. In the streets the tortilleras were crying their wares, the water-carriers proclaiming the fact that they sold "aqua limpia," and, but for the unusual number of soldiers, it would have been quite impossible to see that the city was in the very jaws of danger. At times a woman wrapped in the rebozo would pass along the street, but as a rule they kept within doors, and showed themselves but rarely. In the plazas men were being drilled, and many of the houses were used as hospitals for the sick and wounded.

Tim and Jack made their way through the crowded streets, and duly arrived at the former's quarters, where they found Peter

eagerly expecting them. He was weary of being by himself, and when he heard they were going to the land-gate to seek news of the reinforcements, insisted on accompanying them. After taking a drink of aguardiente, of which they stood much in need, owing to the exhaustion caused by excitement, the three friends set off at once to see if they could hear anything about the expected troops.

Don Sebastian was fraternising with the captain in command of the cavalry, as his own troops had been sent forward to the sea ramparts. The mounted regiments were stationed at this end of the town as they were more useful in sallies than were the infantry. This was proved by the way in which they had succoured the soldiers from *The Iturbide*, as only horse-men could have kept the rebel troops at bay.

"No signs yet, Señor," said Don Sebastian, politely; "but half an hour ago the general sent out two Indian scouts with instructions to inquire at Centeotl for our men."

"That is twenty miles away."

"Yes; but these Indians travel fast. Before midnight we shall hear news of our troops – that is if they get as far south as Centeotl."

"And before midnight Xuarez will have landed his new regiments," said Tim, turning away. "Well, there's no help for it, I suppose. Come, Jack and Peter, 'tis no use waiting here. We must wait till these scouts return."

"And meanwhile, Tim?"

"Come with me to the telegraph-office. I'm going to send an account of the sea-fight to my paper."

"You are sure the wires are not cut to the southward?" said Peter, as they trudged along to the office.

"They weren't this morning anyhow. Why should they cut them? All they want to do is to intercept communication with the capital. They don't care two straws what goes to England."

"Xuarez does. He told me so."

"Ah! but, you see, Xuarez is not here at present, and has forgotten to give orders to cut them. When he arrives again, he'll do it, maybe."

"Well, seeing that he wishes the world to look on him as a noble patriot, he certainly won't care about your wiring plain truths about him to the old country. He'll either cut the wires or bring a war correspondent on his own hook."

"A rival!" cried Tim, indignantly. "If I thought so, I'd shoulder a musket myself, and go out to shoot the dirty villain. Here's the P.O., my boys! Peter! hold your noise. Jack's going to give me a history of the fight."

"I know as much about it as Jack does," said Peter, in an injured tone, as they entered the office.

"Then I'll let you put in a word here and there," replied his friend, in a kind tone. "Why, Peter, I'd do anything to please you. Didn't I think you were knocked out of time, entirely. Manuel, are the wires right?"

"Yes, Señor," replied the operator, a dark alert-looking man;

"all safe to Truxillo!"

"Bueno! Then they will be safe to England. Truxillo is in Honduras, and is as right as the Bank. Come, Jack, begin at once!"

They were over two hours at this business as, what with Jack's roundabout descriptions and Peter's interruptions, it took some time for Tim to get the story ship-shape. Then Manuel was constantly wiring the intelligence, as transmitted to him by Tim, who took full advantage of the licence given by his editor to send extensive telegrams. It was close on six o'clock when he finished, and he was just stretching himself with a yawn after his long spell of sitting, when outside a murmur began. It rapidly swelled into a roar and the three friends rushed out of the office to learn what new event had taken place. The telegraph-office was situated in the street which ran straight to the land-gate, and down this street they saw advancing a dense body of men.

"Vivas los soldados! Viva el Republico!"

"Hurrah!" roared Tim, wildly, "'tis the reinforcements!"

"There's Philip!" cried Jack, pushing his way through the crowd.

"And wounded!" said Peter, noticing with a true professional eye that Cassim's left arm hung useless by his side.

The Janjalla Band, stationed in the Plaza, burst out into the patriotic strains of the "Opal Fandango," the crowd yelled and cheered, the soldiers tramped steadily down the street; and Tim, to the imminent danger of his life, flung himself almost under

the feet of Philip's horse.

"Philip, my dear boy! Here we are."

"Tim! Jack! Thank God!" cried Philip, and urging his horse a little way to the side, jumped down from the saddle.

Tim gripped one hand, Jack the other, and Peter patted the baronet on the back. Philip looked worn and haggard, and winced as Tim seized his left hand.

"Are you wounded?" cried Tim, letting it go.

"Yes; but not badly! An Indian arrow through the fleshy part of the arm."

"Ah!" exclaimed Jack, anxiously, "then Cocom was right. You have been attacked by Indians."

"Two days ago! They surprised our camp by night, and came in in overwhelming force. Velez was unable to rally his men, and we were forced to retreat to Centeotl."

"And how many men have you brought, Philip?"

"Six hundred!"

"And one thousand started from Tlatonac," said Jack, sadly; "four hundred killed. Thank God, Philip, you at least are safe."

CHAPTER II

THE FALL OF JANJALLA

They mount the ramparts, and they man the walls,
Resolved to keep the climbing foe at bay,
The hot-mouthed cannon hurl a thousand balls,
A thousand swords flash forth to wound and slay.
Down in the fosse the planted ladder falls,
And smoke sulphurous spreads its veil of grey;
Like incense from an altar up it rolls,
To tell the war-god that a thousand souls
Are to his honour sacrificed this day.

Oh, Mars! Oh, red Bellona! he or she,
Though fallen your shrines, we bend yet 'neath your yoke;
Born later than the Greeks, we seem to be
Not much more civilised than were those folk,
Instead of spears, and shields, and cutlery,
Revolvers, rifles, guns, spit fire and smoke.
For ye, blood-thirsty pair, we yet retain
Our ancient love, and hence on battle plain
With myriad victims we your names invoke.

The siege of Janjalla lasted five days, and during that period the town was completely invested by the troops of Xuarez. As

had been foreseen by him, the *Columbus*, acting as a decoy, had drawn away the ships of the Junta from protecting the harbour, and that same night Xuarez, under cover of darkness, landed four thousand troops from his transports. By an inconceivable oversight on the part of the engineers, the city walls were unprovided with search-lights and electric apparatus, so Don Hypolito was enabled to land boat-load after boat-load of men without hindrance. By dawn six thousand men were encamped on the beach, under the very guns of the forts.

Had Xuarez attacked the capital, he would have been easily repulsed, for in Tlatonac all the latest inventions for defence were to be found. Krupp's guns pointed from the forts, powerful electric lights swept the harbour, and the bed of the ocean in front of the sea-line was one vast mass of torpedoes. The flower of the Cholocacan army were behind the walls, armed with the latest invented rifles, and altogether a siege of the capital would have lasted months. Don Hypolito, however, was too crafty to waste his time so fruitlessly, and artfully attacked the Republic in her weakest part.

Janjalla was but ill defended by walls and cannon and but ill garrisoned with capable men. By throwing on the devoted town an overwhelming mass of troops he could hope to capture it within a few days. Then making it his head-quarters, could gradually advance along the plain towards the capital, eating up a town at every twenty miles. He was already master of Acauhtzin in the north, and if he could only reduce Janjalla and the four

inland towns, he would be in complete command of the whole inner country. Then, besieging Tlatonac by land and sea, he could starve the capital into surrender.

Promptness was Xuarez' great characteristic, and so rapidly had he accomplished the transference of active operations from north to south that he had completely taken the Junta by surprise. It was a fatal mistake on the part of the Governmental party in leaving such an incapable man as Gomez at the head of affairs. If, relying on the strength of the capital to protect herself, he had sent all his available soldiers to garrison Janjalla and defeat the rebels before they could get a footing in the south, he would have probably crushed the rebellion in the bud. Victorious in the lower part of the country, he could have then reduced Acauhtzin at his leisure, and thus ended the war within a few weeks.

Unfortunately, Gomez lost his head at the critical period, and proved himself quite unable to cope with the masterly activity of the rebel leader. First of all, he committed the mistake of not concentrating his troops at Janjalla, and then sent a few hundreds of men down at a time. General Gigedo therefore found himself shut up in Janjalla with scarcely a thousand troops, few guns, and insufficient ammunition. The telegraph-wires having been cut, he was unable to communicate promptly with the capital, and being in urgent need of reinforcements, was in absolute despair as to what would occur in the near future. It was true that Gomez had promised another thousand men in ten days; but, even if they arrived earlier, it would be too late, as with the small garrison at

his disposal, it was impossible that he could hold out against a force of six thousand for any lengthened period.

He would have sent messengers to Tlatonac for aid, but the troops of Don Hypolito completely encircled the city, and it was worse than useless to try and break through that girdle of steel. He held a council of war, but no decision could be arrived at, save that Janjalla should hold out, if possible, until reinforcements arrived from the capital. Day after day Gigedo and his staff swept the ocean with their glasses, looking for the torpederas and the cruiser. None of them appeared, and it could only be conjectured that they had captured *The Columbus*, and taken her at once to Tlatonac, in the harbour of which they were now doubtless lying.

Meanwhile, the garrison fought with desperate valour, and with great difficulty managed to keep the rebels at bay, but it could be easily seen that such a state of things could not last. On the fourth day preparations were made by Xuarez for a final assault, and everyone instinctively guessed that the end had come. *The Cortes* was lying with the transports out of range of the fort-guns, and, by means of their glasses, those shut up in the town could see that the warship was making ready to bombard the city.

Don Hypolito had come south again, with his new troops, and could be now seen riding about the camp with a brilliant staff, seeing that all things were ready for the assault. Jack, who, in company with Philip, was leaning over the ramparts, noted the audacious rebel, and remarked on his presence before the walls of Janjalla.

"There goes the brain of the rebellion," he said touching Philip on the shoulder. "If he could only be disposed of, the war would be over."

"No doubt. But Xuarez knows his own value too well, and will therefore keep out of danger. He has evidently made up his mind to finish the siege to-day."

"Unless help comes, I think he will succeed," replied Jack, gloomily. "I cannot conceive what the President or Maraquando can be thinking about to thus neglect Janjalla. If this town falls into the hands of Xuarez, as it must do, unless a miracle takes place, Don Francisco will find the war longer than he expects."

"Gomez is a fool," said Philip, stamping his foot. "What the deuce is the use of keeping all the army in the capital? There must be ten thousand soldiers shut up in Tlatonac, and his Excellency evidently intends to keep them there till Xuarez and his victorious troops arrive before the walls."

"Very likely the Indians are before the walls now, and are waiting for Xuarez to join them."

"It's not improbable. Things don't look promising for the Junta, and all because they let Gomez muddle the business. See, the rebels are marching up to the sea-gate. It is now noon. Before sundown they will be within the walls, and masters of the city."

"What about the garrison?"

"Their lives depend on the caprice of Xuarez," said Philip, after a pause. "He may let Ggedo march out with the remains of his troop, or massacre every one of us."

"I don't intend to be massacred," replied Jack, dryly; "and, what is more, I don't intend to be seen by Xuarez. He must know by this time, through his spies, that I escaped from Totatzine, but he is probably ignorant that I am in Janjalla. I must escape unseen, Philip, else he will send me back to be slaughtered by Ixtlilxochitli."

"Hardly, Jack, while Tim is at hand!"

"What do you mean?"

"Don Hypolito," said Philip, sagely, "wishes to stand well with the world. Tim is the medium through which his actions are reported to the world. Were he to send an Englishman to be offered up by savages to a barbaric deity, there would be trouble with England. Xuarez can't afford to risk that, so he will let you go free."

"He didn't do that in Acauhtzin."

"In Acauhtzin, my friend, you were supposed by us to be killed in the riot. He could do as he pleased with one, who, to the world was practically a non-existing person. Here it is different. You are alive, you are with your friends, one of whom is a correspondent of a great English journal. He dare not seize you for his own ends in broad daylight. No, my dear Jack, while we are beside you, Xuarez will think twice before repeating his treachery of Acauhtzin. He will have to look for a new victim for Ixtlilxochitli."

"I fervently hope and trust so," answered Jack, looking at his revolver to see that it was loaded. "And now I suppose we had

better go to the Plaza. The troops must be assembling just now. Hark! there goes the trumpet. Where is Tim?"

"In the telegraph-office, with Peter, wiring news to his paper."

"Poor Peter," said Duval, as they left the ramparts; "he came here to collect beetles, and finds himself plunged into an unpleasant war."

"Never mind. There's nothing like experience, Jack. Peter will recount his deeds of valour, even unto the third generation. We will come out safe in the end. You will marry Dolores, I Eulalia, and all will be gas and gaiters, *videlicet* Nicholas Nickleby."

Philip's gaiety was infectious, and Jack burst out laughing at his last remark. They had no time, however, for further conversation, as the trumpets were calling loudly in the Plaza, and they hurried to that portion of the town to find the troops rapidly falling in. General Gigedo made a speech to encourage his soldiers, assuring them that he had communicated with Tlatonac, and that relief would shortly come to the besieged town.

"Is that true, or a lie?" asked Jack of Don Sebastian, who stood beside him.

"True," replied the Spaniard, smiling. "This morning carrier pigeons were sent to his Excellency with messages of our deplorable state. We shall certainly be relieved in a few days."

"A few days!" echoed Philip, with a sneer. "My dear Señor de Ahumada, a few hours will see our troops evacuating Janjalla."

"If we are forced to do that, Señor, we can fall back on

Centeotl."

"What, with a few hundred men, and the Indians scouring the country?"

"They are further north."

"I assure you they are not," replied Cassim, emphatically. "We were attacked near Centeotl, and by this time the savages are between that town and this. Señor de Ahumada, I assure you that if we evacuate Janjalla, we shall fall into the hands of the Indians."

"Dios!" cried Don Sebastian, suddenly. "*The Cortes* has started bombarding." Even as he spoke a bomb burst in the air directly over the Plaza. At once Gígedo gave the signal to the troops to march to the ramparts. In the distance they could hear the fierce cries of the rebels as they marched out of camp, and a tremour passed through the whole of the city as those within its walls recognised the desperate state of affairs. Bomb after bomb exploded with deafening noises, the troops manned the walls, the besiegers hurled themselves against the sea-gate and planted ladders against the walls. The assault had commenced. It was the beginning of the end.

The full force at the disposal of General Gígedo, excluding the sick and wounded, amounted to some nine hundred men. He divided this into two portions: five hundred held the sea-facing portion of the town, four hundred were stationed at the inland gate. Xuarez attacked the two gates of the town simultaneously, and trusted, in the event of entering at either portal, to be enabled

to attack the loyalists in the rear, and thus crush them between two armies.

On the ramparts it was not so difficult to keep the foe back as it was below. They planted ladders, and these were hurled with their burden of climbing men into the ditch below. An incessant fusillade of musketry crackled along the walls, and the cannon with depressed muzzles hurled their balls with more or less damaging effect into the dense throng massed on the beach below. The bombs from *The Cortes* did their deadly work skilfully, and the besiegers kept themselves as widely apart as possible, so as to neutralise the effect of the shells on compact masses.

It was outside the sea-gate, however, that the siege was pressed most hardly. Xuarez had cannon planted at the gate, to break down, if possible, the huge wooden valves, clamped with iron. Through the loop-holes low down in the walls the besiegers fired incessantly, killing the rebel gunners as they strove to discharge the cannon. Above the city hung a thick cloud of grey smoke, and at intervals, through the misty veil, flared the red flame of a bomb bursting overhead. The rattle of musketry, the booming of cannon, the cries of the wounded, the shouts of besieged and besiegers, all made an infernal din deafening to the ear.

Tim and Peter were at the land-gate in company with Captain Velez and Colonel Garibay, while Jack and Philip fought side by side in repelling the attack from the sea front. After an incessant cannonading lasting two hours, the rebels managed to smash

the gates down with their artillery, and rushed in only to find themselves confronted by a dense mass of resolute soldiery.

From the sea-gate the street arose suddenly, and on the top of the incline Gigedo had planted cannon which cut lanes in the throng of rebels pressing through the gate. At last the battle resolved itself into a hand-to-hand fight in which the loyalists strove to beat back the rebel forces from the gate. Xuarez saw this, and signalled to *The Cortes* to stand in closer and drop her shells into the centre of the besieged. At once the warship did as she was commanded, and in a few moments bombs were creating fearful havoc in the ranks of the loyalists. In answer, the guns of the forts speedily opened fire on the warship, but did little damage, as the besiegers were too busily occupied in repelling the foe as they swarmed up the walls, to take careful aim.

What with the dense crowd pressing from without, the loss of men caused by the incessant bursting of the bombs in their midst, the loyalists began to fall back, and, in spite of the most desperate resistance, were thrust beyond the line of cannon at the top of the street. A horde of rebel soldiery rushed inside the gate, and proceeded to scale the ramparts in order to aid their comrades who were climbing the outer walls, and to silence the guns playing on *The Cortes*.

Skilfully making use of all material he found to hand, Xuarez turned the cannon taken from the loyalists on themselves. In the hurried retreat, they had been unable to spike the guns, and now these, loaded and fired by the rebels, were mowing them down in

dozens. The soldiers on the ramparts were either killed or beaten back, and the whole of the sea front of Janjalla was in complete possession of Xuarez. One comfort had the loyalists, namely, that they were protected in the rear by their men defending the land-gate.

Shortly, however, a roar of rage, and the cheers of the besiegers announced that the town was captured on that side. The soldiers retreated towards the Plaza in the centre of the town, and there found their comrades who had fallen back from the sea-gate. Here there was this handful of men shut up in the square, surrounded on all sides by the victorious rebels. They could not possibly hold out long against the dense masses converging to that centre from all parts of the town, and it could be easily seen that the siege was practically over.

During the fighting night had fallen, and now the battle was going on in the dim twilight, rendered still darker by the heavily hanging clouds of smoke enwrapping the town. Jack had received a nasty cut on the shoulder; but Philip was unwounded, and in the general scrimmage they managed to keep well together. When beaten back into the Plaza, they made for the telegraph-office, where they hoped to find Tim and Peter. This was the rendezvous appointed by Tim in case the battle went in favour of the rebels, as he wished to send a final message to his paper before clearing out of the town. With a handful of men, principally those belonging to their own regiment, Philip and Jack managed to throw themselves into the telegraph-office, and

shortly afterwards were joined by Tim.

"Where's Peter?" asked Jack, as he saw the huge form of his friend dashing through the door.

"Just behind, with Don Sebastian," gasped Tim, throwing himself into a chair. "It's all up, boys; the Opposidores are in full possession of the land-gate."

"And the sea-gate also," said Philip, who was reloading his revolver. "All our men are in the Plaza, and can't hold out much longer. Whew! there's another bomb."

"We'd better get out of Janjalla, and make for Centeotl," cried Don Sebastian, entering with his sword smashed in two; "all is over!"

"Gigedo?"

"Killed! Garibay is wounded, and taken prisoner!"

"Where is Don Pedro?"

"Here I am," cried Peter, darting into the room and closing the door. "There's a regiment of rebels cutting their way through the crowd to take the telegraph-office. Xuarez has particularly commanded it."

"Anyhow, I'll have time to send another telegram, if I die for it," said Tim, who was hastily scribbling notes. "Where's Manuel?"

Manuel had vanished; so Tim, with a growl, sat down to work the instrument himself.

"Keep those devils out, with your men," he said to Philip, who was barricading the windows with Jack. "I'll send one telegram,

saying Janjalla has fallen, and then we'll go off."

"How the devil are we to get away?" asked Philip, angrily.

"Easily. The cavalry barracks are behind here. We'll get round by the back way and seize the horses, then cut our way out by the land-gate. Once across the river, and we are safe."

Philip did not wait for the conclusion of this speech, but, with a few men, dashed out at the back of the house to see if the horses were still there. Jack would have followed, but Peter stopped him.

"I have my medicine-chest here. Let me bind up your shoulder." Jack was unwilling, protesting he did not feel the wound.

"Bosh, my dear boy, you are excited. You will feel it afterwards. If we are to ride to Centeotl, you will need all the blood you have. Don Sebastian can hold the telegraph-office."

Don Sebastian had posted his men at the windows, and was firing at the mass of rebels, now trying to take the house by storm. All this time Tim was working the instrument and wiring the news of the fall of the city to his editor. Through the yells outside, the rattle of the musketry, and the curses of Don Sebastian could be heard the incessant click, click, click of the telegraph-instrument.

A bomb exploded on the roof of the house, and a few yards of plaster fell from the ceiling. Peter had finished binding up Jack's wound, and now they were both defending the windows and doors of the mansion.

"How long, Jack?"

"In two minutes the door will be down," cried Jack. "Do leave that d – d instrument, Tim, and look for Philip."

"I'll go!" said Peter, as Tim refused to leave his post. He turned to make for the back way, when Philip came back with a radiant face.

"Here is a dozen horses just outside, all saddled and fresh as daisies! Come, Tim, quick! Jack. De Ahumada."

"A moment," said Tim, and went on with his clicking.

Crash! The door was down, and a number of fierce faces appeared at the door. The room was full of smoke, and the rebels were firing freely through the windows. Sebastian and his men threw themselves in front of those trying to face the door, and Philip, seizing Tim by the shoulder, dragged him away from the instrument.

"Tim, you cursed fool. Come along!"

"Just a second!"

He turned back to the instrument in spite of Philip's protest, but had just clicked twice when Don Sebastian and his men were forced back and a crowd of the enemy rushed into the room. Philip, Jack, and Peter had already disappeared through the back, and Tim was left alone with Don Sebastian and the soldiers. The rebels threw themselves forward with yells of delight, when Tim, catching up a heavy table, flung it fair on the advancing mass, then bolted through the back door, dragging Don Sebastian after him. Two of the soldiers followed, and promptly closed the door when on the right side. At once the rebels commenced to beat

it down with the butts of their rifles, but the Irishman and his friend had reached the back street.

Here they found their friends already mounted and waiting for them.

"Tim. De Ahumada! Mount at once!" cried Philip, pointing to three horses waiting under the shelter of the wall. "Make for the land-gate, and straight for the river."

In another moment they were clattering towards the lower part of the town, keeping close together for safety. The street down which they were riding was quite deserted, as the fighting was principally confined to the main thoroughfares of the town. They could hear the brisk fire of musketry still kept up, the booming of the cannon, and the bursting of the shells. Shrieks of women, and yells of the victors broke incessantly through these noises, and the whole city was draped in a thick veil of stinking smoke.

"Oh, those poor women!" cried Philip, as he spurred his horse towards the gate. "Now they are in the clutches of those fiends."

"I'm glad we're not," muttered Dr. Grench, thankfully.

"Anyhow," said Tim, cheerfully, "I've sent the fall of the city to the paper."

"Oh, hang your paper," said Jack, whose wound was making him fractious. "Come along, De Ahumada."

"Dios! How we have been beaten."

Suddenly the street turned a sharp angle, and they found themselves before the gate. Most of the attacking party had marched towards the centre of the town to complete their victory,

and only a few scattered soldiery were on guard. These yelled loudly as they saw the small party dash towards the gate. The valves were broken down; beyond was the country, and between this and safety was but a score of men.

Philip drew his sword, spurred his horse to its full speed, and made for the gate, cutting down a man who tried to stay him. Jack emptied two barrels of his revolver, and killed one man, wounding another. The rebel soldiers fired freely, and breaking Sebastian's arm, also tumbled one of his company off his horse. Tim seizing Peter's bridle-rein, galloped wildly through the spare crowd, cursing freely.

In their rush for the portal, they scattered them all. There were a few musket-shots, a howl of rage from the disappointed rebels, and at top speed they tore out of the gate, and made for the open country.

"Twenty miles," cried Philip, settling himself in his saddle. "We can do that easily. Hurrah!"

"Provided we don't fall into the hands of the Indians," said Jack, sagely.

As for Don Sebastian, he turned round and shook his fist at Janjalla.

"Carajo!"

CHAPTER III

THE FLIGHT TO TLATONAC

Boot and saddle, away! away!
We must be far e'er the breaking of day.
The standard is down,
The foe's in the town,
Forbidding us longer to stay, to stay.

Boot and saddle! we ride! we ride!
Over the prairie land side by side,
Our foemen behind,
Speed swift as the wind,
And gain on us steadily, stride by stride.

Boot and saddle! so fast! so fast!
We ride till the river be crossed and past;
Then over the plain,
With loose-hanging rein,
And find ourselves safe in the town at last.

Before them spread the plains, flat and desolate-looking, covered with coarse grass, and stretching towards the horizon in vague immensity. West-ward the faint flush of sunset, delicately pale, lingered low down, but otherwise the sky was coldly

clear, darkly blue, thick sprinkled with chill-looking stars. To the right the leaden-hued waters of the river moving sluggishly between low mud banks, and on the left sandy wastes, alternating with hillocks and convex-shaped mounds. All this desolation appearing ghostly under a veil of mist exhaled whitely from the hot earth.

Over these monotonous plains galloped the six fugitives. Philip and Jack in the van, Don Sebastian and his one soldier in the rear; between Tim, side by side with Peter. For some time they urged on their horses in silence. Then a sudden flare of crimson caused them to turn in their saddles. The low walls of Janjalla were crowned with smoke, beneath which leaped tongues of flame, crimson and yellow. A rapid, disjointed conversation ensued.

"Those brutes are burning the city!"

"It will only be some drunken soldiers. Xuarez will soon put a stop to that. He cannot afford to lose his city of refuge, after paying so much to gain it."

"Must we swim our horses across the river?" called out Grench, unexpectedly.

"Not unless the bridge is down. It was standing when we came this way a week ago."

Philip answered the question, and then cast an anxious look at the sky.

"I wish the moon would rise," he said disconsolately; "we need some light."

"What the deuce would be the good of that when we're on the high-road. Hang it, the moon would only show Xuarez how to follow us."

"Que dici?" asked Don Sebastian, looking at Jack.

"The Señor Correspoñsal thinks we might be pursued."

"I doubt it, Don Juan. Xuarez will be too busy checking the excesses of his soldiers. Besides, Señor, as we escaped in the confusion, it may be that we will not be missed for some hours."

Peter, unaccustomed to riding, began to feel sore with this incessant galloping, and raised his voice in protest.

"I hope we will be able to rest at Centeotl. When do we reach it?"

"Before midnight, probably. Then we will rest till dawn, get fresh horses, and push on to Tlatonac."

"Hope we'll get there," muttered Jack, shaking his reins. "But if the Indians –"

"Deuce take the Indians," retorted Philip, irritably. "Come on Jack, and don't worry so much."

Their horses were fortunately quite fresh, having been mewed up in Janjalla without exercise for some weeks. Stretching their necks, they clattered along at a breakneck speed. The road was as hard as flint, and their iron-shod hoofs struck out sparks from the loose stones. The riders, with their heads bent against the wind whizzing past their ears, let the reins hang loosely, and pressed on with blind trust along the highway leading to Centeotl.

Here and there they passed a flat-roofed house, deserted by

its occupants, and standing up lonely, a white splotch amid the vague gloom of its flat acreage. Clumps of trees loomed suddenly against the clear sky, at times a ragged aloe sprang spectral-like from the reddish soil, thorny thickets lay densely in the hollows, tall spear-grass waved on the tops of undulating drifts of sand, and at intervals an oasis of rank herbage would frame an oval pool thickly fringed with reeds.

The road wound onward, turning now to right, now to left, dipping into hollows, curving over eminences, stretching white and dusty towards the horizon like a crooked winding river. On either side they could mark the moving forms of animals, flying from the clatter of their horses' hoofs, cattle, vicuñas, llamas, and flocks of sheep. The white peak of Xicotencatl arose suddenly like a ghost from the shadows of forests lying heavily along the verge of earth between plain and sky. A thin vapour lay white over the plain, and gathered thickly along the banks of the river. The horses stretched their necks and neighed loudly. They smelt the water of the stream.

"The bridge is down!" cried Jack, drawing rein at the verge of the stream. "Indians!"

"Or Xuarez!" added Philip, gravely. "I suspect the latter. Indians are not sufficiently civilised to destroy bridges."

The *débris* of the bridge impeded the current, and here the waters boiled white amid the black ruins. Jagged posts stretched in black rows to the other side of the stream, but there was no foothold left by which they could cross dry-shod.

"Swim!" said Tim, briefly, and sent his steed down the bank. The others followed, and in a few minutes the surface of the stream was dotted with black figures. The river being sluggish, with little or no current, they found no difficulty in crossing, and speedily gained the opposite bank. Climbing the slope on to the flat land, they regained the line of road, and once more urged their horses to full speed.

The moon arose, round and bright, making the whole scene cheerful with her kindly light. The fugitives looked back, but could see no sign of pursuit. Even the town had vanished. Behind, before, lay nothing but the immensity of the plains. It was as though they were in the midst of a leaden-hued sea. The appearance of the moon raised their spirits, and they redoubled their speed. Centeotl was now comparatively near. The ground began to show signs of cultivation. Hedges of cacti ran along the sides of the road, bearing fleshly looking flowers of tawny gold. Right and left stretched gardens, environing country houses, and before them arose a white line of wall.

"Centeotl!" cried Don Sebastian, pushing forward.

The gates were closed owing to the fear of the townspeople lest the Indians should make a night attack. De Ahumada galloped on ahead, and reined his horse immediately under the walls. At intervals the sentinels called the one to the other, "Centinella alerte," to show that they were awake. The noise of the approaching horses brought them to the walls.

"Quien vive!"

"Amigos! From Janjalla."

The red light of torches glared from the low battlements, and in a few minutes the gates were opened. The officer in charge recognised Don Sebastian, and was much depressed at learning Janjalla had fallen.

"Dios! It is Centeotl next that Xuarez will capture," he said, disconsolately, and then led the fugitives to the house of the Jefe Politico.

That individual received them kindly, and gave them food and beds. He also promised them horses for the next morning, to push on to Tlatonac, but feared lest they should fall into the hands of the Indians, whom he believed were further north. The telegraph-wires between Centeotl and Hermanita had been destroyed by the savages. His town was now quite isolated in the plains. Only five hundred men were within its walls, and he expected it would be shortly besieged and captured by Don Hypolito, unless aid arrived from the capital.

During the night straggling parties of soldiers arrived from Janjalla for refuge. All brought the same tale. Janjalla was nearly in ruins, as the rebels had fired many houses, and the bombs and cannon had smashed others. Xuarez had kept all his men in the town, and was doing his best to reduce them to order; but many were beyond his control. There was no pursuit in any case. It was reported that he would throw forward two regiments of cavalry next day, to attack Centeotl.

"Santissima!" said the Jefe, in despair; "we are lost, Señores.

When you arrive at Tlatonac, tell his Excellency that I am faithful to the Junta, but that my town is too weak to hold out against the rebels."

De Ahumada promised and shortly afterwards, thoroughly worn out, they all composed themselves to sleep. It was impossible, however, to get much repose, as the constant arrival of fugitives, the clattering of horses through the streets, and the murmur of many voices, kept them awake. At dawn they were up at once, mounted fresh horses, and rode away from the town in the direction of Hermanita, twenty miles away.

They reached that town in two hours, and found the inhabitants in a state of terror. The Indians had been threatening for the last week, and had been scouring the country to the south. Now they had gone north, and, it was believed, with the intention of making an attack on the Puebla de los Naranjos. Nor did the news brought by Jack and his friends reassure them in any way. What with the Indians in the north, and Xuarez threatening them in the south, there was no doubt that Hermanita was in a terrible fix. As had Centeotl, they also implored Don Sebastian to ask Gomez to send aid, lest they should fall victims to the rebels or to the Indians.

After taking a hurried meal, the fugitives once more proceeded on their way to the north. Towards noon they struck Puebla de los Naranjos, and found it a heap of ruins. Undefended as were the other towns by stone walls, the town was surrounded by orange groves, and had therefore been easily captured by the

Indians. A few terrified survivors crept about the ruins of their houses, the streets were thick with dead bodies, and the whole place presented a scene of unexampled desolation. Those folks who survived said that the Indians had plundered the town two days previously, and had then departed with the intention of taking Chichimec. As this city was only distant twenty miles from the capital, the little party was quite appalled at the audacity of the savages. It showed how little they cared for the power of the Republic.

"If Gomez had crushed this rebellion at once, all would have been well," said Jack, as they rode from the smoking ruins of Puebla de los Naranjos; "but now it seems as though the Indians and Xuarez were going to have it all their own way."

"Gomez should have placed the command of affairs in the hands of a competent man, and not meddled with them," replied Philip, impatiently. "He keeps all his army in the capital, and lets the country be laid waste. The end will be that all the inland towns will join with Xuarez, and the capital will be besieged. With the whole of Cholocaca against it, the capital must fall."

"Unless the Junta can capture or sink the two remaining warships of Xuarez," said Don Sebastian, who was fearfully enraged at the destruction of the country.

"True! Then Xuarez won't be able to get more troops from Acauhtzin."

"He has got quite enough troops, as it is to make things unpleasant for the capital," said Tim, in Spanish, for the benefit

of Don Sebastian. "Six thousand at Janjalla – five thousand Indians. Quite enough to invest the town. The Junta has but eight thousand troops in Tlatonac."

"Well, that's a good number!"

"Yes; but what with his own troops and the savages, Xuarez has three thousand to the good. Besides which, he is a capable general."

"If the Indians could only be detached from his cause, the rebellion might be crushed," said Jack, ponderingly. "It is the only way of saving the present Government."

"There is no chance of doing that," replied Tim, disconsolately. "The Indians are mad about the loss of the opal, and will fight like fiends to get it back."

"Perhaps they can be quietened by means of the opal!"

"Dios!" exclaimed Sebastian, turning in his saddle. "What mean you, Señor?"

"I have an idea," replied Jack, quietly. "It was suggested to me by a remark of Cocom's."

"And this idea?"

"I will not tell you at present, lest I should fail to carry it out, and thus disappoint your hopes. Wait till we reach Tlatonac."

"If we ever do get there," muttered Philip, savagely. "Now we are half way to Chichimec, gentlemen. There, according to report, the Indians are camped. I vote we make a detour, and reach Tlatonac in some other way. Do you know of a road, Don Sebastian?"

"No, Señor. I know not this country."

"I do!" cried Duval, suddenly. "I have been all over this portion. That is a good idea of yours, Philip! We must avoid the Indians. I know a road!"

"Bueno! Take the lead."

It was fortunate, indeed, that Philip suggested such an idea, and that Jack's knowledge of the country enabled them to carry it out, else they would assuredly have fallen into the hands of the Indians. Making a detour towards the coast, they managed to avoid Chichimec by some miles. They learned from a peon, whom they met making his way to Tlatonac, that the town was entirely invested by the savages, but that as yet, thanks to the strong walls, they had been unable to effect an entrance. The Jefe Politico had sent this peon to the capital with a request for immediate aid from Don Francisco.

"What, in God's name, can the President be thinking about?" cried Jack, on hearing this intelligence. "He is simply playing into the hands of his enemies."

"Things certainly look bad for the Junta, owing to his negligence. Janjalla captured by Xuarez. Puebla de los Naranjos ravaged, Chichimec invested. Perhaps, when the whole country is in the hands of Don Hypolito, this very wise ruler will bestir himself."

"Wait till I have a conversation with Don Miguel!" muttered Jack, striking the spurs into his horse. "We are outsiders, and cannot interfere with local politics; but it makes me sick to see

how Gomez is fooling away his chances. If I can only rouse Don Miguel into making things hot for the President, I shall do so!"

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