

there, after having locked the door with great care, the hand of his guest, said: 'Father, it is useless for you to hide yourself under such clothes as you are wearing now; you are Father Tapia; you taught me seven years ago in old Puebla. Do you not remember me?'

'I do not,' answered the other. 'Your name is Rodriguez, and I do not remember having had a pupil of that name in all my life as a professor.'

The general smiled. 'I know I can trust you,' he said. 'Rodriguez is not my name. I am John Bernal.'

'You, John!' the priest exclaimed. 'And you, one of my best boys, have become the sanguinary Rodriguez?'

'Sanguinary,' came the sad reply. 'How many are the crimes imputed to me which I never knew of? Still, let it pass. I became the sanguinary General Rodriguez in a very simple way. I joined the Constitutionalist revolution at the very beginning, thinking I was right in doing so. My superior education, my courage, my will power have done the rest. After a few months I have found myself at the head of a thousand men with the title of general.'

'And are you happy?' asked the old professor.

'Happy?' he answered. 'I was happy at the beginning of the revolution. I thought we were fighting for a good cause. I thought we were right. But when I saw the predatory instinct of my soldiers; when I saw justice and chastity and religion trampled under foot; when I saw that we were more like bandits than soldiers of liberty, I began to grow weary of this life and think of leaving it.'

'Why do you not leave it?'

'Leave it? How can I? As long as I lead my soldiers against the enemy or to plunder I am obeyed as never general was obeyed, and I can dispose of my soldiers' lives as I can of my pocket money. But were I to give any sign of being remiss in the cause I am fighting for; were I to show any disgust for it, God only knows what the consequences might be. A few weeks ago a lifelong friend of mine, Januarius Caso y Lara, the one who was so lively and so studious in our old class, was shot simply because he disapproved the burning of the houses of innocent people. And Black, the Yankee filibuster, who has brought so much sorrow to many a Mexican home by his sword and his lust, killed one of his lieutenants because he had delayed for a few minutes the execution of several Federal soldiers. Father, we are bandits, that's all, and I am tired of it. It is indeed inspiring to fight against the enemy of one's country or of one's liberties, but to fight against brothers, and not in the interests of a noble cause, but for thirst of plunder and power is unbearable. I am tired of it all.'

'Poor John,' said the priest, soothingly. 'How I pity you. Would that I could do something to relieve your distressed soul. But, tell me, do you ever think of your religion? How happy you were when you were faithful to it.'

'How often have I thought of that, Father! At times, after a boisterous victory or a hurried flight, when all was hushed and still in the camp, while my soldiers were heavily sleeping, tired to death, or drunk, sitting under my tent or by the window of some lonely house, I remembered the beautiful days of yore, and I wished I could be a good Christian again. But with the rising sun and the bustle of the day the good thoughts faded away, leaving behind them nought but painful remorse.'

'John,' said the priest, 'what hinders you from being reconciled with God? You know that I am a priest, and a priest, even under the disguise of a rebel officer, has power to forgive sins. Come, John, do as you often did in those happy college days. Kneel down and make a good confession.'

'Not now, Father,' he replied, 'not now. I do not feel that I am well prepared for it. It is not the number of my sins that frightens me. I have ordered the shooting of Federal spies and of unruly prisoners,

but I was forced to do so. At times I have led my men to plunder, but I could not help it and I tried to restrain them as much as I could. I do not think I have more sins than these, but I do not feel prepared for confession, nor have I as yet sufficient strength to leave this life of mine. Father, to-morrow I will have another talk with you; now please go to rest. Do not be afraid of sleeping here; nobody will dare to harm the general's guest.' He spoke, and without giving his old teacher any time to answer, called one of his officers and told him to accompany the visitor to his room. So they separated.

Father Tapia knew not how long he slept that night. The only thing he knew was that after his interview with the general he prayed for a long, long time, begging the Lord to finish his work by completing John's conversion. Sleep overtook him during his prayer. It was morning when the firing of many guns awoke him. At about 300 yards' distance from the house where he was located fighting was going on. It lasted only a few minutes; a scouting party of Federals, about twenty in number, had suddenly approached the camp. They were easily put to flight by the rebels, who were already beginning to exult over their easily gained victory when their joy was changed into sorrow. There on the ground lay their general. He, the bravest of them all, had been the first to meet the Federals, and had received a mortal wound. Taking advantage of the momentary consternation of officers and men, Father Tapia mingled with the crowd that pressed around their leader, whose life blood was ebbing fast, and at last succeeded in approaching the prostrate form of his onetime pupil. Opening his eyes, he looked up at his teacher, and summoning all his remaining strength faintly whispered a single word which was meant for him alone. The tone of penitence in which the word was uttered brought a flood of joy to the priest's heart, who, with tears of gratitude to God, breathed in the general's ear the sacramental words which restored the prodigal son to his Maker.

A few hours later Father Tapia was galloping with the young man he had delivered from the rebels away from the camp towards X.—Joseph M. Sorrentino, S.J., in the *Pilgrim*.

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