

## A Model Revolution.

BY W. MACPHERSON WILTBANK AND SEWELL FORD.



"Hi, you're just in time for the revolution!"

This was the whispered greeting Don Munios gave me half an hour after my arrival in La Guayro.

"Revolution," said I, "what revolution?"

"S-s-h!" said he. Then leading the way into the library, he carefully closed the door and answered with a chuckle, "Why, *yours*, of course."

"My revolution! Look here, Munios, out with your joke."

"But it's no joke. We've got the men, we've got the guns, and the trap is all but ready to be sprung. A week from St. Sebastian's and the business will be on. It won't take long. We bag the Prince, that rascal Castillo, his councilor, and General Sarjos at one clip. At the next we get the Prince's brother and one or two of the smaller fry in the army. Then, *vive la republique!*"

"And what is to happen to these people you mention?"

"Oh, just removed — g-r-r-, you know," and Don Munios drew his hand across his throat with a suggestive leer. Yet I have seen his eyes fill with tears at sight of a pin scratch on a child's arm.

In an instant my business instinct was up in arms. "Look here!" I said hotly, "you don't suppose that I take stock in your g-r-r business, do you? Why, that sort of thing would simply kill my enterprise. As a friend, I advise you to drop your revolution right here."

"What!" Don Munios threw his cigarette out of the window and jumped to his feet. "Let Guayro suffer longer under this good-for-nothing Prince? Why, see what he's done for the country in the last five years! Look at the banana plantations — abandoned! Look at the gold mines — idle! Look at the railroad — two streaks of rust and a mortgage! Look at the quays!

They rot in the sun. The treasury is bankrupt, the government corrupt, and things are going to the dogs generally, all that our featherhead of a Prince may amuse himself with his boon companions and make a study of new sensations !”

Calm or ruffled, these people of Spanish blood are always picturesque. Their fires of passion are ever lightly banked. Just open a damper and the flames leap from coals which a moment before seemed black and dead. And Don Munios was a true Spaniard.

“Your Prince may be all you say,” I returned, “and your affairs may have gone to the dogs, but mine are all right, and a revolution would play ducks and drakes with them. Why not use peaceable means, — agree to get along without a Prince, and send him back to Spain marked ‘unavailable’ ?”

“Impossible ! I’d be as much opposed to bloodshed as you are, but I know the situation. The officers are well paid and well treated. They are the Prince’s boon companions. As for the soldiers, they idolize their officers, — and there you are ! No, the people have made up their minds that for the good of La Guayro the Prince and his soldier friends must die. In confidence I tell you that in ten days the blow will fall. If in that time you can propose any plan for setting up a republic peacefully, I promise to put it fairly before the Revolutionary Council.”

This was the situation over which we argued until the stars faded ; and it still “hung heavy over my head ” when I awoke to find the tropic sun beating straight down upon the adobe walls of my host’s home.

Not that I am an ardent humanitarian, — though naturally not in favor of wholesale bloodletting. But as I had intimated to Don Munios, there were pressing personal and financial reasons why I could not tamely consent to a revolution at La Guayro.

And this brings me to tell how I happened to be in that tropical country. Way back in the Paleozoic age a few million years ago, — to go to the root of things, — a minute marine insect flourished most prolifically in the waters that covered that part of the globe. The cast-off shells of countless generations of these insects formed a bank many feet thick on the bottom of the sea, and when, in a subsequent age, the ocean had become dry land, this bank

was gradually buried. Then, ages later, a prying and learned chap by the name of Pratt, Junius K., came along and discovered the deposit, and, being of an inquisitive turn of mind, lugged off a bag of the stuff, and experimented until he found it was something for which certain manufacturers would pay an almost fabulous price. Corolith, I'll call it, though that isn't the real name.

Having in addition to his special knowledge enough general wisdom to appreciate the unfitness of a scientist for launching a business enterprise, he gave me a share of his secret in return for my services as a promoter.

Since then everything had gone swimmingly, and now, only a year after the agreement, I had come to La Guayro as representative of the Corolith Company, Limited, with several millions of capital, and a concession from the government of La Guayro given in return for a sum in tax that assured royal reception in the bankrupt kingdom.

To make our position doubly secure I had, in a sort of inspection tour three months ago, engaged Don Munios as local agent with a salary that had secured his protestations of everlasting loyalty. Indeed, even now he tried to make himself believe that the prospective revolution was for the company's best good, though to me it was evident that, like all Latin America, he loved war for war's sake. And war to me meant nothing less than indefinite delay in digging corolith, if indeed the mere rumor of it did not knock the bottom out of our stocks in the New York market.

At any rate, gunpowder costs money, and whoever won would make us pay their bills in the shape of taxes.

Viewed from any angle, the situation accumulated seriousness at such a rate that before I had been up an hour I had cabled to the New York office that a revolution impended, and that unless it could be prevented our interests would be imperiled. With as much urgency as I could put into a cable message, I begged that the president of the company should come at once.

When I reported my movement to Don Munios, asked his hospitality for the expected guest, and suggested that an unknown capitalist from New York might throttle the dogs of war in La Guayro, his face expressed incredulity. However, he was sufficiently politic to say only that the *Americano* could not possibly

get here in time; "for," he explained, "there's not another steamer leaving New York for La Guayro before the fifteenth."

When I suggested that the *Americano* could charter a steamer, Don Munios's face expressed such amazement at the suggested opulence as mine must have shown when I was confronted with his grown-up-in-a-night revolution. In La Guayro life is cheap and money dear.

For two days I fairly lived at the cable office, waiting feverishly for an answer; but the oracle remained dumb, while the hours alternately galloped and stood still.

On the third morning I had gone down to the steamship office — to lay my plans in case it seemed necessary to get away before the row began — and on one pretext and another killed an hour or two there. Finally the sight of a knot of people gathering on the quay drew me thither to join them in watching a big white yacht plow her way up the bay. She did not deign to poke her aristocratic nose up to the tumble-down quay, but came to a stop off shore, not even dropping her anchor. It was much such a craft, but arrived at least three days before even a miracle of speed could have brought it, as I could imagine the Corolith Company might have sent to the rescue of its fortunes; and it was with a sense of injury that I watched the immaculate duck-clad sailors swing the gig from the midship davits and drop the companion-way to the starboard. Then injury changed to mystification as a curiously familiar figure, followed by a man carrying a dress suit case, sauntered out of the cabin, shook hands with half a dozen men aboard, waved an airy good-by, stepped into the boat, turning to me a face that — yes, there was no mistaking him, — it was the face of Lewis Rayner, the president of our company, and the one man in the world who, if the means existed for accomplishing a bloodless revolution in La Guayro, would find these means.

Rayner I had seen develop from a schoolboy, with a corner on marbles, to a capitalist with credit in a dozen banks and the finest collection of rare books this side of the Atlantic. In a year I have known him to bring out a new type-setting machine, promote a Western mining syndicate, catalogue his library, and learn Spanish as an incidental aid to furthering railroad interests in

Mexico,—all with equal success,—and never yet had I plumbed the depths of his resources or found him unequal to any emergency. Without burdening himself with things or facts, he knew beyond any one I have met, the secret of legitimately acquiring other people's best thoughts and things, and how to put them to uses undreamed of by their original owners. So when he stepped off the quay at La Guayro, exactly three days ahead of my closest calculations, I only babbled my delight that he had arrived so soon after receiving my message.

"Message," repeated Rayner, as I helped his man tumble their belongings into the broken-down vehicle that did duty for a public conveyance. "I got no message. Left New York eight days ago with Sam Hiller and his crew. He came clear from the Keys to drop me off here, and now he's going back after alligators. But what about your message? Nothing wrong with Corolith, I hope, for I'm down here for a month's rest. Doctor's orders. Told me to hunt up the dullest, sleepest hole on earth and go there. Well, what are you snickering about?"

As well as I could, the way in which we were being jolted over vilely paved streets, and also considering the proximity of Rayner's man on the front seat, I explained the La Guayro tangle, winding up with the point blank question whether he could straighten it out. To which Rayner responded only with the counter question, when could he see Don Munios? When informed that we were to be guests at that worthy's he relapsed into silence. Rayner did not keep the workings of his mind in a glass case.

The surprise of Don Munios on seeing my companion had a touch of fear in it. The Latin American is only a generation removed from the believer in the black arts.

"Your Yankee steamships must have the wings of the wind," was all he said. And neither Rayner nor I denied it.

After dinner, seated under the palm trees in the courtyard, Don Munios gave a report of the preparations for revolution, which he vainly attempted not to make enthusiastic; ending his account, as I had mine, by asking if Rayner had any peaceable plan to suggest.

"Give me time," said my friend slowly. "You don't suppose I have conspiracies on tap, do you? Besides, there are one or two things I want to know."

Then ensued something like a game of twenty questions, in which Rayner in an hour acquired more information concerning La Guayro, its finances, agriculture, banking system, etiquette, leading men, and in especial concerning the character, foibles, and habits of its ruler, than I had obtained during the two months of my previous stay.

Finally, "So the Prince amuses himself, he seeks new sensations at the expense of his people," he said slowly. "And the people — they are ready for a republic?"

"As the rosebud is ready to burst into bloom," said the Spaniard fervently.

"Um. With the Prince out of the way, would you have any trouble in establishing it?"

"Not a bit," said the Spaniard, only he put it again in the form of a flowery figure of speech.

"And you say there's no successor?"

Don Munios repeated that there was no heir apparent, that the Prince was a bachelor, and his only brother mentally unsound. "Besides," he added, "it's generally understood that the principality is to end with him and a popular form of government is to be adopted."

"That simplifies matters. Now let me have a chance to think things over."

Rayner's way of thinking things over was characteristic. It seemed to consist in literally seeing the town from its markets and quays, to the cathedral and palaces, and in casually chatting with representatives of every class, from the mule drivers to the chief conspirators, and the Prince himself. It even allowed him to spend an hour or so each evening in Munios's library, never reading, but apparently reveling in the atmosphere of books.

On the evening of the third day Rayner and I sat and smoked silently in this library. Apparently he was idly gazing at the ceiling. Then he walked about the room, glancing at the rows of books that lined the walls. He looked with the critical eye of a book fancier at the backs of one or two, and finally sat down with a volume on his knee.

"I've got it," he said quietly after a time, closing the volume and blowing a ring of smoke towards the ceiling.

"Got it! I knew you would. What is it?"

"That's it — up there," pointing to the thinning smoke ring.

"But where did you get it?"

"Out of that book. That's where the best of us go for an idea. Men have been thinking for ages, and writing what they thought for centuries. Don't try to do all your thinking yourself. Use other men's brains when you can. It pays."

"Which book? Let me see." But he had put the volume back, and would only indicate his source of inspiration by an indefinite wave of the hand. He said nothing more until Don Munios returned late that night from a meeting of the conspirators.

"The Prince suspects nothing as yet?" asked Rayner of the arch conspirator.

"I shouldn't be at liberty if he did."

"Good! Now I have a little plan. If it works, you can organize your republic without decimating the population. If it don't, you will be free to use your rifles and banana knives. Can I depend on you, Don Munios?"

"To the last."

"All right. Now I want you to tell me about this banquet we're all invited to at the Palace a — let's see, three days from now."

The banquet was the usual monthly affair to which not only Don Munios, but Rayner and I, as large taxpayers worthy of conciliation, had already been invited.

Don Munios repeated this information, with appropriate phrases concerning wines and sweets wrung from the starving people.

"Yes, I know," said Rayner; "but I want details. Where is it to be held?"

"In the big banqueting hall of the Palace."

"Oh, yes. It was being redecorated when I went over it, so I didn't see it. Quite a fine place, isn't it? Is it lighted by electricity?"

"Yes —" more phrases concerning the Prince's criminal extravagance.

"One thing more. Who is the Prince's royal sky-pilot, father confessor, chief priest, or that sort of thing?"

The Spaniard's eyes expressed mental dizziness at this irreverence.

"The Archbishop of La Guayro. But why —"

"All right; I'd like to meet him to-morrow. Can you fix it?"

"Certainly, only —"

"One thing more. You say the Prince likes to be amused. Do you suppose that you could arrange to have him ask my man Drake to be present as entertainer? Oh, Drake's no clothes-brusher,"— to a look in the Spaniard's eyes. "He's a gentleman, Drake is, college graduate, and all that; but something went wrong with him early in life—crossed in love, maybe—and he's never got a grip on life. Been fancy drink mixer in a Broadway café, advance agent for a two-ring circus, faro dealer in a Colorado mining camp, and has graced half a dozen other professions. He's been a bookmaker at country race tracks, turned street fakir when times were dull, and has done a turn as magioian on the variety stage. My friends and I found him mighty entertaining on the yacht, I assure you, and quite fit for gentlemen to associate with. And I think I may assure you he'll give the Prince a new sensation or two. Now why not introduce him as the distinguished French prestidigitateur, Monsieur Brion? Will that go?"

"Certainly," said Don Munios, catching some of his infectious enthusiasm. "The Prince will insist on summoning him if he numbers the black art among his accomplishments. Our sovereign dotes on that sort of thing. Only I don't understand —"

"Oh, I thought we might give him one night's fun before he quits the Prince business," said Rayner, yawning. "Suppose we get some sleep, gentlemen, I'm tired."

And neither that night nor on the three days following would Rayner utter a word to either of us concerning his plan. In fact he seemed to have forgotten it himself, and spent most of his time strolling around the city, chatting of old missals and cathedrals with the Bishop introduced to him by Munios, discussing military matters with the generals, talking affairs electric with the Palace electrician,— a clever young American who was winning his spurs in the service of the Prince.

Drake, meantime, had received his invitation, and was making such preparations as were possible without apparatus.



When Don Munios, becoming uneasy as the next day of grace approached, remonstrated and reminded him that the Revolutionary Committee was going ahead with its preparations, Rayner nodded his acquiescence. "All right," he said; "load your guns, sharpen your swords and organize your government. I suppose you'll have a dictator for awhile. All I want is the assurance that your first cabinet will sign an iron-bound contract to respect our concession, and let us dig corolith twelve months in the year."

"I'll answer for that," said Don Munios. "But when are you going to get the Prince out of the way?"

"Wait till after the banquet," was the enigmatic reply.

It was a superb affair even for the Prince of La Guayro — that banquet — for the fact that it marked the thirty-third birthday of the sovereign gave an excuse for extra preparation. As large taxpayers and persons to be conciliated, Rayner and I were given seats of honor, Rayner on the Prince's right hand, and I next to my friend. On either side of the long table gleaming with the royal palace plate and glass and flowers extended a line of dark, heavily moustached men, many handsome, most of them young, and looking very brave and gay in their broadcloth, brass buttons, and gold lace. The viands were of distinguished excellence, and the wine of a flavor that belongs only to the output of certain world-renowned vineyards. At the same time there was no vulgar excess. It was not for nothing that the Prince had made the pursuit of pleasure the chief business of his life.

By the time the last course was reached, all things had worked together to bring the company into just the humor for greeting with fervent enthusiasm the gentleman introduced as "M. Brion, the far-famed magician, and friend of President Rayner of the Corolith Company."

And M. Brion, otherwise Drake, proved himself worthy of Rayner's praises. Without any outfit but playing cards, rings, coins, handkerchiefs, and other small objects borrowed on the spot, he kept the entire assembly mystified and entranced. The Prince he captured at the start, by making a strawberry grow out of that gentleman's salt-cellar. Don Munios for the moment forgot the revolution in wonder of beholding a mango seed, hidden in his

table napkin, sprout, leave out, and finally shoot up into a perfect plant.

Finally after a number of tricks involving the disappearance of coins, interchange of rings, and the like, Drake took up a pack of playing cards, and proceeded to such card throwing as I have never seen.

Standing at the foot of the long table, he dealt a card to each of the thirty guests without moving from his position, landing the pasteboard deftly in the finger glass before each man. Then he threw one which sailed gracefully to a point just above the Prince's head, and then returned to the hand of the magician. The native boomerang thrower of Australia would have been moved to envy to see the Queen of Hearts float back with such precision to the hand that sent her. Besides, he read cards through the back, made a rainbow of them about his head, and performed half a dozen clever tricks that took by storm the La Guayreans.

Suddenly, as if by way of climax, he turned, gave a long, shrill whistle, and, with a graceful gesture, sent the entire pack fluttering like a flock of birds straight at the walls of the banquet hall. Before the first one fell to the floor the lights went out with a snap, and the company was left in total darkness.

For a moment there was absolute silence, then the faint clink of metal betrayed the fact that there was a furtive reaching for swords. The Spaniard trusts no man in the dark.

The next instant, however, all were reassured, and ardent Spanish interjections broke from the lips of the Prince and his delighted guests. Where had been the solid wall of the palace now appeared a fairy-like landscape. Trees, mountains, a lake, a river and waterfall gleamed out of the darkness as by enchantment, then faded as quickly as they had appeared. But with only an instant's interval the scene appeared again, this time faintly as a landscape seen in the gray of early morning. Then one of the upper clouds was streaked with pink; then another. The light grew stronger, the whole sky and scene were gradually lighted up, until we saw it once more as if in the glare of the noonday sun.

Darkness again, illuminated this time by the crimson glow of a sunset. Then another interval of blackness and the electric globes

in the crystal chandelier above us blazed out again, and instead of gazing at the magic landscape, our eyes detected that what had seemed a section of the solid wall of the Palace was a sort of drop curtain painted to match the other decorations. These waterfalls, dawns, and noons, and sunsets had not been the product of black art, but merely the work of a clever scene painter and skilful electrician.

As the storm of applause following M. Brion's withdrawal died away, the Prince rose, glass held high.

"A health to M. Brion and Signor Rayner," he cried, his handsome face aglow.

With a bell-like tinkling of glasses the toast was drunk, and we had pushed back our chairs and begun to move about and break up into groups, when the voice of Castillio, the chief councilor of the Prince, drew all eyes to our end of the table.

"The Prince! Look!"

Without a sound His Highness had sunk back into his chair, his arms limp, his head hanging to one side, his face, lately gay and glowing, now turned an ashy gray.

The next moment he fell into the arms of General Sarjos, who sat at the Prince's left.

In an instant a contagion of excitement spread to the entire Palace. While attendants removed the Prince to his apartments a messenger was despatched for the Royal Physician and the Archbishop, and the banqueters, now thoroughly sobered, withdrew to the reception room to await developments.

"A slight heart seizure, or a mild stroke of apoplexy," was the news with which we were finally dismissed. And it was added that the Royal Physician expected that the Prince would soon revive. But those acquainted with the ways of Palaces wagged their heads knowingly over the non-committal nature of the report.

By 9 the next morning the seriousness of the Prince's condition could no longer be concealed, but was proclaimed in bulletins to the excited crowd who had been waiting at the Palace gates since dawn. At noon the Prince was still unconscious, and the bulletins indicated grave doubts of his recovery. At 2 p. m. the situation was the same. His respiration was faint and the heart action almost imperceptible.

At 8 o'clock it was rumored that the Archbishop, who stood ready to administer extreme unction, had proposed that as a last expedient he should resort to an old custom still prevalent among Spanish-speaking people. In accordance with this usage, when a man of prominence is supposed to be dying, has apparently but one chance in a hundred of living, and wants to make the most of it, he has his head shaved, is dressed in a monk's robes, and takes a solemn vow, if his life is spared, to enter a monastery.

Then, if he dies, his soul is saved from perdition, and if he lives the monastery receives a notable recruit. For there's no renouncing of his vows; it's not a case of "when the devil is sick the devil a monk would be, and when the devil is well the devil a monk is he."

If he is unconscious, — and herein lay the special application of the custom, — his friends may take the necessary steps without his sanction.

In short, the priests asked that in order to save the Prince's life for this world, or his soul for the next, they should make a monk of him; and though Castillio and the army officers protested vigorously, many prominent and pious citizens, some of whom Don Munios had been accustomed to meet with in secret, enthusiastically seconded the appeal of the monks. As for the ignorant and superstitious common people, who believed fervently in the potency of the old custom, they thronged about the cathedral and raised their voices in a fervor of entreaty.

At 4 it was officially announced that the Archbishop would wait until 6 o'clock, and that if by that time the Prince was still unconscious and alive, he would perform the ceremony.

When 6 arrived and the Prince's condition was unchanged, word swept through the dense crowd that filled the plazas, and, overflowing, pressed against the very gates of the Palace, that the operation of transforming the Prince into a monk had begun.

And indeed, up in the royal chamber hung with silks, lighted with rosy chandeliers, gilded, and perfumed, and flower filled, the ceremony was carried through to the end. The royal love locks were shaved, the royal form, accustomed to the softest linen and cloth, was arrayed in the plain shirt and coarse serge; in place

of flashing studs or cunningly enameled chains, a wooden rosary was hung around the royal neck.

Then, comforted by the thought that the soul of the Prince was saved from perdition, the royal household waited for the end.

But the expected end was not to come. About 7 o'clock the Prince showed signs of returning vitality. In another hour he opened his eyes, and by 9 o'clock he was sitting up, rubbing his hands over his head in bewilderment, and weakly gasping a "health to M. Brion and Signor Rayner."

Meantime Don Munios and his followers, realizing the drift of affairs, had quietly gathered their forces, seized the Arsenal, and before Castillio and the Prince's military friends understood what was happening, occupied the royal council chamber, — all without a struggle.

Just at midnight, as the Prince, by order of the Archbishop, was carried off to the monastery, uttering remonstrances grievously out of character with his habit, Don Munios and his friends proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of La Guayro. The thing had been done without the pop of a gun or the loss of a single life.

"Lewis," said I, as we sat in Munios's library late that night, "now that Providence intervened so opportunely, do you mind telling me your plan?"

"Providence!" returned my friend scornfully. "I couldn't wait for Providence. The Prince was in too good health. So I had it fixed up with Drake that while the lights were out I should drop the potion into the Prince's cup."

"But the custom?"

"I discovered it that night in the library — recorded in Volume III., Chapter 4, of that set of Curiosities of Spanish History. In chumming with the Archbishop I found that it was still 'practical.' But say," said Lewis with a twinkle of appreciation, "do you suppose that the Prince, in all his varied experience, ever had a sensation that matched his when he found he'd been made into a monk?"