

**FROM THE CRUCIFIX TO
THE CROSS AND
THE HERETICS: STORIES OF
WESTERN MEXICO**

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From the Crucifix to the Cross and the Heretics: Stories of Western Mexico by Harriet Crawford

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HARRIET CRAWFORD

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BY

HARRIET CRAWFORD

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1909

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PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION.

The two stories comprising this volume are true delineations of life in Old Mexico. The writer of these stories has been quite a part of the incidents of the stories.

They deal in a mild spirit with the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church, and show the gradual leading out, by Protestant teaching, from the errors of the former to the clearer light as taught by the latter.

We are hopeful that the circulation of these stories may be encouraged by all lovers of the truth, and that the impressions made may lead others from darkness into the glorious light of God's truth.

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FROM THE CRUCIFIX TO THE CROSS.

CHAPTER I.

"THE CRAZY OLD MONK."

Brother Leonardo, the old priest of the Calistro School, was kneeling on the cold, earth floor of his cell. The cell was his own little room, and he was his own willing prisoner. The room was bare of furnishings, save a narrow iron bedstead and a low wooden stand. A "petate" (native mat) served as mattress, and across this lay a coarse woolen blanket, the only covering. The walls were of adobe, the plastering still clinging in places. On these walls hung a few brightly-colored prints of some of the saints, most conspicuous that of St. Peter, with keys suspended from his girdle.

In a niche in the wall stood a clay figure of the Virgin Mary, bright in blue and gold, with the infant Jesus in her

arms. Hanging above this image was a wooden cross, upon it the painted figure of Jesus crucified.

Under this cross and under this image kneeled the old man. His worn black robe had fallen from him, revealing undergarments coarse and still more worn. His face was very thin and deeply marked by suffering. As he kneeled, clasping his brazen crucifix, his black sunken eyes fixed upon the image before him, he prayed.

"O, holy Mother of God, have pity upon this feeble child of thine! Precious heart of Mary, be my salvation!"

Suddenly, there was a voice at his door, a child's voice, calling, "Abre, Tio, abre!" (Open, Uncle, open!) A light crept into those dull eyes. The old man arose, moved slowly across the floor, and withdrew the bolt from the door. There sprang into the room a handsome boy of about twelve years of age, straight and lithe, with the step of a soldier and with eyes flashing and black.

"Santisima Virgen! How you do love this dark corner! Come out into the garden, Tio mio, into the sunlight and among the flowers!"

The old man looked fondly into the eyes of the boy and said:

"My beautiful, the Virgin smiled when thou wast born! Sunshine, birds and flow-

ers were made for thee! But not for me! I soon must leave them all, but ere I go I must find peace, peace for my soul!"

"And wilt thou find it here?" interrupted the boy, looking about him.

The old man only replied by drawing the boy toward him. Then he led him to the little iron bedstead, where together they sat a moment in silence.

"Uncle," began the boy, "there is a stranger in our town, a white man, from the great country north of us. As he walks our streets he carries papers and little books. We met him this morning, Juan and I. He held out a little paper to me, and I reached to take it, but Juan drew me back, and told me not to touch it. The stranger did not speak. He only looked at me and smiled, and there was kindness in his smile and in his face. But Juan hurried me on and told me that the holy father said that whoever should talk to this stranger, or should take aught from him, would be cut off from the Holy Church and his soul forever lost. For this stranger, Juan said, is one of those 'Protestantes' lately come into our town."

The old man had been listening, but at the word "Protestantes" he raised his head, and with horror in his voice, exclaimed, 'Ay Dios mio! And have those accursed