A GREAT HEARTED TROPICAL ADVENTURER.

Any book or story which we may pick up concerning the tropics is sure to give colorful pictures of what we have come to know as a tropical adventurer. Richard Harding Davis has given us romantic pictures of those adventurous spirits who know no restraining influences and whose favored occupation purporting to his romances is the fomenting of revolutions and the wooing of beautiful señoritas. Others have made us familiar with the tropical beachcomber. Both of these types exist or rather have existed, but they are rapidly passing out of the picture. Revolutions fomented by outsiders are no longer particularly popular and where they do persist, it is preferred that they remain a domestic monopoly. The romance has been taken out of beachcombing and as a rule the writer has to draw very largely on pure imagination to give us a good story. Certainly the modern beachcomber, as a consul knows him and he usually knows him better than any one else, is not a romantic figure.

But the spirit of high adventure is fortunately still strong in our race and the term "adventurer" does not carry to me any sinister meaning. I have known many adventurers, but the wrong type, men who because of their misdirected genius were really dangerous. I have the most distinct recollection of a scion of a well known English family who appeared at Bogota and soon made himself a persona grata by his charming manners, and after a well winding wooing married the niece of the Archbishop. After making her distinctly miserable and unhappy, her highly placed relatives finally made it impossible for him to stay in the country, and when I first met him he was travelling as the private physician of a world famous prima donna who was making a South American tour with her own troop. She became quite ill at Curacao and as I was entirely convinced that her so-called physician had had no medical training whatever, and as he had just advised her to undergo a serious operation, I told her that while his charming manners and his undoubtedly attractive personality might make him a pleasant companion for her leisure hours, and that while his huge bulk and great strength served an excellent purpose as a protector, it was not quite safe to risk her health in his hands. I persuaded her to see a competent physician, who easily determined that an operation was not necessary and had her out of her bed in a few days.

All business is really adventure and there is only a difference of degree. Some of our hardiest spirits unable to submit to the restrictions of society and seeking free land, no longer find it necessary to find diversion in upsetting
upsetting governments, but find it much more profitable and equally interesting to help in exploiting the resources of these countries. There is just as much danger, just as much excitement and an equal interest in developing a new industry. One of these adventurers, who turned into a very good captain of industry, came into my life and became one of my firm friends.

Shortly before we arrived in Curacao, in fact just about the outbreak of the war, Harold Poos in some way heard of huge deposits of goat guano in Venezuela in which nobody seemed to be interested, but which represented a veritable goldmine. He came from a family of New England sea captains and for at least four generations the men had been masters of all Fourmasters in practically every ocean trade. He himself at the age of 27 was a master of one of our finest sailing vessels in the African trade. Little known countries held little terror for him and when his vessel was in a lonely African port for weeks taking on a cargo of precious woods, the long quiet nights and the vast dark areas of the continent behind spelled a charm which remained with him. When he heard of these deposits in Venezuela, he was able to arrange to leave his ship for a voyage and on his own went to La Vela de Coro in Venezuela. Now La Vela de Coro is one of the oldest cities of South America. Legend has it and it is fairly well established, that Columbus called there on his second voyage to America. La Vela is only a rather miserable village, but some distance inland is the city of Coro which is also a very ancient and fairly important city, and is I believe the capital of the state of Tachira (verify this). La Vela de Coro is at the base of a peninsula extending from the Venezuelan coast known as

Although civilisation has made rapid progress in Venezuela, it is a huge country and certain large areas of it are still practically inhabited and others know only the presence of Indians. The Juayhure peninsula it is said was occupied only by Indians, or even the Venezuelan troops or tax collectors did not venture to invade it. It received very little rain, was comparatively barren and produced principally a few low shrubs, cacti and hundreds of thousands of goats. The Indians lived practically entirely on corn meal which they got from the main land, on soups cooked and flavored with goat meat and cacti, while the goats subsisted on the leaves of shrubs and cacti. The Indians lived in small villages, near each of which was a huge corral, a simple sort of affair open to the sky and formed simply by four rows of cacti. In these corrals the goats gathered at night and through the years these corrals had grown into good sized elevations dominating the surrounding country and were in reality huge deposits of guano.
When Foss appeared at La Vela he was able to fairly well establish the fact that these deposits existed, but he also learned that the Indians would not tolerate the presence of white Venezuelans and that they had been left entirely to themselves. There was no doubt but that personal danger was sure to any one who ventured there. Although he knew not a word of Spanish or any other language except English, Foss seemed to learn instinctively the ways of the country and with a judgment entirely sure he directed himself to General Gurado and General Leclay, respectively the President and Vice President of the State, who lived at Coro and in whose district lay the Peninsula.

Foss explained to them his plan, which was to form an American company of which all the actual capital should be furnished by the American stockholder, but in which the two Generals should have 49% of the stock. The Company was to receive the right to take out the guano making such compensations to the Indians as they might desire. The two Generals were to give the Company the necessary local protection and in case it were necessary afford protection to Foss by lending native soldiery. With the ground thus prepared, Foss went to New York and laid the matter before one of the leading fertilizer companies in that city. His conditions were that the company should furnish the capital; assure him the direction of the enterprise as well as a liberal share of the profits and give him the promise that his Venezuelan associates would receive fair and proper treatment. He himself would undertake operations with La Vela de Coro as a base and attend to the loading of the ships and the bringing of the phosphate to the shore. The profits were sufficiently alluring to enable Foss to form his company, and he soon arrived at La Vela with a forty foot launch which he brought on the steamer, in which he would make visits to the peninsula. He soon gathered about him a number of adventurous Venezuelans among whom one Juan became his personal henchman and bodyguard. Accompanied only by Juan, whom he taught to run the machine of the launch, and by a few others he set out from La Vela to visit the peninsula.

While well armed and well provisioned, he was going to depend upon friendly gestures and when it is realized that he still had no knowledge of Spanish and merely had in his boat various presents which he believed would appeal to the Indians, we will agree that he had no less a measure of courage than the argonauts. How he did it, he never fully explained to me, but he accomplished the impossible and established friendly relations with the Indians and secured their permission to remove the guano. Then the big sailing vessels began to come and cast their anchors in the lee of the peninsula and with the aid of the Indians the guano was brought to the shore and carried to the ships in lighters. Suffice it to say that the profits were appreciable and the gold which flowed into the hands of Generals Gurado and Leclay was not inconsiderable.
Leolay most welcome. Foss became a persona grata in that section of Venezuela for a double reason, for by his very openhearted and genuine personality he had already won their friendship. He built himself a fairly comfortable house in La Vela and began to make arrangements to bring Mrs. Foss to share his life.

My first contact with Foss was during a visit which he made at Curacao, and we rapidly became friends because the man was genuinely likeable. By this time he had acquired a sailing vessel in which he used to bring supplies from Curacao to La Vela, and he made frequent and regular calls at Curacao. One morning at the Consulate I received a letter from Foss, delivered by the master of the schooner, saying that I was to place an order for a certain amount of lumber with a local firm and have the schooner return as soon as possible. While I was much surprised, I realized there must be an emergency and saw that the order was executed and that the schooner left the following day. When Foss arrived a few weeks later, I asked him why he had asked for certain specific sizes of lumber, as we had all been mystified as to what he could use such assorted sizes for. He blandly explained that it was the rainy season in La Vela, that most of the natives lived in patched huts, with the floor of hard 'pressed earth, and that the constant rains, of course, turned these floors into mud. That that developed a sort of fever and that the natives were dying off even more rapidly than usual in the rainy season. He said that he simply could not bear to see these people buried without a coffin and as the available lumber had been given out and he had already turned down a leanto that he had erected to his house so as to provide wood, he had decided that he would become public benefactor and order a schooner load of lumber for coffins.

Some weeks later a quarantine was established by the Curacao authorities against La Vela, as it was rumored that another communicable fever had broken out there. All schooners arriving from La Vela had to go to the quarantine station at Caracas Bay near Willemstad until a certain period has passed. I had a communication from Foss asking me whether the local authorities would not permit him to land at Curacao instead of going to the quarantine station as he had important business. While I knew it to be useless, I inquired from the Dutch doctor in charge of the quarantine whether any exceptions could be made, and of course he replied that this was impossible, and Foss was so informed. Some days later I received a telephone call from Foss who, it appeared, was at the quarantine station at Caracas Bay. He asked me to come out and bring him "a dozen bottles of beer fresh from the ice" as he had been becalmed between La Vela and Curacao and their supply of water had given out. When I closed the
office that afternoon, I drove out to Caracas Bay with the beer and was permitted to enter the outer enclosure of the station. To my surprise Foss was permitted to pass into the outer enclosure where he readily seized upon the supply of beer and after having quenched a gargantuan thirst, he calmly informed me that he was going back with me to Willemstad. I protested and said he could under no circumstances break quarantine even if he had succeeding in bribing the subordinates at the station. He assured me that everything had been arranged with the authorities at Willemstad and did it in such an effective manner that I was convinced. We got into the automobile and when we passed through the gates of the station, I noticed a rather protesting look upon the faces of the guards, but nothing was said. When we reached the city, Foss left the automobile saying he had some business in the neighborhood. A few hours afterwards, I saw a huge crowd of natives in the centre of which some khaki clad native troops and tearing over them the huge and familiar figure of Foss. He was on his way back to Caracas Bay and I found to my horror that failing to bribe the officials at the station he had conceived a plan of my passing him by the guards, as he thought they would not stop him if he were in my automobile. I communicated with Foss by telephone at the quarantine station and told him in what a bad light he had placed me before the local authorities, and when he really learned how serious the thing was, he was most contrived. It was really from his point of view only a boyish trick, a sort of escapade, but it meant that I had to go to the local authorities and make rather a humiliating explanation to them which however was very kindly received, as the adventurous and boyish spirit of Foss was already well known to every one.

He was intensely chivalrous and could not abide the careless and rather hap-hazard manner in which the courteous Latins at times treated their womenfolk. He came to me on an occasion when he was staying in a hotel in the city and said that in the room next to his a Venezuelan had just hit a woman; that he had heard her cries and that the man had persisted in beating her up. He said he came to tell me that he was going to beat the Venezuelan within one inch of his life and he wanted me to know why he was going to do it if anything happened. I tried to dissuade him by telling him that the same thing was happening practically every hour of the day in some other room or house in Curacao, and that he could hardly afford to set himself up as the squire for this particular lady, unless he was going to devote himself entirely to this altruistic mission of teaching better manners to some of the inhabitants. He was obdurate however and when I learned that he had already seen this particular lady and found her
beautiful, I knew the task would be all the harder because he was particularly susceptible to feminine beauty. Nothing that I could do would dissuade him, not even when I told him that his attack on this Venezuelan would be considered in an entirely different manner from what it might be considered at home. The only argument which seemed to have any effect was when I said that Mrs. Foss who would shortly be arriving would be pained to find any scandal connected with his name, no matter how little foundation there was to it. For unkind tongues would be sure to say that he had been interested in the lady himself. In spite of this, he insisted upon his original intention.

One of his friends, Captain Rutledge, was in town in command of a schooner loading a cargo of tropical woods and I got in touch with him and had him look up Foss immediately explaining fully to him the situation and suggesting that by keeping by his side he might be able to put off any undesired events. In the meantime I got in touch with the captain of his boat and asked him to get ready to sail before sundown. I then neglected Uncle Sam's business for a period of two hours and joined Foss and Captain Rutledge and between us we succeeded in diverting his sufficiently to forget his threats. Shortly before sundown we got him into the vicinity of the schooner and he saw with surprise the preparations for sailing, not arranged for by him. With a little bit more seriousness in my tone than I generally used with him, I let him know that for his own good and for the good of all the Americans on the island, I wanted him to get out. That I appreciated his motives and sympathised with him entirely. That he was perfectly right in wanting to beat up this man, but that it would be misunderstood and do him and all of us infinite harm. He said he understood and thought he would leave, because if he did not leave, he would not be able to hold himself in. It was with genuine relief that Rutledge and I saw the graceful outlines of the schooner passing out between the rocks at the entrance of St. Anne's harbor, for we had feared really for the life of our friend. He was accustomed to a fair fight and would not have been prepared for a knife thrust or a pistol shot which would undoubtedly have resulted from any attack which he might have made, for just as we all of us do not look at things in the same way, so we have different ways of defending ourselves.

The life which he led was one which required extraordinary endurance, which he often tested to the limit. It was necessary for him to do considerable travel and that section of Venezuela has no railroads and even roads in certain parts are unknown. Mrs. Foss had arrived from their home in the United States to spend several months with him. She came just before
the Christmas holidays. He unfortunately had to leave for a distant point to which he had to travel on burros, a sort of small mule, and was not there to greet her on her arrival at La Vela. He made every effort to return to La Vela for Christmas eve, and had been going two days steadily, with only a few hours sleep to accomplish it. On the night preceding he was going alone across a practically trackless desert of hardbaked earth with only cactus plants here and there to break the monotony under the brilliant starlight of a tropical night. He was entirely alone and was keeping awake with the greatest difficulty. He urged on his animal, but at last the beast dropped from sheer exhaustion and as Foss naively put it, he was so put about with sleep that he simply snuggled up to the animal for its warmth and dropped into a deep sleep. It can be cold even in the tropics when a wind from the Andes is blowing. He slept until late in the morning and was able to continue his trip to La Vela. The risks of all kinds which he took on these trips, he seemed to be entirely oblivious of, and a sort of charm seemed to protect him from the elements as well as from the marauders always ready to prey on travelers.

When the declaration of war came, it was practically impossible to restrain him from enlisting immediately. He explained that he was a sea captain and that he was determined to take ships through the submarine area. I explained to him that he was doing a work that really no one else could do and that until he could find someone who could continue to assure this supply of fertilizer, which we had grown to depend upon and when other supplies were being cut off by the war, it was his duty to remain. Most unwillingly he listened to reason, but one day he appeared in Curacao and informed me that he was going to a hospital to have an operation for a hernia. He explained that this was brought about by the strain he had put upon himself during the long ride to reach La Vela in order to spend Christmas with Mrs. Foss, and that a doctor had examined him and told him no army or navy board would accept him for service in his present condition. I urged him to put this off until he could have it done under better conditions in the United States, but nothing would dissuade him as he was determined to be ready for useful service as soon as he was able to return home. For he confided to me that he had sent to Maine for a friend, Captain Crabtree, who would be sure come and take care of the business during his absence. He entered the hospital and fortunately all went well.

He appeared one day in my office and I noticed a roughly healed scar on the end of his thumb and index finger of the right hand. It was almost impossible to draw the story from him, but he finally confided to me that about a month before
General Gurado and he had had dinner at Coro and that after dinner the guests amused themselves by a rather favored prac­tice of shooting at a target with revolvers, without which no Venezuelan who could own one in that section of the country ever found himself. Although good shots, the bowl had flowed rather freely and General Gurado wagered Foss that he could shoot a bolivaro, which is about the size of our dollar, from his outstretched hand at a distance of I forget how many paces. To have failed to accept would have indicated a lack of confi­dence in his friend's marksmanship, as well as a lack of personal courage, and Foss held the coin for the General's shot with the result that the slightly shaky hand of his friend caused the shot to deviate and took part of the ends of his two digits.

With our entrance into the war, rumors became current that submarine warfare was to be carried into the Caribbean as well as along the Atlantic coast, and German submarines actually did attack and sink a vessel bound from Porto Rico to New York. Rumor added that a base was being established by the Germans for their Caribbean operations on the Juayhure Peninsula and circumstances added some basis to this rumor as it was ideally located for the purpose. One of our Intel­ligence men appeared at Curacao and informed me that an American Cruiser would patrol the Caribbean and that the Captain particularly wished to talk with Foss and me because of our knowledge of the situation. He did not wish to enter Curacao with his ship as it would mean that he would not be able to enter this neutral port again for some time. Neither did he wish that his whereabouts were too well known. It was there­fore arranged at my suggestion that Foss should come to Curacao with his forty foot launch and that rendez-vous should be given us at a particular point off the Curacao coast one night well outside the three mile limit, and that Foss and I would go out in the boat accompanied by the Intelligence Officer to meet the ship. We were informed as to the exact time and place of the rendez-vous by the Intelligence Officer, but he was unable to come being retained in Venezuela. Foss and I started out in the late afternoon in the launch accompanied only by Juan to run the engine, ostensibly leaving on a fishing party. We had to idle away a good deal of time as the rendez-vous was not until late in the night, and as luck would have it a fairly strong wind blew up and made it rather uncomfortable for us in this boat which seemed very small on high seas. We were sure of our position, but we waited for two hours at the rendez-vous, until dawn showed us no vessel in sight, when we returned rather a haggard and bedraggled crew to Willemstad, where we explained our absence by engine trouble and by saying that we had spent most of the night close to the northern shore of the island. Another rendez-vous was arranged
for a satisfactory explanation being given for the failure of the cruiser to turn up, but I confess that it was with considerable relief when this nocturnal meeting was cancelled and the Captain of the cruiser decided to lay off the harbor of Willemstad one afternoon and send in the ship's launch to take me out. The call of the ship's launch at shore could not be construed as a visit of the ship and would leave her free to come in for fuel or supplies whenever she might wish to. The rather casual way in which we had been invited to meet the ship well off the coast at night never appealed to me very strongly, for while the risk was not great it was in my opinion a totally unnecessary one as the presence of the cruiser in those waters was pretty generally known. It struck me as being not a unique instance of a lack of consideration and forethought by some of our naval officers.

When Captain Crabtree arrived it was easy to see that although he was not of the adventurous type of Foss, he was a sturdy poke and that he could be depended upon to carry on at least the business end of the enterprise. Foss took the first steamer home and was soon piloting vessels through the submarine zone and continued to do so until the end of the war. Fate has decided that we should not meet since we said good bye on the steamer which took him home, but I have always felt that I was a better man for having known him. His sterling honesty, his initiative, his personal courage, his adaptability and his extraordinary capacity for good fellowship and his generosity all combined with that love of adventure make him stand out in my mind as a real man, the kind who can build empires, a true adventurer.