

Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine



Edmond Hamilton — H. Warner Munn — B. Wallis
Adolphe de Castro — Frank Owen — and Others

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE



Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 450 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Ill. **FARNSWORTH WRIGHT**, Editor.
Copyright, 1928, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

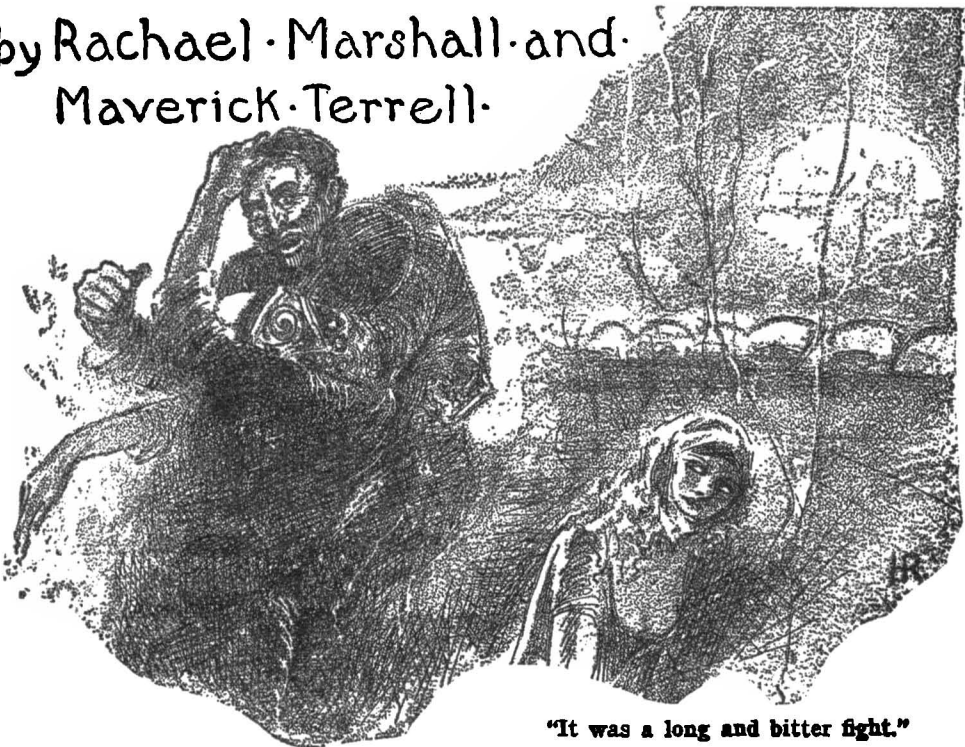
Contents for November, 1928

Cover Design.....	C. C. Senf
<i>Illustrating a scene in "The Mystery in Acatlan"</i>	
The Eyrie	580
<i>A chat with the readers</i>	
The Mystery in Acatlan.....	Rachael Marshall, Maverick Terrell 582
<i>It happened in Acatlan, and the horror of it drove the American to seek forgetfulness in strange drugs</i>	
The Polar Doom.....	Edmond Hamilton 589
<i>From under the polar ice a horror out of long-dead ages is loosed upon the world to spread terror and destruction</i>	
The Head From Ecuador.....	Robert Lee Heiser 608
<i>The sight of that shriveled head and red hair, with the tattoo-marks he knew so well, was too much for Dan Hack</i>	
Flame of the Ages.....	Robert Choate Albright 616
<i>Shabad Nagaur, high priest of the Fire Temple of Oudh, let the sacred flame expire on the altar</i>	

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

The Mystery in Acatlan

by Rachael Marshall and
Maverick Terrell.



"It was a long and bitter fight."

IT WAS in the Explorers' Club that I first noticed the expression in Harvey Larrison's eyes when Anthony's dog came in. Larrison did not move; there was a barely perceptible pause between the puffs of his pipe; yet for a moment, before he could clamp down on his nerves, fear looked out of them—stark, staring fear, almost instantly controlled. The dog was an unusually handsome one and he went the rounds of us seeking pats and praise and getting them, including Larrison's. No one else had noticed the betraying flash in Larrison's eyes. Had it been in anyone else it would not have been so noticeable, but Harvey Larrison had a reputation for daredevilry unequalled even in our Explorers' Club, whose members are never what one might call cau-

tious people. I began to remember tales about Larrison, even an unpleasant hint since his return from his last trip somewhere on the ends of the earth.

"Thought you liked dogs," I said later in the evening when Anthony and his dog had left.

Larrison eyed me with surprise.

"I do," he said. "I have always been extremely fond of them, all kinds. In fact I see very little difference between them and man, except that caused by a few eons' difference in evolution."

"You looked at Ted's dog queerly," I persisted. He did not deny it.

"I had a curious experience once," he said. "It has made me feel different about dogs."

I had had the luck to catch him in the mood, to get him started on the

story which would explain that curious flash.

"It was in Acatlan it happened," he said slowly. "A terrible country, Acatlan, enormous, savage, half a million years behind the rest of the world. Anything could happen there."

"Seems that way," said Dr. McGonigal from out the shadows beside the great library fireplace where we were gathered against the harshness of a cold and stormy night.

"Yes, you've been there too, haven't you?" Larrison said.

"Three years," said the big Scotch doctor laconically.

"Anything might happen there, in Acatlan," repeated Larrison. "I have never explained this thing. There is no explanation," he continued, "except one, and that, of course, is ridiculous, impossible. Or is it, in Acatlan?"

He looked over at the doctor, who merely crossed his legs anew and muttered something unintelligible into his pipe.

"I was lounging in the railroad pueblo of Cuernavaca," continued Larrison, "waiting for my man Pablo to turn up with a wheel part which I had ordered rushed out by express. It was too hot to go down to the station, even at 10 o'clock in the morning, so I sat under an awning eating Cordovan pineapple. There is nothing in all the world so pleasant to eat as Cordovan pineapple. They grow ripe on the plant, and one cuts them in two and eats them with a spoon—sweet, ice-cold and fragrant as a field of flowers.

"There was the usual crowd hanging about, or passing to and fro: water carriers, *leche camada* venders, blue Indians—so called because of the blue blankets they weave and which constitute their sole costume, a piece cut off the end for a girdle, a hole in the middle to put their heads through and the piece out of the hole tied niftily on their heads for a hat—

white-clad peons, naked children, a woman or two in the usual soiled chemise pounding corn for *tortillas*; white adobe glaring in the sun, blue shadows, and unbelievable greens, and somewhere in the distance the interminable music of a *danza* played on strings that seemed to drip with melody. Above the village towered the frowning vastness of the mountains. Strange tales are told of those mountains. Dunsany must have had some such tremendous ravines and mist-curtained valleys in mind when he wrote of 'the gods who dwell in the folds of the hills.' It is impossible to look up to those mountains and not feel awe, reverence, even a little cold fear along one's spine. They seem to be guarding with utter indifference and relentlessness the last withdrawing place of ancient gods dealing in ancient and sometimes terrible laws.

"Along the sun-checkered, cobbled street I saw a dog coming. It passed quite close to me and suddenly turned and gazed at me with its brown, unhappy eyes. That is what first attracted me to the dog: its unhappy, beseeching eyes, bewildered with pain and fear and yet holding somehow to a dumb, blind hope. I like dogs, even Mexican ones, which is the very limit of affection. And because the dog seemed so miserable I smiled at it, as one would smile at a person; an unusual thing to do, I admit, but I smiled in response to those eyes, seeking so desperately for a friend.

"The dog hesitated and looked back over its shoulder. It was a slender little beast, hardly more than a puppy, dark and smooth of coat. Just above one corner of its mouth was a scar—a small, deep wound which had healed but which drew the mouth up into an odd, whimsical quirk. As it came over in answer to my invitation I saw that its back, beneath the soft coat, was welted across and across with scars of the lash. Then all of a sudden as I patted it, swearing to myself at the brute who

had tortured it, such a look of utter fear leaped into its eyes as I do not like to think of. It moved its muzzle sideways, as though looking desperately for a way of escape, then again it turned to me. I threw over the dog the rubber poncho which I had folded over my arm, to conceal it from whatever or whoever it was it feared, and turned to see what the dog had seen.

"He came out of the only restaurant—a fat, sleek man with black drooping mustaches over a hard mouth. His shirt was open half-way down his hairy chest, and his velvet pants were trimmed with rows of silver buttons, and a gay *serape* hung over his shoulder. I recognized the marks of Mexican wealth; some *ranchero* probably, or a robber from the hills. He sauntered complacently by, picking his teeth, and cast a lack-luster eye in my direction. Evidently seeing nothing to interest him, he passed on down the street and around the corner.

"Unconsciously I heaved a sigh of relief when he was out of sight; I hardly know why, unless it was because he was one of those persons whom one instantly dislikes. However, then Pablo cantered up with the wheel part strapped behind his saddle-bags," Larrison continued, "and I mounted and followed him, the little dog trotting along beside me.

"I WAS working on the railroad some thirty miles from the town, and it was late afternoon when we arrived at the camp.

"I went to my house, changed my clothes and went on up to the office, which was at the camp proper, a half-mile away. I forgot all about the little dog, which I had left asleep on a rug in my rooms. Work had piled up in my absence and I stayed at my desk until nearly 11 that night. Then I knocked off work, and decided to have a bite and turn in.

"I had inherited a pretty decent place from the engineer who had preceded me, and left on account of his health. It was a rambling old hacienda, long since deserted. He had only furnished one end of it, a high-ceilinged living-room with a tiled floor, a bedroom and a kitchen. He had had a fireplace built in of stone and adobe, for the evening chill pours down from the mountains like so much water. A fire was burning as I entered, and the room looked unusually attractive, almost home-like; I had accumulated a lot of blankets and Indian stuff and had some books sent out to me, and these had been dusted and rearranged. I supposed McCormack had dropped in, though I had not heard him mention any such intentions, and had made himself comfortable. Someone was sitting in the big armchair and moved in answer to my greeting but made no reply. I glanced at the chair and nearly dropped in my tracks, for there sat a girl, a young thing, hardly more than a child, staring at me with big, frightened brown eyes. I don't know exactly why, but I thought instantly of the dog, and looked for him where I had left him asleep on the hearth-rug. He wasn't there.

"'Hello,' I said to the girl, as casually as I could, 'where did you come from?'

"She said nothing, but got slowly to her feet; rather bewildered and half frightened she seemed.

"'You—you live here?' she asked in a very pure, upper-class Spanish.

"'That was my impression,' I replied.

"A moment more she stared at me—a long, somber look that seemed to be trying to read my inmost depths, and then she smiled.

"'I very glad,' she said, this time in halting English. 'I make fire for you.' The light struck full on her as she came forward, and I was amazed at her gentle, delicate beauty,

more that of a child than of a woman. Oddly enough a small scar drew up one corner of her mouth into a whimsical sort of twist.

"She took my hat from my hands and hung it up; she drew the chair toward the fire; then went and got my slippers from where I had left them under the table and set them by the fire.

"'If you will seet down,' she said timidly, 'I will take off the shoe. Then I weel make the coffee. I make ver' good coffee.'

"'I sat down because I didn't know what else to do, but she seemed to take the situation as a matter of course.

"'She took off my shoes, unlacing them deftly and quickly, and thrust my feet into the slippers. One of them had a rent in the toe.

"'Tonight I will mend that,' she said.

"'But look here,' I burst out, 'you can't stay here, you know!'

"'She looked up at me, sitting back on her heels, and her eyes filled with tears.

"'Please you not send me away! I be good to you! I make cook, I make fire, I mend clothes, I do everyting—'

"'Who told you I wanted a—a servant?' I asked. It seemed hard to connect the word with her delicate beauty. 'I never said such a—'

"'She burst into tears and flung herself down on the rug, sobbing so that her whole frame trembled. She crept toward me along the floor and clung about my knees, sobbing. Her hair fell all about her face, and as she looked up at me, her beseeching eyes half veiled by its tangles, I again thought of the dog. Nowhere else had I seen such an expression of longing, of unreasoning despair and terror.

"'You no send me back,' she begged. 'You no send me back—to him—he so cruel—he beat me so.

No! no! you no send me back—please—please!'

"Words dissolved into sobs; her little brown hands clutched me; her tangled brown head dropped upon my knee. One shoulder of the loose garment she wore slipped back and down, and I saw across her back innumerable scars of the lash.

"Pity engulfed me, even while, for some undefined reason, a little cold chill ran down my spine. Gently I put my hands about her and lifted her up. She seemed such a child, a helpless, frightened child to whom someone had been unbelievably cruel, even for that land of cruelty. She collapsed on my lap and buried her face on my shoulder, her slender little body so racked with sobbing that it seemed almost as if it might break under the violence of her grief. I soothed her the best way I could; though it's little enough I know about children.

"'Don't be afraid, *pobrecita*,' I said. 'I won't send you back if you don't want to go. No one is going to hurt you any more.'

"Instantly her sobs stopped and her eyes smiled up at me, all wet with tears.

"'I know you are good,' she said. 'I know I make no mistake. I weel repay you. I weel work for you.' Her instant faith was overwhelming.

"While I sat wondering how on earth I was going to get out of the position in which I had just put myself, she slipped away and went into the kitchen. Soon she returned and drew up the small table near the fire and served me a deliciously cooked meal, which she must have had already prepared and keeping hot, and fragrant, perfectly made coffee. But to all questions as to who she was and where she came from she returned one answer.

"'But I do not know, *Señor*. I am here. It has always been like that.'

"When she was questioned closer,

a bewildered look came into her eyes and she seemed frightened. I saw that she really did not know who she was, other than that the man to whom she referred occasionally called her Chulita, when he didn't happen to be swearing at her. From her references to him I believed him to be her father. She said he was fat and had big black mustaches. There were many blanks in her story, and always she spoke of 'that night,' or 'the night when.' It was a week before I discovered that she had never seen daylight, and did not know that the world ever looked other than dark, or moonlit. She supplied all lapses by saying, 'It must have been while I sleep.' It seemed she slept during the daytime, or entered some sort of comatose state of which she retained no slightest memory. Otherwise she seemed perfectly normal."

"Ay!" muttered the doctor, looking more than he said. Our guest went right on with his strange tale.

"I WAS in a quandary," Larrison said. "What on earth could I do with her? To be sure, she was 'only a Mexican,' but youth and beauty and a child's delicate innocence, such as seemed to be hers, must be shielded regardless of such matters as nationalities.

"There was not a woman in the camp, and only one other white man besides myself — McCormack, who sometimes tramped up from the camp to spend the night with me over Scotch and soda and cigars and memories of 'back home.' I was tired out from work and the long ride up from Cuernavaca, and I left the problem to the morrow and tumbled into bed and instant sleep.

"In the morning I found the room exquisitely clean and set in order, my torn slipper mended and hot food upon the fire, but of the girl there was no sign. No one was about except the little brown dog asleep upon the rug. She rose and came to me,

fawning at my feet, looking up at me with brown eyes of adoration and gratitude, her mouth drawn up into a sort of one-sided smile by the scar. I patted her and pulled her ears, but somehow, in spite of myself, a suspicion of a chill ran down my back.

"However, as I plunged into the routine of work, surrounded by noise and the matter-of-factness of everyday affairs, the breath of superstition passed away. The dog followed me about the yard or lay asleep in the sun in my office. I told McCormack about the girl and he was highly amused, the more so because of my seriousness.

"'If she followed you up from Cuernavaca it's because she likes you,' he said.

"'But she didn't follow me up,' I expostulated. 'There was no one at all on the road.'

"'These Indians have trails of their own,' he said. 'No white man can follow them. What the 'ell! take the goods the gods send you and forget it.'

"'But she's so infernally young!' I exclaimed.

"'Yeh,' said McCormack, 'better leave your watch with me. Them young, innocent kind's usually the worst. Besides, what else can you do with her away out here, anyway?'

"And what else could I do with her? Send her back to be beaten by that fat scoundrel? At least she was safe and well cared for in my big place. Besides, she might go again, as mysteriously as she came.

"Toward sunset the dog roused herself from her sunny corner by my desk and scratched at the door. I let her out, somewhat impatiently, for I wanted to finish a letter before dark. An hour or two later I called for McCormack and invited him to spend the evening with me.

"The house was lit when we arrived, and there was a savory smell of cooking in the air. Chulita was there and served us a most delicious

supper. The dog was nowhere in sight.

"'But there is no dog, *Señor*,' she said when I asked her. 'I have seen no dog.'

"'I hope she hasn't got lost,' I said.

"We spent a pleasant evening, smoking and talking, while Chulita sat quietly in a corner sewing buttons on my clothes. She seemed to have only one idea—to be of service to me.

"'She's a winner,' said McCormack as he turned in beside me later. 'Some baby pup!'

"For some reason the old joke irritated me.

SEVERAL days passed. My house was cleaned as it had never been cleaned before. My lamps were always filled, my clothes mended and washed and pressed, my supper delightfully cooked and served. In the mornings there was no sign of Chulita. I never saw her in the daytime, and whatever she did about the house she evidently did at night or in the evenings before I came home from the office. I paid her a week's wages, but she left them untouched in a jug in the kitchen. She seemed to have no other wants than to look after my welfare, and no other pay but praise for her work. In all her attitude there was never a touch of coquetry. She was a child, a happy, inconsequential child, easily hurt, easily angered, easily pleased.

"I noticed after a while that I never saw the dog in the nighttime. In fact, I never saw the dog and Chulita together. The dog always grew restless toward evening and would trot off into the woods, though I always found him asleep on the rug at home in the morning. Gradually the preposterous idea, which I had felt rather than thought, died away.

"Then one day I heard an unusual commotion in the yard and Pablo came in.

"'There is an *hombre* out there who raise hell, *Señor*,' he said. 'He says you steal his dog.'

"I told Pablo to bring him in, and he returned with the fat man I had seen in Cuernavaca. He had even more silver buttons on his velvet pants and an even more gorgeous *serape* over his shoulder, and evidently a goodly lot of *pulque* under his large belt.

"'I want my dog!' he exclaimed loudly. 'You damn t'ief, you steal my dog.'

"'Is that your dog?' I asked, pointing to the little brown animal asleep in the sun.

"A curious look lit up the Mexican's face; a shadow of fear crossed it, and greed and something else.

"'Here you!' he snapped savagely, and the dog sprang to life, quivering and terrorized.

"'Well, you can't have her,' I said. 'A man that treats a dog as you have treated that beast can't get any animal from me.'

"'But she's my dog!' began the Mexican.

"'She may have been your dog, but she's mine now,' I interrupted. 'She followed me and I've had her three weeks. Just to keep your feelings from being hurt I'll pay for her. Here.' I threw five dollars on the table.

"The Mexican's eyes blinked at the amount, but he drew himself up haughtily. 'I want no money,' he said. 'I want my dog. Come here, you.'

"The dog whined and crouched, cast me a look of entreaty, and creeping over to me laid her head against my feet. The Mexican swore and kicked at it viciously with his spurred boot. He missed the full force of the blow, but the sharp spur tore a ragged line across the dog's shoulder.

"The ensuing combat was swift and to me extremely pleasant. After the Mexican had picked himself out

of the dirt-pile in the yard in which he found himself he turned a face convulsed with rage toward me.

"'I have you arrest!' he shrieked. 'You steal my girl—I mean my dog. I have you arrest!'

"Clearly the man was drunk.

"'Go to it,' I remarked, flexing my arm. 'Plenty more medicine where yours came from. She's my dog and she stays my dog; here's your money and that's all there is to it.'

"He took himself off, grumbling and muttering threats under his breath.

"'Bad business,' said McCormack to me afterward. 'Those greasers never forget. And the damn dog isn't worth a nickel anyhow.'

"'Maybe not,' I said, 'but I like the little beast, somehow. It's so darn pathetic. And besides, it likes me.' Which after all is probably half of why most of us like dogs. We enjoy the flattery of their devotion.

"I DID not see the dog again that day, and I did not think particularly of the matter again, having company affairs upon my mind. But that night, as Chulita leaned over to serve me the *enchiladas*, her bodice slipped back from her shoulder and I saw a freshly made, jagged, red scar on her shoulder, as though a spur had struck across it. Somehow I found it difficult to finish my supper.

"Of course it was an accident, a coincidence. It was ridiculous to think anything else—worse than ridiculous. What strange notions came from staying for years up in these lonely, savage mountains! How I would laugh at myself for even dreaming remotely of such a possibility, once I was back in safe and sane, everyday New York. But insidiously the idea remained.

"Then another complication arose.

I fell in love with Chulita. I tried to argue myself out of it, to reason and to shame myself out of it, without avail. I could not get home early enough, it seemed to me, to the house which was a house no longer but a home.

"As for Chulita, she, too, was changing. The haunted look left her eyes and a look of happiness succeeded it. The scars on her pretty back healed and faded. I still treated her as I would a child, a lovable and loving child, though more and more I felt toward her as toward a woman. And I thought she felt the same toward me. I surprised depths in her gaze, and once when our hands inadvertently touched I saw her tremble. I determined to marry her, and told McCormack so after one of his rude jokes which angered me.

"'Go ahead,' he said. 'Stick your head in the noose if you're determined to.'

"'Why shouldn't I marry her?' I demanded. 'She's as sweet as they come, and good, too. And she's a lady.'

"'Where did she come from? What's her name? How do you know she ain't married already? What is she, anyway?' he demanded; to all of which I replied that I didn't know and didn't care.

"'Chulita, I love you. I'm not good at fancy speeches, but will you marry me?' I asked her that night.

"She looked up at me with those great, fathomless brown eyes. 'I will do anything you want,' she replied. 'What is this, to marry?'

"'I love you,' I told her. 'I love you so much that I can't talk about it.'

"'Oh,' she sighed, resting her head against me. 'To love, I know what that is.'

"'Get ready,' I told her after a while. 'Tomorrow we will ride down to Cuernavaca and get the *padre* to

(Continued on page 715)

The Mystery in Acatlan

(Continued from page 588)

marry us, and then you will belong to me for ever and for ever.'

" 'Tomorrow,' she repeated. 'I will be ready.'

"We stayed out in the moonlight, sitting by the doorway under the jasmine vine until midnight, lovers for the first time. Then I got up and told her she must sleep.

" 'We must start very early in the morning,' I said. 'It is a long ride.'

"I went to bed and heard her moving about the house until at last I fell asleep, happier than I had ever been or ever shall be in my life.

"In the morning when I got up there was no sign of Chulita, no one at all in the house but the little brown dog, asleep on the rug with a faded jasmine flower under her paw.

"Failing to find Chulita anywhere, I went to the office and spent the day half-heartedly working, puzzled and unhappy. Why had she failed me? Had anything happened to her? Had perhaps that Mexican returned? Again the eery thought crossed the edges of my mind, sending faint cold through all my veins—the thought of the strange impossible legend which one finds in every nation and told in every tongue, the legend of the *loup-garou*, the werewolf; that ridiculous tale believed by the Indians of a being under a curse and doomed to be human by day, or by night, and a dog or wolf for the other twelve hours.

"I looked down at the little dog I had rescued that day at Cuernavaca, the day of the same evening that Chulita had appeared in my house. The dog's deep brown eyes were fixed upon me with a look of sadness and utter devotion and its

mouth was drawn up at one corner by the scar into a sort of a half smile—so like Chulita's, so terribly like! I shuddered, and even in the hot sunlight pouring through the window my hands felt cold and wet. The dog sighed profoundly and came over and laid her head heavily upon my feet.

"WHEN I returned I found Chulita dressed for travel in one of the prettiest of the dresses I had had sent out to her from Mexico City, some weeks before. She was so pretty and and so sweet and eager that fears and cautions slid off my back like water from a duck's wing. We mounted and rode through the fragrant, moonlit night, down past mist-hung ravines where the perfumes of a thousand orchids enveloped us, down and downward and at last into moonlit, sleeping Cuernavaca.

"I roused the priest, and we were married in the dark little church. The priest's sister and a sleepy Mexican lad were witnesses. The civil ceremony would be attended to later. We went out of the church to where our horses stood, and just as we came around the stone buttress we ran into a Mexican. Heaven alone knows how he came there, by what evil chance he was abroad and passing at that hour and place. But there he was. In the clear moonlight I recognized instantly his great bulk, his evil eyes and drooping mustache. He snapped out a single word.

Chulita turned and saw him and screamed. A knife flashed from his hand and I sprang at him.

"It was a long and bitter fight, for this time he had not been drinking and he had his full strength. I had him at last, and felt his body suddenly grow limp as his breath left him beneath my fingers. But he had me, too. The blood was pouring from a gash in my head and the

world spun and went out as I collapsed.

"The stars were paling when I came to myself, still lying across the body of the Mexican in the completely deserted street. Evidently no one had seen us or been near. The horses were still tied to the hitching-post. I staggered to my feet and looked about for Chulita. She was gone! There was no one there, nothing but the little brown dog lying dead in the moonlight with a Mexican knife through her heart. I never could find Chulita again, nor anyone who had seen her or any trace of her. There is no explanation, is there, Doctor? You've been out in lonely places, in Mexico; is there?"

Dr. McGonigal came out of his reverie.

"Er—no, Mr. Larrison, I canna say there is," he answered.

"Except of course unless," continued Larrison, "unless—however, that way madness lies."

He rose, and soon, the storm having died down in the meantime, he left the club for his rooms.

The rest of us said nothing for awhile.

Bob Wheeler spoke suddenly.

"Er, ah," he began, "didn't I hear somewhere that Larrison uses some form of dope?"

The doctor grunted.

I admitted that I had heard the same rumor.

"Ay! Perhaps!" said the doctor, pulling on his greatcoat. "God-forsaken place, Acatlan. Gets a man, one way or another."

"That would explain a story like that," Wheeler went on.

Again the doctor grunted.

"Still," he said in his slow Scotch way as he pulled on his gloves, "I'm wondering, lads, which came first, the dope or the dog? Good-night, fellows."

The door closed after him.