

The Man Who Saved Mexico

AN OLD THRILLER RETOLD

By *CARL O. JOHNSON* in *California Freemason*

Masonic honor and the fidelity of a Brooklyn brother played a Hollywood thriller episode in Mexican history back in 1870.

Mexico was bleeding under cruel church and state dictatorship. Porfirio Diaz, patriot in exile, haunted New Orleans cafes, with a fat price of \$50,000 on his idealistic, brave head. The purser of a ship bound for Vera Cruz, a Mason was accosted by a friend who introduced a quiet looking young Mexican who wore a magnificent Square and Compass. The friend explained, "This man is your brother—his very life is at stake. You must take him to Vera Cruz."

Once on the high seas, the mysterious passenger told the purser, "There is a price of \$50,000 on my head. All you have to do to get it is deliver me to the military in Vera Cruz." The purser cleared his throat and replied, "Brother, I'll put you ashore on a beach in Mexico, whatever the cost."

Diaz, his identity unknown to his benefactor and brother, handed the purser a check for \$50,000 and said, "Here is a check equal to the amount my enemies would pay you." But the purser tore the paper up and tossed it into the waves of the gulf.

When the ship anchored off Vera Cruz, young Diaz tried to swim ashore. Mexican soldiers on the coast spied the swimmer and put out in a boat to catch him. Diaz was pulled aboard in the nick of time. Mexican soldiers were already starting to board the ship. One false move now would have meant death to Diaz and death to the Mexican Republic about to be born. The purser seized Diaz by the hair while the boarding party looked on. He shoved him below and yelled, "Put the drunken bum in irons." The ruse worked and the soldiers left without their man. A few nights later young Diaz was rowed safely ashore. The rest is history and Mexico freedom was started.

Years later the purser, still ignorant of the identity of the brother in the Mystic Tie, visited Mexico City. The minute he alighted from his train, he was arrested by military officers. As he was escorted through the street, bands played and cheering crowds waved sombreros. Finally the carriage stopped in front of the palace. Smiling attendants escorted the purser to the central room. An officer in uniform grasped his hand with an ancient grip. "El Presidente de Mejico," announced an attendant.

The amazed purser looked into the face of the strange passenger he had landed on a deserted beach years ago. "How did you know I was here?" asked the purser. "Brother," the President replied, "I have had you followed and watched day and night, for you saved me, your Masonic brother, and you also saved Mexico."