THE MILL OF LIFE

Work while yet the daylight shines, Man of strength and will: Never does the streamlet glide Useless by the mill.

Wait not till tomorrow's sun Beams upon the way. All that thou canst call thy own Lies in thy today.

Power, intellect, and health, May not, cannot last; "The mill will never grind With the water that has passed.

Oh, the wasted hours of life. That have drifted by! Oh, the good we might have done, Lost without a sigh!

Love that we might once have saved By a single word: Thoughts conceived, but never penned, Perishing unheard.

Take the proverb to thine heart, Take! oh. hold it fast!-"The mill will never grind With the water that has passed." The Easy Book

A dog close behind him, flea-ridden and mangy, raised an inquiring ear toward a stream of youngsters pouring by, intent on some noisy

One pointed in derision at the silent boy. "Yah!" "Yah, redhead! Yah,

The shout was taken up by the rest of that diminutive horde as they swept jeering and mocking down the dusty village street. But the boy never moved—only stared with sleepy, half-veiled eyes out ov-er the sun-baked desert.

Now even a casual glance would have betrayed that on this boy had been laid a mark forever setting him part from the rest of the swarthy urchins who infested the Mexican quarter of Verde. For one thing, the color of those sleepy eyes was blue and about his dark forehead bristled a mat of sandy, red-dish hair. Big-boned, too, loose-jointed, with long, dangling legs. No, he didn't belong to Verde—

not entirely. Yet in a sense he typi-fied Verde, seeing that through his very being ran a line of demarcation not unlike the line that bisected the little town of his birth. For you may remember the international boundary cuts through the south suppose, is the nearest word, end of Verde. Below lies Mexico though that doesn't quite touch

Below, too, lies Verde's Mexican quarter—a third of the town, but living under the laws and traditions

So you see, what with national boundaries and racial boundaries and the memories of old feuds, almost any thing is likely to happen in Verde. Gringo and Mexican, old desert and is called with somewhat

way. Her eyes still held a memory of the tenderness and the soft dreaming of the youth that once had been hers. But the slenderness had gone out of her boy with the years

"Eh, Dios!" she mocked him.
"Must you lie there ever idling away
the hours, Miguel mio? Daily you
grow more like that big slow father of yours. Laugh and play, little son of mine, and be as my people. Play while you are young, for very soon comes a time when you can do no other thing than sit in the sunshine and suck your gums and regret."

He fell to stroking the dog beside

"They call me 'El rojo,' " he mut-

His mother's white teeth gleamed in swift laughter. "Why not? Red-head is not such a bad name. They called your father that, chico mio. But your father's hair was like fire." Her deep, full bosom rose in a little half sigh. "Ai, how strong he was, chico. I have seen him lift a man in either hand, holding them help-less in the air. And that big round neck of his and arms that could crush a man or caress a woman.
"He didn't stay long, but Dios,
he was a caballero. A big silent man

without the laughter and sunshine of my people. And then he went away. So be not too much like him, little son but run and play and be like padre had said. I those other children, for they are your people and mine."

baffled perplexity and wonder-ment first came to be part of him.

where by brawn and brute force he had lorded it over a section gang on the Santa Fe. As Don Miguel they

I shook my head. "I have seen the Santa Fe. As Don Miguel they remembered him in the Mexican ouarter, translating the outlandish English as nearly as might be. And Miguel his mother had named the sandy-haired, blue-eyed boy—the boy for whose sake she asked in many prevers to Our Lady some day of all my days have they

aspect of the world and the loneliness of his soul became very real portions of his solitary childhood.

He grew up as one apart. The unbridgeable chasm of race stood between him and his mother's people and, of course to the whites in Verde he was just a "breed." So about the only friend of Miguel's childhood was that mongrel dog. But he far out-stripped the boys

of his age in height and breadth of shoulder, and as the awkwardness of youth of catlike grace became an unconscious possession. Miguel was inheriting from that red-haired father a gift of strength that later was to be his curse and for a time, his salvation.

Yes, and the very fact that the girls of the quarter smiled in open admiration on this slow-moving, sleepy young giant only served to fortify the barrier between him and

his mother's people.

When Miguel began herding sheep for me he must have been about twenty—perhaps a little more. I wasn't eager to take the boy. The padre of the Mexican chapel was the cause of my considering him at all cause of my considering him at all.

The old priest had stopped me before the post office one morning.

"I have heard he is shiftless, illtempered and discontented, Father." I reminded him. "You know those qualities don't make for success ev-

en in sheep-herding."
"Perhaps that is why I am asking you to give him a chance. That is HALF-BREED

He lay just outside the abode hut wondering at life's strangeness. His mother, somewhere within, shufled over the hard dirt floor humming in soft, lisping Spanish the song of a maiden and a tall horseman—and a song of spring—and from his shadowy corner the boy could see her beating tortillas with fat brown hands.

"Perhaps; but I don't need all that equipment for a sheep-herder." 'He is neither of my people nor

of yours," the priest went on, "and so he has been bruised and distrusted of both. I should like to get him out of Verde for a time, for here he feels that every man's hand is against him-not without reason. There are some life gives no real chance and it would make me happy to know that Miguel gets at least

And as I still hesitated, he added, "Do you remember a day out there on the desert when you, my son, were glad of a helping hand?" "I remember. Let Miguel come to

me tomorrow." That's how I first saw him face to face. He was good to look at, slim and powerful like some pagan god standing at ease before me in the morning sunlight while at his heels a sheep dog looked up in adoration.

Clearest of all I remember that look of puzzled bewilderment and questioning that by now had become as much a part of the boy as the sleepy blue eyes or the sandy hair. Not a sullen look. Perplexity, I suppose, is the nearest word, although that doesn't quite touch it. with its desert, and beyond, the pur-ple hills of Sonora—that little— has been kicked for no reason at

> It didn't take long to arrange The padre had done most of that. And with a slow "Muchas

gracious, senor," he left me. So I became Miguel's employer and as the sunny days passed, I became, too, in a sense his friend.
Sometimes I think the only friend
his lonely life ever knew. For he
talked to me as to no one else exworld and new, high romnce and grim reality—all these serve to make up the little speck of life that lies out there on the edge of the with him the day a rattler struck The shadows had grown longer when his mother stood in the doorway. Her eves still held a him above the heel and by dint of around and out of pain within twenty-four hours.

Probably he would have recovered sooner without all those incantations, but he promptly conceived that I had placed him under an eternal debt-which was just as well, in view of what happened later.

Each week during the long summer that followed I made my rounds of the camps and often beside Miguel's little herder's fire we talked together. Talked of sheep and life and immortality. He knew little English, so it is always in Spanish that I remember his slow halting words and that phrase of his com-monest of all, "A strange world, Senor.

Strange, surely, for you see some-where in the mind of Miguel had come as a heritage of that Irish father a passion for justice—an almost fanatical intolerance of oppression. To Miguel the riddle of the

But life has a way of asking more questions than life ever solves. And looking back I can't be sure that except for a sincere gift of sympathy I ever helped Miguel in all his per-

"Something of a poet," the old padre had said. I remembered that. Tose other children, for they are our people and mine."

And perhaps that was why even in the things about him. Comeliness in those days, days when he was an and symmetry—these things he ungainly youth, the look of half- sought. And when in his dealings things he with man he found discord and ug-

tude of soul—it was to bear him grim company throughout the strange world of men. But all this was before I knew him.

His father I never saw. As Red Mike the Americans had known him during his brief stay in Verde, where by brawn and brute force he had lorded it.

ente,' they say and shrug—'he is different.' And they walk away—to laugh when my back is turned.
"I know I am not so quick as my

mother's people. My thoughts are different. My laughter comes slower and they sneer, 'Que va, he is stupid, that big clumsy Miguel.' sometimes I think to go and find my father's people. Would that perhaps be well, patron?"

"No that would not be well. It

"No, that would not be well. It would bring sorrow only. For after all you are of the desert and these desert people. And it may be that as the years pass, they will forget the color of your hair and eyes and the difference between you and

"But the world outside. Miguel is still harsher even to those who are part of it. Stay here with the sheep and the peace that comes from the desert, and some day they will forget."

Yes, perhaps that is what might have happened. The years might have worn away the sharp outlines of his entangled birth; he might even have come to take his useful place there. All these things might have come to pass.
Only Lolita chance to rais her

eyes and smile... You may remember Mendoza's cantina on the Mexican side just south of Verde. Thirsty Americans

stopping over for the day remember ed up to my door. it well. For Mendoza has the largit well. For Mendoza has the largest bar in the border country—and the best marimba band. But Mendoza's greatest claim to immorality, world at least, will be based in this on the fact that in his cantina Lolita sang.

Now it would be as easy to describe Lolita as to describe a desert sunset. They share the same radiance, for which man has found no words But no one ever forgot her.
"A voice of God's own angel,"
Mendoza once said of her, "and the temper of a panther."
"And," I added to myself, "twice

as dangerous." You know out here there are no soft effects of color, no delicate blending of pastels, no hazy outlines. It's vivid. A world of color and

contrasts. And of that world, Lolita was a colorful part. Small and slender and lithe, her little feet seemed fashioned to tread the pleasant ways of ro-

Miguel was with me when I first saw her. It happened to be his first sight of her, too, for all summer he had been out on the range and that night we had ridden in to get helpers for the season's shearing.

Lolita was standing in the center of the dark cantina, dazzling and luminous in a circle of warm amber light. She was strumming a big guitar and over one shoulder a Spanish shawl was caught, while the other shoulder gleamed like ivory and her hair was as velvet seen at

The shadowy room was filled with rapt, indistinct faces. And never a sound, never the tinkle of a glass. never the shuffle of a riding boot. Lolita was singing her song of the

hammock. "La sombra me da el monte. Las brias me da el mar.

Que dulce as la vida..." Yes, life must have been sweet to Lolita in those days. Why not? She possessed those things from which all the sweetness of life is composed beauty and youth and the adoration of her little world.

And then, as I say, she raised her eyes and smiled at Miguel, and I heard him whisper, "Madre de Dios." "Tengo mi hamaca tendida," sang the fresh youthful voice, and she was singing for Miguel now, as he stood just outside the circle of light like a bronze statue of some hero of other days. Her little teeth were very white and her lips redder than the rose of her voice and body Lolita sang to Miguel and kindled a fire in

his sleepy eyes. I never got those helpers for the shearing. But when I left the cantina Miguel and Lolita were talking in low tones at a little table and once I caught the deep resonance of Miguel's voice—it had taken on a new quality and all the world could see that for both of them the world now ceased to exist. Meanwhile

t those two love-transported chilren.

The same Mendoza waved frantic ands before my face next morning.

The same Mendoza waved frantic and before my face next morning.

The same Mendoza waved frantic and forced him to pack a night and forced my face next morning. Mendoza cast many an anxious look at those two love-transported chil-

hands before my face next morning. "Sus Maria," he wailed in his shrill voice. "That red-haired spawn, Miguel—he has stolen Lolita."
"You mean Lolita's gone?"
"Gone! Last night in the moon-

light he saddled two horses, my best horses, that son of a gringo swine. They have gone out into the desert, nombre de Dios. And what happens to me? Poor Dios, without Lolita my centing it is not worth. universe, its complexities—yes, even its cruelties, seemed things to which there should be satisfactory answers and for some reason he thought I might possess those answers.

They have gone out into the desert, nombre de Dios. And what happens to me? Poor Dios, without Lolita my cantina, it is not worth a peso. Senor, in the name of all the saints, what is to hold my patronage?"

what is to hold my patronage?"
"Softly, amigo." I patted him on
the shoulder. "It comes to me that those two young people there are concerned with an old problem than your patronage. As for the horses

I'll see they are returned."

I think they were the happiest days of Miguel's life, those few desert days and nights while like godlings of a pagan world, those two learned the wonder of each others, love Alone out there havened er's love. Alone out there—beyond good and evil and the strange ways

Well, not to all of us is the gift of even a few perfect, lovelit days. Not to all of us do the gods bestow the memory of having held in our arms such beauty as Lolita's, or having been enveloped in the wild splendor of her love. So not entire-ly could I find it in my heart to pity him, even in the light of what followed, for Miguel had lived.

And three days later I stood in the little chapel while the old padre mumbled ancient Latin before those two children of the sunlight. For Lolita had insisted on the amenities of the sacrament. Miguel had shrug-

ged and obeyed Rather would I have stayed out there," he told me, nodding toward the south, "but Lelita—it makes her many prayers to Our Lady something of the guick laughter and the sunshine of her own people.

Well, small wonder they could not understand the silent, lanky voungster. And no wonder the forbidding to the guick laughter and the let me forget that I am not as other and the sunshine of her own people.

Rather would I have stayed out there," he told me, nodding toward the south, "but Lolita—it makes her happier to know the church blesses us. Myself, I owe no debt to either the silent, lanky voungster. And no wonder the forbidding the same at fiests. Difference would I have stayed out there," he told me, nodding toward the south, "but Lolita—it makes her happier to know the church blesses us. Myself, I owe no debt to either the south of the south the south, "but Lolita—it makes her happier to know the church blesses us. Myself, I owe no debt to either the south the sou

And again his eyes sought the far-off purpling horizon.

So winter came. And the summits of the Spanish Peaks were hidden in snow clouds and through it all Miguel and Lolita lived the dreamlike days of great lovers in the Mexican quarter. And with them 74-23-4m came peace and utter happinessfor a time. Presently the desert began to blossom and another spring had come.

And since in Verde as elsewhere even great lovers must cease from caresses and think at times of the need for food, Miguel sought again his old job of herding my sheep. "Lolita? I asked.

His eyes were somber. "Lolita talks again of the cantina. It is true she earns there five times as much as I. And how can I say, 'Do not go? No, Lolita \*sings in the cantina if she chooses, and I must earn pesos while summer lasts and perhaps before another winter shall think of some way that Lolita may be with me always." He added regretfully, "It was out there in the desert we were happy. Why should we ever have come back?" So once again the cantina welcomed its idol and once again Miguel built his lonely little fires at evening out with the flocks. But he didn't stay there. Not long. For it was a night in early summer when a Mexican boy clatter-

words I pieced together that Lolita had chosen a new protector—a young lieutenant of the rurales. All the quarter knew of it-nightly those two came together to the cantina and made no secret of their devotion. And the quarter smiled—how could big stupid Miguel hope to hold Lolita's love! Then someone — filled with Christian solicitude, I suppose—told Miguel. And Miguel had galloped in. "Where is he now?"

'For the past hour, Senor, he walked up and down through the quarter. He says no word, but we know for what he is seeking. And then as I left to come here, he turned toward Mendoza's. Ser go to him and send him away." "What's all this to you?"

"Lolita's lover, Senor, is my brother and I am ofraid." Within five minutes I drew up outside Mendoza's. As I jumped from the car, I saw Miguel peering in through a window. Then silent-

in through a window. Then silently he pushed open the door.

Beyond the menacing silhouette in the doorway the cantina was a flood of light and from out of the blue hare of the care of t blue haze of tobacco smoke streamed that fresh, exultant voice of Lolita's. There she stood, red rose, white teeth and velvet eyes, and her long slender arms resting on the shoulder of a young Mexican officer. Behind the crowd the prodigious Mendoza bulged.

Once the soldier laid his cheek against the girl's bare arm and, at the touch, her voice thrilled. was the chorus of the hammock song—the song that was Miguel's.

'Que dulce—" In a little gasp of dismay the voice ceased. following her eyes, the eyes of every man turned toward the door. De-liberately Miguel approached. Inevitable as destiny.

The music had stopped and somewhere out of the silence a woman laughed. Still no one moved and now Miguel had come within arm's length of the two before the soldier rose, one hand on the re-volver at his belt. Then Miguel sprang like a great cat and his hands pinoned both the man's arms.

Powerless to move, I watched his brown fingers spread slowly and inexorably about the lieutenant's throat as a shudder ran through the room. Then a snap and a sigh and Lolita's latest consults of the floor

quest slipped to the floor.

Miguel never looked at Lolita once, but made his way toward the door. Still no man moved not a sound. Only a horseman gal-

And Miguel was gone.

Of course the rurales became ctive. They made daily little sorties out on the desert and into the foothills. But nothing really happened.

mule with provisions. later a Mexican dispatch carried was knocked unconscious and rob

Perhaps Miguel —perhaps not.
All this marked the beginning of an era of the intermittent hysteria for the country about Verde. A killer was abroad, At last Miguel's hand had turned against the mankind that had harried him, despised him and now was driving him like a wild thing over the face of the

And now as the months passed rumor began telling of an outlaw band that had its hiding place out in the desert under the leadership of a big, silent, sandy-haired man Their number increased and for year they took heavy toll of cattle and saddle horses. Twice they made open raids on the villages of

Legends grow fast in the south-Legends grow fast in the southwest country and before long Miguel
had become a kind of super devil.
And often the padre, joining me
for coffee and a cigaret, would sit
plunged in long silence fingering
that black crucifix.

"Miguel's band," he told me one
afternoon, with a tired sigh, "is
holding for ransom two ranchers
of Sonora. It grows holder and I

of Sonora. It grows bolder and I am fearful of the end. Life, Senor, can seem very cruel unless we keep faith always in the good God. Miguel has lost faith, Pobrecito, I pray daily he will depart from his ways and repent and seek the peace of God."

"Father, is it not more likely he will find God out there on the desert than here where man laughed at him and cursed him and made life a burden?" "God is everywhere. Only, one must trust. Some day I think

(Continued on page 7, Col. 3.)

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