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SAN BENITO.

In the early nineties there arose in the town of Tularosa a prophet who had honor among his own people. He was only Benito Morales at first, but became to be San Benito, and this was the manner of it: Benito was the only son of one Senora Morales. She had wandered into Tularosa one day with her baby in her arms. To wander in Tularosa afoot is no small achievement. The surrounding country is greasewood plain, barren knolls and alkali patches as far as the eye can reach. At Three Rivers, seven miles to the west, there is a creek which runs almost dry in summer, but north, east and south for many, many leagues there is neither water nor shelter. That the mother, with her child in her arms, had lived through the desert journey was a marvel which was not explained at the time, but which was in after years attributed to divine guidance.

Senora Morales was very young, her baby was but 2 months old, and its father, she said, was a white man. He was her husband, and he would come by and by. But he never came. The priest found her shelter in a crumbling adobe hut, and in return she swept the church and renewed the paper roses in the white and gilt vases upon the altar. She lived mostly on charity. Benito grew to manhood and early gave proof that his mother had spoken the truth in saying that his father had been Americano by the extraordinary activity of his mind. But that he was also half Mexican was evinced in his quite ordinary indolence of body. The priest saw in him a promising padre, and undertook his education. The progress of young Morales was astonishing. His reputation spread. Advice was asked of him as frequently as of the priest, and those who followed it did well, for his inspiration was keen common sense and an eye to the main chance. It dawned slowly upon the padre that his pupil was coming to be of unduly great repute, that his own prestige was menaced, and when Benito was in his twentieth year the good father thus addressed him:

"My son, you are now a man, and you should play a man's part. You should go out into the world and work for the mother who has so long supported you."

The word "work" was a terrible stab to the heart of Benito. "But am I not to be a priest?" he asked.

"No," said the father piously. "You have not the spirit of the priest. You love the things of this world."

Benito's fine black eyes grew rapt, and he opened his lips to protest. But the father had some knowledge of mankind himself, and he interrupted. "And then," he suggested, "the padre must be always poor, but a brain like yours can make much money in the world."

The fine black eyes sparkled with greed. The white strain was strongest in his love of gain, inasmuch indeed that it overcame the laziness of his Mexican blood, and the thought of adventure which should be rewarded with gold fired Benito's soul. "Where shall I go?" he asked.

"To the railroad, to Socorro, to Santa Fe, to Tucson, perhaps even to Los Angeles," the priest answered vaguely. "You can grow rich—ah, very rich—in Socorro or Santa Fe. You need not go farther, for some day you might wish to come back to your mother, and you could not do it maybe if you were so far away as Tucson."

"But I must have money to go with," suggested Benito.

The priest looked at him reproachfully. "Your mother did not need money when she came from the north and carried you in her arms," Benito was silent. "But perhaps we can get \$1, or even \$2. I will go today and try to gather it for you. Have you no money of your own?"

"No," lied Benito glibly.

"And yet," said the good father, perplexed, "you have often been paid when you have given advice."

"I gave the money to my mother. Did she not deserve that I should?" asked Morales righteously.

The padre doubted, but he held his peace. He gathered \$2.20 from his grateful flock, and Benito Morales, taking that and the \$10 he had been all his life in saving, started forth to seek his fortune. His mother wept placidly for days as she smoked her cigarettes on the shady side of the house or knelt in church and prayed and said her beads while the swallows flew back and forth and twittered among the rafters. In time she ceased to weep, but she talked incessantly of her only son.

Two years passed before Benito came back to his own. He had gone in the summer, and in the summer he returned. A thought was upon the land. In those two years there had been no rain. The priest prayed and the people supplicated and the gaze of St. Joseph was carried in procession. It had brought water from the skies before this. Yet now its influence was of no avail, and the crops—even the crop of frijoles—seemed doomed to fall. Then Benito Morales returned. The people, remembering that his advice had proved good of yore, asked him now what they should do. Benito did not commit himself, but he said that he would pray, and perchance the anger of heaven might be withdrawn. If so, he would expect to be paid. The people promised. Then Benito went into the church and bowed his picturesque head and prayed for rain. There was some faith in his heart and such skepticism. On the following day it rained. Benito was well paid, and his reputation far outshone that of the padre. Now Benito in his travels had wandered to the farthest limits of the continent, even unto San Francisco and Los Angeles. He had learned much that the padre would not and much that the padre could not have taught him. Among the latter was the trick of hypnotizing. A hypnotist had picked Morales up from the streets one evening and had promised him 50 cents if he Mexican would help him with his law. Morales did not know what it was, but he needed half a dollar, and he went with the man, and he went again night after night. He observed and he watched, and at last he determined that he could do the "treck" as well as the "gringo." He experimented and practiced and became in course of time fairly proficient, for Morales was a man of brains and will. The "treck" served to amuse him and his friends, but he never thought of

Senate Read. Room

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turning it to account. He was sharp enough to know that he did it so well as the white man.

In course of time he grew weary of working to live. He did not grow rich, and he had to labor hard for the rare dollars that he turned. It was better in Tularosa, where people would give him frijoles and cigarettes and where his mother would do the little that was needed to keep hunger from the door. Slowly and leisurely he earned his way back to Socorro, and thence he rode on a burro that he found on the banks of the Rio Grande to Tularosa. Thus it was that Benito Morales returned to his own people, little dreaming of the honors that were in store for him.

One day as he sat in his own doorway watching the mocking bird that hopped back and forth in its cage and pecked at the red chili stuck between the bars he wondered how he should get his next package of brown rice paper for cigarettes. He had no money, his mother had none and he had exhausted the generosity of his friends. Then it flashed upon him that the "treck" would be of use. He could get endless packages of papers by that method. He went to where a number of his friends lounged around the door of the one store of the town. The least generous man of them all had a new package. In seeming playfulness Morales pressed him upon the brow and gazed into his eyes. The man grew rigid.

"Give me your cigarette papers and some tobacco, if you please," suggested Benito.

His subject did as he was bid. Benito released him and sat down to smoke.

The onlookers were seized with a terrible awe. Benito had a power from the devil or from heaven, they were not certain which, and it lay with Morales to decide that for them. He put his power to good uses for a time. He cured those of the sick who seemed likely to recover. He made men perform feats of prodigious strength. The people rose up and blessed him, and ere long they called him San Benito, timidly at first, then with growing conviction.

When his reputation was established, Morales began to work for his own ends. Manuel Gutierrez awoke from a trance one day to find that he had in the presence of witnesses signed away his house to Morales. When he protested, he was set upon and beaten and driven off with hoots. Jose Ortega in the same fashion gave away his bit of a ranch at Three Rivers. Morales was now a landed proprietor. He married, and one person contributed, all unwittingly, a chair, another a bed, another a table, another a statue of a saint, to furnish the bridegroom's house. The people feared and almost worshipped him. His mother and his wife and his children received much honor. But Morales had too much rope, and in due time he hanged himself.

A teamster who was camping upon the bank of the creek a couple of miles from Morales' rancho had two mules which the Mexican coveted. Benito spent the evening hanging around the teamster's campfire and talking to him. He was a "gringo," but the "treck" had been done to "gringos" before. Why, reasoned Morales, should not be attempt it? He did and with entire success. When the man was under his influence, Morales said, "Tonight at 12 o'clock you will come one mile down the river to where the ford road is, and you will give me these two mules." Morales touched the ones he wanted. Then he awoke the teamster and went away. At midnight he waited by the ford and received the mules. He sent the man back to his camp and took the animals to a clump of heavy willows, where he tied them. He did not want the man to find them in his corral if it should occur to him to make trouble.

The next day as Morales dug aimlessly in his strawberry patch he saw the sheriff and the teamster approaching. The sheriff was an Irishman who kept the one store of the town, and he did not like Benito. The Mexican was badly scared.

"This man," said the Irishman, "says you were loafing around his camp all the evening yesterday and were watching the two mules that are missing now. He thinks you stole them."

"I did not. I have not got them," said San Benito.

"You come and help us look for them just the same. You're a queer lot, and you've got lots of things you didn't work to earn."

The mules were found, of course, tied under the willows on San Benito's own ground with a piece of San Benito's own rope, which he had bought of the Irishman only two days before.

Morales was tried as a horse thief at the next meeting of the court at the county seat, and he was convicted. When the news reached Tularosa that he had been sent to jail, the people of the town turned against their saint after the manner of mankind, which asks nothing better than to burn what it has adored. Gutierrez seized back his house, Ortega reclaimed his ranch, San Benito's wife and children were turned out and found refuge where they might until the padre gave them a home.

Afterward, when San Benito came back to his town, he was met with stones and curses and driven out upon the prairie. And his mother went with him across the burning plain toward the vague north, from which they had come. He might be Morales, the horse thief, to his ungrateful people, but to her he was Benito still—even San Benito.—Gwendolyn Overton in Argonaut.

Bachelors.
She—I think the average man who lives to be an old bachelor pays a very poor compliment to himself.
He—How so?
She—He shows that he doesn't believe he is smart enough to take care of any one beside himself, or he is afraid no girl would have him.—Troy Budget.

EYES

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EYES

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EYES

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