

CAMP FIRE TALES OF

# LOST MINES and Hidden Treasure



\$3,000,000 Villa Cache

~~~~~  
Inca Golden Sun God

~~~~~  
Bense Lost Silver Mine

~~~~~ and others



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Hidden Treasure

BY ROBT. G. FERGUSON



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# Introduction

By

FRANCIS FLAGG

In this engrossing collection of tales of lost mines and hidden treasure by Mr. Ferguson, himself a discoverer of a rich gold placer he was unable to relocate, the reader may ask himself how many of these legendary stories are based on fact and not imagination.

But to one who has travelled on foot with a pack-burro through the far lonely reaches of the Southwestern desert with its sweep of greasewood and cactii, its sudden mountain ranges with their eternal similarity as to topographical features, the difficulty of fixing land-marks correctly in the mind, is at once apparent.

Yet despite this, many lost mines have been rediscovered, enough of them to prove that there is more fact than fiction back of the scores of lost mines and buried gold stories.

Only recently an incident verifying this has come to light. In the *Western Story Magazine* dated February 6, 1937 (Mines and Mining Department), appears the personal account of one, F. W. Harrington, who tells how he and some others rediscovered a lost Indian placer digging in Butte County, California.

The account of the lost Indian placer was fantastic. According to the current yarn, years ago a certain redskin took rich quantities of gold out of a placer he worked. But in the course of nature, he sickened and eventually died, after which a landslide covered up his tools, sluice box, and all signs of his location.

This certainly seemed a story scarce worth the credence, but note the sequence.

Harrington located the ground and actually unearthed the sluice box and encountered pay-dirt containing coarse gold estimated at \$2.00 per pan—approximately \$3,000 to the yard.

Harrington and his partners now have the rich placer diggings and the gold in the old Indian's discovery will soon be theirs.

No—the old tales of lost mines and buried treasure cannot be lightly dismissed. Besides being interesting stories of adventure in a vast mystery land, they serve to show that the Golden Southwest still holds fabulous fortunes in gold and silver for the adventurous to discover.

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## Villa's Three Million Dollar Gold Cache

Eighty bars of gold bullion! Ninety pounds to the bar! That means over three million dollars in any man's money. And all of those bars save two—unless they have been recovered recently—are cached in the wildest region of the Sierra Madre Mountains, below the border in Old Mexico. The two excepted bars lie in quicksands under the turgid waters of the Rio Grande.

Jack Shelton (for reasons the reader can readily surmise, this name and that of Alizana used in the narrative are fictitious) told me of this huge treasure. "At least five hundred men," he said, "lost their lives to protect or to recover it."

About thirty years ago, Shelton's father built a railroad in Mexico, his son, a mere youngster, being with him at the time. The father was acquainted with Pancho Villa before he became widely known; in fact he and his brother engaged in business transactions with that redoubtable-to-be-chieftain. Young Shelton learned to talk Mexican-Spanish like a native. Furthermore, he established friendly relations with Villa and with some of the men later to win prominence as Villa's lieutenants. When Villa finally rose in armed rebellion and took the field, writing history with machinegun bullets and peon machetes below the international boundary line, young Shelton, a college-produced metallurgist and engineer minus the degree, managed (because of his personal acquaintance with Villa) to get sent to Mexico to gather news material on the bloody fracas being waged there. Shelton could write legible king's English, but he was no finished correspondent. However, the colorful facts of the campaign were what the Chicago daily wanted from him; their re-write men could do the rest. And Shelton got them the news hot from the battlefields. When other war correspondents were comfortably housed fifty miles from the scene of the conflict, Shelton was with Villa's troops in action, getting first-hand information. Thus he cemented friendships already made with the bandit chieftain's officers and was enabled to make the acquaintance of still others.

Now for some time Pancho Villa met with unprecedented success. Deserters from the ranks of other parties joined his forces. During this period his army over-ran a good portion of northern and central Mexico and he accumulated a vast amount of gold and silver treasure. This immense wealth was generally in the form of bullion. His brother, Hipolito Villa, stationed at San Antonio, El Paso, or some other one of the cities on the American side of the border, looked after the business of exchanging this gold and silver for ammunition and other supplies needed by the Villa army.

Here a word as to Pancho Villa is necessary. He had received his

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inspiration and enthusiasm at the feet of the ill-fated Madera, the idealist who placed the love of country and humanity above every other earthly consideration. At the close of a talk made by Madera whilst giving him his commission, the illiterate Villa exclaimed, "General, you have painted a beautiful picture in my heart today!"

But the horrors and cruelties of warfare, the disappointments resulting from the drunkenness and undependability of his brother, the disloyalty and treachery of friends and the malignity of enemies, gradually effaced this beautiful picture from his heart. At the battle of ~~C~~Cilaya, he was a wild, raging animal immune to any consideration for human life or of sympathy for the suffering, and for three days made desperate onslaughts, driving his men to frightful slaughter against the entrenched barricades of the enemy. At close of the third day, he was completely broken and hurriedly retreated, leaving on the field of battle, piled high in criss-cross windrows, thousands and thousands of men and horses—the back-bone and flower of his army. This battle was the turning point in the rebellion; Obregon lost an arm—and Villa, the war. But when the latter retreated from Cilaya, he had with him a large quantity of bullion in the shape of gold bars. So much Shelton told me; and, his words were confirmed by a prior source of information given me regarding this treasure.

Cilaya

Some years before, while acting as superintendent of a cotton ranch, I had in my employ a Mexican of more than ordinary ability as a water engineer. He was close-mouthed as to his past, though it was not this which set him aside from the other employees since most of them were derelict drifters from many lands with no desire to talk of yesterday or the day before. It was his quiet dignity and air of competent strength which inspired my respect. We became friendly, and one night after he had had a few drinks of tequilla, he told me some things about his past life.

He had (so he said) been one of Villa's most trusted generals, yet nonetheless he deserted his chief, the desertion coming about in this way. Shortly after the retreat from Cilaya, he got advance information of an immense quantity of gold bullion coming into camp and felt certain that Villa would place it in hiding for a time. He also felt positive that the bandit chief would select him to convoy the treasure to its hiding place. This he dreaded. Trusted lieutenants who buried Villa's gold had a fatal habit of departing this world shortly thereafter. There could (he said) be no such thing as refusing the job, if commanded to do it by Villa, so deeming discretion the better part of valor, he stole away from the Villa camp and made for the border. In our subsequent talks on this subject, we wondered who convoyed the gold to its hiding place and what, ultimately, became of it. Shelton's story was the answer to this question. Though he knew Villa had immense treasure in gold bullion, he returned to the United States without knowledge as to what disposition had been made of it. Then, a few years later, whilst making an engineer's report on a mining property near Santa Rita, he was surprised to recognize in the person of a ragged ore mucker, a man he had long supposed dead.

This was no other than General Alizana, a one time close friend and trusted lieutenant of Pancho Villa. Shelton gripped him by the hand. "Lord, man, I thought you got wiped out in that battle with General Blanco I heard of. What the devil are you doing, mucking ore? Come! knock off for the day and let's have a drink."

Over their glasses in a nearby cantina, General Alizana remarked sadly: "As you see, *senor*, a change! But who regards a peon? It is sometimes well to be humble and unknown. I have been that—as the good saint willed—waiting for fortune's wheel to turn. And now—are you not here?"

"What do you mean?" asked Shelton. "How can I help you?"

"You can help me," said the other slowly, "and I can help you—maybe—to millions."

Of course Shelton's curiosity was aroused, and of course he showered the other with questions which, Alizana, being a cautious man, did not answer all at once but only by degrees, as he felt more secure of the other's goodwill and co-operation. Put briefly, this is the story he told Shelton.

After the battle of Cilaya (as already noted) Villa's star was setting and that of Obregon rising. The remnant of his army was in rags, without munitions, and on the point of starvation; it was urgently necessary for him to get supplies and equipment. It was then he turned the immense treasure of gold bullion over to General Alizana, with orders for him to transport it to the international boundary line near Texas and turn it over to Hipolito Villa who had gone ahead to arrange for getting it over the border into the United States, where it would purchase the sinews of war so badly needed by the rebel chieftain. General Alizana started north with five hundred men and the gold bullion. Only his nephew, a captain in his command, and three others, knew what the wagons carried. Unfortunately, en route to the border, he encountered a much stronger Federal force under the command of General Blanco. Defeat was inevitable, there was the gold to consider, so Alizana turned the command over to his second in command with orders to wage a running fight with Blanco and hold him in check as much as possible; then he and his nephew fled to the mountains with the wagon-train of bullion.

Far into the lonely fastnesses of the rugged wilderness they penetrated, turning and twisting to hide the trail. Finally, they hid the gold. Then they marked the spot. Not content with this, having no further need for the wagons, they hung wagon-wheels on mesquite trees for some distance, to better guide them to the gold should they ever return.

Meantime, in their absence, Alizana's small command of five hundred men had been annihilated by General Blanco. Realizing that Villa was done for, that the game was up, he and his nephew disguised themselves and made for the great republic to the north. Recognition would have meant a firing squad, without benefit of *manana*, but they were lucky enough to reach the border with bleeding feet and half-starved. Once in the United States, they went to work as peons.

As Alizana had foreseen, Villa's cause was lost; the rebel chief made terms with his enemies and retired to a ranch, where he was ultimately shot down from ambush by Government Deputy Jesus Barrazas. Under the circumstances, the two exiles felt that the gold was theirs and plotted and planned how to go back and recover it. But death took the Nephew (he was drowned in the Pueblo, Colorado, flood of 1922) before this could be accomplished. Alizana was now alone and knew that he must have help from some source, if he were to succeed in his designe, hence his willingness to confide in and trust Shelton.

"I raised five hundred dollars," said Shelton, "and we went to El Paso and hired three men, purchasing a supply of picks and shovels, ropes and other needed equipment. The men had no idea where they were going, of course. Two of them were left to guard our supplies placed in a cave and to watch the movements of the border patrol."

Before this, of course, Shelton and Alizana had made other arrangements and enlisted additional help. Two vaqueros from below Del Rio, along with the third man hired at El Paso, swelled their numbers to five as they crossed the border before daylight on a memorable morning.

For three days they rode hard over a dry, rugged desert, keeping well to the east of the Bolson-de-Mapimi. They skirted the foothills of the towering Sierra Madres until they reached that one of them known as Burro Mountain. Here they encountered traces of that three days' battle which left the bones of over five hundred men to bleach under desert skies. Two days later they came to the spot where Alizana and his nephew had burned the last of their wagons on the return trip from hiding the gold; and shortly thereafter found some of the wagon-wheels hung on limbs of mesquite trees at strategic points along the old route.

The hearts of the treasure-seekers leapt in them with exultation. It appeared as if they were going to find everything exactly as the General had enthusiastically described it. Finally they reached a point where a canyon broke the contour of the Sierra Madres.

The General had assured Shelton that this was the gulch up which the heavy wagons with their almost exhausted horses had been driven on that eventful day five years previous to this attempt to revisit the spot.

A watering hole was found, with an abundance of grass for their animals. Where a large encino tree cast welcome shade they pitched camp. As the nondescript bunch of helpers ate lunch, Alizana and Shelton took advantage of the interval to go ahead and survey the land. It was necessary to plan how they were going to recover the bars of gold bullion and pack them out of the mountains without, at the same time, revealing to the other men the location of the cache and the amount of treasure in it. They left camp with sufficient supplies to enable them to spend the night in the mountains. Suddenly they heard hoofbeats other than those made by their own horses. Then rounding a bend came trotting a score or more of khaki-clad Mexican soldiers, their broad sombreros glistening in the sunlight. The leader of this troop called out sharply in Spanish, "Who goes there?"



"Citizens of the United States," Shelton cried instantly, in the same tongue; but even as he cried out, the commandant gave the order and his men fired. Almost as promptly, General Alizana raised his gun. The commandant reeled and fell from his horse. Then the adventurers had wheeled their own mounts and were riding for their lives, firing back as they fled. Jumping several arroyos, they came into the main gulch. Shelton felt a sharp sting in his left arm and it went numb. Then, just as he came to a turn in the canyon where a deep gulch led off to the left, the impact of a bullet pierced his left heel and his horse fell heavily, crushing the wounded leg against the grinding gravel in the bottom of the gulch. Well was it for him that his horse fell in the gulch. The whooping soldiers passed without stopping and went thundering down the canyon in pursuit of Alizana. He heard one of them shout, "We'll come back for the gringo later!"

The horse was dead. The bullet that wounded Shelton's heel had found its heart. He crawled down the deep gulch, off to the left, and so continued for perhaps three miles before coming out of the canyon at a place where, by an almost superhuman effort, he managed to climb over a cactus-covered mesa into another small canyon or gulch. For what he reckoned thirty-six hours, he lay hidden ere venturing into open country.

How he ever made the Rio Grande is one of those eternal mysteries. It took him a week of nightmare torture. The two men were still at the cave on the Texas side of the river. From the cave he managed to reach Deming, New Mexico, where he got medical treatment. Thus, the first attempt to recover Villa's gold bullion ended disastrously.

But despite this initial failure, Shelton was more eager than ever to return to the Sierra Madres and make another effort at unearthing the treasure. He looked around for a partner to interest in the enterprise, but before he approached any one, to his huge surprise General Alizana reappeared on the scene. Shelton had given him up for dead. But though he had been captured by his pursuers and tortured with refined cruelty, the erstwhile Villa lieutenant had managed to escape while the soldiers were conducting him to their chief—and to certain death. His spirit was still unbroken and he readily agreed to guide another expedition which Shelton again financed.

As before, men were secured at El Paso—this time two. A short distance above Del Rio, they established camp. This time Shelton decided he would stay at the rendezvous and study the habits of the border patrol both sides of the river, whilst the General and the two helpers went to the Sierra Madres to bring back two to four of the gold bars.

This time the trip and the job of uncovering the hidden gold was accomplished with little or no trouble. Leaving his two helpers at the Encino tree where the party had pitched camp before, Alizana went alone to the granite gash where the gold lay and, with native ingenuity and strenuous efforts, succeeded in hoisting out two bars of bullion, which he then wrapped in burlap and brought back on mules. In due time,

the expedition arrived on the Mexican side of the border river and the bullion was secreted in a shed. Shelton crossed the river to inspect the bars. He saw the neatly stitched leather covering outside a plain canvas bag which encased each precious bar. He saw the stamp of identification imbedded on the ends of the bars. Again wrapping the bullion in its coverings of burlap, they awaited the hour of midnight. At that hour, Shelton gave the signal from the north bank of the Rio Grande and Alizana and the two helpers—the General leading, followed by a helper on a pony leading by a rope one of the pack mules carrying both bars of gold in saddle pockets, followed by the other helper—attempted to cross the boundary line.

With as much silence as possible, they entered the waters of the river, the last barrier between the two treasure hunters and fortune.

But alas and alas! though Shelton had studied the habits of the border patrol both sides of the river, and proved more or less correct as to the whereabouts of the American guard, he woefully miscalculated the time at which the patrol on the Mexican side would appear on the scene. As the treasure train with its escorts—those two gold bars were valued at \$35,000 each, remember!—approached the middle of the river, the splashing of the waters by the hoofs of a rear animal attracted the attention of an inopportune Mexican guardsmen. This worthy immediately opened fire. The General—perhaps one of the best shots ever to come out of old Mexico and not slow to exercise his talent—returned the fire with deadly effect.

Whether the Mexican guard's first shot struck the mule carrying the gold will never be known, but when the smoke of battle cleared away, both the helpers and their mounts had vanished, whilst the mule bearing the precious cargo was lost in the quicksands beneath the swirling waters below the ford.

This time the General was wounded in the arm, but he and Shelton managed to escape without detection. So the second attempt to salvage Pancho Villa's gold bullion ended as had the first—in disaster.

Two years later, General Alizana felt the urge to return to his native haunts. Despite a disguise, he was recognized and taken to a place called Villa Ahumado, where he was 'dobie-walled. It is said the General met his fate with stoical resignation. Thus ended the only man who knew the abiding place of Pancho Villa's hidden gold—the only man with the exception of Shelton.

Now a word as to the topography of the country in which the Villa treasure lies hidden.

Just east of the waste of blistering sands known as the Llanos de Gigantes lies the terrible Bolson de Mapimi—the yellow floor of a vanquished dead sea where, for scores of kilometers, no water exists and the only sound of life is the flapping of vulture wings—vultures circling overhead as if calculating how long it will be before they can gather around a festal board.

Then to the east of this drear expanse rises the foothills of the Sierra

Madre Mountains, and in a cleft in a rock of one of these foothills known as Burro Mountain—covered with conejo weed—lies the gold bullion hid by the General.

This is a wild, weird country, and the desert is strewn at frequent intervals with the skeletons of stout-hearted adventurers whose bones apparently never decay, but always seem to admonish the wayfarer. Beware, beware!

## *Nigger Bense' Lost Silver Mine*

About the year 1878, his term of enlistment having expired, a colored soldier by the name of Benson was mustered out of the service at old Fort Huachuca. Nigger Bense, as he was familiarly known, was a typical old-time Southern darkie who had served Uncle Sam in the army for a good many years. Whilst doing so, a great deal of his time had been spent as a member of the Border Patrol, scouting long the line between Arizona and Mexico, to the west of Nogales, with his headquarters at old Fort Huachuca.

This was about the beginning of the hectic days that have gone down in the history of the great Southwest as the "Heldorado Days" of old Tombstone. From a very small village, Tombstone grew to be the center of a seething mass of humanity, a city of world-wide reputation and numbering, over a considerable boom period when some of the richest silver mines in the country were being worked full-blast, a population of at least fifteen thousand as tough hombres as every handled drill or toled side-arms.

As soon as he was discharged from the army service, Nigger Bense went to the reckless roaring gambling town of Tombstone. He was a wonderfully agile and graceful dancer. He would go from saloon to gambling hall and from one resort to another, performing his own special rendition of jig dancing, a solo performance something akin to the tap dancing of a later period. As he danced, the money-mad miners and prospectors would toss quarters, dollars, and even gold eagles, at his feet, and Nigger Bense would stoop and gather in the coins without losing a step in his rhythmical cavorting. He had considerable of the gambling blood in his veins and, in order to give the game more interest, made it a rule that whenever through some inadvertency or awkwardness he did miss a step whilst reaching for the money, all of the money at that time lying on the floor would be tossed back to their donors, along with double the amount of their individual antes. As Nigger Bense always managed to miss a step occasionally, the spirit of adventure was whetted and crowds followed him from place to place, throwing their money at his feet with the hope of being lucky enough to cash in on a winning mis-step.

At the time Nigger Bense checked out of the army at Fort Hauchuca another colored soldier known as Nigger Bob also received his honorable discharge. For a good many years he had served with Nigger Bense on

the border patrol and they were good friends. After going to Tombstone, Nigger Bense confided to Nigger Bob the fact that while serving as a border patrolman he had, through the friendship of an old Yaqui Indian, learned the location of a fabulously rich silver deposit, what he called a mine that was a mine, one that would develop enough silver, as he expressed it, to pay the national debt. However, he would tell no one where this rich silver deposit was located. He did tell Nigger Bob that he would make out some sort of will or document, giving explicit directions how to find the mine, in case of his death, and leave it where Nigger Bob could get possession. However, Nigger Bob died with his boots on before ever receiving such a paper. So far as is known this was the only gesture Nigger Bense ever made towards passing out information regarding location of his bonanza.

Immediately after telling friends about his knowledge of the fabulously rich silver mine, Nigger Bense outfitted himself with a three-burro pack train and started alone for his old stamping grounds along the border, below Fort Huachuca. No one paid much attention to his absence as it was thought that Nigger Bense knew more about dancing and drinking booze than he did about prospecting. But in about ten days, to every one's huge astonishment, he returned to Tombstone with three hundred pounds of the richest silver glance ever shown in that hell-roaring metropolis. Old timers who saw the stuff agreed that it was the richest, or the nearest to pure silver they had ever seen taken out of the ground in this part of the world. (At least they assumed that Nigger Bense had taken it out of the ground; but what particular piece of ground and where located no one knew or could guess).

Assays made by the purchasing banker showed the metal to be almost virgin silver. This first three hundred pound load brought Nigger Bense \$500. But the banker, a fellow by the name of Woods, made a great deal more out of the transaction than did Nigger Bense. Once every two months, over a period of three years, Nigger Bense drove his pack train of three burros into the hills and returned from every such trip with approximately the same quantity of silver glance, for which he received the same amount of cash from banker Woods.

Naturally Nigger Bense became a most popular fellow around Tombstone. Hotel-keepers, bar-tenders, show-girls, in fact everybody in town, showered him with favors of various kinds. He was scarcely allowed to spend any of his easily earned cash, which seemed a small fortune to him, after his first trip to the mysterious silver ledge down near the border. Money soon became to Nigger Bense nothing more than a pile of coin to stack up at one corner of a gambling table; something to take the place of the red and blue chips in the great game of life. He continued to dance for the edification of the tenderfeet and for the amusement of the gamblers, miners and prospectors who frequented the public houses of this wild raw city of the wilderness. And, on occasion, Nigger Bense was known to indulge in the flowing bowl.

"Hah! now we have him! He will give himself away when liquor

loosens his tongue." Thus thought some of the wild adventurers willing to eliminate the color-line if only they could get old Nigger Bense drunk enough to tell them where his silver mine was located. But it so happened that when Nigger Bense got drunk, he also got "tight." The drunker he got, the tighter he got.

Of course frequent attempts were made to follow him on his trips and he was trailed beyond Fairbanks around to the north of Fort Huachuca and then, in a southwesterly direction, toward the old Tumacacori Mission, the very region in which so many fabulously rich strikes of silver ores have found their burial places during the centuries since the Spaniards first came into this country, but here, he invariably eluded his pursuers.

The sheriff who, with his deputies, maintained order in and around Tombstone during the Heldorado Days was a man named Slaughter. His principal deputy is given credit for once having arrested Nigger Bense on some trivial charge. Perhaps he put a few shots into the town's lighting system or indulged in some other such playful prank. With Nigger Bense safely esconsed in jail, this arm of the law conceived the bright idea of making him reveal the location of his silver mine. Seemingly he had little difficulty in extracting a promise from him to give truthful directions in exchange for freedom. But once free, Nigger Bense developed a sudden loss of memory and insisted he could not recollect making any such promises.

About this time it was known that Banker Woods had a confidential chat with Nigger Bense and it was thought that he strongly advised him against taking in partners or revealing the location of his mine to any one. The banker was known to have made considerably more out of the shipments or ore brought in by Nigger Bense than he could possibly hope to make from the same ore mined and sent to market by a well organized group of business men. Therefor he was interested in keeping Nigger Bense a near-broke good spender with a source of plenty available that only required a periodical trip of ten to fourteen days to contact.

But finally came the day when Nigger Bense did the last tap dancing he was ever fated to do in the dance-halls and bars that straggled along the main stem of Tombstone. "Ah'm goin'," he said, and outfitted himself for a journey to the mysterious location of his rich silver ledge. Envious eyes followed him as he gaily prodded his burros out of town; many watched and waited for his return, among them Banker Woods; but the days passed, and the weeks and months, and he did not return: Nigger Bense was never again seen in the haunts of men.

What happened to him? No one knows for certain. But enough evidence exists to make people believe that Nigger Bense was returning to Tombstone with his three burros heavily loaded with rich silver glance when disaster befell him. Tracks showed that the burros had turned west instead of coming the regular route eastward to Tombstone.

Undoubtedly the men who sought to trail him to his lost silver mine

failed to do so but way-laid and murdered him on his return trip and stole his ore.

So the old timers believed, and such was the opinion of Mart Taylor, pioneer ranchman of the Tombstone country, who told me the story.

"Out there," he said, pointing southward to where rugged mountains and lonely canyons make terra incognita along the Mexican border; "out there, somewhere, lies Nigger Bense' fabulously rich silver glance ledge for some lucky prospector to find."

But to date, no prospector has.

## *The Lost Planchas de Plata Ledge*

The Southwest is glamorous with its tales of lost gold and silver mines. Long before the coming of the Jesuit fathers, and of Spanish adventurers into Northern Mexico and Southern Arizona (the Pimeria Alta of the Spaniards), the natives worked many mines. Yaqui Indians knew of rich mineral deposits and the Spanish invaders learned of their location from them. The missions established by Father Kino at Guevavi and Tumacacori (according to Hinton) engaged extensively in mining, using Indian labor. But the strictness of mission life, coupled with the excesses of the Spanish adventurers whom the padres sought vainly to control, led to many Indian uprisings. Those uprisings forced the missions to abandon mining and drove the white invaders out of Pimeria Alta for many years, during which time the Indians filled up many valuable workings and destroyed landmarks so that the locations of them were irretrievably lost. Among the mines so lost was the fabulously rich silver mine called by the Spaniards the **Planchas de Plata** (Plates of Silver).

Probably long before the Spaniards' time, Aztecs worked the Planchas de Plata for silver to gild their temples and to fashion into utensils and barbaric adornments. Ore of incalculable richness had doubtless been taken from the mine by them, and yet, seemingly, an inexhaustible store remained for the adventurers and to flow into the coffers of the Spanish crown. It beggars the imagination to try and compute how much free silver this mine held (and still holds.)

During the short period it was in possession of the Spaniards, sheets of pure native silver were stripped from the walls of the mine. The sheets were described as being flexible when first mined but soon hardened on exposure to the elements. Two of these sheets call for special mention. I almost hesitate to set down what the Spanish accounts state was their official weight. One weighed 149 arrobas, and the other 21 arrobas. When I tell you that an arroba is equal to 25 pounds, you will grasp the magnitude of the statement. The sheet said to weigh 149 arrobas (3725 lbs.) had to be reduced in a furnace before the crude transportation facilities of that day could handle it. The approximate amount of silver

glance extracted by the Spaniards in the short time they worked the mine before the Indians drove them out, is put at 400 arrobas; or in other words, came to the stupendous weight of about ten thousand pounds or five tons.

I am told that in "An Essay on the Mineral Resources of Northern Sonora", by Don Manuel Retez, written shortly after the Spaniards worked the mine, that mention is made of the lost Planchas de Plata. Bancroft alludes to it in his history of Mexico and Arizona and I have already said that Hinton does. And of course there are the old documents in the historical archives of Mexico City. When Count Rousseth de Bourbon made his celebrated trip of exploration into Sonora, it was to search for the Planchas de Plata, and for yet another silver mine said to lie several leagues to the south of it.

According to Spanish sources, the location of the lost Planchas de Plata mine was within a league east of the junction,  $31\frac{1}{2}$  degrees north,  $111\frac{1}{2}$  degrees west, of Greenwich.

A story said to be based on the statement of an old Yaqui Indian considered truthful, is to the effect that the Planchas de Plata was about four leagues southwest of old Tumacacori mission. However that may be, no white man's eye, since the Spaniards fled before the attacks of Indians in those early days, has seen the lost Planchas de Plata.

No white man's eye. But did a black man's? Was the lost Planchas de Plata the source of that fabulously rich silver glance Nigger Bense brought periodically into Tombstone on the backs of his plodding burros and sold to Banker Woods? It is impossible to say. Only the similarity of the ore to that mined by the Spaniards, its unbelievable richness, coupled with the fact that it was found in the same vicinity as the lost Planchas de Plata, would incline one to think so.

Nigger Bense is dead, his secret buried with him; dust for centuries now have been the bones of those Indians who filled up the mine and obliterated all trace of its existence. But some day—almost inevitably—some lone prospector, some group of mining men or explorers making their way through those lonely hills and canyons near the international boundary line, will find the fabulous lost Planchas de Plata, as perhaps did Nigger Bense.

I wonder who those lucky men will be.

## Following "Mose"

I had spent part of the winter camped on the old La Paz Placers, to the northwest of Quartzsite, Arizona. In the glamorous gold-rush days back in '49, many overland pioneers travelling via Tyson Wells passed directly over, or within a few miles of the rich gold placer sands of this region, without suspecting that they were passing up fabulous fortunes in yellow metal.

The La Paz placers were discovered by that mysterious fur-hunting mountain man, Paulino Weaver, a decade or so before the turn of the nineteenth century (about 1862), and soon thereafter this region became a beehive of placer miners and camp-followers. It is estimated that, at the peak of its boom, ten thousand miners were sifting its rich dirt, and taking out plenty of gold—some as high as \$100 per day. At a later period, the same ground was gone over again and again with dry washers of various kinds and sufficient gold recovered to exchange for frijoles and other necessary living requirements of those who lived the free and easy life of the gambuzino. Perhaps with more perfect methods and the application of, as yet, undiscovered chemical and electrical processes, larger fortunes than were taken out in the olden days may be recovered from those desert sands. However, it is not my intention to write a treatise on early day mining or the merits of modern methods of gold extraction. I am only endeavoring to relate the story of an enormously rich placer that I discovered and lost in this region and to set the stage, as it were, for those readers not acquainted with the locality, and to make it clear that, past, present or future, this is gold country where desert rats have discovered and lost fortunes, and that in following "Mose" I was taking a legitimate chance on striking it rich.

During my sojourn on the La Paz placers I had made the acquaintance of a typical old-time prospector. Sun, sand, and snow had weathered his tough body to the consistency of gnarled oak. Fifty years had he prospected the gold fields of North America; fifteen of those years in Alaska, hunting the precious metal from White Horse Canyon to the Arctic Circle. Of late years, however, his prospecting had been confined to the land of the wheezy whine of the dry washers.

In confidential chats around the winter campfire, he told me of a wonderfully rich gold-vein he claimed to have seen some two hundred fifty miles to the north of La Paz. After endless discussions as to the possibility of developing his discovery, I decided to take a chance and join the old fellow on a trip to the lode.

Spring was beginning to advance on the desert. From day to day the sun shone warmer and numerous wild bees began to suck honey from the catclaw blooms. At such times I always start suffering from what the highbrows call wanderlust, but for which there is a homelier name—itchy feet. "All right," I said to the old prospector, "it's a bargain. Fifty-fifty on what we strike. Let's get going." We struck hands to seal the bargain and set the day.

Aside from his meagre camp equipment, "Mose" was the chief possession and pride of the old prospector, and a unique burro he was. His hide was mouse-colored, his ears as long as those of a jack-rabbit, and he generally stood with his eyes closed and a deceptive air of humbleness; but woe-betide the unwary dog or stranger that too closely approached his hind quarters. I have heard of men who would share their last crust with a favorite dog; but I am sure the old prospector would



have given this ornery mountain anary of his all of the crust and gone without himself.

It was a clear sunny morning when we started, Mose loaded down with cooking utensils, bedding, tugging outfit, and a complete hand-operated dry washer—all arranged at various vantage points on his stolid anatomy.

Two roads led out of camp, both meandering along in a northerly direction. "Well," I queried, "which do we take?"

To my astonishment the old prospector replied that he didn't know. Since he had repeatedly assured me in our talks that he could go directly to the rich lode, I naturally began to experience some feelings of misgiving which I probably made verbal. He then explained that once upon a time he had cleared up an acre of mesquite brush on Mose's phlegmatic hide persuading him that he was wrong in his desire to take a certain left-hand road. Mose was finally convinced and proceeded to the right; but to his disgust, the old prospector later learned that a rich strike had been made a short distance ahead on the road Mose had wanted to dent with his four hooves. Since when, he explained, he left the choice of roads to Mose. After a few sarcastic remarks I laughed and decided that maybe the old fellow had a good reason for deferring to the burro's guidance. "Okay," I said. "As long as he heads in the general direction of the North Star I'm with you."

It was about noon of the second day out that Mose landed us in the midst of as strange a performance as the eyes of a white man could rest upon, the crematory ceremonies accorded a deceased member of a certain well-known Indian tribe.

The funeral pyre was built of mesquite poles, thickly criss-crossed with arrow weeds, to the height of four feet. This pyre was so constructed that the corpse placed atop of it would fall to the center when it collapsed. The Indians gathered around the pyre were in full tribal regalia, with an abundance of feathers and gaudy-colored paints. At a signal from the chief a torch was applied to the pyre and the whole band of mourners gave voice to a weird, wailing chant which grew louder and louder as the flames mounted high. The frenzied wailing and dancing reached a climax when the pyre collapsed and the corpse dropped. According to Indian theology, this is the moment when the spirit of the dead leaves the body and makes its flight to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

What ceremony, if any followed the collapse of the funeral pyre, I do not know, since Mose grew restless and insisted that we be again on our way in the general direction of Old Polaris.

It would be too tedious to give every detail of our trek northward. We paralleled the Colorado River to the west of us, rounded some foothills to the east, and at times made our way through low passes. After a few days of such going, the old prospector became upset and irritable over his failure to locate a certain watering place he had visited years before and felt certain of finding again. That night an oyster was no dumber as he brooded over our water tins and estimated how much of

the precious liquid still remained therein. Bright and early next morning we set out, husbanding the scant supply left us. Darkness forced us to halt and make a dry camp. All our five gallon cans were empty; only the canteens contained a little for coffee and to whet the gullets of the burros. To my huge surprise the old prospector (whom I would have thought inured to such mishaps) went to pieces and was so nervous that he could scarcely drink his coffee.

Now, before striking camp, a mile or so behind on the back trail, I had noticed against the nose of a mesa or cone projecting from the hills a splendid-looking formation of placer. A handful of clay picked up at this point had gold in it. At night I was restless, what with thinking of this likely spot, and by the time day dawned I had decided to go back and inspect it more closely. I told the old prospector about the gold in the handful of clay and asked him to put off breaking camp for two hours until I returned from dry-panning more of such dirt. We had hot words over this. He said I was a crazy tender-foot for wanting to do such a thing with water practically gone; that the sands of the desert were strewn white with the bones of such fools as myself who took time out for just one more look when they ought to be hitting it for a water hole; that if I wanted to commit suicide it was nothing to him, go ahead and be blankety-blanked. However, I was certain he would wait for me the necessary time since he had done so on request before; besides, I really expected to be back within the hour and felt that sixty minutes would scarcely strain his patience to the snapping point. Therefore I ignored his insulting and torrid flow of language and went back and made a test of one pan of dirt. It took some time to do this since the clay was tough and difficult to pulverize; but I persisted until I panned it down, and then—there it was—surpassing my fondest hopes—dozens of glittering nuggets rolling in the bottom of the pan.

Think of it. Gold! Loose nuggets of the precious metal. Gold! which buys power and luxury and feminine caresses, with which kings and emperors fashion imperial crowns. For the time being I forgot all about the cross old man, the arbitrary Mose and about the scarcity of water; forgot about the desert, my precarious position—about everything but the realization of this enormous wealth within my grasp; wealth that would enable me to do so many things I wanted to do for myself and others. I don't think a hop-head ever had a more rapturous hallucination than had I for a few delirious moments; then my sober senses returned. I must hurry back to camp at once, acquaint the old prospector with my strike, inform him that we would work this discovery instead of the lode he remembered somewhere to the north. So with a lively sense of passing time I hit the camward trail—only to discover that Mose and the old prospector had vanished, that nothing remained of the camp but an empty bean can and some grey wood-ash! And worst of all, the little water had vanished too! In a frenzy of cold fear I dodged in and out among the creosote bushes, the mesquite and sage,

sometimes going forward sometimes back, hunting signs of the course taken by the departed ones, but for a long time in vain. Then I stumbled on the trail. The old man had a peculiar crack in the sole of one shoe with ridged leather to each side and imprints of this I found at intervals where there was soft earth and sand. My first unreasoning fear left me and I became quite stoical and composed.

But as day wore on and I followed those few trail signs hour after hour with no glimpse of Mose or the old man, fear gripped me again and I could not restrain hysterical sobs nor stop the scalding tears from washing down my cheeks, though these latter I sought to prevent for fear the shedding of them would sap my body of what little moisture it possessed and so contribute to my undoing.

Terror lent me false strength. I kept going, most of the time at a run, and that night, just before sundown, I ran right into the outfit I so frantically sought. Not even gold, mountains of gold, gold beyond the wildest dreams of avarice looked fairer to me at that moment than did the sight of the old prospector and his ornery burro. The old prospector had discovered a water-hole, filled all cans, cooked supper, and was peacefully smoking his villainous-smelling pipe as if nothing untoward had happened. He merely remarked that he had made a big pot of coffee for me!

I said nothing. What was the use? But I revelled in that coffee and rolled into my blankets, too tired to feel anything but the most elementary sensations.

The next morning we got an early start and shortly thereafter reached the town of Topock on the Santa Fe railroad. There I informed the old prospector that I made him a free and ungrudging gift of my burro, utensils and bedding, and wished him goodluck and a long goodbye. Then I caught the first train heading for the big city and the bright lights where my job was demanding my return after an extended vacation, a job very necessary to the rehabilitation of my finances, and not until my next vacation did I attempt to go back to the rich placer I had found. But everything looked so strange and different in the desert, I quit in despair.

I have upbraided myself a thousand times for not having sat right down on the spot at the moment of discovery and making a rough sketch showing direction of all mountain peaks and of permanent land-marks. I did not realize at the time that there is a terrible sameness in the general sweep of desert country and that the mind is of all things the most undependable to rely on in trying to re-trace one's footsteps where hills, mesas, canyons seem to repeat themselves with monotonous regularity. But it is of no avail to upbraid myself now.

Yet it is out there—the placer I discovered—possibly millions in gold—waiting for some one luckier than myself to stumble upon again. If any one wants to take a chance on being that luckier person I can tell him this:

It's in a tough reddish yellow clay on the nose of a mesa about one and a half days by burro southeast of Topock, Arizona.

## The Golden Inca Sun God

How many people know that in the state of Texas, on the bank of the Brazos River, under seven veras of earth, a fabulous amount of gold lies buried? This immense cache includes the sacred, solid gold, jewel-bedecked image of an Inca Sun God, and other articles of solid gold. The curious may ask themselves how such a treasure ever reached what was centuries later to be the Lone Star State. By this hangs a tale so strange, so mixed with the romance of war and conquest, so colored with the glamor and rhythm of weird religious rites and strange customs, as to beggar the imagination.

The story of the lost Sun God is as authentic as the first report of the discovery of the Grand Canyon. Early Spanish explorers located this natural wonder of grandeur and beauty; but despite that, over a long period of a hundred thirty-six years, its existence was regarded as a myth.

As for the romantic story of the Sun God, it serves to show that man will forsake all, endure all, and continue to fight on and struggle to the breaking point through trackless jungles, over high and rugged mountains, and contend with the most frightful hardships, for GOLD, for the magic metal which can exchange for any necessity or luxury; and that can purchase any thrill the world affords, or the brain and heart of man desire—save two.

The beginning of it all goes back to the time when the great chief, Huayna Capac, ruled over the empire of the Incas. This was before coming of Pizarro and Almagro, the Spanish conquistadores. The Incas were sun worshippers and believed that all life and vitality came from the sun and that at death the soul went to the mansions of glory which existed in the regions of the sun. They held that the nuggets of gold so lavishly distributed in the rich virgin placers of Peru were the tears of the Sun God shed over the errors of his earthly children. Gold, therefore, was a sacred thing to the Incas and not an article of commerce or a medium of exchange. The Incan form of government was an absolute monarchy mildly administered, the history of which fades back into the dim dawn of tradition. The antiquity of the empire is well authenticated by the painted figures in the main Temple of the Sun at the sacred city of Cuzco. Class lines were strictly drawn, and the rights and privileges of each class or order were clearly defined. The peon type had little and expected little except a big time on fiesta days and a clinging faith that there would be a great day in the morning in the mansions of the sun.

Now at the time the story opens, the great Inca Huayna Capac was growing old, his god, the sun, no longer warmed his blood as of yore and he gave his thoughts over to the inexorability of death, and to reflections of the eternal life of which death was but the gateway. From the royal patio he watched the setting sun, its lingering rays touching

the two gorgeous feathers of the sacred bird, caraquenque, which rose from the llautu swathing his brows.

He thought of his empire, which had been greatly extended and enlarged under his reign, of his deeds of conquest and benevolence, of his warehouses filled with grain and woven cloths and all manner of rich merchandise, and his heart was glad within him because of the teeming plenty he would leave to his people and to the two sons between whom he had decided to divide his empire. Surely no Inca before him had ruled so wisely or accomplished so much, but now it was time to put his house in order. He called to his servants and bade them make ready for a feast, and he also summoned the damsels of his seraglio, the most beautiful and younger of whom danced before him, a ritual dance at once lascivious and holy; but none was slimmer or more graceful in the dance, or lovelier to look upon, than the Inca's favorite, Juari, and for the first time his heart grew heavy at the thought that soon he would see her no more or thrill to her tender caresses. But this heaviness of spirit he banished with the heady fermented liquor of the maguey and the maize. At his command she came to him where he reclined on the royal couch, the gorgeously colored curtains of fine-woven vacuna were drawn, and the night was theirs, and love.

But after all the Inca was an old man and the liquor loosened his tongue. He boasted of his youth and glory, of how he had brought the northern Empire of Quito under his sway, of the temples he had built in honor of the Sun God, and of the golden images he had placed therein. And then, under the spell of Juari's magnetic charm, he told her **THE GREAT SECRET**, known to but a few priests and himself alone, that the huge golden image raised to the sun and placed in the Paquen Caucha, the main temple of the sun, had secretly been conveyed to a hidden place years before, for safe-keeping, and one constructed of wood heavily veneered with gold set in its place. And he told her the exact whereabouts of the hidden image.

When the sun rose once more to dissipate the darkness of his world and to veil his sister the moon with celestial brightness, the Inca was carried forth to greet the rising god in the prescribed ceremonial fashion. Then realizing that his time was short, he caused his chief officers and nobles, together with the priests, to assemble before him, and in the presence of all he made known his will and divided the mighty Incan Empire between the two sons, Huascar and Atahualpa. Huascar had been born to him by his legal wife, and Atahualpa by his favorite concubine, a daughter of the last reigning monarch of Quito. To the first, he gave the south half of the empire, and to the second, the north half. In like manner he divided the grain in the warehouses, the woven cloths and the jewels of great price. All that he possessed, down to the regalia of the court and the inmates of the seraglio, he divided, and then he covered his face and was carried to an inner chamber where, some time after, he passed away.

Now for the time being the two brother princes were well pleased

with what their father had done—with one exception. Of the material things of domains and merchandise and jewels each had plenty and was satisfied. But when it came to the inmates of the seraglio, both brothers looked with desire on the lovely Juari and wished to possess her for his very own. Thus desire for a lovely woman started the fratricidal feud which sowed discord and unrest in the great Inca country and precipitated a cruel civil war for supremacy. This conflict raged with varying fortunes until Atahualpa managed to capture Huascar and put him in chains. But Atahualpa enjoyed his triumph for but a brief time. At this point Pizarro with his band of bold Spanish adventurers landed on the shores of the fabled land of gold.

Here a word as to Pizarro is necessary. The year 1519 found him in Panama and past fifty years of age. He had been in the New World twelve years and was still a penniless soldier of fortune. Yet in his mind a colossal scheme was taking shape—nothing less than to lead an expedition to explore an empire. Evidence as to the existence of this golden empire was very strong. Tales of Indians had led early Spanish explorers on many a wild goose chase, such as quest for the Seven Cities of Cibola, the Big Gold Country to The Northwest, the Fountain of Youth, which were always *poquito mas alla* (a little farther on). However, Pizarro had more to encourage him in his undertaking than had Ponce de Leon and other Spaniards in their quest. The Indian princess, Falvia, common-law wife of Vasco Nunez Balboa, told her husband of a great sea beyond the mountains, and of a fabled land of gold more than one hundred suns to the south which lay on its shores. This tale of a fabled golden land was certified to by one of Balboa's Indian guides who made a clay model of a llama. Inspired by such evidence, Balboa set out and discovered the Pacific in 1513, taking possession of the same in the name of the Spanish sovereigns. Then he started the huge task of building four brigantines in which to sail to the fabled land southward. The building of the ships required four years of arduous toil. Finally all was in readiness for the voyage. Unfortunately, Balboa went to Darien on business before making the trip, where he found that he had been supplanted as governor by Pedro Arias Davily. Balboa was importuned to set aside his Indian wife, Falvia, and marry the new governor's daughter. This he stubbornly refused to do. Even before Shakespeare wrote the immortal lines, hell had no fury like a woman scorned. The governor and his daughter connived to have Balboa arrested on a trumped-up charge, rushed to trial, condemned, and executed. Thus perished the noblest and most brilliant of all the Spanish Conquistadores.

Now Pizarro was with Balboa when he discovered the Pacific Ocean and had naturally heard all the stories of a land of gold to the south. He was fired with ambition to be the one to lead an expedition in search of it. But to outfit an expedition funds were needed. At this point he contacted Almagro, a fluent and convincing talker, and they

agreed mutually to promote such a voyage and to share equally in all its profits.

Mainly through Almagro's efforts, funds were raised, and soon thereafter Pizarro set sail in the boats built by Balboa for the fabled land of gold. The almost incredible story of how a handful of bold Spanish adventurers conquered one of the world's great empires has been told too often to need repeating here. Needless to say, Pizarro would have failed to triumph if it had not been for the division of interests among the Incans themselves. On November 16th, 1532, he seized and imprisoned Atahualpa, demanding from the Inca an immense ransom in gold for his release—enough gold to fill a room twenty-two veras by seventeen, as high as he could reach. Immediately, Atahualpa ordered his subjects to gather and bring in the requisite ransom.

From the temples of the sun, from hidden treasure houses, from many mines, over narrow mountain passes, by foot and on the backs of patient llamas, the loyal Incans brought to Pizarro untold wealth to buy the freedom of their chief. In the designated room gold, which would subsequently stabilize the tottering throne of Spain and lay the keel of the mighty Armada, grew higher and higher. Meantime Atahualpa brooded in his confinement, and it came to him that perhaps the Spaniards might dispose of him and raise his brother Huascar to the throne, so he secretly ordered his generals to put Huascar to death, which they did. Meantime, Pizarro and Almagro quarreled bitterly over the division of the enormous treasure of gold. In most all the upheavals and outbursts of people, when the war drums beat loud and fervor and enthusiasm run high, the under-dog furnishes the head for the battle-axe and bears the brunt of the battle. In this case, while many thousands of natives met death without the least idea as to what all the turmoil was about, the pot boiled over. Atahualpa had his brother strangled in his prison cell; Pizarro had Atahualpa garroted and Almagro beheaded. Then Almagro's son, at the head of a small band of men, assassinated Pizarro. Later, a friend of Pizarro slew Almagro's son. So went the bloody drama of conquest and death, of jealousy, hate, and avarice, and it was out of this seething maelstrom of human passions and conflicting factions that the solid gold image of the hidden Sun God emerged as part of the treasure of Peru which was to find its way to a hiding place in the soil of Texas.

Among Almagro's crew was a sub-officer of the gay, swaggering toreador type who managed to possess himself of the lovely Juari. She, on her part, fell madly in love with him, and knowing the terrible lust of the Conquistadores for gold divulged to her lover the exact whereabouts of the hidden golden sun god and other articles of the same precious metal. This fellow and six of his cronies seized the image and kindred treasure—only to find that they had a white elephant on their hands. They knew that little enough of this enormous wealth would be allotted them if they turned it over to Pizarro, so they debated long and earnestly how else to dispose of it. They were full-fledged

adventurers, inured to hardships and danger, and the enormous wealth represented by the image of the sun-god and other articles of solid gold was enough to make them risk anything for its retention. Thus it was they decided to desert Pizarro's band and flee northward. They could not hope to enter Darien or Panama to ship for the old world without having their treasure confiscated and themselves put to death for seeking to defraud the crown. Further north than those places, however, was Mexico, and futher again, land where ports might be found and transportation to Europe obtained without having to answer too many embarrassing questions. Equipping themselves with horses brought over from Spain and what camp supplies they could obtain, the little band secretly set out on the long hazardous trek northward.

And what a journey that must have been!

Beyond the boundary of the Incan Empire no roads or trails existed, only rugged mountain peaks, pathless jungles, and fever-infested swamps. Hostile Indians, wild beasts and venomous snakes were encountered. The day by day details of this terrible journey are unknown. Some of the adventurers fell by the wayside and the survivors interred their bodies in shallow graves and then toiled on.

Did the lovely Juari attempt this journey with her swaggering lover? And if so, did she meet death in some lonely mountain glen or dismal swamp? Was the Indian superstition fulfilled, that to show gold to the white man brought inevitable disaster and death? No one knows.

As their numbers dwindled, the adventurers recruited friendly Indian guides. I have always marveled at the ease with which the Spanish Conquistadores could obtain the aid of Indian guides willing to start on long perilous journeys of hundreds of miles. Maybe centuries of sameness had aroused in the Indian's soul a longing for change, for an experience foreign to anything he had hitherto known. Be that as it may, the little band had no difficulty in enlisting the services of Indian guides, when they were needed.

Northward, ever northward they toiled. Countless miles of untold hardships now lay behind them. At any moment they might stumble on camps or outposts of their kind. Before that they must discover some kind of a crucible wherein to melt down the golden sun god image and run it into ingots.

Still further north, they heard, was such a place on the banks of a river, and for this crude smelter they made with the energy of desperation. Sickness and battles with hostile Indians wofully depleted their numbers. According to the legend, only one of the group of adventurers survived to reach the smelter location.

Was this survivor the swaggering, truculent fellow who had bewitched the heart of the lovely Juari? As to that, we can only speculate. But if it was he, he was worn and weary now, with the malignant malarial fever gnawing at his body. Yet he was still hopeful, his tenacity and cunning had not forsaken him, though he and his Indian guides were hard pursued by warlike Commanches.



On reaching the site of the old smelter, he instructed the guides to dig twenty-one holes, seven veras deep, and then in the still hours of one memorable night, he crawled painfully forth and dropt the golden image of the sun god, together with the other golden articles, into one of these holes. Over the golden treasure he threw enough dirt to cover it from view, and in the other holes he threw the same amount of dirt so that all twenty-one looked alike. Then at day-break he had the guides fill in the holes and as nearly as possible conceal all traces of their existence.

It was now impossible to tell which hole contained the treasure. None of the guides knew or cared, since they did not realize the value of gold. Shortly thereafter, the lone conquistadore succumbed to the fatal malady racking his bones, the Indians scattered, and only the legend survived.

Then after three and a half centuries had elapsed, a certain individual with a bump of curiosity and acquisitiveness, heard this story and became deeply interested in it. He visited foreign capitals and delved into old archives; then he hurried back to Texas and bought in fee simple the land on which, according to his information, the gold treasure was hidden. He set to work to locate and excavate the twenty-one holes. Ten of them he actually found and cleaned out to the bottom. In one of these holes he found articles identified as Inca trinkets. But the hole containing the image of the golden sun god was never located—and nothing quicker cools the ardor of a treasure hunter than perspiration at the end of a pick-handle. He decided to take a rest; and his rest—so far as digging holes after sun gods is concerned—has continued to this day.

But through all the years a watchman has guarded the treasure site day and night, and it was this watchman who told me that a fifty-fifty contract would be entered into with any one who could demonstrate possession of a geophysical instrument capable of locating gold seven veras deep.

In one of the holes which I examined was an old Bois D'arc ladder ready to crumble to pieces—a ladder constructed without nails!

And there it is, a fabulous treasure on the banks of the Brazos river in Stonewall Co., Texas, far from the highways of commerce, hard by the old smelter and arrasta site, awaiting the call of the Doodle Bug.

## *The Lost Ledge of the Lone Ace Desert Rat*

The story of the Lone Ace Desert Rat demonstrates the old cowmen's saying, "Luck of the dogie; live through a hard winter and die when the grass rises."

For over forty years the Lone Ace had been prospecting the desert reaches of Arizona and Nevada looking for the pot of gold at the rainbow's end.

It seems that the Lone Ace never did have much luck. In each new strike the other fellow always got the rich claims. The Lone Ace's locations would prove barren. His rich veins petered out as shallow pockets and his stringers would "pinch out" entirely instead of getting richer and richer with depth as they sometimes do.

But at last success perched on his banner, his luck changed and he struck it rich—enormously rich. One day he came into camp from a prospecting trip and announced jubilantly that he had located a wonderfully rich ledge—one he believed would prove more than a pocket; a bonanza which should abundantly repay him for all his disappointments, hardships, and wanderings over the waste places for four decades. However, he decided to return to this discovery and dig and test and make certain of its richness before filing papers or opening negotiations with any one for a set-in. So with this much said, he packed his burro one morn and disappeared into the desert—never to return; searching parties were unable to locate his remains.

Some time after this, I was again in the vicinity of Skull Valley and ran into an old friend who told me the sequel to the disappearance of the Lone Ace Desert Rat.

It seems that two old-time prospectors went out into the region at the north end of Big Bug Mesa, near Lynx Creek, within a few miles of the Bullwhacker Mines, to do a little prospecting. They were camped on the side of the Mesa one night, and were about to roll into their blankets when the wind shifted and blew from the north, bringing with it an odor so terrific as to convince them that something dead lay in that direction. Half in earnest, and half jestingly, the men agreed that the odor was the ghost of the Lone Ace Desert Rat hovering about and that it must be his body lying to northward that gave rise to the terrible stench. However the wind shifted again and they were able to pass a fairly comfortable night, though towards morning whiffs of contaminated air blew over their camp, reminding them that what they were pleased to term the ghost of the Lone Ace still haunted the neighborhood.

They broke camp at the first streak of dawn and started out to learn what really caused the unpleasant smell. The tainted air was sufficient guide and they had not gone a quarter of a mile before they came upon the body of the Lone Ace's burro. From its unsavory condition they judged it had been dead for some time. But the peculiar circumstances under which the burro met its end was what rivetted their attention. Evidently, whilst travelling alone down a small ravine, the burro tried to pass between two good-sized palo verde trees standing close together and the huge load of gold ore he packed had become wedged in such a manner that he could neither go forward nor back. There he stood, upheld by the wedged load, and without question had perished of hunger and thirst. No one could guess as to how long he had hung there between the fatal tree trunks, slowly dying, but it was plain that he could not have been dead more than a month. The

two prospectors later marketed the three bags of ore for quite a fabulous sum, considering the small quantity, which proved that at last the Lone Ace Desert Rat had struck a million-dollar ledge. But where was the Lone Ace—and where was his ledge?

To answer the first half of the question, it seems plain, from the finding of the burro's body, that the Lone Ace had perished somewhere in the mountains after loading his burro and starting back toward civilization. Whether the old man fell down a cliff, broke a leg, and died a lonely miserable death at the scene of his rich find, or whether he had been the victim of a heart attack which took him off in a second as he tramped along behind his faithful pack-animal, will never be known, but the latter explanation seems the most probable.

As to the latter part of the question, the prospectors who stumbled on the burro's body cached the three bags of ore in a safe spot and started out to hunt for the body of the Lone Ace Desert Rat and his rich ledge. They searched far and wide, looked in every steep and narrow gorge they could locate, and spent many days combing and recombining that part of the country, but were never able to discover the remains of the Lone Ace or to find any trace of the ledge the rich ore came from. Finally, they abandoned the search. To this day, the source of the Lone Ace's rich ore is a mystery; but one theory, of course (as in all cases of this kind in the Southwest), is that he stumbled on one of the old hidden mines of the Indians. After he had loaded his burro with selected picture rock containing free gold in abundance (rock estimated to be worth \$2000 to \$5000 per ton), the Indians caught him, and either did away with him or spirited him over the border and down into the Yaqui country of Old Mexico.

It seems that some one with the ability to call up the spirits of departed mortals might get in touch with the spirit of the Lone Ace Desert Rat or that of his faithful burro and find from them a way to trace the back trail to the source of those three sacks of rich gold ore. But I am not a believer in the claims of those who say they can talk with the dead and will leave that method to others. However, it would make a mighty fine summer vacation trip to go over into Yavapai county, not far from the old Bull-whacker mine, and look for the Lone Ace Desert Rat's lost ledge.

## Old Pass Doubtful

On the lonely summit of Old Pass Doubtful at the base of Apache Lookout, near the Arizona and New Mexico state line, stands a monument to the memory of John J. Giddings, erected as a marker of his last resting place. He and five others were massacred by Apache Indians on April 25th, 1868.

Pass Doubtful was so named because it was doubtful whether you would get through it or not. The pass was in the heart of the Apache

country and at that time was considered the most dangerous point on the old Butterfield Trail. The Butterfield Trail, as you will perhaps remember, was the southern route of the overland stage, in 1858 and for many years thereafter, from California to the east.

The east-bound stage left old Fort Bowie on the morning of April 25th, 1868, with five passengers in addition to the driver and expected to reach old Fort Doubtful on the east side of the Divide at noon, or a little after, of the same day. But at midday, it seems, at the foot of Apache Lookout, the stage was suddenly attacked by a considerable band of Apache Indians. The driver immediately dashed the stage coach into a shallow arroyo and all hands set to work throwing up a breastwork of boulders and dirt behind which to entrench themselves for the best defense possible against their savage attackers.

All six men were well armed with rifles and revolvers and had plenty of ammunition. Throughout the afternoon, they managed to ward off attack after attack and at nightfall, as was their custom, the Apaches withdrew. But the savage onsets of the Indians, though beaten off, must have exacted a heavy toll, for when the Apaches renewed the attack the following morning they encountered little or no resistance. A rescue party sent out when the stage became many hours overdue at Fort Doubtful found four naked bodies behind the breastworks in the arroyo, together with the dismantled stage coach and various other items of rubbish which had not appealed to the Indians; and at some distance away, the bodies of the other two men, also naked and partially eaten by coyotes. Sorely wounded, they had evidently crawled under cover of darkness to where they were found. The rescue party assembled and buried in one shallow grave the bodies of the six unfortunate men. When I visited the spot some years ago, the wooden slab had fallen and was lying down at the side of this grave, all writing on it effaced by the elements. But later, many years after the massacre at the foot of Apache Lookout, Giddings' daughter erected a monument at the head of it, and there it stands today. The inscription on the shaft reads as follows:

"John James Giddings, Born June 30th, 1821, Killed by  
Indians at this place, April 25th, 1868."

Now three of the passengers on the ill-fated coach were known to have been enroute to their old homes in the East with considerable gold, the proceeds of their work in the California gold fields. One of them possessed a bag containing \$30,000 in gold nuggets; the other two possessed smaller amounts. The total amount of gold carried by the five passengers has been variously put at from \$30,000 to \$75,000, none of which was ever recovered. As has been stated, the rescue party from Old Fort Doubtful found the bodies stripped naked and the coach looted by the Indians.

But it is fairly certain that the Apaches knew nothing of the gold carried on the stage, and that neither did any of the members of the rescue party; therefore it remains a mystery to this hour as to what became of it.

We may presume that the driver of the stage and its five passengers hoped to escape the Indians since a company of the dragoons was stationed at Old Fort Doubtful only a few miles away to the other end of the pass. As they fought to stand off the Indians during the afternoon, they probably expected the arrival of a rescue party at any moment. But as night came on and help failed to arrive, it is reasonable to suppose that they would make preparations to hide their bags of gold where, if able to crawl away and make good their escape during the night, they could later return and recover it.

I have talked to an old lady who has lived in the vicinity all her life and whose people were in the country at the time of the tragic happening. She has substantiated this tale and is of the same opinion as myself, that the gold must be buried somewhere near the grave of these men, since they could hardly have dug a hole very far from the breast-works in the arroya to hold it.

If the gold was hid there at all, it is bound to be in the arroya but a few feet from where they made their last stand.

## *Ben Sublett's Lost Placer Mine*

For centuries and centuries, the Star-quenching Angel of Dawn, as he swept with broad, slow wing across the vast expanse now known as North America, saw the Gaudaloupe Peak much as it stands today.

To me, this is the most sublimely beautiful and majestically austere of any mountain I have seen. I lived awhile in a small valley on the east side of this range.

Each morning when the first streaks of daylight began to mark the outline of the eastern horizon, I would call to mind the song of the Psalmist, "When morning lights the eastern skies, Thy mercy, Lord, disclose," and with the last lingering ray on the western rim I was reminded of the catacombs of the Caesars in which the body was laid, with the feet to the west, symbolizing the pagan belief, The life is ended, the sun is set.

Gaudaloupe Peak! There it stands! A mighty sentinel, as non-communicative as the Sphinx of Gizeh, towering near the Texas-New Mexico state line. It was in a foothill gulch of this grand old peak that Ben Sublette found his fabulously rich placer—the famous Lost Sublette Placer Mine.

Most of the details for this story came to me from people who knew old Ben Sublette and who helped him spend some of his cash; folks who had listened with awe and avarice to his tales of Midas Wealth.

Ben Sublette was a married man who originally lived in Colorado where he was none too prosperous and had begun to accumulate a large family. An old Indian told him that at the foot of the Gaudaloupe Mountains his tribe had washed out gold, and lots of it. This information gave Ben Sublette a mild form of the gold fever and he moved his family to Texas with the avowed intention of searching for this gold. He

located where the town of Odessa now stands and his family made the best living possible by working for neighbors on the ranches in that vicinity and by keeping boarders while the railroad was being built through the region. But the most of Ben's time was spent exploring the foothills at the south end of the Gaudaloupe Range in search of the rich deposits of gold he believed were hidden there. When Ben started out on one of his prospecting trips, he would ask the neighbors to look after his family, with the result that most of the people of West Texas, who knew old Ben at the time, erroneously considered him more or less demented. Old Ben Sublette got to be somewhat of a jest in that region.

For two years he continued his prospecting trips, without apparent success. While on his trips he lived principally on antelope, jackrabbit, and other wild game. During this period he had no financial backers or grubstake partners.

There is little doubt but what the Spaniards and Mexicans of long ago knew about the Lost Sublette Placers, and quite likely the old Indian who told Ben Sublette of the rich deposits of yellow metal was a member of one of the tribes that wandered over this region.

One night about sundown, Ben Sublette created a sensation by coming into a railroad end town with a supply of pure gold, in the form of coarse nuggets, that he had evidently taken from the rich placer ground for which he had been searching so long. Ben rushed into a saloon at this railroad end town and loudly announced that the drinks were on him, that he treated the house. Much to the amazement of the bartender and everybody else, he planked down a large sack of gold nuggets. He was almost wild with excitement over his bonanza discovery. He waved his disreputable old hat and shouted that he had fortune by the tail now, that he was going to make up to his family for all they'd stood for and suffered whilst he hunted the gold.

But alas, Old Ben Sublette, like most everyone who strikes it rich, had a host of fair-weather friends. Though he made frequent trips into the mountains and always brought back a goodly supply of gold nuggets, those friends saw to it that he never saved enough money to keep his family in luxury. He kept it in comfortable circumstances, no doubt, but never laid a cent by for a rainy day.

Many people tried to persuade him to show them the location of his placers, but he always avoided doing so with one excuse or another. On one occasion he entered into a contract with a group of business men to capitalize his gold mine and put it on a commercial-producing basis. The business men agreed to furnish a certain amount of capital if he would show them his mine, so they started out, loaded down with provisions, camp equipment, and a generous supply of hard liquor. But the expedition only got as far as Old Jack's Camp north of Pecos when Ben Sublette took seriously ill and had to be taken home. He swore someone had tried to poison him and the business contract was allowed to expire.

The only one Old Ben Sublette ever took to the source of his gold nugget wealth was his nine-year-old son. The lad went with his father

but once and was too young and heedless at the time to note all the twists and turns of the trails and canyons his father traversed. They had arrived at the place (or rather, at a mesa above the placer ground) late in the evening and made camp. The next morning Ben Sublette produced a rope ladder and, leaving the boy at the camp, used it to descend an abrupt cliff. About noon, he reappeared with a bag of nuggets. As the son remembered it, this cliff was by the side of a very deep and narrow gulch or canyon; but when some years after, with a brother-in-law, he tried to locate the spot, it was without success. The lad said it took his father about four hours to make the descent to his gold placers and to return with the bag of nuggets.

According to a man who lives in Pecos and has carefully studied the utterances credited to Ben Sublette and the topography of the Gaudaloupe country, the Lost Ben Sublette Placers are in the vicinity of a point eight miles north of Rustler Spring. However that may be, no one has yet located the placers; but it seems a very fascinating project for the undertaking of those who delight in beautiful mountain scenery, the romance of the old west, and the prospect, if they are lucky, of becoming a millionaire.

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### *The Lost Dutch Oven Mine*

To any one at all in tune with the universe, there is an indescribable fascination and charm in the desert: especially is this true at eventide in the early Autumn. The stars seem to come down so near that you can almost reach them. They twinkle and blink with a strange alluring witchery. The old lady who undertook to sweep back the rising tide of the ocean with her broom, could as easily dust off the Milky Way. Close at hand the stillness is punctuated by the hyphenated whine of the coyote, and far off, by the lonely scream of the mountain lion. On such a night as this, when the campfire is crackling with iron-wood and mesquite, and the prospectors' pipes are lit, they love to spin tales of lost mines; and along with the Lost Peg-leg, the Gunsight, and the Bryfogle, always comes the story of the Dutch Oven.

I have spent a lot of time in the vicinity of the Lost Dutch Oven Mine, skirting the foothills of the Clipper Mountains and roving through the vast country to the south and west.

This is real desert, where "the sun comes up like thunder." But the rising of the sun is preceded by a glamorous moment of short duration when the entire horizon is emblazoned with a halo which can only be likened minus the streamers, to the Aurora Borealis of northern latitudes. This phenomenon is especially marked just before a terrible desert windstorm.

But to return to the Dutch Oven.

The man who discovered the Lost Dutch Oven Mine, unlike the desert rats that found and lost so many mines in the Southwest, was a scientific

man by the name of Schofield, a water engineer employed at the time in sinking shafts and running tunnels in likely looking canyons of the Clipper Range to develop a water supply for the Santa Fe Railroad. One Sunday he took a jaunt by himself into the mountains, and, while leisurely wandering along at the foot of the Clipper Range, came upon a sizeable spring in a gulch he had never before visited. He drank at this stream and then noticed a dim trail leading further into the mountains. Curious as to where it would take him, he followed the trail over a small ridge, then over another, and finally, through a somewhat deeper canyon, where he lost it. All this took some time; but Schofield had been surprised to find a spring in such an arid region and was curious as to where the dim trail could possibly lead. Doubling on his tracks, he ultimately reached a spot where two huge rocks towered upward with barely room between them for a loaded burro to pass. Then he rounded a large black rock and saw the camp.

It was an abandoned camp—he saw that at once—lone and desolate. The tent pole stood up, naked, save for shredded strips of canvas flapping in the breeze. For quite a time Schofield could only stand and stare. Then he went forward and examined his find.

An old decaying mattress stood in one corner of the tent-space; scattered around were mining tools, pieces of steel; perched high up on the side of the black rock, so as to be out of the way of predatory animals, was a box containing dry and rotted foodstuffs. A trail led away from this forlorn place to a shaft sunk in the earth. A sagging windlass spanned this hole. It didn't need the mining tools, or the piled-up ore dump, to inform Schofield that here was a mine—an abandoned one by the looks of it—and all the tales he had heard of lost mines flowed through his head. But he could not recollect ever hearing of one in connection with this particular mountain range. Eagerly he examined the ore. It was unbelievably heavy, seamed with gold. The rope on the windlass was too rotten to bear his weight, but he knew that the ore he handled could only come from a tremendously rich ledge below.

Imagine Schofield's emotions. From all indications the former owner of this mine had perished leaving no partners or associates to claim title. There were millions—literally millions—in precious metal to be taken out of this hole in the ground and he, Schofield, would own them all!

Night came and found him still in a daze. To follow the dim trail after dark was impossible. He made a fire and with his back to the huge black rock passed the night without food or water, but with a pile of ore on which to feast his eyes as it glinted dully in the firelight.

At sunup, he again examined his find and made selections from the finer pieces of ore to take out to an assayer. But whilst making a last survey of the camp-site (tent-space), he tripped over an object which, on close inspection, proved to be the cover to a large dutch oven imbedded in the earth. He lifted the cover off the dutch oven and then started back. If he had been amazed at the discovery of the abandoned mine and rich ore dump, he was now too astonished even for exclamation. There were,



probably, millions of dollars in gold in the mine shaft, thousands in the ore dump, but to actual gold in the bulk, however small, there is something which takes away a man's breath.

And this dutch oven was crammed full of gold. Gold nuggets, flour gold, wire gold, and pieces that had evidently been picked out of stringers in the shaft. With protruding eyes, Schofield loosened the sand around the dutch oven and tried to lift it, but it proved too heavy to budge. He heaved and strained. In vain. Then the thought occurred to Schofield that little would be gained if he could lift the dutch oven. He could not hope to pack it far and it was safe enough where it was and would await his return. So he covered it over and left it. But not before he filled his pockets with handfuls of the precious stuff and tied up samples of ore in his bandana handkerchief. Then he trudged over the dim trail to the spring, left the canyon, and made his way to the little station of Danby. By this time he was hungry and thirsty and he never dreamed of fixing his landmarks more clearly in his head or of marking the way. Besides the route seemed so simple to follow; merely a matter of crossing the desert to the canyon mouth and the spring, following the dim trail to the ghost mine. So he thought, eager to reach civilization.

One of his first acts was to throw up his engineering job with the Santa Fe Railroad and go to Los Angeles and San Francisco to have his ore assayed. There he cashed in on the free gold, acquired a partner, and equipped himself to return to the lost mine and extract its riches. But the "simple" way of return could not be found; the canyon "easy" to locate eluded his frenzied search. Never again was Schofield to lay eyes on the sizable stream, the dim trail, or on the ghost camp with its fabulous fortune in an old dutch oven and in the bowels of the earth. Its location has vanished from the knowledge of men, but nonetheless it lies out there, in a canyon of the Clipper Range, hard by an old ghost camp at the end of a dim trail, millions in gold—waiting—waiting—for whom?

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### *The Lost Arch Placers*

Due south of the Dutch Oven, in the Turtle Mountains, lies the Lost Arch Placer. Fish discovered it one day, thirsty, tired, whilst searching the northern end of those bleak, gulch-corroded hills for something even more precious to man than gold—water.

Prospecting in the Colorado River country, he and Crocker cut across the desert from the Colorado River into California. They had camped at the Colorado to water themselves and their two lean yet hardy mustang horses. But on leaving the Colorado River they did something almost incredible for desert rats such as they to do—they failed to fill their water-barrel with the life-giving fluid so plentiful in the Colorado River, so lacking out in those bleak wastes of parched sands and barren mountains where they were going. When the two prospectors struck camp the second night after leaving the river and went to make coffee, this over-

sight was discovered. They stared at each other aghast. Only two small canteens full of water were left them. They asked themselves if they should make for the Colorado River or try to locate water in the sun-blistered lonely Turtles upon whose slopes at certain places a little vegetation could be seen. Failure to find water in the Turtles would mean an extra day of travel to reach the Colorado but they decided it was their best bet.

They separated. Crocker went up one canyon and Fish another. In a gulch opening off a canyon he followed Fish came upon an arch, a natural bridge of rock spanning the gulch from side to side. In the sandy sink-hole beneath this natural bridge, no water lay, but Fish's practiced eye examined the mineral aspects of his surroundings—such is the power of habit, even when a desert rat is facing death from thirst.

Then it was he made the astounding discovery that the sands on which he had stretched himself were golden sands and that a breath of his lungs could blow away the latter and leave precious nuggets and flour gold of surpassing richness to shove into his pockets.

Thirst momentarily forgotten by the golden wealth upon which he had stumbled, Fish ran to tell Crocker about it. But Crocker, with parched tongue, only cried: "Of what use is gold to us now? Water, man, water! We must make the Colorado or we're done for!"

This outburst sobered Fish. They had now but a single canteen of water left, and with this meager supply they set out. The water was gone the first day and after that it was delirious hell—swollen tongues, heat-haze dancing and shimmering—but they made the Colorado. They plunged into its turgid floods and drank and drank. Crocker became violently ill and Fish had to tote him down to old Ehrenberg ferry and get him across the river to the little town of Ehrenberg. Here Crocker died, and here Fish himself lay indisposed for awhile. When he recovered, he tried to go back to his discovery in the Turtles, but he couldn't remember details. Where had he and Crocker crossed the Colorado? Was it really the Turtle Mountains they had been in or the Old Woman Range of hills which resembled the Turtles? Though he tried and tried, Fish never again found his lost placers and people began to think of his discovery as a myth, scarcely more than the delusion of a heat-crazed imagination. Then, years later, came Peter Kohler.

Peter Kohler was something of a naturalist as well as a prospector. While wandering through the Turtles, he was much struck with the uniqueness of a natural arch of rock which spanned a gulch. Then under the arch he found gold—gold Fish had found before him but which he had been fated never to rediscover.

It sometimes seems as if Nature is jealous of yielding up too lavishly her treasures of gold to the greed of men. To raise the grubstake necessary to develop his find, Kohler went to work unloading mine timbers at a little place called Amboy near Needles. One day a heavy timber slipped—and the only man who knew where Fish and Crocker's Lost Arch placer lay had his life crushed out!

A man named Packer, who had entered into partnership with Kohler, was no quitter. For years he searched intermittently for the mine, utilizing the few hints as to its location Kohler had let drop—but the time was wasted.

Yet out there in the north end of the sun-blistered Turtles, far up some lonely canyon, in a gulch to the left and under a natural span of rock, lie fabulous placer sands saturated with almost pure gold—waiting—waiting to be rediscovered.

## Emperor Maximilian's Buried Fortune in Silver Plate and Silver Ingots

This story was told me many years ago by an old-time citizen of Pecos, Texas. He was a very substantial and reliable man and believed every word of the narrative himself regarding the Emperor Maximilian's immense fortune in court plate and silver ingots which is held to lie buried in Texas. He wanted to show me the location of the bonfire, where the wagons, harness and camp supplies had been burned. He said he had gathered up the old wagon irons and wondered in which direction and how far the enormous cache of silver ingots lay from that spot. I said I would look into the matter as soon as I could find both the time and a geophysical instrument of real merit. But this man passed on before I located such an instrument. However, the story of Maximilian's buried silver is based on enough fact to induce me to set it down here.

Maximilian, ill-fated Emperor of Mexico, was rather a mild-mannered man of vacillating character who was placed on the Mexican throne by Napoleon the Third, and by certain interests at the court of France that were friendly to the family of his half-demented wife, Charlotta of Austria.

As Emperor of Mexico, Maximilian spent most of his time studying court etiquette and instructing his attendants in the art of approaching and retiring from the imperial presence. He never seemed to realize the type of people he aspired to rule over in Mexico. Now President Andrew Johnson looked with disfavor upon Maximilian's activities and soon after he was established on his shaky throne the French army withdrew. This withdrawal gave great impetus to the movement of the patriot, Benito Juarez, who was daily gaining recruits to march against the Emperor's army. About this time Charlotta went to France and to Rome soliciting old world support and influence in the effort to keep her husband on the throne of Mexico.

Despite the need for consistent and firm policy under turbulent conditions, with constantly increasing discontent among the natives, Maximilian had no fixed plan of action. One day he was on the point of fleeing the country, the next he had dreams of riding at the head of a large army to put down every form of opposition within the Empire. He

needed and used all the gold he could secure to feed and equip his army and to support his luxurious court; but he possessed a large quantity of silver ingots that could not so easily be converted into things he wanted.

According to the story, on one occasion when he had an outburst of the mania of leaving the country incognito to protect his life, he loaded all of this immense store of silver ingots and very rich and priceless court plate brought from Austria into five large wagons and, placing the treasure train under the care of a trusted officer of his army, started it towards the Rio Grande with the idea of eventually loading it aboard a ship at Galveston for transportation to Europe.

This huge cavalcade of treasure reached the Rio Grande river at Ojinaga, crossed the river and drove into Presidio, Texas. When it reached Presidio, the teams were exhausted. The trusted officer in charge inquired as to the best route to take to get to Galveston. He was informed that the best and safest lay by way of Horse Head Crossing on the Pecos River, thence to old Fort Concho, and from that place to Galveston, via San Antonio. But he was also told that outlaws infested even the safest of roads north. The close of the war between the states caused many desperate men, whose home-ties had been broken by the conflict, to flock into the Indian Territory and the Big Bend Country of Texas. But the trusted officer was confident he could get his treasure train safely through. Besides there could be no turning back now no matter how dangerous the journey ahead.

How he chanced to make the acquaintance of the three men who proved his undoing, it is impossible to say. They were of the desperate disbanded-soldier type mentioned above. The officer employed them to act as guides to the cavalcade as far as San Antonio, at which place he would be in entire safety. He told the three guides that the wagons were freighted with provisions of no great value; but the care with which the wagons were guarded, the fact that the canvas coverings were always fastened securely down, coupled with the heaviness of the loads which taxed the strength of the horses to the utmost, aroused their suspicions.

One moonlight night, just after crossing the Pecos River at Horse Head Crossing, one of the guides succeeded in raising a wagon's canvas covering and was astounded to find it loaded with silver bars and shiny utensils of various shapes and sizes.

He immediately communicated his discovery to the other two. Remember, those were men hardened by years of bloody war, human life meant little to them, and they were not squeamish about a few murders. Besides the sight of so much treasure to be had for the taking, might well have tempted more peaceful men to violence. Be that as it may, the three guides acted with a grim determination worthy of a better cause. They fell upon the sleeping officer and his men and incontinently butchered them. Then, embarrassed by the possession of untold wealth which they dared not take openly into any city or town, they buried the treasure near the scene of their crime and reduced what they could of wagons and harness to ashes.

From the little that can be gleaned, one patches the story together. It seems that after burying their loot and burning the wagons, they decided to go east to rest up awhile and give time for any inquiries concerning the missing cavalcade to subside, after which they would return and dig up the treasure. But at old Fort Concho one of the three took violently ill of an old malady. His companions left him at the Fort and proceeded towards San Antonio. Before reaching their destination, they had the misfortune to get involved in a fracas which ended their chequered careers. Thus but one man was left alive with any knowledge as to where the fortune in silver lay buried.

According to all accounts, he recovered somewhat from his illness. Not sufficiently to hazard the hardships and dangers of going back after the buried silver, but enough so as to make him attempt to reach his old home in Missouri. However, near the boundary of Texas and Oklahoma, he suffered a relapse and there gave up the ghost. Before cashing in, he told some one the story the old gentleman in Pecos related to me.

And there you are. The silver has never been found, but there can be little doubt of its existence. If any one wants to take a chance on finding its burial spot, I can tell him this: The old wagon irons alluded to in this story were found about 15 to 20 miles east of Horse Head Crossing, in the Antelope Hills, on the old Fort Concho trail.





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or assist me to make it, let me hear from him.

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