

## The Passing of the Bandit

The solitary figure of a man, silhouetted against the sky, was motionless. On a lonely summit of the Sierra Madres, while the moon was slowly taking her course to the west, and the stars were glimmering on their way, till the shining orb sank to another land, and each silvery light faded, the form had remained still. Though resembling a typical Mexican from his broad sombrero, his bandanna and slovenly clothing to his faithful and well-battered pistol, and by his sturdy frame and dark face, from which flashed his burning eyes, he could not claim that nationality now. The land of his fathers was his no longer.

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Pedro Elmieto had been the captain of a band of youthful warriors—the cause of terror to the neighbors' rambling pigs and half-starved chickens—when but a lad in the mountains. Year by year grew the lawless ambition of this Mexican boy to become the leader of a gang of fearless banditti.

When the flashes of battle reddened the sky of Europe, but a few years ago, the sound of war—the trampling of horses and the moaning of the dying, filled the still air of Mexico. The trail of Francisco Villa, reeking with blood, was marked everywhere by empty homes, ruined lives and burned villages. It was then that Pedro Elmieto, lured on by a great lust for money and a craving for a wide-feared name, gathered a band of lawless men under him, and started to make his career at the ruin of the neighboring country. He lined his pockets with gold from emptied treasuries, and gave likewise to the blood-stained hands of his followers.

When his greed had been partially satisfied, he returned to the mountains with his gang, to gloat over their stolen treasures. As the light of the camp-fire shone low, and all but the guard were asleep, money was the cause of a base and faithless act. A federal officer, with this tempting treasure bribed the sentinel, and the lives of the bandits were no longer their own. Pedro alone, with the cry of the mountains still ringing in his ears, stealthily escaped the government's cavalry and made his way to the wilds of the Sierras.

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In the silent watches during the night Pedro had heard in the weird sighing of the trees, the cries and curses of those murdered by his hand. As the sun's first dim beam darts across the sky, a silent figure in official uniform creeps slowly up the grey slopes. The report of his rifle startles the mountain echoes, and the narrow ravine below receives another victim, to hide for centuries in its darksome and gloomy recesses. The icy brook flows on passed the bloody spot, and winds its course through fields and villages to the sea. But it never tells its secret—the passing of Pedro.

—Marcus, '24.