

## Caracas and the Venezuelan Scourge

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The day was hot—hot even for Caracas—so hot that the hotel proprietor remarked upon the heat and wanted to be back in Switzerland, where he had been born. Because it was early in the afternoon the doctor stood in the shade of the hotel porch and leaned with one shoulder against the wall. That his eyes might be guarded from the glare of the fierce sunlight on the white walls of the city he had shoved his hat forward, tilted downward over his forehead, thus exposing the beginning of the bald spot behind. The city was quiet. During the hours of the strongest sunshine most people remain indoors. The footfalls of a man walking sounded distinctly, grew fainter, and died away. Now a string of donkeys passed, returning to the country toward the east from the market place; now one of the horse cars went by. The doctor pushed his hat still further over his forehead, lighted a cigarette with his last match, threw away the box, and said: "Well! It takes them a long time to fetch that carriage."

"Do you know," he continued, speaking straight into the street and looking at no one, "foreigners aren't liked here so awful much? Last year the United States consul at La Guayra was threatened with death while some Venezuelan officials looked on. And this government did not take much trouble to make an apology to the United States. Then, a few months ago, the United States consular agent at Barcelona was arrested without cause and put in prison. A year ago the same consular officer was arrested and an attempt made by local military authorities to extort money from him by force. Last fall a German merchant at Barcelona was arrested and tortured by the officials there until he gave them a large sum of money. Inside of twenty days a 6,000-ton German cruiser turned up, got back the money and obtained ample satisfaction for the outrage."

"But the worst of all was what happened to two Americans a few weeks ago. They were men of high character—respectable people, mind you. They were going down to La Guayra on the morning train when they were arrested by one of these know-it-all officials and thrown into prison. They didn't get especially fine treatment in jail, and they lost the New York steamer by reason of their detention. The excuse the official gave was that one of them had spilled some cigarette ashes on the seat in front of him. Oh! they're a bird gang. Where is that carriage, I wonder? Must have got lost in the shuffle."

The doctor crossed one foot over the other and shoved his hands in his pockets. He was one of those men who will talk much and fluently at some times, and at other times will say nothing. He had eaten well at lunch, and so, according to the custom of the land, he talked of the all-pervading subject of revolution.

"Well," he said, "they say the affair is all over. This came through the French cable, not from the government, so there is some chance to believe it. President Castro said that if he caught Acosta, who was the leader of the revolution about Carupano, he would shoot him. This is not the way they generally do. Capital punishment is seldom practiced here. When Andrade left after that funny battle he cleared with a barrelful of money and a gunboat. But he sent the gunboat back with his compliments to Castro, who had kicked him out. He thought that Castro might find use for the gunboat. You see he knew his country. Well, the president said that if he captured Acosta that would be the end. Now the French cable said that Acosta has been captured and shot by the president's orders. So that finishes that fellow. Here's that confounded carriage. Come on."

### Road Leading from Caracas.

Headed eastward from Caracas there runs a narrow road which takes its beginning in one of the main streets of the city. Down this street, beneath the glaring sunlight of the early afternoon, a carriage drove languidly over the rough cobblestones. There were four persons in the carriage. The other three were the doctor, the photographer and a negro on the box seat, whose regular occupation consisted in guiding the strangers about Caracas, and who filled in his spare time in burying the dead among the people we had started out to see.

The road grew narrower. After a time the cobblestones came to an end, and the way became like a country lane, only empty of all things beautiful, and desolate. There were deep holes in the road. The carriage wheels slumped into these with a lazy lurch, and the negro on the box seat swayed back and forth according to the lurch of the carriage, and the photographer swayed, and the doctor swayed against the side. The horses plodded on steadily and slowly through the thick dust cloud which rose from the ground and hung close about the moving carriage. The doctor was the first to speak.

"That's the brewery we just passed," he said. "Got a match?"

"Yes—here, take the whole box. I've got another."

"Thanks."

The doctor smoked in silence. The road became more barren. On either side were the houses of the poorer districts of Caracas. All such districts of a city are bare. There live the people—joyless people—the hangers-on, so to speak, of the other

people who walk and talk and live within the city. They belong outside. Even their houses were built chiefly of mud. One or two, in trying to imitate the dwellings of the more wealthy inhabitants, were built with stucco walls; only the stucco was cracked in many places and lined with streaks of dirt. The poverty of these districts brings forth the appearance of desolation. Here to the severest poverty was added great neglect.

The carriage continued slowly on its way, and the doctor smoked. At times the driver jerked on the reins, or spoke to the horses, or whipped them, but the horses proceeded as before. The noise of the city, which we had left behind—the noise of the street where the road had begun, with its horse cars and its shops and the people who walked on the sidewalk—gradually grew fainter, and sounded now only as a low rumbling.

### What is at the End of the Road.

Then the houses became less frequent. Beyond rose a high mountain range, still and silent in the sunlight. The carriage plodded on steadily. The road lay ahead, a thin streak of white curving slightly back and forth through the brown and sunburned plain which reached toward the east from the outskirts of the city. On either side was the barren land where grew here and there small bushes or clusters of scrub, all powdered with the dust which had blown across from the road. Now, there were not even the houses of the poor to mark the dwellings of human beings. All was empty and flat, with the white, stifling sunlight and the grand range of silent hills beyond. The carriage turned around a sharp corner in the road, and before us stood a low, one-story building—all alone in the country of the forsaken plain—the building which had been reared as an asylum for the lepers of the land.

As we came nearer to the place we saw a group of five or six men lying under the shade of a tree. These men looked up as the carriage passed. One of them especially, lying on his stomach, had the look in his eyes of some wild and languid animal who has eaten well, and so, wishing to sleep, carefully regards the passing object. The cheeks of the man were fat and puffy, the eyes were half closed.

"Are these some of them?"

"Yes," answered the doctor, "some of them. See that fellow there lying on his stomach? See the leonine cast of countenance that I told you about? He belongs to one of the early stages."

Then as we came to the building the others collected in a wondering group near the cutting in the wall—a high-peaked arch—which stood in the place of a doorway. They came forth from the inside of the building, steadily, silently, gathering from the far ends of the broad brick veranda which fronted the hospital. They came in twos and threes, or singly, but always with scarcely any noise. Here came a man dressed in all white. Here came another from out beneath the archway resting his weight on the shoulder of a young boy, whose face had already become horribly marked with disease. Here came a man walking close to the balustrade of the veranda who, with an outstretched, fingerless hand, leaned with each step he took on the uppermost stones of the balustrade. Behind him followed two women, each with an arm about the other's waist. Intermingled with the soft footfalls of those who came silently could be heard the regular taps of the ends of the crutches of those whose feet had fallen from them. Thus they gathered in front of the opening of the arch.

The man who leaned on the balustrade stood head and shoulders above the rest. The face of this man was unlovely, and yet when he laughed at something the interpreter said that laugh was like a human being's. In the background stood the two women. One of these was well on in years—the hair had receded far back from the forehead and there were curls there, like

an old maid who is still careful of her appearance. On her hand she wore a ring that she might look the more beautiful. But her face was like the face of the man.

Her companion was tall and dark-eyed and fair to see. Her skin was clear and unblemished. Her figure was neatly cut and she seemed to have taken care with her dress—even the knot of her black velvet belt was tied to lie flat and even. She carried herself with the proud bearing of an ideal queen.

### Disease Attacks Extremities First.

"The disease attacks the extremities first," explained the doctor as we passed by these two standing in the shade of the veranda. "She is beautiful now, but later on it will come to her face."

What the doctor knew the girl also un-



MISS GRACE HUNTER.

derstood—the disease would later come to her face. She stood there holding herself erect, as if proud of what she still possessed, and wondrous fair to see, with her arm laid resting about the waist of the other woman—this other woman, who was always present as a living example of what she herself would soon become.

Entering through the arch we came to the open place in the center of the building where there were many plants—some bearing colored flowers—and a fountain of water falling into an earthenware basin. On the edge of this basin sat a girl child, and because she was only a child she pushed a stick of wood back and forth through the water of the basin in playing it represented some ship. She wore a white dress and blue stockings and black shoes. Her hair was bare to the sunlight. A green parrot lay against her breast, and, as the girl shoved the stick first one way and then the other, the bird pecked constantly at the ruffle of lace about her neck.

"And this one?" was asked.

"She also," answered the doctor.

In following the guide we passed along the inner court, where the rooms opened out into the garden. The doors were thrown wide. The rooms inside were bare. In some of them a piece of a looking-glass was fastened to the wall, but, besides the bed, this was all the furniture. Women were inside the rooms, but they turned away at the sound of approaching footsteps. Hiding their faces in their hands they spoke some hurried words to the interpreter.

"They say they don't want to be seen," explained the guide. "They say they are too ugly."

At the end we came to the rear of the building, where there was a back veranda, presumably belonging to the kitchen. Many

black pots and pans were collected in a corner beneath the roof. At the opposite end from these sat a woman in front of a sewing machine. The skin of her face was clear, because the disease was yet with her in the first stages.

"But the greatest blessing of all is that there is no pain," said the doctor. "This much we know, but little else besides."

### A Ghastly Game of Cards.

We left this woman, sewing always and her eyes always watching the cloth which she shoved beneath the needle. On our return toward the arch and the exit we came upon four men seated about a plain board table playing cards. One man leaned with his elbows on the table; the one opposite him also leaned on the table. The third man, curiously enough, wore glasses to hide his eyes, and tilted backward in his chair. The fourth sat erect, carefully scrutinizing the cards before him.

The doctor rolled a fresh cigarette. "Got a match?" he asked.

"Yes. Hold on a minute. I have given you a box."

"So you did. I forgot. Must have been thinking of something else."

At last we came to the open sunlight and the clean air. According to the habits of these people, the silent men and women and children again gathered near the entrance to the building and as we drove away they lifted their hats in salute.

On the other side of the range of mountains the sun was sinking down to the horizon. There was a clear, bright glow in the heavens, against which the sky-line of the mountains stood forth distinctly. Also an evening breeze blew fresh across the waste of empty land. The same as before, the carriage swayed from side to side, with the wheels slumping into the holes in the road and the dust cloud rising thick and hanging about the horses and the carriage.

Once more we passed through the outskirts, strongly marked with the poverty and neglect of the people, where stood a child with its eyes full of strange knowledge and a pale woman.

No one talked for a long time. The doctor rolled a cigarette, but he tore the paper; so he threw it away and rolled another. He struck a match, still in silence. Then between the first hurried puffs he spoke:

"I've got a match now," he said, holding up a box. "You see, I remembered it this time, didn't I?"

Slowly the carriage crawled back toward the city. The noise of the street could be heard now—the low rumbling—which gradually grew louder until it resolved itself into distinct sounds, in which the tinkling of the horse car bells could be distinguished from the traffic of heavy wheels. We repassed another train of donkeys returning from the city to the country, with the man in soiled white trousers and soiled undershirt walking in the dust beside the animals. And no one spoke. We repassed the brewery with its sign painted in black letters across the front of the stucco wall. Then we came to the cobblestones, where the street of the city began again, and we felt the wheels beneath us rattling hard over the uneven pavement. Here was the city, full of life and movement, and people who lived and were clean. The desolate plain of sunburned land had passed behind us. It was not until then that any more words were said:

"And there is no cure," said the doctor.

### What His Line Was

F. Hopkinson Smith, the art critic, on one of his trips last summer had a little fun with a party of drummers that were occupants with him of the buffet car of a train bound for Chicago. Mr. Smith was dressed in a rather unconventional fashion in a suit that was noticeable because the figure was a large plaid. He wore a golf cap as well and was smoking a pipe. The drummers did not know Mr. Smith nor did they know his many accomplishments as writer, mathematician and engineer. But they had agreed among themselves that he was one of their sort and a new man to the western trade. So when opportunity came one of them broached the subject by asking if he was a traveling man. Being assured

that he was, the next query was, "What line?"

"You look a pretty shrewd lot of fellows and I'll give you a chance to guess," responded Mr. Smith.

"Jewelry?" was the guess of the man who had started the conversation, after he had taken a careful inspection of the clothes Mr. Smith had adorned himself with. "Sporting goods," was the guess of the second man. "White goods" followed, and each in the party tried his hand at it half a dozen times or more until they had exhausted their abilities at guessing and were in turn assured that they were wrong. Finally, confessing themselves stumped, there came the query in unison, "What in the world do you sell?"

"Lighthouses!" was the thoroughly truthful answer that so completely feazed the traveling men that but one of them was able to continue the conversation for an instant, and he could only gasp, "Where, in heaven's name, do you carry your samples?"

Then Mr. Smith explained to the party that he was one of the few lighthouse experts in the country.

### Poem that Won a Bride

The February Kalends, the periodical published by students of the Woman's college, contains a bit of dainty verse by a Baltimore alumnus of '98. And thereby hangs a tale, relates the Baltimore Sun. This young Baltimore student had a way of scribbling verse to such an extent that a young male cousin sighed as he said if he could write like that he might make some speed in wooing a certain fair Maid Marian. Immediately the young poet became a veritable Cyranos, and wrote a poem which she handed over to the faint-hearted lover. The engagement has just been announced and the marriage will take place soon. The poem follows:

TO MARIAN.

If—Oh, would that it were so,  
Marian, my lady—  
I had lived long, long ago,  
Marian, my lady;  
In the days of which we read,  
I should ride a fiery steed  
And perform some noble deed,  
All for you, my lady.

If—but who can ever tell,  
Marian, my lady?—  
Maybe it is just as well,  
Marian, my lady,  
For the fairest of the fair,  
Other knights would brave deeds dare,  
And for me you might not care,  
Might not be my lady.

Though I cannot be your knight,  
Marian, my lady,  
I can still your battles fight,  
Marian, my lady,  
I will brave the world for you,  
I will dare all things to do,  
I will be your lover true,  
If you'll be my lady.



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