

# Jack's View- Jack's Short Story of Social Justice

## *The Mexican*

by Doc Stull, 9/20/13

From the Jack London State Historic Park Moonletter,  
Fall, 2013

In August of 1911 *The Saturday Evening Post* published one of Jack London's most compelling and riveting short stories, "The Mexican." Jack's story was based on an incident in February earlier that year when a group of Mexican revolutionaries seized the town of Mexicali in defiance of Mexican ruler Porfirio Diaz.

Jack, in Los Angeles at the time, wrote a letter in support of the revolt which was read at the Los Angeles chapter of the Industrial Workers of the World, whose members were active in supporting a revolution in Mexico.

"The Mexican," published six months after the revolt, concerns a young man named Felipe Rivera whose disappearances at work bring about speculation and suspicion amongst his coworkers. In the story's dramatic

conclusion, Rivera fights in the boxing ring against overwhelming odds to buy guns for the revolution.

Four decades later, progressive filmmaker/documentarian and Jack London admirer Herbert Klein made the film *The Fighter* (1952) based upon “The Mexican.” The movie featured Richard Condon as Felipe Rivera and co-starred American stage and movie actor icon Lee J. Cobb. The soundtrack was written and performed by flamenco guitar superstar Vicente Gomez.

The story “The Mexican” and the subsequent film *The Fighter* stand as fiery testaments in support of social justice, an ideal that suffused Jack’s literary and personal life.

Three years later, in 1914, Jack covered the revolution in Mexico for *Colliers Weekly* and had misgivings about the opportunism and motivations of many of the revolutionaries. He ultimately resigned from the Socialist Party in 1916. Jack’s unfulfilled longings for social justice and his conflicted feelings about socialism were salved, in part, by his study of the economics and science of the soil. His farming experiments and work at his Beauty Ranch became Jack’s true passion in the last years of his life