

HUNTER OF BURIED TREASURE



A treasure seeker on the job. George Allan England opening a treasure cache on a Caribbean island, uncovers the skull of a pirate.

this story and asked my friend to locate the Mexican for me, so that he could take me to the source of his information.

"Well, I eventually located this source—an old peon, who after a great deal of urging and cajolery 'spilled all the beans.'"

In brief this peon's tale follows: Some 25 years ago while he was doing construction work on the Douglas-Nacozari Railroad he went out hunting during a lull in operations while supplies were being brought up. He lost his way, and in order to locate the construction camp climbed a mountain. In coming down a "hog-back," or ridge, he reached a place where there was a depression in the earth about 10 feet square, with the dirt caved away in the center.

This attracted his attention, and with his heel he began digging into the middle of the depression, enlarging the aperture.

"I made a torch of a pine knot, senior," he told La Liberté, "and got down into a kind of room underneath. And there, what did I find? Dios mio! I found an altar, with a crucifix about it, and on the altar a gold chalice. In one corner of the room was a pile of bars. Black bars, senior, very heavy."

METAL, thus blackened by age, would probably be silver, La Liberté explains. Those bars alone represent a vast fortune. But let the aged peon continue his narrative:

"In one corner, senior, was a chest with a heavy lock. I tried to open this chest, but the lock resisted me. On the far side of the chamber I saw an archway, with this inscription: 'Mina del Obispo Jesuito San Roman.' This means, of course, the Mine of the Jesuit Bishop, San Roman."

"Through the archway led a sort of tunnel, which extended as far as the flare of my torch would shed light. And there, what did I see? Ah, caramba! I saw rows of sacks, rotted with age, out of which had fallen heaps of gold nuggets!"

"Was this gold just oro," queried La Liberté, "or was it dinero?"

"That is, was it raw gold, or was it coined money?"

"Oro!" the peon affirmed. "Just the raw gold, in the form of nuggets. Well, I filled a little bag with these nuggets, perhaps two handfuls in quantity. After a while I got back to the construction camp."

"That night I could not sleep. I was afraid some of the other workmen might find my gold and then torture me till I told where I had found it, after which they might kill me. For you know, senior, 'Dead men tell no tales.'"

The peon was so alarmed that he gave up his job and crossed over into Arizona, afterwards making his way to California. This old man was still living three years ago. He believed at the time that he had stumbled by chance into a robbers' cave, and being very superstitious and full of fear he was extremely reluctant to give any information. But after a great deal of urging La Liberté got the exact location.

La Liberté then looked up the history of Sonora for the last 300 years. In one narrative he found where during a rebellion in 1812 at Arizpe, then a flourishing city of 25,000 inhabitants, the Jesuits had buried their treasure, amounting to some \$16,000,000. Comparing this history with his topographical map he discovered that Arizpe was about 25 miles from the location given by the peon.

"I CAME to the conclusion," he says, "that this was none other than the treasure buried by the Jesuits in 1812. They were mas-

sacred soon after, the secret perishing with them. I took a party down there to recover the treasure, but soon after we had camped near the location our camp was fired on by revolutionists.

"I was away from camp that time, having gone to Nacozari to buy horses. The revolutionists shot limbs off the trees around our camp. After this my men refused to stay in Mexico. This was in 1924, and since then I haven't had the opportunity to reorganize and go on with the search."

Today Arizpe has possibly 1,500 people, instead of the 25,000 it had 119 years ago. All the people around there still believe that some day this vast treasure will be unearthed.

"When I arrived at the Mexican border on my way in," continues La Liberté, "just by way



His adventures read like romantic fiction. Eugene Rudolph La Liberté, poisoned, shot at, attacked with knives in his hunts for buried gold.

of showing what kind of adventures I've often been up against, see what happened: I had our camp equipment hauled from the railroad station at Douglas over into Agua Prieta, the Mexican port of entry. I had handed my baggage to one of the Mexican customs inspectors, who had already begun to untie my bedroll, when a truck driver—quite an alert young man—asked me if I had any guns or ammunition. I answered:

"Only four guns and about 1,000 rounds of ammunition."

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, throwing up his hands, "you're committing suicide, buddy! Unless you can get your luggage away from that inspector you're as good as a dead man!"

"How come?" I asked.

"Why, man," he explained, "there's a revolution going on right now. Agua Prieta has been fired on this very day. If they find the guns in your baggage they'll think you're help-

ing the revolutionists, and then good-night for yours! You'll face a firing squad!"

"WITHOUT another word I grabbed my bedroll from that Mex. The truck driver—good scout!—gathered up the rest of my duffel. I explained to the official that 'manana' would do just as well for the inspection, and thanked el buen Dios for having steered me up against this friendly truck driver."

"Inside of an hour they marched 14 rebel prisoners into the general's headquarters, only a stone's throw from the United States boundary. One of these prisoners happened to be an American. He managed to escape; the rest were executed next day."

"I made another try for the treasure, however, with a very high-powered car, so that I could outdistance any pursuing band of Greasers, friendly or otherwise. However, now the Yaqui War was blazing in all its ferocity, and the treasure lay very close to the Yaqui Indian country. So once again discretion was the better part of valor."

"But my search for that \$16,000,000 lost treasure of Arizpe hasn't even begun to sprout yet," La Liberté concluded with a smile. "Some of these days before long if I can get the backing of somebody with a little courage and cash and a love for the spice of adventure this undertaking will once more burst into full bloom!"

He searched among his many papers—plans, maps, charts and data of all kinds—and presently fetched out a clipping, worn and yellowed with age.

"See this?" he asked, handing it over. "This cutting from a magazine was found in the leather fold that once belonged to an old prospector named Anderson, and with it was also this map. Just read the clipping and let's hear what you think of it."

The clipping told how two young hunters years ago had stopped to drink at a little waterfall in the mountains about 50 miles northeast of Reserve, N. Mex. They had discovered gold nuggets in a cavity back of the fall, but illness forced them to leave the country.

One of the young men died soon after they left, but the other returned to search for the waterfall. He was unable to find it, however, and finally went insane and was locked up in an asylum.

RUMORS about the rich gold deposit have persisted, however, and the clipping remarked that "some day it will be found—probably by accident."

"Some story!" I commented, handing back the document. "And have you any dope on this?"

"I believe so," La Liberté answered. "I think this has a close connection with the wonderful deposit that I call the Madre del Oro, or Mother Lode, in the northwestern part of New Mexico. This came to my attention in 1926 through a friend of mine named Jordan, who was informed about it by a doctor then attending an old 'desert rat,' or prospector."

"The doctor told Jordan that the prospector was dying and had a statement to make about a vein of gold-bearing quartz, said to be enormously rich. Jordan visited the prospector and heard his story—that the prospector had been searching for this vein for many years and had at last accidentally stumbled across it. The old man claimed he 'had taken out \$25,000 in six hours, with millions in sight ready to be had for the taking.'"

"During this visit Jordan saw mint receipts for \$18,000 which corroborated the old prospector's story. The prospector explained that he had given \$7,000 to an associate for having made the trip to the mint, but that as this

associate had done him an injury he'd never get any more. The old desert rat made an agreement with Jordan to give him a 50 per cent share in this mine in case the old man lived and all of it if he died."

"Well Jordan agreed to this, having in mind the idea that he would ask me to go with him and locate this lost El Dorado, but he didn't know where to find me. It happened that I arrived in Los Angeles at about this time, called him on the 'phone and we got together. Jordan told me about his having gone to the hospital, and of the talk he'd had with the old desert rat. He asked my opinion of the story the old-timer had told him."

"BELIEVE it's true," said I. "These old prospectors are usually pretty truthful."

And when in the face of death they certainly wouldn't lie. So you'd better go right back to the hospital and get the location and the map."

"This map, by the way, was drawn on a paper poke, or bag, such as grocers use. However, it was too late to go that day, so Jordan promised he'd go back in the morning."

"And he went, and the old prospector gave him the map?" I queried. The story had me tensely interested—it seemed so woven with romance and thrills, like all of La Liberté's strange, adventurous life.

"Oh, Jordan went back, all right," La Liberté smiled, "but when he got there, what do you suppose? He found the old man had died in the night!"

"This looked like pretty tough luck, but wait and see what happened. The matron gave Jordan permission to view the old desert rat's body in the morgue, which Jordan did. The prospector's effects were in an oldskin bag under the slab on which he was laid out. While the nurse who had accompanied Jordan to the morgue was out of the room for a few minutes Jordan got possession of the map! Then he came back to me with it and you bet he didn't let much grass grow under his feet, either."

"I made him an offer of \$1,000 and a 50 per cent share in the mine and he accepted. So the data all passed into my hands."

On January 27, 1927, six weeks after the death of the old man La Liberté went to New Mexico, thinking that in three or four weeks he'd be a millionaire. But he little knew the hardships and privations he'd have to endure. He spent nearly 11 months in the search and exhausted all his resources.

"It was a tough proposition when I tackled it," continued La Liberté. "When I got to New Mexico I found it far different from what it had been pictured to me. Instead of a land of sunshine and budding trees I found rugged and inhospitable mountains buried in deep snow."

"This delayed my search, but did not prevent me from compiling data on the Madre del Oro, and also about two other propositions—the 'Adams Diggings' and the 'Kilburn Diggings,' about which I had heard. I believe these to be the same vein of gold from which the Spaniards got their wealth in the old days of the Conquistadores."

"My search continued, and believe me, I suffered plenty. Poison nearly ended my life, poison deliberately given me by a woman and her Mexican lover. After they had used various subterfuges to get hold of my map and data on the Madre del Oro they resorted to poisoning my food. My iron constitution pulled me through, but for a while there it was nip-and-tuck between me and the undertaker."

"Another time they scheduled a murder party,

Continued on Thirteenth Page