

WITHOUT LAW OR LICENSE

By Sewell Ford

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FLETCHER C. RANSOM



OF the many events in the somewhat tumultuous career of my friend, Major Pemberton Jones, there are two which belong together. Both have to do with high finance. There are, you know, high finance, plain, every-day finance, and highway robbery.

The Major's specialty was high finance. Not always did it pay, but to this he stuck through many reverses, ever building new argosies from the wrecks of stranded hopes. A scheme whose probable profits he could not write with six figures before the decimal was too paltry for his consideration.

It was an experiment in high finance which took the Major so far away as the republic of—well, there are a lot of little federations down in South and Central America. This particular one we will call Guanica. The enterprise was nothing short of bribing a few receptive government officials in relation to a grant of rubber forest.

Now, an all-wise providence probably intended the Major's varied talents for other things, but the fact remains that he seemed especially designed for business of this sort. Nature had furnished him with impressive bulk. It had endowed him with such dignity as is instinct in negro porters and acquired by statesmen. It had gifted him with persuasive speech. The Major had done the rest. He had held himself aloof from work of head or hand. Toil he viewed as some lamentable misfortune that might happen to others but could never happen to him.

Because of his gift in the matter of persuasive speech a discerning and not wholly reverent circle of friends were pleased to speak of the Major as "Lubricator" Jones, a nickname of which he did not wholly approve, but which he never took pains to resent.

By the time the Major had found just whose palms to cross in Guanica and had

properly "crossed" them he had distributed some four thousand dollars gold. Then to the trusting speculators who had supplied the funds he jubilantly cabled: "Have greased the ways; launching soon."

The Major was confidently awaiting the promised signatures to certain documents of state when something happened which was not on his programme. A lot of ridiculously uniformed soldiers marched from somewhere into the plaza, fired a few rifle shots, dragged some cannon about and waved some flags. They were joyously received by every Guanican in sight.

"What's it all about?" demanded the Major.

"Why, it's a revolution. Long live Mendez, the Liberator!" said his landlord in the one breath.

And so it was. The Major learned that the men who but the day before had guided the destinies of Guanica were now either in jail or in breathless flight therefrom, while an entirely new set of destiny shapers held forth within the walls of the jimcracky government palace.

Having meditated on these things Major Pemberton Jones went, with no indecent haste, to make inquiry of Mendez, the Liberator, as to the status of his concession. A very small, very dark man with bristling mustaches and unquiet eyes received him with scant courtesy. In his most persuasive tones, and in very faulty Spanish, the Major said some nice things to Mendez, the Liberator, and suggested that he would like his concession signed right away. Incidentally he mentioned that no further attempt at extortion would be successful. In very good Spanish, but in rather explosive tones, Mendez, the Liberator, suggested that Major Pemberton Jones should go to the devil.

Thereupon the Major played his trump. He, the Major, knew his rights. He should stand for them. He asserted that

he was an American citizen with a watchful state department, a great army, and a first-class navy at his back.

This should have wilted the liberator. But it didn't. His unquiet eyes grew still more unquiet, and he gave some sharp, snapping orders. In a remarkably short time Major Jones was hustled before a very impromptu court, and there charged with many grave felonies whose nature he understood but vaguely. From court he was taken to an ill-ventilated but very secure stone prison. It was all quite abrupt.

For twenty-seven unpleasant days the Major was badly treated. Then he was removed to a hospital where they found he had a well-developed case of yellow fever. The nurses were chiefly remarkable for greed, incompetency, and laziness, but the physicians knew how to handle yellow jack. So the Major survived.

Six weeks later an emaciated individual, wearing a faded suit of blue ticking, walked uncertainly up the steps of the government palace and demanded an interview with the dictator of Guanica. The man was what was left of Major Pemberton Jones, whose weight had dropped from 225 pounds to a bare 150. As was quite natural, he looked as if his skin did not fit him.

Through some mistake he was admitted into the august presence of the dictator. Before he could be stopped he had told about one-third the story of his wrongs. When the small, dark man with the unquiet eyes caught his drift he laughed mirthlessly. Next he banged a bell and there came in a dozen or more energetic guards.

"Take this Yankee pig outside and kick him off the grounds," he said. The order was obeyed with promptness and to the letter.

Mental poise had always been one of the Major's strong points, but years of self-control could not fit a person for such unusual emergency. Picking himself up out of the white dust of the roadway the Major then and there, to the intense enjoyment of some score of interested loungers, cursed the republic of Guanica in all its several departments, executive, judicial, civil, and military, from top to bottom and back again. Also did he declare the fut-

ure business of his life to be the pursuit of vengeance.

On the very face of it this declaration was vain, for there were left to the Major, after contact with Guanicans of high and low degree, neither coin, credit, nor proper raiment. The immediate future contained only dire necessity, but from it was born quick resource.

Walking as one whose way was clear the Major limped to the water-front. There he found a Norwegian tramp steamer which happened to be full of salt hides and short handed below decks. The Major impetuously shipped as stoker.

It is only just to state that the Major had but the most vague conception of a stoker's duties. They are not contemplative. Neither is the stoke-hold of a steamer an attractive place, particularly in tropic seas. During a nightmare existence of unguessed length did Major Pemberton Jones, disciple of high finance, feed mountains of pea-coal into the insatiate maw of a red-mouthed demon.

No clear recollections has he of that period save that with every shovelful he made a new vow, or repeated an old one, concerning his purpose and attitude toward the republic of Guanica. That the hard work and high temperature did not end his existence was a marvel. But it did not. While awake he worked like a fiend, ate what was given him and drank oatmeal water by the gallon. When it was permitted he dropped on the baled hides in the evil-smelling hold to sleep as one in a trance.

Some strange sights may be seen in the neighborhood of Pier 1, North River, but probably no one ever saw, before or since, a soot-grimed stoker jump ashore, run into the middle of Battery Place and kiss the unresponsive and not always immaculate Belgian blocks. Yet that is what Major Pemberton Jones did. Whether there is any potency for sanity in New York's paving-stones I do not know, but from that moment the Major regained his mental poise.

There ensued for the Major some bitter months. To the men who had coveted Guanica's rubber forests he made brief report of failure unadorned with the story of his personal sufferings. Then he dropped out of sight.

Just what vineyards of endeavor shadowed his paths during that period of disappearance are unknown to me. Into it was packed, I suppose, all the real toil of which Major Pemberton Jones was ever guilty, barring that in the stoke-hold, and there is no doubt that he still feels it the deepest blot on his record as a gentleman and a financier.

One spur there is more effective than ambition. This was supplied to my friend, the Major, when the minions of Guanica's dictator did hurt to his person and violence to his feelings. Now to undertake at forty-eight a climb, from the depths represented by a lodging which you buy at so much per night, to the comfortable heights associated with hotel apartments paid for by the quarter, this is indeed a task. Add to it the wreaking of a private revenge on the executive head of a sovereign republic and you have set a goal for nothing short of genius.

Of those desperate beginnings the Major will say no word. I have guessed at feverish days spent in haunting certain obscure brokers' offices where clerks and messenger-boys may risk the price of a week's luncheons on the rise and fall of stocks. Pony bucket-shops they are called in the metaphor of "the Street," and they serve both as kindergartens and asylums for those who follow the game.

In the end luck must have come to the Major. At any rate, he was seen, on that notable day when X, Y & Z (preferred) shook off the lethargy of months and rose from something like fifty-seven to four points beyond par, to sit, from opening to closing, breaking toothpicks into bits as he watched his little hoard grow like the magic flowers under the wand of the sleight-of-hand performer. Sometimes, but not frequently, this happens.

Next day Major Pemberton Jones reappeared. He took his old rooms at the hotel where he had been for years a fixture, was reinstated at his club, and leased two tiny offices on the eighteenth floor of a new skyscraper.

By many outward signs he was the same "Lubricator" Jones as before. Yet he was much changed. For one thing his dark-brown hair had become almost white. He was stouter than ever and week by week his weight increased. Even the ex-

pression of his eyes was new. There was another thing, though trivial. On one of his stubby fingers blazed balefully, from a heavy chased setting, a green diamond of quite three carats weight.

"It's an investment, not an ornament," explained the Major. "Queer stone? Well, yes. I'll tell you the story some day. The dealers call it El Vengador. That's Spanish, you know, for—well—" The Major thrust a well-kept hand out into the sunlight and allowed the rays to dance among the facets for a moment. "When you see me without it you will understand."

"Doubted," said I. "But it is of great price, this El Vengador?"

"No—and yes. I can get five hundred on it at an hour's notice, but while I wear it the stone stands for something I owe to seven hundred thousand dear friends."

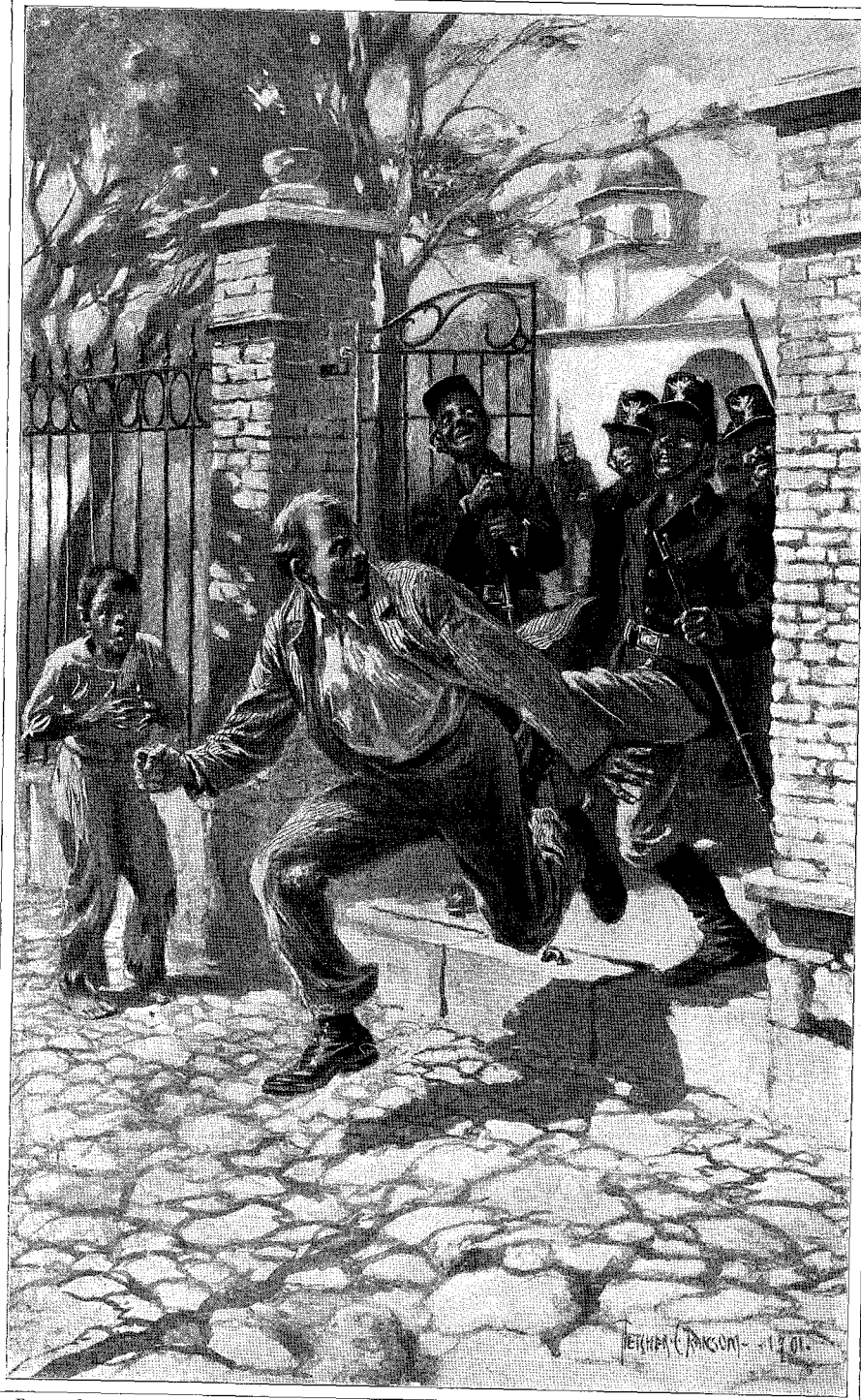
Not knowing the Major's point of view I set this down as mere imagery.

As president of the Montezuma Mining Company (Limited) the Major enjoyed a season of moderate prosperity, during which it was to be noted that he was somewhat uniquely busied in keeping track of South American affairs. I judged this from the journals and government reports with which his desk was burdened.

"When one wears El Vengador what else can you expect?" he would say; which reply, you see, was no reply at all.

Gradually there approached evil days. A suspicious public began to doubt the wonderfully convincing truths elaborately printed in the pamphlets of the Montezuma Mining Company and—here was the rub—to withhold its dollars. Even the curb brokers refused to traffic in such discredited stock. There were base rumors that the Montezuma mine was an unproductive hole in the ground, and that the early dividends had been purely fictitious declarations.

Vainly did Major Jones angle for men with money to invest and confidence in his ability to do the investing. The partial story of his failure in the matter of the Guanican rubber concession was widely spread, and where it went there fell a blight upon all budding assurance as to the financial wisdom of "Lubricator" Jones.



Drawn by F. C. Ransom.

The order was obeyed with promptness and to the letter.—Page 567.
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So once more the Major was posted at his club, once more he gave up his hotel apartments, and in time his raiment became unfitting for one who practised high finance. Still, on a stubby finger of his right hand gleamed El Vengador, although many a time it would have brought to the Major not only the comforts of life but might have enabled him to grip fast golden and speculative chance.

Still another notable feature of the Major's conduct during these dark days was his habit of dining nightly at the Hôtel d'Espagne, an uptown hostelry where the charges are certainly not moderate and where gather well-dressed foreigners of the Latin races. Although his lodgings were so humble that their location was a matter of secrecy, although his breakfasts and luncheons must have been slight indeed, every evening found the Major at a little corner table in the bizarrely decorated dining-room of the Hôtel d'Espagne ignoring the slights of untipped waiters and narrowly watching, between the garlic-tainted courses of the table d'hôte, the crowd of swarthy, gesticulating señors.

This sort of thing continued until one night, after a day when the ultimate end became most obvious, the Major decided, and clenched his fat hands in unfruitful rage that it must be, to sacrifice El Vengador. An unsatisfied landlady had locked the door between him and the poor relics of his personal belongings, while a chattel-mortgage shark had stripped bare his tiny offices. There remained in his pockets only the price of bed and breakfast, or a dinner at the Hôtel d'Espagne. Which should it be? From five until six P.M. the owner of El Vengador sat on a bench in Union Square park and wrestled with this problem.

In the end the Major flipped a coin. Soon after he was sitting at his table in the corner wondering, and for the last time, what might be the true name of the pallid meat which at the Hôtel d'Espagne appears on the menu as *filet de bœuf*.

Some words, spoken in a tense whisper meant to carry only across the cloth, impinged on the Major's left ear. They roused him to a state of mental acuteness to be attained only in rare moments. With elaborate caution the Major turned

his head for one swift, inquiring glance. He saw a small, dark man with bristling mustaches and unquiet eyes.

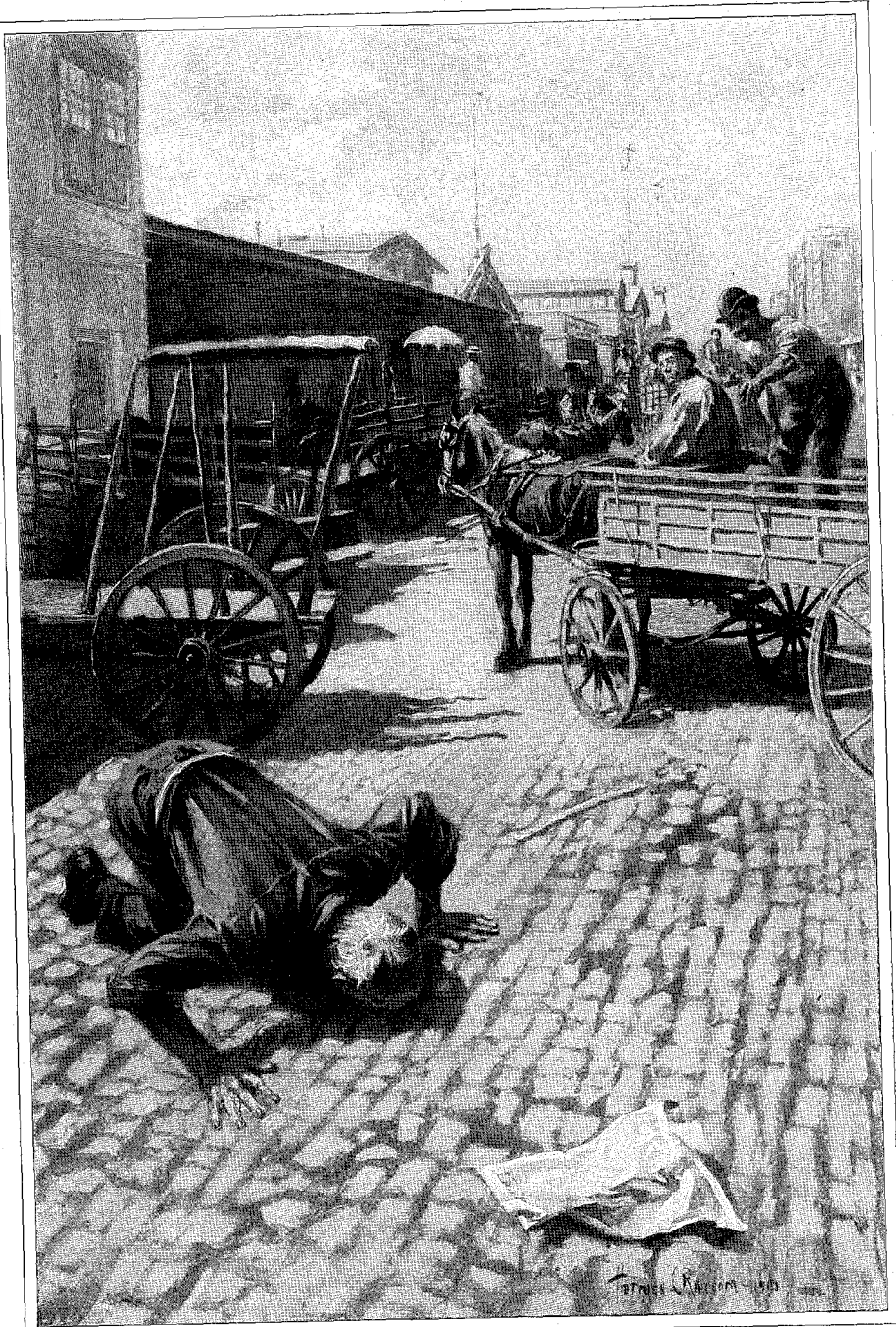
The next half hour every nerve in the Major's big body, save that important one connecting the ear with the brain, was willed into stillness. That to which he listened was a confidence, imparted by the small, dark man, to another, even darker. It was a guarded confidence, spoken in hints and innuendo. Possibly not two other persons in the room would have understood. But the Major did. Not for nothing had he read *La Patria*. Eagerly he absorbed knowledge of affairs affecting the immediate future of the sovereign republic of Guanica.

In the first place he learned that Señor José Mendez del Norte, he of the unquiet eyes, was no longer dictator, but a hunted exile. More important still was the revelation that the señor was the leading spirit of an anticipated revolt, and that he had come to New York laden with much contributed gold, the filchings of his fellow-conspirators and some of his own. His errand was to buy some kind of armed and armored steamer, to buy it with all possible despatch, and to hurry back to Guanica in the same.

What even a third-rate war-ship could accomplish in the harbor of Guanica's capital Major Pemberton Jones well knew. With a few broadsides it could knock into a heap of junk the absurd fort which pretends to command the bay; with another it could riddle the antiquated wooden frigate that represents the whole of Guanica's naval strength, and then—why, then the dictatorship of Señor Mendez would be re-established so firmly that nothing short of a miracle could shake it.

Where the Major's feet took him that night he never knew. He had cloudy remembrance of passing through streets, of sitting on benches, of staring unseeingly into shuttered show-windows, and of being "moved on" by men in blue. He knew only that somehow the shifting destinies had once more jostled together himself and this arch rogue of his personal drama. He saw only wide-handed opportunity beckoning him to lay hold. But how? Where?

At last it came, this plan of vengeance for which he had waited with patience



Drawn by F. C. Ransom.

A soot-grimed stoker . . . kiss the unresponsive and not always immaculate Belgian blocks.—Page 567.

deserving better motive. It was elaborate, brilliant, daring. Yet he knew it must succeed. It should succeed. It began with the exchange of El Vengador for a yellow ticket and a neat packet of yellow-backed bank-notes. Then followed the busiest day in the Major's life and the one most productive of results.

One of these results was the receipt of a cablegram, some twenty-four hours later, by Señor Mendez del Norte. No detail was there about the envelope or contents to excite suspicion as to its genuineness. The message bore even the wrinkles left by the copying-press. It advised Señor Mendez to apply at once to the International Maritime Company, street number given. It was dated at Guanica's capital and signed by a discreet person who had once held office under the ex-dictator and who still had his confidence. Nothing could be more convincing.

So the Señor put on a fresh linen suit, pointed the ends of his bristling mustaches, set firmly on his head a high-crowned Panama hat and called a cab. If the Señor held himself very straight and looked very important as he rode downtown it should be passed by. One does not ride out every day, backed by a \$200,000 bank deposit, to buy a war-ship.

The piled-up mass of the building occupied solely, as he decided, by the International Maritime Company, had a somewhat sobering effect on the Señor. As he was jerked skyward in a grilled, cage-like express elevator he half expected to see prows of war-ships, stacked like goods on a shelf, jutting out here and there. But he caught only glimpses of marble tiled halls falling away with dizzying suddenness. So confused was he that when he was shoved out into a top corridor he paused a little before knocking on a lavishly lettered door that was, as near as he could judge, the entrance to the main offices of the great company with which he was to do business.

But if Señor Mendez expected to break in upon the routine of such a concern as the International Maritime Company and buy a war-ship offhand, as he might a package of cheroots, he was mistaken. There appeared to be a certain amount of ceremony preliminary to getting speech with the president-manager. Señor Men-

dez del Norte, ex-dictator of the republic of Guanica, was allowed to sit for a long quarter of an hour contemplating a framed lithograph of the late U. S. S. Maine, listening to the nervous click of typewriting machines and waiting for the reappearance of the serious-looking young man who had taken his card.

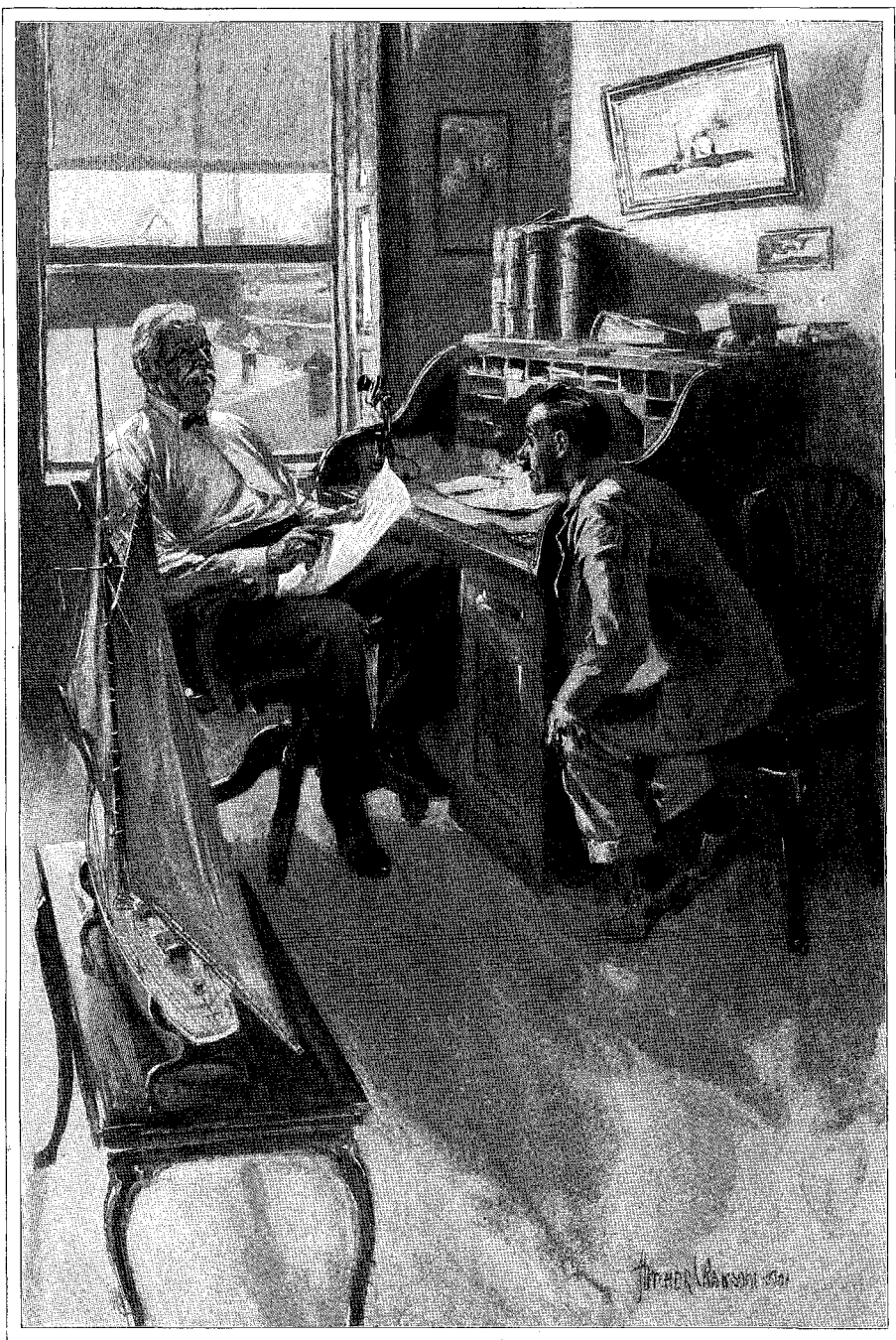
"The president-manager regrets very much," said the serious-looking young man when he finally returned, "but he is compelled to ask you to call again at one o'clock to-morrow, as he will be engaged for the rest of the day with the Secretary of the Navy."

There was no doubt that Señor Mendez was impressed. He had once seen a United States squadron of evolution at target practice. Involuntarily he glanced at the closed door which separated him from the head of the United States navy and the president of the International Maritime Company. Oh, yes, he would come again. This was the right place for his purpose.

And he did come, on the stroke of the hour. At a massive roller-top desk brave with nickel-plated telephone, push buttons, speaking tubes and electric light fittings, sat the president-manager. He looked the part, for he was a large man. So big he was that the whole corner of the room seemed full of him. The bulk of him bulged through the chair-arms, ponderously he bulged at the waist-line, his ruddy, clean-shaven jaws bulged over his low collar and his big eyes bulged from a big face that, with its frame of white hair, seemed to bear the stamp of responsible authority. Small wonder then, that Señor Mendez failed to see, in this personage of obvious importance, the man whom he had ordered kicked from his palace steps.

One moment Major Pemberton Jones allowed for possible recognition and then, as it came not, plunged briskly into the business. "Cruiser, eh?" said the Major, just as a shoe-store clerk might say: "Oh, it's a pair of rubbers you want, is it?" "An auxiliary cruiser? Let's see, what government do I understand you represent?"

Quite unblushingly Señor Mendez announced himself as the authorized purchasing agent of the Republic of Guanica.



Drawn by F. C. Ransom.

The unquiet eyes of Señor Mendez scintillated with interest.—Page 574.

"Ah, Guanica! Yes, we've had dealings with you; sold you some torpedo boats three years ago, didn't we? No, it must have been Brazil. Well, we will see what we have in the way of auxiliary cruisers. I beg pardon." Here the Major pushed a button. A bell buzzed in the next room and the serious young man reappeared. "Mr. Brown, get me our list of war-ships. Ah, that's all. Um-m-m-m." The Major was running a fat forefinger down a column. "Albatross, Carlos V.—built for Spain, you know—Alliance, Le Presidente, Sequoia—now there's one that might do, the Sequoia!"

The unquiet eyes of Señor Mendez scintillated with interest.

"The Sequoia," continued the Major, "is one of that lot our Government sold at auction just after the war with Spain. We picked up quite a number at bargain prices. She's the only one left. Used to be a White Moon freighter, but they made an auxiliary cruiser out of her, finished her just in time to be too late. She's just as the navy turned her over to us, wardroom fittings, drab top-sides and all. Let's see, the Sequoia's a 3,500-ton boat and can make eighteen knots on a pinch. She carries eight four-inch Armstrongs, two six pounders and five machine guns, one pounders. No torpedo tubes, though. Were you particular about torpedo tubes?"

The Señor said he was not.

"Good! Her length is 225 feet, beam 35, mean draught 14, coal capacity 700 tons and indicated horse-power 4,000. She has a 1.5 armor belt, a steel deck and her coal-bunkers have been shifted to cover her vitals. But here, I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll just take a run over to the navy yard and have a look at her. We're still paying Uncle Sam dock charges, you see. Beg pardon." Here the Major once more pushed a button. "Mr. Brown, will you send for a hansom. If anyone from Cramps calls tell 'em to come tomorrow."

It was really quite simple. By applying at the proper time and place any citizen, or alien for that matter, may secure passes giving him limited freedom of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When one has an acquaintance on the Commandant's staff, as Major Jones had, special privileges are also easy to get. But for all that, this

offering for sale, under the very eyes of the Government and on its own ground, a United States war-ship to the organizer of a filibustering enterprise, was a splendid piece of impudence. Even the Major admits this.

Having admired the officers' quarters, squinted knowingly about the engine-room and patted the breechlocks of the big guns, Señor Mendez declared his thorough approval of the Sequoia. The rest was mere business detail. It involved the signing of a thoroughly correct appearing bill of sale and the delivery of a certified check for \$100,000 as half payment, the remainder to be paid when the Señor took possession. The Major tossed the scribbled slip of paper negligently into a desk basket. The Señor smilingly bowed himself out. There had been neither hitch nor quibble.

That same afternoon the International Maritime Company, having existed for three consecutive days, ceased to be a factor in the business world. The serious-looking Mr. Brown chuckled as he watched a sign-painter scraping the recently painted names from the door in preparation for a new tenant. Three bewildered young women who had industriously copied many pages of the naval register went away with two weeks' salaries in their respective purses. A hustling dealer in second-hand office furniture carted away the desks and other things.

While making ready for dinner, a few hours after buying his war-ship, Señor Mendez was interrupted by a caller.

"I came up," said Major Jones, "to tell you that you have a very poor memory."

Señor Mendez checked his affable greeting and looked perplexed.

"Sit down," commanded the Major, pulling a chair before the closed door and taking a comfortable position. His tones were not the soothing ones peculiar to "Lubricator" Jones, for somewhere far below the Major's placid exterior there existed unsatisfied wrath of long standing. Your Cassius, who treasures up an injury and bides his time, need not always be lean. He may be fat and still love as well to pay off a score. Even the best of us carry one or two well-defined hates. The Major had his. This disturbed looking man with the unquiet eyes who stood there

fidgiting with a half-buttoned collar was its object.

"But, Señor, I—" began the ex-dictator.

"Excuse *me*," broke in the Major firmly, "you've had your turn. Now it's mine."

Well, he had it. Before he finished there was established thoroughly in the mind of Señor Mendez the identical relation between the man whom he had so abruptly caused to be kicked down his palace steps and the personage whom he now knew as the president-manager of the International Maritime Company.

"But the Sequoia, Señor—the bill of sale—my check?" There were in these queries every shade of anxiety and alarm.

"The Sequoia is still the property of the United States Government, just as she has been for several years past. Your check—that has been deposited to my account. The bill of sale—you may keep that as a souvenir of our last meeting." This was "Lubricator" Jones at his best.

Violent emotion, expressed by a certain contraction of the eyelids and a swelling of forehead veins, was visible on the swarthy face of Señor Mendez.

"I will bring suit! I will appeal to your Government! I will——"

"No," interjected the Major, speaking with much calm deliberation, "oh, no. You will not do any of these things. Neither you nor I, Señor, can afford to have the United States courts prying into our private business affairs. You especially cannot. There was a time, Señor, when you could send people you didn't like off to fever-reeking prisons. Then you might have brought suit and appealed to some purpose. It's different now. You are in a highly civilized country. So long as you are moderately quiet you are safe, but the moment you go about shouting that you've come to buy a war-ship you spoil the illusion. You become a filibuster, a disturber of the sacred peace between nations, and a character of interest to United States marshals.

"On the other hand"—here Major Pemberton Jones paused for purely rhetorical reasons—"down in Guanica there are a lot of inconsiderate people who ac-

cuse you of juggling with the public funds. They are politically prejudiced, perhaps, but they've declared you to be a felon and an outlaw."

Just at this point Señor Mendez squirmed and suddenly appeared to be hunting for something which he had lost.

"Tut, tut, now!" said the Major, sternly. "Never mind about that knife. I haven't struck a man for thirty years and I shouldn't like to begin with you. That's right. Sit down. Yes, a felon and an outlaw. Ugly words, are they not? And we have an extradition treaty with your country; don't forget that. You once did me the honor, Señor, to call me a Yankee pig. Spanish is so very expressive! A pig is a stupid, a very stupid animal. Just remember, Señor, when you are trying to explain to your fellow-revolutionists about your failure to get a war-ship, that a Yankee doesn't like to be called a pig. Adios, Señor."

In a highly dramatic manner Señor José Mendez del Norte paced the length of his hotel apartments, tore at his collar, and shook his clenched fists at the richly decorated ceilings. But that was all.

"Of course," says the Major, and you will note his fine regard for the ethics of statute breaking, "it was technically an illegal procedure. But it was morally just. I got about what I should have divided among my lawyers had I taken the case to the high courts. Yes, the señor was greatly displeased. He was game, though. When he found himself beaten he concluded to let the Guanican revolt shift for itself. The last I heard of him he was living very comfortably in Paris, on the rest of that war-ship money, I suppose. As for me, I have quit high finance."

Very often I see, riding up or down Fifth Avenue in a smart hansom cab, a big, very big man. On a finger of his right hand he wears a large green diamond set in a heavy chased ring. The big, very big man is Major Pemberton Jones, with whom riding in hansom cabs is almost a passion. The large diamond is called El Vengador, Spanish words whose meaning it is not hard to guess.



THE WINGED VICTORY

By Julia Larned

FROM what far, heavenly height of hope
Didst thou descend to light our way,
Cleaving with flash of snowy robe
Time's dusky veil of twilight gray ?

Not of the earth that buoyant strength
Forthreaching to a goal unseen ;
Thou hast beheld life's end divine,
Its light is in thy conquering mien.

Spread o'er our faint and faltering hearts
Thy joyous pinions evermore,
Bright vision of a triumph vast
When the long strife of earth is o'er !