

The Rover Of The Andes

**By
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Freeditorial 

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Chapter One

A Tale of Adventure in South America At the Foot of the Mountain Range

Towards the close of a bright and warm day, between fifty and sixty years ago, a solitary man might have been seen, mounted on a mule, wending his way slowly up the western slopes of the Andes.

Although decidedly inelegant and unhandsome, this specimen of the human family was by no means uninteresting. He was so large, and his legs were so long, that the contrast between him and the little mule which he bestrode was ridiculous. He was what is sometimes styled “loosely put together;” nevertheless, the various parts of him were so massive and muscular that, however loosely he might have been built up, most men would have found it rather difficult to take him down. Although wanting in grace, he was by no means repulsive, for his face, which was ornamented with a soft flaxen beard and moustache of juvenile texture, expressed wonderful depths of the milk of human kindness.

He wore boots with the trousers tucked into them, a grey tunic, or hunting coat, belted at the waist, and a broadbrimmed straw hat, or sombrero.

Evidently the times in which he travelled were troublous, for, besides having a brace of large pistols in his belt, he wore a cavalry sabre at his side. As if to increase the eccentricity of his appearance, he carried a heavy cudgel, by way

of ridingwhip; but it might have been observed that, however much he flourished this whip about, he never actually applied it to his steed.

On reaching a turn of the road at the brow of an eminence the mule stopped, and, letting its head droop till almost as pendent as its tail, silently expressed a desire for repose. The cavalier stepped off. It would convey a false impression to say that he dismounted. The mule heaved a sigh.

“Poor little thing!” murmured the traveller in a soft, low voice, and in a language which even a mule might have recognised as English; “you may well sigh. I really feel ashamed of myself for asking you to carry such a mass of flesh and bone. But it’s your own fault you know it is for you won’t be led. I’m quite willing to walk if you will only follow. Come let us try!”

Gently, insinuatingly, persuasively, the traveller touched the reins, and sought to lead the way. He might as well have tried to lead one of the snowclad peaks of the mighty Cordillera which towered into the sky before him. With ears inclining to the neck, a resolute expression in the eyes, his forelegs thrown forward and a lean slightly backward, the mule refused to move.

“Come now, do be amiable; there’s a good little thing! Come on,” said the strong youth, applying more force.

Peruvian mules are not open to flattery. The advance of the forelegs became more decided, the lean backward more pronounced, the ears went flat down, and incipient passion gleamed in the eyes.

“Well, well, have it your own way,” exclaimed the youth, with a laugh, “but don’t blame me for riding you so much.”

He once more rem; no, we forgo the once more lifted his right leg over the saddle and sat down. Fired, no doubt, with the glow of conscious victory the mule moved on and up at a more lively pace than before.

Thus the pair advanced until they gained a rocky eminence, whence the rich Peruvian plains could be seen stretching faraway toward the glowing horizon, where the sun was about to dip into the Pacific.

Here again the mule stopped, and the rider getting off sat down on a rock to take a look at the level horizon of the west for he had reached a spot where the next turn in the road would partially shut out the plains and enclose him among the giant mountains.

As he sat there meditating, while the mule cropped the herbage at his side, he observed two riders a considerable way down the circuitous road by which he

had ascended a man and a boy, apparently.

Whether it was the fine stalwart figure of the man that influenced him, or the mere presence of wayfarers in such a solitary place, our traveller could not tell, but he certainly felt unusual interest, and not only watched the pair as they approached, but sat still until they came up. As they drew near he perceived that the smaller of the two, whom at a distance he had taken for a boy, was an Indian girl, who, according to custom, bestrode her mule like a man. Her companion was a handsome Spanish-looking man, a Peruvian or it might be a Chilean with fine masculine features and magnificent black eyes. He was well-armed, and, to judge from his looks, seemed a little suspicious of the tall Englishman.

The hearty salutation of the latter, however, in bad Spanish, at once dissipated his suspicions. Replying in the same tongue, he then added, in good English:

“You are a stranger in this land, I perceive.”

“In truth I am,” replied the other, while the Peruvian dismounted, “nevertheless, I ought scarcely to admit the fact, for I was born in Peru. This perhaps may seem contradictory, but it is not more so than your being apparently a native of the soil yet speaking English like an Englishman.”

“From which it follows,” returned the Peruvian, “that men ought not to judge altogether by appearances. But you are wrong in supposing me a native of the soil, and yet I am not an Englishman. I have got a gift of language, however at least I feel myself equally at home in English, Indian, Spanish, and Portuguese, which is not to be wondered at, seeing that I have been forced to talk in all four languages for nigh a quarter of a century.”

“Then you must have been but a boy when you came here,” returned the Englishman, “for you seem to be not yet middle-aged.”

“Right, I was indeed a mere boy when I came to this land.”

“And I was a boy of seven when I left it to be educated in Europe,” returned the Englishman. “It is sixteen years since then, and I had feared that my memory might have failed to recognise the old landmarks, but I am rejoiced to find that I remember every turn of the road as if I had left home but yesterday.”

We have said that the tall youth's face was not handsome, but the glow of animation which rested on it when he spoke of home, seemed for a moment to transform it.

“Your home, then, cannot be far distant?” remarked the Peruvian, with a peculiar look that might have attracted the attention of the younger man if his gaze had not at the moment been directed to the Indian girl, who, during the foregoing conversation, had remained motionless on her mule with her eyes looking pensively at the ground, like a beautiful statue in bronze.

“My home is close at hand,” said the Englishman, when the question had been repeated; “unless memory plays me false, two more turns in the road will reveal it.”

The earnest look of the Peruvian deepened as he asked if the Estate of Passamanka was his home.

“Yes, you know it, then?” exclaimed the youth eagerly; “and perhaps you knew my father too?”

“Yes, indeed; there are few people within a hundred miles of the place who did not know the famous sugarmill and its hospitable owner, Senhor Armstrong. But excuse me,” added the Peruvian, with some hesitation, “you are aware, I suppose, that your father is dead?”

“Ay, well do I know that,” returned the other in a deeper tone. “It is to take my father’s place at the mills that I have been hastily summoned from England. Alas! I know nothing of the work, and it will be sorely against the grain to attempt the carrying on of the old business in the desolate old home.”

“Of course you also know,” continued the Peruvian, “that the country is disturbed just now that the old smouldering enmity between Chili and Peru has broken forth again in open war.”

“I could not have passed through the low country without finding that out. Indeed,” said the youth, glancing at his belt with a halfapologetic smile, “these weapons, which are so unfamiliar to my hand, and so distasteful to my spirit, are proof that I, at least, do not look for a time of peace. I accoutred myself thus on landing, at the urgent advice of a friend, though my good cudgel which has sufficed for all my needs hitherto is more to my mind, besides being useful as a mountain staff. But why do you ask? Is there much probability of the belligerents coming so far among the hills?”

“Wherever carrion is to be found, there you may be sure the vultures will congregate. There is booty to be got here among the hills; and whether the soldiers belong to the welltrained battalions of Chili, or the wretched levies of Peru, they are always prepared, for plunder ready to make hay while the sun shines. I only hope, Senhor Armstrong, that but come, let us advance and see before the sun sets.”

Turning abruptly as he spoke, the man mounted his mule and rode briskly up the winding road, followed by the Indian girl and our Englishman.

At the second turning of the road they reached a spot where an opening in the hills revealed the level country below, stretching away into illimitable distance.

As had been anticipated, they here came upon the mills they were in quest of. The Peruvian reined up abruptly and looked back.

“I feared as much,” he said in a low tone as the Englishman rode forward.

Rendered anxious by the man’s manner, Lawrence Armstrong sprang from his mule and pushed forward, but suddenly stopped and stood with clasped hands and a gaze of agony.

For there stood the ruins of his early homewhere his mother had died while he was yet a child, where his father had made a fortune, which, in his desolation, he had failed to enjoy, and where he finally died, leaving his possessions to his only child.

The troops had visited the spot, fired no doubt with patriotic fervour and knowing its owner to be wealthy. They had sacked the place, feasted on the provisions, drunk the wines, smashed up, by way of pleasantry, all the valuables that were too heavy to carry away, and, finally, setting fire to the place, had marched off to other fields of “glory.”

It was a tremendous blow to poor Lawrence, coming as he did fresh from college in a peaceful land, and full of the reminiscences of childhood.

Sitting down on a broken wall, he bowed his head and wept bitterly though silently while the Peruvian, quietly retiring with the Indian girl, left him alone.

The first paroxysm of grief over, young Armstrong rose, and began sadly to wander about the ruins. It had been an extensive structure, fitted with all the most approved appliances of mechanism which wealth could purchase. These now helped to enhance the wild aspect of the wreck, for iron girders had been twisted by the action of fire into snakelike convolutions in some places, while, in others, their ends stuck out fantastically from the blackened walls. Beautiful furniture had been smashed up to furnish firewood for the cooking of the meal with which the heroic troops had refreshed themselves before leaving, while a number of broken winebottles at the side of a rosewood writingdesk with an empty bottle on the top of it and heaps of stones and pebbles around, suggested the idea that the warriors had mingled light amusement with sterner

business. The roofs of most of the buildings had fallen in; the windowframes, where spared by the fire, had been torn out; and a pianoforte, which lay on its back on the grass, showed evidence of having undergone an examination of its internal arrangements, with the aid of the buttends of muskets.

“And this is the result of war!” muttered the young man, at last breaking silence.

“Only one phase of it,” replied a voice at his side, in tones of exceeding bitterness; “you must imagine a few corpses of slaughtered men and women and children, if you would have a perfect picture of war.”

The speaker was the Peruvian, who had quietly approached to say that if they wished to reach the next restingplace before dark it was necessary to proceed without delay.

“But perhaps,” he added, “you do not intend to go further. No doubt this was to have been the end of your journey had all been well. It can scarcely, I fear, be the end of it now. I do not wish to intrude upon your sorrows, Mr Armstrong, but my business will not admit of delay. I must push on, yet I would not do so without expressing my profound sympathy, and offering to aid you if it lies in my power.”

There was a tone and look about the man which awoke a feeling of gratitude and confidence in the forlorn youth’s heart.

“You are very kind,” he said, “but it is not in the power of man to help me. As your business is urgent you had better go and leave me. I thank you for the sympathy you express yet stay. You cannot advance much further tonight, why not encamp here? There used to be a small hut or outhouse not far off, in which my father spent much of his leisure. Perhaps the the”

“Patriots!” suggested the Peruvian.

“The scoundrels,” said Lawrence, “may have spared or overlooked it. The hut would furnish shelter enough, and we have provisions with us.”

After a moment’s reflection the Peruvian assented to this proposal, and, leaving the ruins together, they returned to the road, where they found the Indian girl holding the youth’s mule as well as that of her companion.

Hastening forward, Lawrence apologised for having in the agitation of the moment allowed his mule to run loose.

“But I forgot,” he added, “of course you do not understand English.”

“Try Spanish,” suggested the Peruvian, “she knows a little of that.”

“Unfortunately I have forgotten the little that I had picked up here when a boy,” returned Lawrence, as he mounted, “if I can manage to ask for food and lodging in that tongue, it is all that I can do.”

They soon reached an opening in the bushes at the roadside, and, at the further end of a natural glade or track, observed a small wooden hut thatched with rushes. Towards this young Armstrong led the way.

He was evidently much affected, for his lips were compressed, and he gave no heed to a remark made by his companion. Entering the hut, he stood for some time looking silently round.

It was but a poor place with bare walls; a carpenter’s bench in one corner, near to it a smith’s forge, one or two chairs, and a few tools; not much to interest a stranger but to Lawrence full of tender associations.

“It was here,” he said in tones of deepest pathos, “that my father showed me how to handle tools, and my mother taught me to read from the Word of God.”

Looking at his companions he observed that the large dark eyes of the Indian girl were fixed on him with an expression of unmistakable sympathy. He felt grateful at the moment, for to most men sympathy is sweet when unobtrusively offered whether it come from rich or poor, civilised or savage.

“Come, this will do,” said the Peruvian, looking round, “if you will kindle a fire on the forge, Senhor Armstrong, Manuela will arrange a sleeping chamber for herself in the closet I see there, while I look after the beasts.”

He spoke in cheering tones, which had the effect of rousing the poor youth somewhat from his despondency.

“Well, then,” he replied, “let us to work, and it is but just, as we are to sup together, and you know my name, that I should be put on an equal footing with yourself”

“Impossible!” interrupted the other, with a slight curl of his moustache, “for as I am only six feet one, and you are at least six feet four, we can never be on an equal footing.”

“Nay, but I referred to names, not to inches. Pray, by what name shall I call you?”

“Pedro,” returned the Spaniard. “I am known by several names in these parts, some of them complimentary, others the reverse, according as I am

referred to by friends or foes. Men often speak of me as a confirmed rover because of my wandering tendencies, but I'm not particular and will answer to any name you choose, so long as it is politely uttered. The one I prefer is Pedro."

He went out as he spoke to look after the mules, while Lawrence set about kindling a small fire and otherwise making preparations for supper.

The Indian girl, Manuela, with that prompt and humble obedience characteristic of the race to which she belonged, had gone at once into the little closet which her companion had pointed out, and was by that time busily arranging it as a sleeping chamber for the night.

Chapter Two

Compact with the New Friend and Discovery of an Old One

Keeping the fire low in order to prevent its being seen by any of the wandering bands of patriots alias soldiers, alias banditti who might chance to be in the neighbourhood, the three travellers thus thrown unexpectedly together ate their supper in comparative silence, Lawrence and Pedro exchanging a comment on the viands now and then, and the handsome Indian girl sitting opposite to them with her eyes for the most part fixed on the ground, though now and then she raised them to take a quick stealthy glance at the huge youth whose appetite did not seem to be greatly affected by his misfortunes. Perhaps she was wondering whether all Englishmen, possessed such innocent kindly faces and such ungainly though powerful frames. It may be that she was contrasting him with the handsome wellknit Pedro at his side.

Whatever her thoughts might have been, the short glances of her lustrous eyes gave no clue to them, and her tongue was silent, save when she replied by some brief monosyllable to a remark or query put in the Indian language occasionally by Pedro. Sometimes a gleam of the firelight threw her fine brown features into bold relief, but on these occasions, when Lawrence Armstrong chanced to observe them, they conveyed no expression whatever save that of profound gravity, with a touch, perhaps, of sadness.

The bench being awkwardly situated for a table, they had arranged a small box, bottom up, instead. Lawrence and his new acquaintance seated themselves on the ground, and Manuela used her saddle as a chair.

Towards the end of their meal the two men became more communicative, and when Pedro had lighted a cigarette, they began to talk of their immediate future.

“You don’t smoke?” remarked Pedro in passing.

“No,” replied Lawrence.

“Not like the most of your countrymen,” said the other.

“So much the worse,” rejoined the youth.

“The worse for them or for you which?” asked Pedro, with a significant glance.

“No matter,” returned Lawrence with a laugh.

“Well, now,” resumed Pedro, after a few puffs, during the emission of which his countenance assumed the expression of seriousness, which seemed most natural to it, “what do you intend to do? It is well to have that point fairly settled tonight, so that there may be no uncertainty or delay in the morning. I would not urge the question were it not that in the morning we must either go on together as travelling companions, or say our final adieux and part. I am not in the habit of prying into men’s private affairs, but, to speak the bare truth, I am naturally interested in one whose father has on more than one occasion done me good service. You need not answer me unless you please, senhor,” added the man with the air of one who is prepared to retire upon his dignity at a moment’s notice.

“Thanks, thanks, Pedro,” said the Englishman, heartily, “I appreciate your kindness, and accept your sympathy with gratitude. Moreover, I am glad to find that I have been thrown at such a crisis in my fortunes into the company of one who had regard for my dear father. But I scarce know what to do. I will give you my confidence unreservedly. Perhaps you may be able to advise”

“Stay,” interrupted the other, on whose countenance a slightly stern expression hovered. “Before you give me unreserved confidence, it is but fair that I should tell you candidly that I cannot pay you back in kind. As to private matters, I have none that would be likely to interest any one under the sun. In regard to other things my business is not my own. Why I am here and what I mean to do I have no right to reveal. Whither I am bound, however, is not necessarily a secret, and if you choose to travel with me you undoubtedly have a right to know.”

Young Armstrong expressed himself satisfied. He might have wished to know more, but, like Pedro, he had no desire to pry into other men’s affairs, and, being of an open confiding nature, was quite ready to take his companion on trust, even though he had been less candid and engaging in manner than he was. After explaining that he had been educated in Edinburgh, and trained to the medical profession, he went on to say that he had been hastily summoned

to take charge of the sugarmill at his father's death, and that he had expected to find an old overseer, who would have instructed him in all that he had to do in a business with which he was totally unacquainted.

"You see," he continued, "my father always said that he meant to retire on his fortune, and did not wish me to carry on the business, but, being naturally an uncommunicative man on business matters, he never gave me any information as to details. Of course, I had expected that his manager here, and his books, would reveal all that I required to know, but the soldiers have settled that question. Mill and books have gone together, and as to manager, clerks, and servants, I know not where they are."

"Scattered, no doubt," said Pedro, "here, there, and everywhere only too glad to escape from a neighbourhood which has been given up to fire and sword by way of improving its political condition!"

"I know not," returned Lawrence, sadly. "But it would be useless, I fear, to try to ferret them out."

"Quite useless," said Pedro. "Besides, what would it avail to talk with any of them about the affairs of a place that is now in ashes? But if your father spoke of his fortune, he must have had at least some of it in a bank somewhere."

"True, but I don't know where. All I know is that he once mentioned casually in one of his letters that he was going to Buenos Ayres, where he had some property."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Pedro. "Come, that may help you to decide, for I am myself going to Buenos Ayres, and can guide you there if disposed to go. Only, you will have to make up your mind to a pretty long and hard journey, for duty requires me to go by a devious route. You must know," he continued, lighting another cigarette, "that I am pledged to take that girl to her father, who lives not far from Buenos Ayres."

He pointed as he spoke to Manuela, who, having laid her head on her saddle, appeared to have fallen asleep.

"Her father must be a chief, I should think, to judge from her dignified, graceful carriage, as well as her fine features," said Lawrence in a low tone.

"Yes, he is a chief a great chief," returned Pedro, gazing at his cigarette in a meditative mood "a very great chief. You see, she happened to be living with friends on the western side of the mountains when this war between Chili and Peru broke out, and her father naturally wants to get her out of danger. The old chief once saved my life, so, you see, I am bound both by duty and gratitude to

rescue his daughter.”

“Indeed you are, and a pleasant duty it must be,” returned Lawrence with an approving nod; “but don’t you think it might have been wise to have rescued some other female, a domestic for instance, to keep her company? The poor girl will feel very lonely on such a long journey as you speak of.”

Pedro again looked musingly at his cigarette, and flipped off the ash with his little finger.

“You have not had much experience of war, young man,” he said, “if you think that in cases of rescue men can always arrange things comfortably, and according to the rules of propriety. When towns and villages are in flames, when plunder and rapine run riot everywhere, and little children are spitted on the bayonets of patriots, as is often the case even in what men have agreed to term civilised warfare, one is glad to escape with the skin of one’s teeth. Yet I was not as regardless of Manuela’s comfort as you seem to think. A poor woman who had nursed her when a child volunteered to accompany us, and continued with us on the first part of our journey; but the exertion, as I had feared, was too much for her. She caught a fever and died, so that we were forced to come on alone. If you join us, however, I shall be greatly pleased, for two can always make a better fight than one, and in these unsettled times there is no saying what we may fall in with in crossing the mountains.”

“But why expose the poor girl to such risks?” asked Lawrence. “Surely there must be some place of safety nearer than Buenos Ayres, to which you might conduct her?”

“Senhor Armstrong,” replied the man, with a return of his stern expression, “I have told you that my business is urgent. Not even the rescue of my old friend’s daughter can turn me aside from it. When Manuela begged me to take her with me, I pointed out the difficulties and dangers of the route, and the necessity for my pursuing a long and devious course, but she said she feared to remain where she was; that, being young, strong, and accustomed to an active life, she felt sure she was equal to the journey; that she could trust me, and that she knew her father would approve of her taking the step. I agreed, with some hesitation. It turned out that the girl was right in her fears, for before we left the town it was attacked by the troops of Chili. The Peruvians made but a poor resistance, and it was carried by assault. When I saw that all hope of saving the place was gone, I managed to bring Manuela and her nurse away in safety. As I have told you, the nurse died, and nowhere we are alone. Manuela chooses to run the risk. I will not turn aside from my duty. If you choose to join us, the girl will be safer at least until we cross the mountains. On the other side I shall be joined by friends, if need be.”

Pedro ceased, and rekindled his cigarette, which had gone out during the explanation.

“I will go with you,” said Lawrence, with decision, as he extended his hand.

“Good,” replied Pedro, grasping it with a hearty squeeze; “now I shall have no fears for our little Indian, for robbers are cowards as a rule.”

“Have we, then, much chance of meeting with robbers?”

“Well, I should say we have little chance of altogether escaping them, for in times of war there are always plenty of deserters and other whitelivered scoundrels who seize the opportunity to work their will. Besides, there are some noted outlaws in the neighbourhood of the pass we are going to cross. There’s Conrad of the Mountains, for instance. You’ve heard of him?”

“No, never.”

“Ah, senhor, that proves you to be a stranger here, for his name is known from the Atlantic to the Pacific chiefly, however, on the east side of the Cordillera, and on the Pampas. He is an outlaw at least he is said to be so; but one cannot believe all one hears. Some say that he is cruel, others that he is ferocious among men, but never hurts women or children.”

“Well, it is to be hoped we may not fall in with him, or any of his band,” said Lawrence; “for it is better to hear of his qualities than to put them to the test.”

“Yet, methinks,” resumed Pedro, “if you fell in with him alone you should have no cause to fear him, for you must be more than his match.”

“I don’t think I should fear him,” returned Lawrence, with a simple look. “As to being more than his match, I know not, for my spirit does not prompt me to light, and I cannot boast of much capacity in the use of arms unless you count my good oak cudgel a weapon. I have acquired some facility in the use of that, having practised single stick as an amusement at school.”

As he spoke, the youth was surprised and somewhat startled by his companion suddenly drawing a pistol from his belt, and pointing it steadily at the open doorway of the hut. Turning his eyes quickly in that direction, he beheld, with increased astonishment, a pair of glaring eyes, two rows of glittering teeth, and a pair of thick red lips! The flesh which united these striking objects was all but invisible, by reason of its being nearly as black as its background.

Most eyes, if human, would have got away from a pistol’s line of fire with precipitancy, but the eyes referred to did not disappear. On the contrary, they

paid no regard whatever to the owner of the pistol, but continued to glare steadily at Lawrence Armstrong. Seeing this, Pedro hesitated to pull the trigger. He was quick to defend himself, but not prompt to kill. When he saw that the eyes slowly advanced out of the gloom, that they with the lips and teeth belonged to a negro who advanced into the room unarmed and with outspread hands, he quietly lowered his weapon, and glanced at Lawrence. No doubt Pedro felt, as he certainly looked, perplexed, when he observed that Lawrence returned the intruder's gaze with almost equal intensity.

Suddenly the negro sprang towards the Englishman. He was a short, thickset, and exceedingly powerful man; yet Lawrence made no move to defend himself.

“Quashy!” he exclaimed, as the black fell on his knees, seized one of his hands, and covered it with kisses, at the same time bursting into tears.

“Oh! massa Lawrieoh! massa Lawrie, why you no come sooner? Why you so long? De sodger brutes nebber dar to touch de ole house if you was dere. Oh! Massa Lawrie, you's too latetoo late! My! how you's growed!”

In the midst of his sobs the young negro, for he was little more than a youth, drew back his head to obtain a better view of his old companion and playmate.

Need we say that Lawrence reciprocated the affection of the man?

“He was a boy like myself when I was here,” said Lawrence in explanation to the amused Peruvian. “His father was one of my father's most attached servants, whom he brought from Kentucky on his way to this land, and to whom he gave his freedom. Quashy himself used to be my playmate. But tell me about the attack on the mill, Quash. Were you present?”

“Prisint! You bery sure I was, an' I poke some holes in de varmints 'fore dey hoed away.”

“And how did you escape, Quash? Come, sit down and tell me all about it.”

The negro willingly complied. Meanwhile the Indian girl, who had been roused by his sudden entrance, resumed her seat on the saddle, and, looking intently into his black face, seemed to try to gather from the expression of his features something of what he said.

We need not repeat the story. It was a detailed account of murder and destruction; the burning of the place and the scattering of the old servants. Fortunately Lawrence had no relatives to deplore.

“But don't you know where any of the household have gone?” he asked, when

the excited negro paused to recover breath.

“Don’t know nuffin’. Arter I poke de holes in de scoundrils, I was ’bleeged to bolt. When I come back, de ole house was in flames, an’ eberybody gonewhat wasn’t dead. I hollereday, till I was a’most bustedbut nobody reply. Den I bury de dead ones, an’ I’ve hoed about eber since slobberin’ an’ wringin’ my hands.”

“Was our old clerk among the slain?” asked Lawrence.

“No, massa, but I tinks he’s a dead one now, for he too ole to run far.”

“And I suppose you can’t even guess where any of those who escaped went to?”

“Couldn’t guess more nor a Red Injin’s nooborn babby.”

“Quashy,” said Lawrence in a low voice, “be careful how you speak of Indians.”

He glanced, as he spoke, at Manuela, who now sat with grave face and downcast eyes, having apparently found that the human countenance, however expressive, failed to make up for the want of language.

And, truly, Quashy’s countenance was unwontedly mobile and expressive. Every feature seemed to possess the power of independently betraying the thoughts and feelings of the man, so that when they all united for that end the effect was marvellous. Emotional, and full of quick sympathy, Quashy’s visage changed from grave to gay, pitiful to fierce, humorous to savage, at a moment’s notice. When, therefore, he received the gentle rebuke above referred to, his animated countenance assumed a sudden aspect of utter woe and selfcondemnation that may be conceived but cannot be described, and when Lawrence gave vent to a short laugh at the unexpected change, Quashy’s eyes glistened with an arch look, and his mouth expanded from ear to ear.

And what an expansion that was, to be sure! when you take into account the display of white teeth and red gums by which it was accompanied.

“Well, now, Quash,” resumed Lawrence, “what did you do after that?”

“Arter what, massa?”

“After finding that slobbering and wringing your hands did no good.”

“Oh! arter dat, I not know what to do, an’ den I tried to dieI was so mis’rable. But I couldn’t. You’ve no notion how hard it is to die when you wants to.

Anyhow I couldn't manage it, so I gib up tryin'."

At this point Manuela rose, and, bidding Pedro goodnight in the Indian tongue, passed into her little chamber and shut the door.

"And what do you intend to do now, Quash?" asked Lawrence.

"Stick to you, massa, troo t'ick an' t'in," returned the negro with emphatic promptitude, which caused even Pedro to laugh.

"My poor fellow, that is impossible," said Lawrence, who then explained his position and circumstances, showing how it was that he had little money and no immediate prospect of obtaining any, that, in short, he was about to start out in the wide world friendless and almost penniless to seek his fortune. To all of which the negro listened with a face so utterly devoid of expression of any kind that his old master and playmate could not tell how he took it.

"And now," he asked in conclusion, "what say you to all that?"

"Stick to you troo t'ick and t'in," repeated Quashy, in a tone of what might be styled sulky firmness.

"But," said Lawrence, "I can't pay you any wages."

"Don' want no wages," said Quashy.

"Besides," resumed Lawrence, "even if I were willing to take you, Senhor Pedro might object."

"I no care for Senhor Pedro one brass buttin," retorted the negro.

The Peruvian smiled rather approvingly at this candid expression of opinion.

"Where you gwine?" asked Quashy, abruptly.

"To Buenos Ayres."

"I's gwine to Bens Airies too. I's a free nigger, an' no mortal man kin stop me."

As Quashy remained obdurate, and, upon consultation, Lawrence and Pedro came to the conclusion that such a sturdy, resolute fellow might be rather useful in the circumstances, it was finally arranged, to the poor fellow's inexpressible delight, that he should accompany them in their long journey to the far east.

Chapter Three

Lingual Difficulties Accompanied by Physical Dangers and followed by the Advent of Banditti.

After several days had passed away, our travellers found themselves among the higher passes of the great mountain range of the Andes.

Before reaching that region, however, they had, in one of the villages through which they passed, supplied themselves each with a fresh stout mule, besides two serviceable animals to carry their provisions and camp equipage.

Pedro, who of course rode ahead in the capacity of guide, seemed to possess an unlimited supply of cash, and Lawrence Armstrong had at least sufficient to enable him to bear his fair share of the expenses of the journey. As for Quashy, being a servant he had no expenses to bear.

Of course the finest, as well as the bestlooking, mule had been given to the pretty Manuela, and, despite the masculine attitude of her position, she sat and managed her steed with a grace of motion that might have rendered many a white dame envious. Although filled with admiration, Lawrence was by no means surprised, for he knew well that in the Pampas, or plains, to which region her father belonged, the Indians are celebrated for their splendid horsemanship. Indeed, their little children almost live on horseback, commencing their training long before they can mount, and overcoming the difficulty of smallness in early youth, by climbing to the backs of their steeds by means of a foreleg, and not unfrequently by the tail.

The costume of the girl was well suited to her present mode of life, being a sort of light tunic reaching a little below the knees, with loose leggings, which were richly ornamented with needlework. A straw hat with a simple feather, covered her head, beneath which her curling black hair flowed in unconfined luxuriance. She wore no ornament of any kind, and the slight shoes that covered her small feet were perfectly plain. In short, there was a modest simplicity about the girl's whole aspect and demeanour which greatly interested the Englishman, inducing him to murmur to himself, "What an uncommonly pretty girl she would be if she were only white!"

The colour of her skin was, indeed, unusually dark, but that fact did not interfere with the classic delicacy of her features, or the natural sweetness of her expression.

The order of progress in narrow places was such that Manuela rode behind Pedro and in front of Lawrence, Quashy bringing up the rear. In more open places the young Englishman used occasionally to ride up abreast of Manuela

and endeavour to engage her in conversation. He was, to say truth, very much the reverse of what is styled a lady's man, and had all his life felt rather shy and awkward in female society, but being a sociable, kindly fellow, he felt it incumbent on him to do what in him lay to lighten the tedium of the long journey to one who, he thought, must naturally feel very lonely with no companions but men. "Besides," he whispered to himself, "she is only an Indian, and of course cannot construe my attentions to mean anything so ridiculous as lovemaking, so, I will speak to her in a fatherly sort of way."

Filled with this idea, as the party came out upon a wide and beautiful tableland, which seemed like a giant emerald set in a circlet of grand blue mountains, Lawrence pushed up alongside, and said

"Poor girl, I fear that such prolonged riding over these rugged passes must fatigue you." Manuela raised her dark eyes to the youth's face, and, with a smile that was very slight though not so slight but that it revealed a double row of bright little teeth she replied softly

"What you say?"

"Oh! I forgot, you don't speak English. How stupid I am!" said Lawrence with a blush, for he was too young to act the "fatherly" part well.

He felt exceedingly awkward, but, observing that the girl's eyes were again fixed pensively on the ground, he hoped that she had not noticed the blush, and attempted to repeat the phrase in Spanish. What he said it is not possible to set down in that tongue, nor can we gratify the reader with a translation. Whatever it was, Manuela replied by again raising her dark eyes for a moment this time without a smile and shaking her head.

Poor Lawrence felt more awkward than ever. In despair he half thought of making trial of Latin or Greek, when Pedro came opportunely to the rescue. Looking back he began

"Senhor Armstrong"

"I think," interrupted the youth, "that you may dispense with 'Senhor.'"

"Nay, I like to use it," returned the guide. "It reminds me so forcibly of the time when I addressed your good old father thus."

"Well, Senhor Pedro, call me what you please. What were you about to say?"

"Only that we are now approaching one of the dangerous passes of the mountains, where baggage mules sometimes touch the cliffs with their packs, and so get tilted over the precipices. But our mules are quiet, and with

ordinary care we have nothing to fear.”

The gorge in the mountains, which the travellers soon afterwards entered, fully justified the guide’s expression “dangerous.” It was a wild, rugged glen, high up on one side of which the narrow pathway wound in some places rounding a cliff or projecting boulder, which rendered the passage of the baggage mules extremely difficult. Indeed, one of the mules did slightly graze a rock with its burden; and, although naturally surefooted, was so far thrown off its balance as to be within a hair’s breadth of tumbling over the edge and being dashed to pieces on the rocks below, where a turbulent river rushed tumultuously at the bottom of the glen.

One of the snowclad peaks of the higher Andes lay right before them. One or two guanaco animals of the lama species gazed at them from the other side of the gorge, and several illomened vultures wheeled in the sky above, as if anticipating a catastrophe which would furnish them with a glorious meal.

“A most suitable place for the depredations of banditti, or fellows like Conrad of the Mountains, I should think,” said Lawrence.

“Bandits are sometimes met with here,” returned Pedro, quietly.

“And what if we should meet with such in a place where there is scarcely room to fight?”

“Why then,” returned the guide, with a slight curl of his moustache, “we should have to try who could fight best in the smallest space.”

“Not a pleasant prospect in the circumstances,” said Lawrence, thinking of Manuela.

For some time they rode together in silence; but Quashy, who had overheard, the conversation, and was of a remarkably combative disposition, though the reverse of badtempered or quarrelsome, could not refrain from asking

“W’y de Guv’mint not hab lots ob sojers an’ pleece in de mountains to squash de raskils?”

“Because Government has enough to do to squash the rascals nearer home, Quashy,” answered Pedro. “Have a care, the track gets rather steep here.”

He glanced over his shoulder at the Indian girl as he spoke. She was riding behind with an air of perfect ease and selfpossession.

“Fall to the rear, Quashy,” said Pedro.

The black obeyed at once, and a minute later they turned the corner of a jutting rock, which had hitherto shut out from view the lower part of the gorge and the track they were following.

The sight that met their view was calculated to try the strongest nerves, for there, not a hundred paces in advance, and coming towards them, were ten of the most villainous-looking cutthroats that could be imagined, all mounted, and heavily armed with carbine, sword, and pistol.

Taken completely by surprise, the bandits for such Pedro knew them to be pulled up. Not so our guide. It was one of the peculiarities and strong points of Pedro's character that he was never taken by surprise, or uncertain what to do.

Instantly he drew his sword with one hand, a pistol with the other, and, driving his spurs deep into his mule, dashed down the steep road at the banditti. In the very act he looked back, and, in a voice that caused the echoes of the gorge to ring, shouted in Spanish

“Come on, comrades! here they are at last! close up!”

A yell of the most fiendish excitement and surprise from Quashy who was only just coming into view assisted the deception. If anything was wanting to complete the effect, it was the galvanic upheaval of Lawrence's long arms and the tremendous flourish of his longer legs, as he vaulted over his mule's head, left it scornfully behind, uttered a roar worthy of an African lion, and rushed forward on foot. He grasped his great cudgel, for sword and pistol had been utterly forgotten!

Like a human avalanche they descended on the foe. That foe did not await the onset. Panic-stricken they turned and went helter-skelter down the pass all except two, who seemed made of sterner stuff than their fellows, and hesitated.

One of these Pedro rode fairly down, and sent, horse and all, over the precipice. Lawrence's cudgel beat down the guard of the other, flattened his sombrero, and stopping only at his skull, stretched him on the ground. As for those who had fled, the appalling yells of Quashy, as he pursued them, scattered to the winds any fagends of courage they might have possessed, and effectually prevented their return. So tremendous and sudden was the result, that Manuela felt more inclined to laugh than cry, though naturally a good deal frightened.

Lawrence and Pedro were standing in consultation over the fallen bandit when the negro came back panting from the chase.

“Da’s wan good job dooed, anyhow,” he said. “What’s you be do wid him?”

“What would you recommend?” asked Pedro.

The negro pointed significantly to the precipice, but the guide shook his head.

“No, I cannot kill in cold blood, though I have no doubt he richly deserves it. We’ll bind his hands and leave him. It may be weakness on my part, but we can’t take him on, you know.”

While Pedro was in the act of binding the robber, a wild shriek, as of some one in terrible agony, startled them. Looking cautiously over the precipice, where the sound seemed to come from, they saw that the man whom Pedro had ridden down was hanging over the abyss by the boughs of a small shrub. His steed lay mangled on the rocks of the river bank at the bottom. There was an agonised expression in the man’s countenance which would have touched a heart much less soft than that of Lawrence Armstrong. Evidently the man’s power of holding on was nearly exhausted, and he could not repress a shriek at the prospect of the terrible death which seemed so imminent.

Being a practised mountaineer, Lawrence at once, without thought of personal danger, and moved only by pity, slipped over the crags, and, descending on one or two slight projections, the stability of which even a Swiss goat might have questioned, reached the bush. A look of fierce and deadly hate was on the robber’s face, for, judging of others by himself, he thought, no doubt, that his enemy meant to hasten his destruction.

“Here, catch hold I’ll save you!” cried Lawrence, extending his strong right hand.

A glance of surprise told that he was understood. The bandit let go the hold of one of his hands and made a convulsive grasp at his rescuer. Their fingers touched, but at the same moment the branch gave way, and, with a cry of wild despair, the wretched man went headlong down.

Not, however, to destruction. The effort he had made threw him slightly to one side of the line which his horse had taken in its fall. The difference was very slight indeed, yet it sufficed to send him towards another bush lower down the cliff. Still, the height he had to fall would have ensured the breaking of all his bones if the bush had not hurled him off with a violent rebound.

Lawrence almost felt giddy with horror. Next moment a heavy plunge was heard. The man had fallen into a deep dark pool in the river, which was scarce distinguishable from the cliffs above. Being fringed with bushes, it was impossible to note whether he rose again. Lawrence was still gazing anxiously

at the pool, when something touched his cheek. It was a lasso which Pedro had quietly dropped over his shoulders.

“Hold fast to it, senhor, you’ll never get up without it,” he said, in tones so earnest that the youth became suddenly alive to the great danger of his position. In the haste and anxiety of his descent he had failed to note that one or two of the slight projections on which he had placed his feet had broken away, and that therefore a return to the top of the almost perpendicular precipice by the same route was impracticable. Even the slight ledge on which he stood, and from which the little shrub grew, seemed to be crumbling away beneath his great weight. With that feeling of alarm which the sudden and unexpected prospect of instant death brings, we presume, even to the stoutest hearts, Lawrence clutched the line convulsively. He was ignorant at that time of the great strength of the South American lasso, and hesitated to trust his life entirely to it. Pedro guessed his feelings.

“Don’t fear to trust it,” he said, “many a wild bull it has held, four times your size; but wait till Quashy and I get our feet well fixed we’ll haul you up easily.”

“Have you made the end fast?” cried Lawrence, looking up and encountering the anxious gaze of the Indian maiden.

“Yes, massa, all fast,” answered Quashy, whose look of horror can be more easily imagined than described.

“Hold on, then, and don’t haul.”

The two men obeyed, and the active youth pulled himself up hand over hand, making good use in passing of any hollow or projection that afforded the slightest hold for his toes. At the top he was roughly grasped by his rescuers and dragged into safety.

“Poor fellow!” he exclaimed, on reaching the top.

“Well, massa,” said Quashy, with a broad grin, “das jist w’at I’s agwine to say, but you’s too quick for me.”

“I meant the bandit, not myself,” said Lawrence, looking over the cliff at the pool with an expression of great pity.

“Ha! don’t be uneasy about him,” said Pedro, with a short laugh, as he resumed the binding of the stunned robber. “If he’s killed or drowned he’s well out o’ the way. If he has escaped he’ll be sure to recover and make himself a pest to the neighbourhood for many a day to come. No, no, my good man, it’s of no use, you needn’t try it.”

The latter part of this speech was in Spanish, and addressed to the robber, who, having recovered consciousness, had made a sudden struggle to shake off his captor. As suddenly he ceased the effort on finding that the strength of the guide was greatly superior to his own.

In another minute Pedro stood up, having bound the bandit's hands in front of him in a manner that rendered any effort at selfliberation impossible at least in a short space of time.

"There," said Pedro to Lawrence, "I'll warrant him to lead a harmless life until tomorrow at any rate."

As he spoke he drew the man's pistols, knife, and carbine, and handed them to Quashy.

"There," he said, "you may find these useful."

Meanwhile the robber lay quietly on his back, glancing from one to another of the party with looks of hatred that told clearly enough how he would have acted had he been free.

Turning to him as he was about to remount and quit the scene, Pedro said very sternly in Spanish

"You and I have met before, friend, and you know my powers with the rifle at longrange. If you offer to rise from the spot where you now lie until we have disappeared round that rocky point half a mile along the road, you are a dead man. After we have turned the point, you may go where you will and do what you please. I might point out that in refraining from cutting your throat I am showing mercy which you don't deservebut it is useless to throw pearls to swine."

The man spoke no word of reply, though he did look a little surprised as the party left him and rode away.

"Would it not have been safer to have bound his hands behind his back?" asked Lawrence.

"No doubt it would, but he is secure enough for our purpose as he is. If I had bound him as you suggest, he would have been almost certain to perish, being quite unable to help himself. As it is, he can use his tied hands to some extent, and, by perseverance in sawing the lines against sharp rocks, he will set himself free at last. By that time, however, we shall be beyond his reach."

From time to time they all glanced over their shoulders as they rode along, but the bound man did not stir. After they had passed beyond the point of rock

before referred to, Lawrence's curiosity prompted him to turn back and peep round.

The bandit had already risen from the ground, and could be seen walking, as quickly as circumstances permitted, up the track by which they had just descended.

In a few minutes his tall figure was seen to pause for a brief space at the summit of the pass. Then it disappeared on the other side into the gloomy recesses of the mountains.

***Chapter Four**

In which Quashy is Communicative and an Enemy is Turned into a Friend.

The pass which our travellers had just crossed merely led them over a mountain chain which may be described as the Peruvian Cordillera. Beyond it lay a fruitful valley of considerable extent, which terminated at the base of the great range, or backbone, of the Andes. Beyond this again lay another valley of greater extent than the first, which was bounded by a third range or cordillera of inferior height, the eastern slopes of which descended on one hand in varying undulations to the dense forests of equatorial Brazil, on the other, by easy gradations to the level Pampas or plains which extend for hundreds of miles through the lands of the Argentine Confederation to the Atlantic.

Two mountain passes, therefore, were still to be crossed, and Lawrence Armstrong began to think that if things went on as they had begun a pretty lively experience probably lay before them.

But in this he was mistaken, at least as regarded banditti, though in some other respects the journey was not quite devoid of stirring incidents as we shall see.

We have said that the goodnature of the young Englishman induced him to attempt conversation with the Indian girl, and at first Manuela appeared to be amused, if not interested, by his unsuccessful efforts; but after one of these futile attempts Pedro made some remarks to the girl in the Indian tongue, and in a tone of remonstrance, which had the effect of rendering her more silent and grave than before. Lawrence, therefore, finally ceased to address her, though his natural gallantry prompted him to offer assistance when it seemed necessary, and to accost her with a hearty goodnight and goodmorning each day.

As Pedro, in his capacity of guide, usually rode a few paces in advance, and

was frequently in a silent, abstracted mood, Lawrence was thus thrown almost entirely on the negro for companionship. Although the young Englishman may not have estimated his company very highly, nothing could have been more satisfactory to Quashy, who, with delight expressed in every wrinkle and lineament of his black visage, fully availed himself of his opportunities.

“O Massa Lawrie!” he exclaimed, at the close of one of their conversations, “how I does lub to talk ob de ole times when me an’ you was play togidder!”

“Yes, it’s very nice to recall old times,” answered Lawrence, with a half-suppressed yawn, for they had by that time gone over the old times so often that the novelty had rather worn off.

“Yes, bery nice,” repeated Quashy, with gleaming eyes, “when I tink ob de ole fadder an’ de ole mill an’ de ole fun what me an’ you carried onoh! my heart goes like to bu’st.”

“Don’t let it bu’st here, whatever you do, Quashy, for you’ll need all the heart you possess to carry you safely over these mountain passes.”

Quashy opened his huge mouth, shut his eyes, and went off in a high falsetto his usual mode of laughing. He always laughed at Lawrence’s little jokes, whether good or bad, insomuch that the youth finally abstained from jesting as much as possible.

“I did not know,” continued Lawrence, “that there were so many robbers about. Pedro tells me that the mountains are swarming with them just now.”

“Ho yis, massa, plenty ob rubbers eberywhar,” said Quashy, with a nod, “more nor ’nuff ob dem. You see, massa, Chili an’ Proo’s a fightin’ wid each oder jus’ now. What dey’s fightin’ about no mortal knows; an’, what’s more, nobody cares. I s’pose one say de oder’s wrong an’ de oder say de one’s say not right. Bof say das a big lie so at it dey goes hammer an’ tongs to proveha! ha! to prove dey’s bof right. Oh my!”

Here the negro opened his cavernous jaws and gave vent to another explosion of shrill laughter.

“What fools dey is!”

“Then you think it is only fools who fight, Quashy?”

“Ob coorse, massa. Don’ you see, if dey wasn’t fools dey wouldn’t fight; ’cause fightin’ can’t prove nuffin’, an’ it can’t do nuffin’, ’cep’ waste life an’ money. No doubt,” added the negro, with a meditative gaze at the ground, “when rubbers come at a feller he’s boun’ to fight, for why? he can’t help it; or

when Red Injin savages”

“Have a care, Quashy, what you say about Indians. I’ve warned you once already.”

“O massa!” said the poor black, with a look of almost superhuman penitence, “I beg your pard’n. I’s quite forgit to remimber. I was just agwine to say that there is times when you mus’ fight. But isn’t Chili Christ’n, an’ isn’t P’roo Christ’n? I don’ bleeve in Christ’ns what cut each oder’s t’roats to prove dey’s right. Howsever, das noting. What I’s agwine to say isdars a lot o’ white livers on bof sides, an’ dese dey runs away, takes to de mountains and becomes rubbers. But dey’s not all bad alike, dough none of em’s good. You’s heer’d ob Conrad ob de Mountains, massa?”

“Yes, Pedro mentioned his name. He seems to be a celebrated bandit.”

“Well, I’s not sure. Some peepil say he’s not a rubber at all, but a good sort o’ feller as goes mad sometimes. He’s bery kind to women an’ child’n, but he’s bery awrful.”

“That’s a strange character. How do you know he’s so very awful, Quashy?”

“Because I seed ’im, massa.”

“Indeed, where?”

“On de plains ob Proo, massa,” replied the negro, with that selfsatisfied clearing of the throat which was usually the prelude to a long story.

“Come now, Quashy,” said Lawrence, with a laugh, “don’t be too longwinded, and don’t exaggerate.”

“Don’t exwhatgerate, massa?”

“Exaggerate.”

“What’s dat, massa?”

“Never mind, Quashygo on.”

With a genial and highly exaggerated smile, the negro proceeded:

“Well, as I was agwine to say, I see dis man, Conrad ob de Mountains, on de plains ob Proo. I’s in de Proo camp at de time, attendin’ on you’s fadder, an’ de army ob Chili was in front ob us on de slopes ob de hills, agwine to go in for a fight wid us. De sojers of Proo wasn’t bery keen for fightin’. I could see dat, but their gin’ral screwed ’em up to de pint, an’ dey was all ready, when all of a

sudden, we sees a pris'ner brought in by four sojers. Dey seem so 'fraid ob him dey darn't touch him, tho' he was unarmed. Two walked behind him, an' two walked in front ob 'im, all wid dere baynets pintin' at 'im, ready to skewer 'im all round if he was try to run. But, poor chap, he walk wid his head down, bery sadlikenebber t'inkin' ob runnin'. So dey druv' 'im up to our gin'ral. I was in a crowd o' tall fellers, an' de pris'ner had his back to me, so I not seed his face well. 'Das Conrad ob de Mountains dey've cotched,' says a feller near me. 'Listen!' We all listen'd so quiet you could hear a 'skito sneeze. 'What's you' name?' asks de gin'ral, ridin' close up to Conrad on his splendid warhossa child ob one ob de warhosses as come ober wid Pizarro from Spain. 'My name's Pumpkin,' answers de pris'ner. 'Das a lie!' says de gin'ral. 'No's not,' says Conrad, lookin' up, as I could see by de back ob his head. 'What side you b'longs to, raskil?' 'To no side, gin'ral.' 'Whar you come fro'?' 'Fro' de mountains, gin'r'l.' 'Whar you go to?' 'Ober de mountains, gin'ral.' I could see by de way de fedders in de gin'ral's hat shake dat he's gittin' in a wax at de cool imprence ob de pris'ner, but he 'strain hissself, an' spoke sarkmistic. 'Senhor Pumpkin,' says he, 'you are Conrad ob de Mountains,' 'cause he guess who he was by dat time; 'how you prepose to go ober de mountains?' 'Dis way!' says Conrad, an', nixt momint, up goes de gin'ral's leg, down goes his head an' fedders on de ground, and Conrad sits in de saddle afore you can wink. All round de baynets was charge, but dey haul up jist in time not to skewer one anoder, for de horse shotted out fro' between dem all, an' away straight to de Chili lines, whar dere was a great cheerin', for dey t'ought it was a deserter. When Conrad came up, he trotted quietly troo de ranks, till he got near to whar de Chili commander stood wid his hofficers, wonderin' who he was. As he couldn't 'spec' to git no furder, he rides quietly up to a hofficer, takes de sword out ob his hand afore he understand what he wants, den, diggin' de spurs into de big warhoss, off he goes wid a yell like a Red Injoh! I's mean like aa buff'lo bull. Out comes de swords. Dey close all round 'im. I no see him by dat time. He too fur off; but a friend ob mine was near, an' he say dat Conrad swing de long sword so quick, an' de sun was shinin' so clar, dat it look like a circle ob fire all round him. Down dey hoed on ebery side. Off goed a head here, an arm dere. One trooper cut troo at de waist, an' fall'd off, but de legs stick on. Anoder splitted right down fro' de helmet, so as one half fall on one side, an' de odour half fall"

"Come now, Quashy," interrupted Lawrence, with a laugh, "you exaggerate."

"What! you call dat exaggerate, massa? Den Conrad exaggerate about ten more afore he cut his way troo an' 'scaped to de hills. Oh, he's an awful man!"

"Truly he must be very awful, if all you relate of him be true," said Lawrence;

“and I sincerely trust that if we fall in with him we may find him friendly. Now, I shall ride forward, and ask Pedro if we are far from our haltingplace.”

This abrupt change of subject was usually understood by the amiable negro to mean that our herowhom he persisted in regarding as his master had had enough of his conversation at that time, so he reined back his mule, while Lawrence pushed forward.

To his question Pedro replied that he expected to reach the next sleepingplace very soon.

“It will not be as luxurious as the last,” he said; “but, doubtless, one who has traversed the mountains of Scotland is prepared to rough it in South America.”

“You speak as if you were yourself somewhat acquainted with the Scottish mountains.”

“So I am, senhor,” replied the guide. “I had clambered up Ben Nevis while I was yet a little boy.”

“Surely you are not a Scot?” said Lawrence, with a quick glance.

“No, I am not a Scot, senhor. To have travelled in a country does not render one a native, else might I claim England, Ireland, and Switzerland as my native lands. See, yonder lies the little farm where I hope to put up for the night.”

He pointed as he spoke to the head of the glen or valley, which was somewhat narrower and more gloomy than the vales through which they had ridden in the earlier part of the day. Since crossing the first cordillera on the Pacific side of the Andes they had, indeed, traversed a great variety of country. In some places the land was rocky and comparatively barren. In others, where the peculiar form of the mountains sheltered the tablelands, the country was fertile, and numerous farms dotted the landscape, but as they ascended higher on the main chain the farms became fewer, until they finally disappeared, and an occasional hut, with a mere patch of cultivated ground, was all that remained in the vast solitudes to tell of the presence of man.

It was to one of these huts that Pedro now directed his companion’s attention.

“A most suitable place for the abode of banditti,” remarked Lawrence, as they advanced up the winding path.

“And many a time do the bandits lodge there,” returned Pedro. “Of course, robbers of the Andes do not go about with placards on their backs announcing their profession to all the world, and, as long as they behave themselves,

farmers are bound to regard them as honest men.”

“You said, if I heard rightly,” observed Lawrence, “that you had formerly met with the rascal whom we let off the other day.”

“Yes, I know him well. One of the worst men in the land. I’m almost sorry we did not shoot him, but I never could take human life in cold blood, even when that life had been forfeited over and over again. However, he’s sure to get his deserts sooner or later.”

“Then he is not Conrad of the Mountains whom you mentioned to me lately?”

“No, Conrad is a very different stamp of man though he has not too much to boast of in the way of character if all that’s said of him be true. The man we let go is a gaucho of the Pampas named Cruz. He delights in war, and has fought in the armies of Chili, Peru, and the Argentine Confederation without much regard to the cause of quarrel. In fact, wherever fighting is going on Cruz is sure to be there. Lately he has taken to the mountains, and now fights for his own hand.”

“And the other poor fellow who went over the precipice,” asked Lawrence, “did you know him?”

“I knew him slightly. Antonio is his name, I think, but he is a villain of no note an inferior bandit, though quite equal to his captain, no doubt, in selfishness and cruelty.”

On arriving at the hut or small farm at the head of the valley, they found its owner, a burly, goodhumoured Creole, alone with his mother, an old woman whose shrivelled up appearance suggested the idea of a mummy partially thawed into life. She was busy cooking over a small fire, the smoke of which seemed congenial to her judging from the frequency with which she thrust her old head into it while inspecting the contents of an iron pot.

There was plenty of room for them, the host said, with an air of profound respect for Pedro, whom he saluted as an old acquaintance. The house had been full two days before, but the travellers had gone on, and the only one who remained was a poor man who lay in an outhouse very sick.

“Who is he?” asked Pedro, as he assisted Manuela to alight.

“I know not, senhor,” replied the host. “He is a stranger, who tells me he has been robbed. I can well believe it, for he has been roughly handled, and there are some well known bandits in the neighbourhood. His injuries would not have been so serious, however, if he had not caught a fever from exposure.”

“Indeed,” returned the guide, who, however, seemed more interested in unsaddling his mules than in listening to the account of the unfortunate man, “was it near this that he fell in with the bandits?”

“No, senhor, it was far to the west. The travellers who brought him on said they found him almost insensible on the banks of a stream into which he appeared to have fallen or been thrown.”

Pedro glanced at Lawrence.

“Hear you that, senhor?”

“My Spanish only suffices to inform me that some one has been robbed and injured.”

Explaining fully what their host had said, Pedro advised Lawrence to visit the stranger in his medical character.

“My friend is a doctor,” he said, turning to the host, “take him to the sick man; for myself, I will put up the mules and then assist the old mother, for mountain air sharpens appetite.”

In a rude, tumbledown hut close to the main building Lawrence found his patient. He lay stretched in a corner on a heap of straw in a state of great exhaustion apparently dying and with several bandages about his cut and bruised head and face.

The first glance told Lawrence that it was Antonio, the robber whom he had tried to rescue, but he carefully concealed his knowledge, and, bending over the man, addressed him as if he were a stranger. The start and look of surprise mingled with alarm on the robber’s face told that he had recognised Lawrence, but he also laid restraint on himself, and drew one of the bandages lower down on his eyes.

Feeling his pulse, Lawrence asked him about his food.

He got little, he said, and that little was not good; the people of the farm seemed to grudge it.

“My poor man,” said Lawrence in his bad Spanish, “they are starving you to death. But I’ll see to that.”

He rose and went out quickly. Returning with a basin of soup, he presented it to the invalid, who ate it with relish. Then the man began to relate how he had been attacked a few days before by a party of robbers in one of the mountain passes, who had cut the throats of all his party in cold blood, and had almost

killed himself, when he was rescued by the opportune arrival of some travellers.

Lawrence was much disgusted at first by the man's falsehood. Observing the poor fellow's extreme weakness, however, and his evident anxiety lest he should be recognised, the feeling changed to pity. Laying his hand gently on the man's shoulder, he said, with a look of solemnity which perchance made, up to some extent for the baldness of the phraseology

“Antonio, tell not lies; you are dying!”

The startled man looked at his visitor earnestly. “Am I dying?” he asked, in a low tone.

“You are, perhaps; I know not. I will save you if possible.”

These words were accompanied by a kind look and a comforting pat on the shoulder, which, it may be, did more for the sick man than the best of physic. At all events the result was a sudden grasp of the hand and a look of gratitude which spoke volumes. The robber was about to give vent to his feelings in speech when the door opened, and the burly host, putting his head in, announced that supper was ready.

Giving his patient another reassuring pat, the young doctor left him and returned to the banqueting hall of the mountain farm, where he found that Manuela, Pedro, and Quashy were more or less earnestly engaged with the contents of the iron pot.

Chapter Five

Lawrence and Quashy become “Flosuffical,” and they camp out beside the “Giant's Castle”

While the party were at supper the first gusts of a storm, which had for some time been brewing, shook the little hut, and before they had all fallen into the profound slumber which usually followed their day's journey, a heavy gale was howling among the mountain gorges with a noise like the roaring of a thousand lions. For two days the gale raged so furiously that travelling especially in the higher regions of the Andes became impossible. The Indian girl, Pedro, and the negro, bore their detention with that stoicism which is not an infrequent characteristic of mountaineers, guides, and savages. As for our hero, he devoted himself and all his skill to his patient to which duty he was the more reconciled that it afforded him a good opportunity at once for improving his Spanish and pointing out to the bandit the error of his ways.

To do the man justice, he seemed to be fully sensible of the young doctor's kindness, and thanked him, with tears in his eyes, not only for his previous intention to save him from the tremendous fall over the cliff, but for his subsequent efforts to alleviate the evil consequences thereof.

It mattered nothing to the great warmhearted, loosejointed Englishman that when he mentioned these hopeful signs in his patient to Pedro, that worthy shook his head and smiled sarcastically, or that Quashy received the same information with a closing of the eyes and an expansion of the jaws which revealed the red recesses of his throat to their darkest deeps! Lawrence, being a man of strong opinions, was not to be shaken out of them either by sarcasm or goodhumoured contempt.

Turning to the Indian girl for sympathy, he related the matter to her at a time when the other inhabitants of the hut had gone out and left them alone.

"You see,Manuela," he said, with the frown of meditation on his brow, and his eyes fixed on the ceiling, "I have no belief in the very common idea that there is a soft spot in the heart of every man, however bad; but I do believe that the heart of the very worst of men may be made soft by the Spirit of God, and that He employs us, who call ourselves Christians, as His agents in bringing about the result. It is quite possible that I may have been thrown in the way of this robber for the very purpose of touching his heart through kindnessGod's own motivepowerand that the Spirit will soften his heart to receive the touch."

He paused, and, withdrawing his gaze from the ceiling, observed that the girl's eyes were fixed on his face with an expression of perplexity and earnestness.

It then suddenly occurred to him that, having spoken in English, she could not have understood him.

"But you do look as if you had some idea of what I have been saying, Manuela. Have you?"

"Si, senhor, some," was the reply, as she dropped her eyes with an embarrassed look and blushed so as to make her pretty brown face look alarmingly red.

Endeavouring to convey the same ideas through the medium of Spanish, Lawrence made such a bungle of it that Manuela, instead of expressing sympathy, began to struggle so obviously with her feelings that the poor Englishman gave up the attempt, and goodnatureedly joined his companion in a little burst of laughter. They were in the midst of this when the door opened and Quashy entered.

“You ’pears to be jolly,” observed the genial negro, with every wrinkle of his black visage ready to join in sympathetically, “was de jok a desprit good un?”

“Not very desperate, Quashy,” said Lawrence, “it was only my bad Spanish which made Manuela laugh. If you had been here to interpret we might have got on better with our philosophical discourse.”

“O massa!” returned the blacksolemn remonstrance, both in manner and tone, putting to sudden flight the beaming look of sympathy “don’t speak of me ’terpretin’ Spinich. Nebber could take kindly to dat stuff. Ob course I kin talk wid de peons an’ de gauchos, whose conv’sation am mostly ’bout grub, an’ hosses, an’ cattle, an’ dollars, an’ murder, but when I tries to go in for flosuffy, an’ sitch like, I breaks down altogidder.”

At this point the Indian girl’s tendency to laugh increased, but whether because of fresh views of the absurdity of what had passed, or because of some faint perception of the negro’s meaning, Lawrence had no power to decide.

“I should have thought, Quashy,” he said, with a return of his wonted gravity, “that a man of a thoughtful and contemplative turn of mind like you would have acquired the power of expressing almost any idea in Spanish by this time.”

“T’ank you for de compl’ment, massa,” replied Quashy, “but I not so clebber as you t’ink. Der am some tings in flosuffy dat beats me. When I tries to putt ’em afore oder peepil in Spinich, I somehow gits de brainpan into sitch a conglomeration ob fumbustication dat I not able to see quite clar what I mean myselfdough, ob course, I knows dat I’m right.”

“Indeed!”

“Yis; but de great consolation I has is dat de peepil I’m talkin’ to don’t onderstand me a mossel better nor myself; an’, ob course, as noting in de wurl could show dem dey was wrong, it don’t much matter.”

“That is good philosophy, at all events. Isn’t it, Manuela?” asked Lawrence in Spanish.

“Si, senhor,” replied the girl, with sparkling eyes and a dazzling display of little teeth which seemed to indicate that she fully appreciated what was said.

“Strange,” thought Lawrence “so grave and pensive, yet at times so sprightly; so intelligent, yet, of course, so ignorant; so very brown, and yet so pretty. What a pity she is not white!”

He only said, however, with a sigh, "Is the gale abating, Quashy?"

To which the negro replied, with a responsive sigh, "Yis, massa, it am."

After two days' delay our travellers were enabled to proceed. While their host was busy saddling the mules Lawrence took Pedro aside.

"I am anxious about that bandit," he said. "It is not his power of recovering I am afraid of, but our host's willingness to take care of him."

"Have you not spoken to him about it, senhor, and paid him in advance, like the good Samaritan?"

"Truly I have, but that does not secure fidelity in our host, and the man's life may depend on his treatment during the next few days. I almost wish that we might delay our journey a little."

"That cannot be," returned Pedro, with decision. "Besides, it is unnecessary, for I have spoken to our host, and told him to take good care of the fellow."

Lawrence could scarcely forbear smiling at the quiet assurance with which Pedro spoke.

"Surely," he said, "you cannot count on his being influenced by your commands after you are gone?"

"Yes, senhor, I can count on that, for he knows me, and I occasionally pass this way."

Pedro turned away as he spoke and went towards the mules, the fastenings of whose loads he carefully inspected. Lawrence went to look after his own animal with his mind much relieved, for the manner of Pedro was such as to inspire irresistible, almost blind, confidence.

During the first mile or two, as they rode along, our hero puzzled himself in a vain attempt to analyse the cause of this confidence. Was it the result of that imperturbable selfpossession and invariable readiness of resource which marked the guide; or was it the stern truthfulness of his dark eyes, coupled with the retiring modesty and gravity of his demeanour? Perhaps it was the union of these characteristics. He could not tell.

While thus engaged in profound thought he was roused by Manuela riding alongside of him, and pointing upwards with animated looks while she exclaimed

"Seelooksenhor!"

Much surprised, for this was the first time during the journey that the girl had ventured to attract his attention, the youth looked in the direction indicated, and certainly the view that met his eyes was calculated to banish not only the surprise, but all other feelings save those of admiration of Nature and reverence for Nature's God.

They had just rounded one of those rocky bluffs which so frequently interrupted their view during their upward journey, and had come upon a scene which they could not find words adequately to describe. As interjectional phrases alone could indicate something of their emotions to each other, so fragmentary sentences alone will convey a faint semblance of the truth to the intelligence of the reader.

Mountains, glens, and mighty cliffs; hideous precipices and yawning gulfs; snowclad summits high above them, and rockriven gorges far below. Distance upon distance ranging backward and upward to infinity, where all was mingled with cloudland; sunlit here, darkest shadowed there wildness, weirdness, grandeur, and magnificence everywhere!

In the immediate foreground the serpentine path wound upward among rugged rocks, and the riders, picking their steps, as it were, midway up the face of a stupendous precipice, looked upward on the left at an apparently summitless wall, and downward on the right into an almost bottomless valley, through which a river roared as if mad with joy at having escaped its glacierprison; though its roaring was softened wellnigh to silence by distance, while in appearance it seemed little larger than a silver thread.

"I could almost believe that to be a giant's castle," remarked Lawrence, pointing to the opposite side of the ravine, where a huge perpendicular mountain of porphyry was so broken into turrets, towers, and battlements, that it was difficult, except for its size, to believe it other than the work of man. There were even holes and formations about it that had the appearance of antique windows, gates, and drawbridges!

"Yes, it is a strange place," said the guide, checking his mule; "moreover, we must spend the night under its shadow, for it is impossible to reach a better place of shelter tonight; and, by good fortune, yonder is something fresh for supper."

Pedro pointed to a spot about seven or eight hundred yards distant, where a group of guanacos stood gazing at the intruders with profound attention.

"How will you get near enough for a shot?" asked Lawrence; "they will be gone before you can get across the ravine, and there is little or no cover."

“You shall see,” said Pedro, cocking his rifle.

“But but no weapon short of a cannon will carry so far at least with accuracy,” exclaimed Lawrence in surprise, for at the time of which we write breechloaders and the longrange weapons of precision had not been introduced in those regions. Indeed, the armies of South America, and of Europe also, still slew each other with the familiar Brown Bess and the clumsy flintlock at that time.

Pedro paid no attention to the remark, but, dismounting, slowly raised the rifle to his shoulder. The guide was one of those men who seem to live in advance of their age. He had thought out, and carried out in a roughandready manner, ideas which have since been scientifically reduced to practice. Being well aware that any projectile is drawn downward in its flight by the law of gravitation, and that if you want to hit a distant point you must aim considerably above it, he had, by careful experiment, found out how high above an object at a given distance one must aim in order to hit, and, by constant practice in judging distance, as well as in taking aim above his mark, he had attained to such skill as a longrange marksman that his friends almost believed it impossible for game to get beyond the range of his deadly weapon, and foes never felt easy till they were entirely out of his sight. The comparative slowness, too, of the flintlock in discharging a rifle, had necessitated in him a degree of steadiness, not only while taking aim, but even after pulling the trigger, which rendered him what we might term statuesque in his action as he levelled his piece.

For a few seconds the rock beside him was not more steady. Then the cliffs burst into a fusillade of echoes, and the guanacos leaped wildly up the mountainside, leaving one of their number on the rocks behind them.

It was some time before the young Englishman could get over his astonishment at this feat, for Pedro had pointed his weapon so high that he did not appear to be aiming at the animal at all, and he maintained an animated discussion with the mountaineer until they reached a part of the pass which proved to be somewhat dangerous.

And here they met with a party of muleteers crossing the mountains in the opposite direction. They were still far above them when first observed descending the same steep and narrow road.

“We will wait here till they pass,” said the guide, pulling up at a point where the width of the track was considerable. “I see by the escort that they carry something of value probably bars of silver from one of the mines. They have reached the worst part of the pass. I shouldn’t wonder to see one of the mules

go over they often do.”

“And always get killed, I suppose,” said Lawrence.

“Not always. Now and then they have wonderful escapes, but many hundreds have been lost here. See!”

As he spoke one of the baggage mules of the party touched the cliff with its load. This caused the animal to stagger; his hind legs actually went over the precipice, and the loose stones began to roll away from under his hoofs. With his forefeet, however, still on the narrow track, he held on bravely, even sticking his nose on the ground, so that he had the appearance of holding on by his teeth! Two of the peons rushed to render assistance, but before they reached him he had slipped, and rolled down the awful slope which ended in a sheer perpendicular precipice. Here he bounded off into space, and next moment fell, baggage and all, with a tremendous splash into the river.

It seemed impossible that the poor animal could have escaped with life, but in another moment his head reappeared above water, and he made a brave struggle to gain the bank. The current, however, was too strong for him. Down he went below the foaming water, his scraggy tail making a farewell flourish as he disappeared. But again his head appeared, and once again he struggled for the bank. This time with success, for he had been swept into a shallow in which he was able to maintain his foothold and slowly drag himself out of the river. When in safety, he stood with drooping head and tail, as if in a state of the most thorough dejection at having made such an exhibition of himself.

“Clebber beast!” shouted Quashy, who had stood with his ten fingers expanded, his great mouth open, and his whole emotional soul glaring out of his monstrous eyes.

“Well done!” echoed Lawrence, who was scarcely less pleased than his servant.

The party now drew near, and very striking was their appearance the variously coloured mules, following the bellmare which went in advance as a leader, winding slowly down the crooked path, and the peons in their picturesque costumes shouting, laughing, or singing wild snatches of song as they were moved by fury, fun, or fancy.

The men, who numbered a dozen or so, and were well armed, were apparently relieved to find that our travellers were not bandits, in regard to whom their questions showed that they felt some anxiety. They had witnessed Pedro's shot from the heights above, and looked upon him with no little surprise and much respect as they commented on his power with the rifle.

A few questions were asked, a few compliments paid, and then the two parties, passing each other, proceeded on their respective ways.

Crossing the mountain torrent at a rather dangerous ford, towards evening Pedro led his companions to a spot not far from the ramparts of what Lawrence styled the giant's castle.

It was not an inviting spot at first. There was little pasture for the wearied mules on the almost naked rocks, and the stunted trees and gnarled roots told eloquently of the severity of winter in those high regions. There was, however, a good spring of water and an overarching rock, which promised some degree of refreshment and shelter, and when firewood was collected, a ruddy blaze sent up, the kettle put on to boil, and several fine cuts of the guanaco set up to roast, the feelings of sadness which had at first influenced Lawrence were put to flight, and he felt more satisfaction in his lodging than he could have experienced if it had been a palatial hotel with its confined air and feather beds and cloying luxuries.

There was a species of natural recess in the cliff which Pedro screened off as a chamber for Manuela, while she assisted Quashy to prepare the supper.

"There's nothing like fresh mountain air," exclaimed Lawrence, with a glow of enthusiasm, after the first attack on the guanaco steaks had subsided.

"Specially when the said air happens to be quiet and warm, and the night fine and the stars bright and the company pleasant," added the guide.

Quashy had a habit, when his risible faculties were only gently tickled, of shutting his eyes, throwing back his head, opening his great mouth wide, and indulging in a silent laugh. Having done so on the present occasion, he shut his mouth with a snap and opened his eyes.

"Ho yis," he said in a low tone, "bery nice when it all plisent like now, but it am anoder t'ing when de fresh mountain air goes howlerin' an' bowlerin' about like a wild beast, an' when it snowses an frozes fit to cut off your noses an' shribel up de bery marrow in your bones! Oh! you got no notion what"

"Hold your tongue, Quashy," interrupted Lawrence, "why, your description of such things makes one shiver. Let us hope we may have no experience of them and enjoy our comforts while we may."

"Dat's true flosuffy, massa," returned the negro, helping himself to more guanaco, and offering some on the end of his fork to Manuela, who accepted the same with her usual ready smile, which, however, on this occasion,

expanded into an uncontrollable little laugh.

Lawrence was perplexed, and so was Quashy, for the quiet little Indian was not given to giggling at trifles, much less to laughing at nothing. Lawrence observed, however, that the girl did not reach out her hand with her usual graceful action, but on the contrary gave her arm an awkward twist which obliged the negro to stretch needlessly far over towards her in handing the meat.

The result was that a pannikin of coffee which Quashy had placed on his plate the plate being in his lap began to tilt over. Before any one could warn him it overturned, causing the poor man to spring up with a yell as the hot liquid drenched his legs. Of course every one laughed. People always do at such mild mishaps. As the coffee was not too hot, and there was more in the kettle, Quashy joined in the laugh while he wiped his garments, and afterwards replenished his pannikin.

But a new light began to force itself upon Lawrence. "Can it be," he thought, "that she did that on purpose? that she saw the pannikin was tilting, and no, that's impossible!"

He looked earnestly at the girl. She had recovered her gravity by that time, and was quietly eating her supper with downcast eyes. "Impossible," he repeated in thought, "so unlike her, and so very unlike the Indian character." Nevertheless his perplexity remained, and when he went to sleep that night, after gazing long and earnestly up at the bright stars and at the white summits of the Andes which rose in awful grandeur above him, he dreamed that while Quashy was sitting sound asleep with his head on his knees in front of the fire, Manuela availed herself of the opportunity to pour an ocean of hot coffee down his back!

Starting up wide awake at this, he found that Quashy lay beside him, sleeping quietly on his back, that Pedro was similarly engaged, that the Indian girl had disappeared into her dormitory, that the giant's castle looked more splendidly real than ever in the rising moonlight, and that no sound was to be heard save the brawling of the escaped river, as it fled from its glacier-prison to its home in the mighty sea.

Chapter Six

A Storm in the Mountains Refuge found Converse round the Fire

The summit of the pass was at last gained, and not a moment too soon, for the storm which they had experienced a few days before was but the prelude to a gale such as is rarely experienced save in the winter months of the year, when

most of the mountain passes are closed.

It began by mutterings of distant thunder, which caused the guide to look round the horizon and up at the sky somewhat anxiously.

“Do you think we shall reach our next shelter before it breaks?” asked Lawrence.

“I hope so,” said Pedro, pausing on a ridge from which an almost illimitable view was had of mountain range and valley in all directions.

“Far over in that direction,” he continued, pointing with his hand, “lies the land of the Incas. You have heard of the Incas, senhor?”

“Yes, I have heard of them, but cannot say that I am intimately acquainted with their history.”

“It is a strange history a very sad one,” returned Pedro. “I will tell you something about it at another time; at present it behoves us to push on.”

There was no question as to that point, for just as he spoke a sudden and powerful gust of wind swept Quashy’s straw hat off and sent it spinning gaily along the path. Vaulting from his mule with a wild shout, the negro gave chase on foot, with an amount of anxiety that seemed not justified by the occasion. But as the poet truly puts it, “things are not what they seem,” and Quashy’s headpiece, which presented much the appearance of a battered old straw hat, was in truth an article of very considerable value.

It was one of those hats made by the people of South America, with a delicate fibre so finely plaited that in texture it resembles fine canvas, though in appearance it is like straw. It is exceedingly tough, takes a very long time to manufacture, and costs many dollars so many, indeed, that a hat of the kind is thought worthy of being preserved and left as an heirloom from father to son as long as it lasts.

No wonder then that the negro made frantic efforts to regain his property all the more frantic that he was well aware if it should pass over one of the neighbouring precipices it would be lost to him for ever. At last a friendly gust sent it into a snowdrift, through which Quashy plunged and captured it.

Snow in considerable quantities lay here and there around them in the form of old patches or drifts, and this began to be swept up by the fierce wind in spite of its solidity. Soon new snow began to fall, and, mingling with the old drifts, rendered the air so thick that it was sometimes difficult to see more than a few yards in advance. Lawrence, being unused to such scenes, began to fear they

should get lost in these awful solitudes, and felt specially anxious for Manuela, who, despite the vigour of a frame trained, as it no doubt had been, in all the hardihood incidental to Indian camp life, seemed to shrink from the fierce blast and to droop before the bitter cold.

“Here, put on my poncho,” said the youth, riding suddenly up to the girl’s side and unceremoniously flinging his ample garment over the slight poncho she already wore. She drew it round her at once, and silently accepted the offering with a smile and an inclination of her small head which, even in these uncomfortable circumstances, were full of grace.

“Why was she born a savage?” thought the youth, with almost petulant exasperation. “If she had only been white and civilised, I would have wooed and won at least,” he added, modestly, “I would have tried to win and wed her in spite of all the opposing world. As it is, the gulf is impassable!”

“You have anticipated me, senhor,” said the guide, who had reined in until the rest of the party overtook him. “I had halted with the intention of offering my poncho to Manuela. Poor girl, she is a daughter of the warm Pampas, and unused to the cold of the mountains.”

He turned to her, and said something in the Indian tongue which seemed to comfort her greatly, for she replied with a look and tone of satisfaction.

“I have just told her,” he said to Lawrence, as they resumed the journey, “that in half an hour we shall reach a hut of shelter. It is at the foot of a steep descent close ahead; and as the wind is fortunately on our backs, we shall be partially protected by the hill.”

“Surely the place cannot be a farm,” said Lawrence; “it must be too high up for that.”

“No, as you say, it is too high for human habitation. The hut is one of those places of refuge which have been built at every two or three leagues to afford protection to travellers when assailed by such snowstorms as that which is about to break on us now.”

He stopped, for the party came at the moment to a slope so steep that it seemed impossible for man or mule to descend. Being partly sheltered from the fitful gusts of wind, it was pretty clear of snow, and they could see that a zigzag track led to the bottom. What made the descent all the more difficult was a loose layer of small stones, on which they slipped continually. Before they had quite completed the descent the storm burst forth. Suddenly dense clouds of snow were seen rushing down from the neighbouring peaks before a hurricane of wind, compared with which previous gusts were trifles.

“Come on fast!” shouted the guide, looking back and waving his hand.

The first deafening roar of the blast drowned the shout; but before the snowdrift blinded him, Lawrence had observed the wave of the hand and the anxious look. Dashing the cruel Spanish spurs for the first time into the side of his no doubt astonished steed, he sprang alongside of Manuela’s mule, seized the bridle, and dragged it forward by main force. Of course the creature objected, but the steep road and slipping gravel favoured them, so that they reached the bottom in safety.

Here they found the first of the refugehuts, and in a few moments were all safe within its sheltering walls.

Having been erected for a special purpose, the hut was well adapted to resist the wildest storm. It was built of brick and mortar, the foundation being very solid, and about twelve feet high, with a brick staircase outside leading to the doorway. Thus the habitable part of the edifice was raised well above the snow. The room was about twelve feet square, the floor of brick, and the roof arched. It was a dungeonlike place, dimly lighted by three loopholes about six inches square, and without furniture of any kind. A mark in the wall indicated the place where a small table had originally been fixed; but it had been torn down long before, as Pedro explained, by imprisoned and starving travellers to serve for firewood. The remains of some pieces of charred wood lay on the floor where the fire was usually kindled, and, to Pedro’s great satisfaction, they found a small pile of firewood which had been left there by the last travellers.

“A dismal enough place,” remarked Lawrence, looking round after shaking and stamping the snow out of his garments.

“You have reason to thank God, senhor, that we have reached it.”

“True, Senhor Pedro, and I am not thankless; yet do I feel free to repeat that it is a most dismal place.”

“Mos’ horribole,” said Quashy, looking up at the vaulted roof.

“Ay, and it could tell many a dismal story if it had a tongue,” said the guide, as he busied himself arranging the saddles and baggage, and making other preparations to spend the night as comfortably as circumstances should permit. “Luckily there’s a door this time.”

“Is it sometimes without a door, then?” asked Lawrence, as he assisted in the arrangements, while Quashy set about kindling a fire.

“Ay, the poor fellows who are sometimes stormstaid and starved here have a tendency to use all they can find about the place for firewood. Some one has replaced the door, however, since I was here last. You’ll find two big nails in the wall, Manuela,” he added in Indian; “if you tie one of the baggage cords to them, I’ll give you a rug directly, which will make a good screen to cut off your sleeping berth from ours.”

In a short time Quashy had a bright little fire burning, with the kettle on it stuffed full of fresh snow; the saddles and their furniture made comfortable seats and lounges around it; and soon a savoury smell of cooked meat rendered the cold air fragrant, while the cheery blaze dispelled the gloom and made a wonderful change in the spirits of all. Perhaps we should except the guide, whose calm, grave, stern yet kindly aspect rarely underwent much change, either in the way of elation or depression, whatever the surrounding circumstances might be. His prevailing character reminded one of a rock, whether in the midst of a calm or raging sea or of a strong tower, whether surrounded by warring elements or by profound calm. Need we say that Pedro’s imperturbability was by no means the result of apathy?

“Blow away till you bust your buzzum,” said Quashy, apostrophising the gale as he sat down with a beaming display of teeth and spread out his hands before the blaze, after having advanced supper to a point which admitted of a pause; “I don’ care a butt’n how hard you blow now.”

“Ah! Quashy,” said the guide, shaking his head slowly, as, seated on his saddle, he rolled up a neat cigarette, “don’t be too confident. You little know what sights these four walls have witnessed. True, this is not quite the season when one runs much risk of being starved to death, but the thing is not impossible.”

“Surely,” said Lawrence, stretching himself on his saddlecloths and glancing at Manuela, who was by that time seated on the opposite side of the fire arranging some hard biscuits on a plate, “surely people have not been starved to death here, have they?”

“Indeed they have only too often, senhor. I myself came once to this hut to rescue a party, but was nearly too late, for most of them were dead.”

He paused to light his cigarette. The negro, after making the door more secure, sat down again and gazed at the guide with the glaring aspect of a man who fears, but delights in, the horrible. Manuela, letting her clasped hands fall in her lap, also gazed at Pedro with the intense earnestness that was habitual to her. She seemed to listen. Perhaps, being unusually intelligent, she picked up

some information from the guide's expressive face. She could hardly have learned much from his speech, as her knowledge of English seemed to be little more than "yes," "no," and "t'ank you!"

"It was during a change of government, senhor," said Pedro, "that I chanced to be crossing the mountains. There is usually a considerable row in South America when a change of government takes place. Sometimes they cause a change of government to take place in order to get up a considerable row, for they're a lively people almost as fond of fighting as the Irish, though scarcely so sound in judgment. I had some business on hand on the western side of the Cordillera, but turned back to give a helping hand to my friends, for of course I try never to shirk duty, though I'm not fond of fighting. Well, when I got to the farm nearest to this hut where we now sit, they told me that a tremendous gale had been blowing in the mountains, that ten travellers had been snowed up, and that they feared they must all have perished, since travelling in such weather was impossible."

"Have you made no effort to rescue them?' I asked of the farmer.

"No,' says he, 'I couldn't get any o' my fellows to move, because they've been terrified about a ghost that's been seen up there.'

"What was the ghost like?' I asked; so he told me that it was a fearful creature a mulish-looking sort of man, who was in the habit of terrifying the arrieros and peons who passed that way, but he said they were going to get a priest to put a cross up there, and so lay the ghost.

"Meanwhile,' I said, 'the ten travellers are to be left to starve?'

"It's my belief they're starved already,' answered the farmer."

At this point Pedro paused to relight his cigarette, and Quashy breathed a little more freely. He was a firm believer in ghosts, and feared them more than he would have feared an army of Redskins or jaguars. Indeed it is a question whether Quashy could ever have been brought to realise the sensation of fear if it had not been for the existence, in his imagination, of ghosts! The mere mention of the word in present circumstances had converted him into a sort of human sensitive plant. He gave a little start and glance over his shoulder at every gust of unusual power that rattled the door, and had become visibly paler perhaps we should say less black.

Manuela was evidently troubled by no such fears, perhaps because she did not understand the meaning of the word ghost, yet she gazed at the speaker in apparently rapt attention.

“You may believe,” continued the guide, “that I was disgusted at their cowardice; so, to shame them, as well as to do what I could for the travellers, I loaded a couple of my mules with meat, and said I would set off alone. This had the desired effect, for three men volunteered to go with me. When we reached the hut we found that six of the ten poor fellows were dead. The bodies of two who had died just before our arrival were lying in the corner over there behind Quashy. They were more like skeletons covered with skin than corpses. The four who still lived were in the corner here beside me, huddled together for warmth, and so worn out by hunger and despair that they did not seem to care at first that we had come to save them. We warmed and fed them, however, brought them gradually round, and at last took them back to the farm. They all recovered. During the time they were snowed up the poor fellows had eaten their mules and dogs. I have no doubt that if the ground were clear of snow you would find the bones of these animals scattered about still.”

This was not a very pleasant anecdote, Lawrence thought, on which to retire to rest, so he changed the subject by asking Pedro if there were many of the Incas still remaining.

Before he could reply Manuela rose, and, bidding them goodnight in Spanish, retired to her screened-off corner.

“A good many of the Incas are still left,” replied the guide to his companion’s question; “and if you were to visit their capital city you would be surprised to see the remains of temples and other evidences of a very advanced civilisation in a people who existed long before the conquest of Peru.”

“Massa Pedro,” said Quashy, who would have been glad to have the recollection of ghosts totally banished from his mind, “I’s oftin hear ob de Incas, but I knows not’ing about dem. Who is dey? whar dey come fro?”

“It would take a long time, Quashy, to answer these two questions fully; nevertheless, I think I could give you a roughish outline of a notion in about five minutes, if you’ll promise not to stare so hard, and keep your mouth shut.”

The negro shut his eyes, expanded his mouth to its utmost in a silent laugh, and nodded his head acquiescently.

“Well, then, you must know,” said Pedro, “that in days of old about the time that William the Conqueror invaded England a certain Manco Capac founded the dynasty of the Incas. According to an old legend this Manco was the son of a white man who was shipwrecked on the coast of Peru. He married the daughter of an Indian chief, and taught the people agriculture, architecture,

and other arts. He must have been a man of great power, from the influence he exerted over the natives, who styled him the 'blooming stranger.' His hair was of a golden colour, and this gave rise to the story that he was a child of the sun, who had been sent to rule over the Indians and found an empire. Another tradition says that Manco Capac was accompanied by a wife named Mama Oello Huaco, who taught the Indian women the mysteries of spinning and weaving, while her husband taught the arts of civilisation to the men.

“Whatever truth there may be in these legends, certain it is that Manco Capac did become the first of a race of Incas or kings or chiefs, and, it is said, laid the foundations of the city of Cuzco, the remains of which at the present day show the power, splendour, and wealth to which Manco Capac and his successors attained. The government of the Incas was despotic, but of a benignant and patriarchal type, which gained the affections of those over whom they ruled, and enabled them to extend their sway far and wide over the land, so that, at the time of the invasion by the Spaniards under Pizarro, the Peruvians were found to have reached a high degree of civilisation, as was seen by their public works, roads, bridges, terraces, gardens, fortifications, and magnificent buildings, and so forth. It is said by those who have studied the matter, that this civilisation existed long before the coming of the Incas. On this point I can say nothing, but no doubt or uncertainty rests on the later history of this race. Cuzco, on Lake Titicaca, became the capital city of a great and flourishing monarchy, and possessed many splendid buildings in spacious squares and streets. It also became the Holy City and great temple of the Sun, to which pilgrims came from all parts of the country. It was defended by a fortress and walls built of stone, some blocks of which were above thirty feet long by eighteen broad and six thick. Many towns sprang up in the land. Under good government the people flourished and became rich. They had plenty of gold and silver, which they used extensively in the adornment of their temples and palaces. But evil followed in the train of wealth. By degrees their simplicity departed from them. Their prosperity led to the desire for conquest. Then two sons of one of the Incas disputed with each other for supremacy, and fought. One was conquered and taken prisoner by the other, who is reported to have been guilty of excessive cruelties to his relations, and caused his brother to be put to death. Finally, in 1532, the Spaniards came and accomplished the conquest of Peru, from which date not much of peace or prosperity has fallen to the lot of this unhappy land.

“Yes,” said the guide in conclusion, “the Incas were, and some of their descendants still are, a very fine race. Many of the men are what I call nature’s gentlemen, having thoughts, and manners too, that would grace any society. Some of their women, also, are worthy to”

“Pedro!” interrupted Lawrence eagerly, laying his hand on the guide’s arm, for a sudden idea had flashed into his mind. He was rather subject to the flashing of sudden ideas! “Pedro! she is a daughter of a chief of the Incas she not? a princess of the Incas! Have I not guessed rightly?”

He said this in a half whisper, and pointed as he spoke to the screen behind which Manuela lay.

Pedro smiled slightly and tipped the ash from the end of his cigarette, but made no answer.

“Nay, I will not pry into other people’s affairs,” said Lawrence, in his usual tone, “but you once told me she is the daughter of a chief, and assuredly no lady in this land could equal her in grace or dignity of carriage and manner, to say nothing of modesty, which is the invariable evidence.”

“Not of high rank?” interrupted the guide, with a quick and slightly sarcastic glance.

“No, but of nobility of mind and heart,” replied the youth, with much enthusiasm. In which feeling he was earnestly backed up by Quashy, who, with eyes that absolutely glowed, said

“You’s right, massasure an’ sartin! Modesty am de grandest t’ing I knows. Once I knowed a young nigger gal what libbed near your fadder’s millSooz’n dey calls ’eran’ she’s so modest, sooh! I not kin ’splain rightlybut I say to ’er one day, when I’d got my courage screwed up, ‘Sooz’n,’ ses I. ‘Well,’ ses she. ‘II lub you,’ ses I, ‘more nor myself, ’cause I t’ink so well ob you. Eberybody t’inks well ob you, Sooz’n. Whatwhat’ I was gitten out o’ bref by dis time from ’citement, and not knowin’ what more to say, so I ses ‘whatwhat you t’ink ob you’self Sooz’n?’

“‘Nuffin’,’ ses she! Now, wasn’t dat modest?”

“It certainly was, Quashy. Couldn’t have been more so,” said Pedro. “And after that we couldn’t, I think, do better than turn in.”

The fire had by that time burned low, and the gale was still raging around them, driving the snowdrift wildly against the hut, and sometimes giving the door so violent a shake as to startle poor Quashy out of sweet memories of Sooz’n into awful thoughts of the ghost that had not yet been laid.

Each man appropriated a vacant corner of the hut in which to spread his simple couch, the negro taking care to secure that furthest from the door.

Lawrence Armstrong thought much over his supposed discovery before falling

asleep that night, and the more he thought the more he felt convinced that the Indian girl was indeed a princess, and owed her good looks, sweet disposition, graceful form and noble carriage to her descent from a race which had at one period been highly civilised when all around them were savage. It was a curious subject of contemplation. The colour of his waking thoughts naturally projected itself into the young man's dreams. He was engaged in an interesting anthropological study. He found himself in the ancient capital of the Incas. He beheld a princess of great beauty surrounded by courtiers, but she was brown! He thought what an overwhelming pity it was that she was not white! Then he experienced a feeling of intense disappointment that he himself had not been born brown. By degrees his thoughts became more confused and less decided in colourwhiteybrown, in fact, and presented a series of complicated regrets and perplexing impossibilities, in a vain effort to disentangle which he dropped asleep.

Chapter Seven

Things begin to look BrighterThe Guide's Story

It was bright day when our travellers awoke, but only a dim light penetrated into their dungeonlike dormitory, for, besides being very small, the three windows, or loopholes, had been so filled up with snow as to shut out much of the light that would naturally have entered.

That the gale still raged outside was evident enough to the sense of hearing, and sometimes the gusts were so sudden and strong that the little building trembled, stout though it was. Indeed, Lawrence at first thought they must be experiencing the shocks of an earthquake, a mistake not unnatural in one who, besides having had but little experience in regard to such catastrophes, knew well that he was at the time almost in the centre of a region celebrated for earthquakes.

It was with mingled feelings of interest, anxiety, and solemnity that he surveyed the scene outside through a hole in the door. It seemed as if an Arctic winter had suddenly descended on them. Snow completely covered hill and gorge as far as the vision could range but they could not see far, for at every fresh burst of the furious wind the restless wreaths were gathered up and whirled madly to the sky, or swept wildly down the valleys, or dashed with fury against black precipices and beetling cliffs, to which they would sometimes cling for a few seconds, then, falling away, would be caught up again by the tormenting gale, and driven along in some new direction with intensified violence.

“No prospect of quitting the hut today,” observed Lawrence, turning away

from the bewildering scene.

“None,” said Pedro, stretching himself, and rising sleepily on one elbow, as men are wont to do when unwilling to get up.

“Nebber mind, massa; lots o’ grub!” cried Quashy, awaking at that moment, leaping up like an acrobat, and instantly setting about the kindling of the fire.

Having, as Quashy truly said, lots of grub, possessing a superabundance of animal vigour, and being gifted with untried as well as unknown depths of intellectual power, also with inexhaustible stores of youthful hope, our travellers had no difficulty in passing that day in considerable enjoyment, despite adverse circumstances; but when they awoke on the second morning and found the gale still howling, and the snow still madly whirling, all except Pedro began to express in word and countenance feelings of despondency. Manuela did not speak much, it is true, but she naturally looked somewhat anxious. Lawrence began to recall the fate of previous travellers in that very hut, and his countenance became unusually grave, whereupon Quashy whose nature it was to conform to the lead of those whom he loved, and, in conforming, outrageously to overdo his part looked in his young master’s face and assumed such an aspect of woeful depression that his visage became distinctly oval, though naturally round.

Observing this, Lawrence could not restrain a short laugh, whereupon, true as the compass to the Pole, the facile Quashy went right round; his chin came up, his cheeks went out, his eyes opened with hopeful sheen, and his thick lips expanded into a placid grin.

“There is no cause for alarm,” observed Pedro, who had risen to assist in preparing breakfast. “No doubt it is the worst storm I ever met with, or even heard of, at this season of the year, but it cannot last much longer; and whatever happens, it can’t run into winter just now.”

As if to justify the guide’s words, the hurricane began to diminish in violence, and the pauses between blasts were more frequent and prolonged. When breakfast was over, appearances became much more hopeful, and before noon the storm had ceased to rage.

Taking advantage of the change, without delay they loaded the packmules, saddled, mounted, and set forth.

To many travellers it would have been death to have ventured out on such a trackless waste, but Pedro knew the road and the landmarks so thoroughly that he advanced with his wonted confidence. At first the snow was very deep, and, despite their utmost care, they once or twice strayed from the road, and were

not far from destruction. As they descended, however, the intense cold abated; and when they came out upon occasional tablelands, they found that the snowfall there had been much less than in the higher regions, also that it had drifted off the road so much that travelling became more easy.

That night they came to a second hutofrefuge, and next day had descended into a distinctly warmer region on the eastern slopes of the great range, over which they travelled from day to day with ever increasing comfort. Sometimes they put up at outlying mountain farms, and were always hospitably received; sometimes at small hamlets or villages, where they could exchange or purchase mules, and, not unfrequently, they encamped on the wild mountain slopes, with the green trees or an overhanging cliff, or the open sky to curtain them, and the voices of the puma and the jaguar for their lullaby.

Strange to say, in crossing the higher parts of the Andes not one of the party suffered from the rarity of the air. Many travellers experience sickness, giddiness, and extreme exhaustion from this cause in those regions. Some have even died of the effects experienced at the greater heights, yet neither Manuela, nor Lawrence, nor Quashy was affected in the slightest degree. We can assign no reason for their exemptioncan only state the fact. As for the guide, he was in this matteras, indeed, he seemed to be in everythinginvulnerable.

One afternoon, as they rode along a mountain track enjoying the sunshine, which at that hour was not too warm, Lawrence pushed up alongside of the guide.

“It seems to me,” he said, “that we are wandering wonderfully far out of our way just now. We have been going due north for several days; at least so my pocket compass tells me, and if my geography is not greatly at fault, our backs instead of our faces are turned at present towards Buenos Ayres. I do not wish to pry into your secrets, Senhor Pedro, but if it is not presuming too much I should like to know when we shall begin to move in the direction of our journey’s end.”

“There is neither presumption nor impropriety in your wish,” returned the guide. “I told you at starting that we should pursue a devious route, for reasons which are immaterial to you, but there is no reason why I should not explain that at present I am diverging for only a few miles from our track to visit a localitya cottagewhich is sacred to me. After that we will turn eastward until we reach the headwaters of streams that will conduct us towards our journey’s end.”

With this explanation he was obliged to rest content, for Pedro spoke like one

who did not care to be questioned. Indeed there was an unusually absent air about him, seeing which Lawrence drew rein and fell back until he found himself alongside of Quashy.

Always readynay, eagerfor sympathetic discourse, the negro received his young master with a bland, expansive, we might almost say effusive, smile.

“Well, massa, how’s you gittin’ along now?”

“Pretty well, Quashy. How do you?”

“Oh! fustrate, massaonly consid’rable obercome wid surprise.”

“What surprises you?”

“De way we’s agwine, to be sure. Look dar.” He pointed towards the towering mountain peaks and wild precipices that closed in the narrow glen or gorge up which they were slowly proceeding.

“In all our trabels we’s nebber come to a place like dat. It looks like de fag end ob creation. You couldn’t git ober de mountaintops ’cept you had wings, an’ you couldn’t climb ober de pres’pisses ’cep you was a monkey or a skirlthough it am bery lubly, no doubt.”

The negro’s comments were strictly correct, though somewhat uncouthly expressed. The valley was apparently surrounded in all directions by inaccessible precipices, and the white peaks of the Andes towered into the skies at its head. Within rugged setting lay a fine stretch of undulating land, diversified by crag and hillock, lake and rivulet, with clustering shrubs and trees clinging to the cliffs, and clothing the mountain slopes in rich, and, in many places, soft luxuriance. It was one of those scenes of grandeur and loveliness in profound solitude which tend to raise in the thoughtful mind the perplexing but not irreverent question, “Why did the good and bountiful Creator form such places of surpassing beauty to remain for thousands of years almost, if not quite, unknown to man?”

For, as far as could be seen, no human habitation graced the mountainsides, no sign of cultivation appeared in the valley, though myriads of the lower animals sported on and in the waters, among the trees and on the ground.

Perchance man overestimates his own importanceat least underrates that of the animal kingdom below himand is too apt to deem everything in nature wasted that cannot be directly or indirectly connected with himself! Is all that glows in beauty in the wilderness doomed to “blush unseen”? Is all the sweetness

expended on the desert air “wasted?”

As the guide rode slowly forward, he glanced from side to side with thoughtful yet mournful looks, as if his mind were engaged in meditating on some such insoluble problems. As he neared the head of the valley, however, he seemed to awake from a trance, suddenly put spurs to his mule, and went off at a canter. The rest of the party followed at some distance behind, but at so slow a pace, compared with that of the guide, that the latter was soon lost to sight among the trees.

Somewhat surprised at his unusual state of mind Lawrence pushed on and soon reached an open glade which showed some signs of having been cultivated. At the end of it stood a pretty little cottage, in front of which Pedro was standing motionless, with clasped hands and drooping head.

Lawrence hesitated to disturb him, but as Quashy had no such hesitations, and rode smartly forward, his companions followed.

Pedro turned with a grave look as they came up, and said

“My home. I bid you welcome.”

“Your home!” echoed Lawrence, in surprise.

“Ay, a happy home it once was but desolate enough now. Come, we will sleep here tonight. Unload the mules, Quashy, and kindle a fire. Go into the room on the right, Manuela. You will find a couch and other civilised comforts there. Senhor Armstrong, will you come with me?”

Without even awaiting a reply, the guide walked smartly into the bushes in rear of his lonely dwelling, followed by our hero. In a few minutes they reached a mound or hillock, which had been cleared of trees and underwood, and from the summit of which one could see over the treetops and the cottage roof away down the valley to the horizon of the tablelands beyond. It was a lovely spot, and, as Lawrence saw it that quiet sunny afternoon, was suggestive only of peace and happiness.

There was a rustic bower on the mound, in which a roughly constructed seat was fixed firmly to the ground. In front of the bower was a grave with a headstone, on which was carved the single word “Mariquita.”

Lawrence looked at his companion, but refrained from speech on observing that he seemed to be struggling with strong emotion. In a few seconds Pedro, having mastered his feelings, turned and said, in a tone that betrayed nothing save profound sadness

“The body of my wife lies there. Her pure spirit, thank God, is with its Maker.”

Lawrence’s power of sympathy was so great that he hesitated to reply, fearing to hurt the feelings of one for whom, by that time, he had come to entertain sincere regard. He was about to speak, when Pedro raised his head gently, as if to check him.

“Sit beside me, senhor,” he said, seating himself on the rustic seat already referred to. “You have from our first meeting given me your confidence so frankly and freely that the least I can do is to give you mine in return as far, at least, as that is possible. You are the first human being I have invited to sit there since Mariquita left me. Shall I tell you something of my history, Senhor Armstrong?”

Of course Lawrence assented, with a look of deep interest.

“Well, then,” said Pedro, “it may perhaps surprise you to learn that I am an Irishman.”

To this Lawrence replied, with a slight smile, that he was not very greatly surprised, seeing that the perplexing character of that race was such as to justify him in expecting almost anything of them.

“I’m not sure whether to take that remark as complimentary or otherwise,” returned Pedro; “however, the fighting tendency with which my countrymen are credited has departed from me. I won’t quarrel with you on the point. At the age of sixteen I was sent to America to seek my fortune. My mother I never knew. She died when I was a child. My father died the year after I left home. How I came to drift here it would be difficult, as well as tedious, to explain. Many of the men with whom I have chummed in years gone by would have said that it was chance which led me to South America. I never could agree with them on this point. The word ‘chance’ fitly describes the conditions sometimes existing between man and man, and is used in Scripture in the parable of the Good Samaritan, but there can be no such thing as chance with the Almighty. I must have been led or guided here.

“At all events, hither I came, and wandered about for some years, with that aimless indifference to the future which is but too characteristic of youth content to eat and sleep and toil, so that I might enjoy life, and get plenty of excitement! I went to Peru first, and of course I joined in the fights that were so frequently stirred up between that country and its neighbour, Chili. A very little of that, however, sufficed. The brutal ferocity of the soldiery with whom I was mixed up, and their fearful disregard of age, sex, infirmity, or helpless childhood during war disgusted me so much that I finally cut the

army, and took to hunting and doing a little trade between the countries lying on the east and west sides of the Andes. It was while thus engaged that I became acquainted with your good father, Senhor Armstrong, who has more than once helped me over financial difficulties and set me on my legs.

“At last came the grand crisis of my life. One evening when travelling over the pampas of La Plata, I, with a dozen Gauchos, arrived at a posthouse where we meant to put up for the night. On coming in sight of it we saw that something was wrong, for there were a number of Indians fighting about the door. On seeing us they made off; but one, who was in the house struggling with the postmaster, did not observe the flight of his comrades, or could not get clear of his enemy. We all went madly after the savages. As I was about to pass the door of the house, I heard a woman shriek. The Gauchos paid no attention, but passed on. I glanced inside, and saw the Indian in the act of cutting a man’s throat, while a girl strove wildly to prevent him. You may be sure I was inside in a moment, and I brained the savage with the butt of a pistol. But it was too late. The knife had already done its work, and the poor man only lived long enough to bless his daughter, who, covered with her father’s blood, sank fainting on the floor. It was my first meeting with Mariquita!

“Around her,” continued Pedro, in deepening tones, “lay her mother and two brothers all slaughtered. I will not describe the harrowing scene. I tried to comfort the poor girl, and we took her on with us to the next post, where the postmaster’s wife attended to her.

“On seeing her next morning I felt that my life’s happiness or sorrow lay in her hands. She was innocence, simplicity, beauty, combined. With artless gratitude she grasped and kissed my hand, regarding me, she said, as her deliverer, and one who would have saved her father if he had been in time.

“Often before had my comrades twitted me with my indifference to the female sex. To say truth, I had myself become impressed with the feeling that I was born to be one of the old bachelors of the world and I cannot say that the doom gave me much concern. But now well, if you understand me, senhor, I need not explain, and if you don’t understand, explanation is useless! Mariquita was left alone in the wide world. I would not, for all the gold and silver of Peru, have spoken of love to her at that time; but I made arrangements with the postmaster and his wife to take care of the poor girl till I should return. In time I did return. She accepted me. We were married, and I brought her up here, for I wanted no society but hers. I was content to live in absolute solitude with her. She was much of the same mind, dear girl, but God had touched her heart, and in her sweet talk without intending it, or dreaming of it she showed me how selfish I was in thinking only of our own happiness, and caring nothing for the woes or the joys of our fellowmen.

“My conscience reproached me, and I began to think how I could manage to live a less selfish life, but before I could make up my mind what course to follow an event occurred which caused delay. A little girl was sent to us. I called her Mariquita, of course, and thought no more of leaving our happy home in the mountains. For five years we remained here, and the little Mariquita grew to be an angel of light and beauty like her mother in all respects, except that she was very fair, with curly golden hair.

“About that time war broke out doubly accursed war! One night a band of deserters came and attacked my cottage. It had always been well prepared for anything of the sort with bolts, and bars and shutters, and even flanking loopholes, as well as plenty of firearms and ammunition. But the party was too numerous. The villains forced the door in spite of me, and fired a volley before making a rush. From that moment I remembered nothing more until I recovered and found my head supported on the knee of an old man. I knew him at once to be a poor lonely old hunter who ranged about in the mountains here, and had paid us occasional visits. When he saw I was able to understand him, he told me that he had come suddenly on the villains and shot two of them, and that the others, perhaps thinking him the advance guard of a larger party, had taken fright and made off. ‘But,’ he said, in a low, hesitating tone, ‘Mariquita is dead!’

“I sprang up as if I had been shot, but instantly fell again, for my leg had been broken. I had seen enough, however. My beloved one lay dead on the floor, not far from me, with a bullet through her brain. And now,” added Pedro, pointing in deep despondency to the little mound at their feet “she lies there!”

“Not so, my friend,” said Lawrence, in a low but earnest tone, as he grasped the man’s hand, “it is only her dust that lies there, and even that is precious in the sight of her Lord.”

“Thank you, senhor, for reminding me,” returned Pedro; “but when the memory of that awful night is strong upon me, my faith almost fails.”

“No wonder,” rejoined Lawrence, “but what of the child?”

“Ah! that is what I asked the old hunter,” returned Pedro. “He started up, and searched high and low, but could not find her. Then he went out, calling her by name loudly, and searched the bushes. Then he returned with a wild look and said the robbers must have taken her away he would pursue! I knew it would be useless, for the scoundrels were mounted and the old hunter was on foot; but I let him go, and was not surprised when, two hours later, he returned quite exhausted. ‘It is in vain,’ he said. ‘Yet if I could have come up with them, I

would have died for her.’

“I was long ill after that. A good while, they say, I was out of my mind, but old Ignacio nursed me through. He also buried Mariquita where she now lies.”

The guide paused.

“And the child?” asked Lawrence, anxiously.

“I have sought her far and wide, year after year, over mountain and plain. She may be deadshe may be alivebut I have never seen her nor heard of her from that day to this.”

“Your story is a very, very sad one,” said Lawrence, his face expressing the genuine sympathy which he felt. “May I askare your wanderings mere haphazard? Have you no idea who they were that stole your little one, or where they went to?”

“None whatever. The broken leg, you know, prevented my commencing the search at once, and when I was able to go about I found that all trace of the band was gone. No wonder, for the country was at war at the time, and many marauding parties had traversed the land since then.”

“I shrink,” said Lawrence, with some hesitation, “from even the appearance of unkindness, but I cannot help expressing the fear that this vague, undirected wandering will be useless.”

“It would be so,” returned Pedro, “if God did not direct all human affairs. If it be His will, I shall yet find my child on earth. If not, I shall find her abovewith her mother. In our intercourse, senhor, I have observed in you a respect for God’s Word. Is it not written, ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass?’”

“Most true,” replied Lawrence, feeling the reproof, “yet God works by means. If we do not take the right means, we cannot expect to attain our end, however much we may trust.”

“Right, senhor, and I have taken the only means open to me. Since I cannot give direction to my search, I search everywhere. Fortunately my business permits of this, and also of doing a little service to my fellowmen as I go on my way. Periodically I return here to rest,”he pointed to the little mound,“and when my powers begin to wane, either through disease or age, it is my purpose, if God permit, to return and die beside Mariquita’s grave.”

Chapter Eight

A New Acquaintance and a Change of Scene

On their way back to the cottage they heard dogs barking, and a man talking to them. Next moment these came in sight.

“The old hunter!” exclaimed Pedro, hastening forward with evident pleasure to meet his friend.

It was equally evident that the old man was as much pleased to meet Pedro, for they grasped each other’s hands with hearty goodwill.

“What news?” asked the old man, eagerly, as he held up a hand to check the dogs, which were leaping round him.

Pedro shook his head sadly, and the expression of the old man became grave. The question referred to Pedro’s search for his lost child. It had long been the first inquiry when these two met after a separation. The old man seemed never to lose hope, but he had become so accustomed to the reply that his despondency was now of short duration. He had known and loved the child in days gone by had helped the mother in cultivating her gardenplot, and had gone out hunting with the father many a time. He was a fine looking man, above seventy years of age, with iron grey hair, turning in some places to pure white. The hunter’s spare though still upright figure showed that he must have been a powerful man in his youth, and the deeply marked wrinkles about his mouth and eyes told eloquently that he was a kind one. Round his shoulders were twined the cords of the heavy “bolas,” or balls, with which he sometimes felled, at other times entangled, his prey. These balls were covered with clotted blood. He carried a short gun in his hand, and a large knife was stuck in his belt.

The dogs that leaped around him were a strange pack some being very large, some very small, and all of different breeds. A few of them had been lamed, and all were more or less marked by the wounds received from jaguars and pumas.

“You expected me, Ignacio?” said Pedro, after the first greetings were over.

“Nonot quite so soon, but I chanced to be wandering about in the mountains, and came down to take a look at the old place, to see that all was right. You know I am fond of our old haunts, and never stay long away from them, but I did not expect to find you here.”

The hunter spoke in Spanish, and Lawrence found to his satisfaction that, although he by no means understood all that was said, he had already improved so much in that tongue through his frequent efforts to converse with

Manuela, that he could follow the drift at least of the hunter's remarks.

"I have come back sooner than I intended," returned Pedro, "for war is a wonderful hastener, as well as dictator, of events; but I have to thank war for having given me a new friend. Let me introduce Senhor Lawrence Armstrong to you; Senhor, my old comrade Ignacio, who, as I have told you, nursed me back to life many years ago."

The old man held out a hard bony hand, and gave Lawrence a hearty squeeze of friendship that had something vicelike in its vigour. He then turned to Pedro, and began to make anxious inquiries about the war. As the two men spoke in undertones, Lawrence drew back a few paces, and followed them towards the cottage. He observed that Ignacio shook his head very often, and also that he laughed once or twice silently, but with apparent heartiness. As he overheard the name of Manuela just before one of these laughs, he experienced some disagreeable feelings, which it was not easy to understand or get rid of, so he took to fondling the hunter's dogs by way of diversion to his mind.

The animals testified indirectly to the character of their master by receiving his advances with effusive demonstrations of joy.

At the cottage they found Ignacio's horse very fine one with a lasso hanging from the saddle. Beside it stood a loose horse with the carcass of a guanaco flung over it, and a Gaucho lad who was the hunter's only attendant. Quashy was engaged in animated conversation with this youth, and Manuela stood beside him listening.

"I cannot understand," said Lawrence to Pedro, as they approached, "how men ever acquire dexterity in the use of these bolas."

"Practice makes perfect, you know," said the guide, "and it doesn't matter much what sort of weapons you use, if you only learn to use them well. Of course it's not easy to a beginner. When Ignacio's dogs turn out a jaguar or a puma, they follow him hotly till he stops to defend himself. If the dogs fly upon the brute, the hunter usually jumps off his horse, whirls the three balls about till they get up tremendous momentum, and then brings them down on the jaguar's skull with a whack that generally drops him. But if the dogs are afraid to go at him, Ignacio throws the lasso over him, gallops away, and drags him over the ground, while the dogs rush in and tear him. What between bumping and hounds, the jaguar's career is soon finished."

"I'm glad I've met you," said Pedro to Ignacio, as they turned aside into the bushes together, "for I've got news to tell, and I'll want your help. There's mischief brewing in the air, and I am commissioned"

Thus much did Lawrence and Quashy overhear before the voice died away in the distance. It was a tantalising point to stop at! Lawrence looked at Quashy and at Manuela, who stood near.

“Does Manuela know anything of the mischief that is brewing?” asked Lawrence in amazing Spanish.

“Not’ing,” replied the girl in English, “but she trust Pedro.”

“So do I, with all my heart,” returned Lawrence; “my question was prompted by curiosity, not by doubt.”

“I’s not so sure,” said Quashy, with a frown, and a tone of selfassertion which was rare in him. “Nicelookin’ men like him’s not allers as nice as dey looks.”

“Fie, Quashy! I thought you were of a more trustful spirit.”

“So I is, massaawrful trus’ful! Kin trus’ you wid a’most anyt’ing. Trus’ dis yer Injin gal wid untol’ gol’. Trus’ Sooz’n wid de whole world, an’ eberyt’ing else besides, but I’s not quite so sure about dis yer Pedro. Di’n’t he say dar’s noos to tell, an’ he wants help, an’ der’s mischif abrewin’? An’ ain’t I sure ’nuff dat he’s got suffin to do wid de mischif, or he wouldn’t be so secret?”

“Well, Quashy, you’d better not tell Pedro your doubts of him,” said Lawrence; “for if he knocks you down, I won’t feel bound to stand up for youseeing that I have perfect confidence in him.”

Further conversation on this point was cut abruptly short by a tremendous hissing inside the cottage, followed by clouds of steam. It was caused by one of Quashy’s pots having boiled over. The negro sprang to the rescue. Soon afterwards, the host and the old hunter returning, they all entered the place together, and sat down to supper.

It was but a simple cottage, suitable to the simple tastes of a mountaineer in such a region, with only two rooms and a kitchen, besides a small attic divided into two chambers, which could be reached only by a ladder through a trapdoor. Little furniture graced it, yet what little there was bore evidence of having felt the touch of a tasteful female hand. Numerous nails and pegs were stuck in the walls for the purpose of supporting firearms, etcetera, but the weapons had been secreted in a place of safety, for, during the owner’s frequent and long absences from home, the cottage was locked up and left pretty much to take care of itself, being deemed safe enough, owing to its remote and lonely position.

The key was always left in charge of old Ignacio who was understood to have

his eye on the place, and privileged to inhabit it whenever he chose.

All this, and a great deal more, Pedro told to Lawrence as they sat round the table at supper in what used to be the parlour of the establishment. "But I'm going to lock it up, and hide the key this time," he continued; "because I have to send Ignacio on urgent matters into the eastern parts of Bolivia, to"

"To git help, an' tell de noos about de mischif what's abrewin'," said the negro abruptly, with a pointed stare at the guide, and an arrested potato on the end of his fork.

"You've learnt your lesson well, Quashy," returned Pedro, with a goodhumoured smile, as he helped himself to a fresh supply of meat; "these are the very words to obtain help and spread the news about the mischief that's brewing. Pass the salt, like a good fellow, and help Manuela to some more maize. You're forgetting your manners, boy."

The negro heaved a sigh of discomfiture, and did as he was bid.

Next morning at daybreak they left the cottage, and descended the intricate valley which led to it. Pedro seemed to have quite subdued his feelings at least all outward manifestation of them for he was sterner and more silent than usual as they resumed their journey. For some distance their route and that of Ignacio lay in the same direction, but towards the afternoon of the same day on which they left Mariquita Cottage the old hunter bade the party adieu, and, accompanied by his Gaucho lad and his dogs, entered a northeasterly defile of the hills, and disappeared.

"We shall soon get to more cultivated lands, Manuela," said Pedro, in the Indian tongue, glancing back at Lawrence, who rode a few paces behind. "I doubt not you will be glad to see female faces again."

To the surprise of the guide, Manuela said that she did not care!

"Indeed!" he rejoined; "I thought you would be getting tired by this time of such rough travelling, and frequent hard lodging and fare, as well as of the conversation of us men."

"No, I am not tired. I delight in this wild, free life."

"Surely not because it is new to you," said Pedro, with a glance of amusement; "when you dwell with your kindred, your life must be wild enough unless indeed the great chief, your father, deems it beneath the dignity of his daughter to join in the sports of her fellows."

Manuela made no reply, but for a moment or two gave vent to that clear, short,

merry laugh in which she sometimes indulged. Lawrence Armstrong, irresistibly charmed by the sound, rode up alongside.

“Manuela is merry,” he said to the guide; “will you not translate, that I may enjoy the joke?”

“It is not easy to translate,” replied Pedro. “In fact, I doubt if you will see the joke at all. It requires a little knowledge of Manuela’s past career to make understanding possible. She only said that she delighted in this wild, free life.”

“Not much jest in that, truly,” returned Lawrence, “being, I fear, dull of comprehension; nevertheless, I see an unintentional compliment to us in the remark, for it implies that we have not made Manuela’s journey tedious to her.”

“It may be so,” said Pedro, simply. “I was just telling her that we shall soon get to more inhabited parts of the land, where she will have a little female society now and then, and I was about to add that afterwards we shall descend into the lower grounds of Bolivia, where she will have wild life enough to her heart’s contentperchance too much of it.”

Soon afterwards the guide’s prophecy came true, for they passed from the rugged mountains into a wide and richly clothed tableland, where there were a few scattered farms, at which they were made heartily welcome whenever they chose to stop for the night or for a meal.

Passing thence into another range of comparatively low hills, they reached the town of San Ambrosio, where they found comfortable quarters in a new and commodious innat least it seemed commodious, after the recent experiences of our travellers.

Here Pedro said he would have to spend a day or two, as he had business to transact in the town, and that he would search out an old acquaintance with whose family he would place Manuela till their departure.

While Pedro was gone in quest of his friend, the Indian girl, probably feeling shy in the midst of such unwonted crowds, retired to the room provided for her, and Lawrence and Quashy found themselves left in the unusual condition of having nothing to do. Of course, in these circumstances, they resolved to go out and see the town.

While Lawrence was questioning the landlord, an American, as to how he should proceed, a very decided tremor passed through his frame. Quashy seemed to experience a similar sensation, for he said abruptly

“Eart’quak’!”

“That’s nothing new here, sir,” said the landlord to Lawrence, as he lighted a cigarette; “we’re used to it, though some of the natives ain’t quite easy in their minds, for the shocks have been both frequent as well as violent lately.”

“Have they done any damage?” asked Lawrence.

“Nothin’ to speak of. Only shook down a house or two that was built to sell, I suppose, not to stand. You’ll find the marketplace second turn to your left.”

Somewhat impressed by the landlord’s freeandeasy manner, as well as by his apparent contempt for earthquakes, the master and man went out together. With characteristic modesty the negro attempted to walk behind, but Lawrence would by no means permit this. He insisted on his walking beside him.

“Bery good, massa,” said Quashy, at last giving in, “if you will walk ’longside ob a nigger, ’s’not my fault. Don’t blame me.”

With this protest, solemnly uttered, the faithful negro accompanied our hero in his inspection of the town.

Chapter Nine **Tells of a Tremendous Catastrophe**

San Ambrosio was, at the period of which we write, a small and thriving placethough what may be styled a mushroom town, which owed its prosperity to recently discovered silvermines. All things considered, it was a town of unusual magnificence on a small scale.

Being built with straight streets, cutting each other at right angles, Lawrence and his man had no difficulty in finding the principal square, or marketplace, which was crowded with people selling and buying vegetables, milk, eggs, fruit, etcetera, brought in from the surrounding districts. The people presented all the picturesque characteristics of the land in profusionpeons, with huge Spanish spurs, mounted on gaily caparisoned mules; Gauchos, on active horses of the Pampas; marketwomen, in varied costumes more or less becoming, and darkeyed senhoras on balconies and verandas sporting the graceful mantilla and the indispensable fan.

The carts and donkeys, and dogs and fowls, and boys had the curious effect of reducing the babel of voices and discordant sounds to something like a grand harmony.

Besides these, there was a sprinkling of men of freeandeasy swagger, in long

boots, with more or less of villainy in their facesadventurers these, attracted by the hope of “something turning up” to their advantage, though afflicted, most of them, with an intense objection to take the trouble of turning up anything for themselves. Dangerous fellows, too, who would not scruple to appropriate the turnings up of other people when safe opportunity offered.

A clear fountain played in the centre of the squareits cool, refreshing splash sounding very sweet in the ears of Lawrence, whose recent sojourn in the cold regions of the higher Andes had rendered him sensitive to the oppressive heat of the town. Besides this, a clear rivulet ran along one side of the square, near to which was the governor’s house. A line of trees threw a grateful shade over the footpath here. On the opposite side stood the barracks, where a few illclad unsoldierly men lounged about with muskets in their hands. All the houses and church walls and spires, not only in the square, but in the town, bore evidence, in the form of cracked walls and twisted windows and doorways, of the prevalence of earthquakes; and there was a general appearance of dilapidation and dirt around, which was anything but agreeable to men who had just come from the free, grand, sweetscented scenery of the mountains.

“They seem to have had some severe shakings here,” said Lawrence, pointing with his stick to a crack in the side of one of the houses which extended from the roof to the ground.

We may remark here that, on entering the town, our travellers had laid aside their arms as being useless encumbrances, though Lawrence still carried his oaken cudgel, not as a weapon but a walkingstick.

“Yes, massa,” replied Quashy, “got lots ob eart’ quaks in dem diggins. Ebery day, more or less, dey hab a few. Jest afore you come down dis mornin’ I hab some conv’sashin’ wid de landlord, an’ he say he don’ like de look ob t’ings.”

“Indeed, Quashy. Why not?”

“’Cause it’s gittin’ too hot, he say, for de time ob yearsulfry, he called it.”

“Sultry, you mean?”

“Well, I’s not ’zactly sure what I means, but he said sulfry. An’ dey’ve bin shook more dan ornar ob late. An’ dere’s a scienskrific gen’leman in our inn what’s bin aprofisyin’ as there’ll be a grand bustup afore long.”

“I hope he’ll turn out to be a false prophet,” said Lawrence. “What is his name?”

“Dun’ know, massa. Look dar!” exclaimed Quashy, with a grin, pointing to a

fat priest with a broadbrimmed white hat on a sleek mule, “he do look comfortable.”

“More comfortable than the poor beast behind him,” returned Lawrence, with a laugh, as he observed three little children cantering along on one horse.

There was no lack of entertainment and variety in that town, for people generally seemed to a great extent to have cast off the trammels of social etiquette, both in habits and costume. Many of the horses that passed were made to carry double. Here would ride past a man with a woman behind him; there a couple of girls, or two elderly females. Elsewhere appeared a priest of tremendous length and thinness, with feet much too near the ground, and further on a boy, so small as to resemble a monkey, with behind him a woman so old as to suggest the idea he had taken his greatgrandmother out for a ride, or vice versa!

For some hours master and man wandered about enjoying themselves thoroughly in spite of the heat, commenting freely on all they saw and heard, until hunger reminded them of the flight of time. Returning to their hotel, Lawrence, to his surprise, found a note awaiting him. It was from Pedro, saying that he had found his friend in a village about three miles from San Ambrosio, describing the route to the place, and asking him to send Quashy out immediately, as he wanted his assistance that night for a few hours.

“I wonder what he wants with you?” said Lawrence.

“To help him wid de mischief!” replied the negro, in a halfsulky tone.

“Well, you’ll have to go, but you’d better eat something first.”

“No, massa; wid you’s leave I’ll go off at once. A hunk ob bread in de pocket an’ lots o’ fruit by de waydas ’nuff for dis nigger.”

“Off with you, then, and tell Pedro that you left Manuela and me quite comfortable.”

“O Massa Lawrie!’scuse me usin’ de ole nameit am so nice to hear you speak jolly like dat. ’Minds me ob de ole times!”

“Get along with you,” said Lawrence, with a laugh, as the warmhearted black left the hotel.

Thus these two parted. Little did they imagine what singular experiences they should encounter before meeting again.

Soon after Quashy’s departure Lawrence went to the door of Manuela’s room,

and, tapping gently, said

“Dinner is ready, Manuela.”

“I kom queek,” replied the girl, with a hearty laugh.

It had by that time become an established little touch of pleasantry between these two that Lawrence should teach the Indian girl English at least to the extent of familiar phrases while she should do the same for him with Spanish. There was one thing that the youth liked much in this, and it also surprised him a little, namely, that it seemed to draw the girl out of her Indian reticence and gravity, for she laughed with childlike delight at the amazing blunders she made in attempting English. Indeed, she laughed far more at herself than at him, although his attempts at Spanish were even more ridiculous.

A few minutes later Manuela entered the room, and, with a modest yet gracious smile, took a seat opposite her pupilteacher.

“Dignity,” thought the latter “native dignity and grace! Being the daughter of a great chief of the Incasa princess, I suppose she cannot help it. An ordinary Indian female, now, would have come into the room clumsily, looked sheepish, and sat down on the edge of her chair perhaps on the floor!”

But as he gazed at her short, black, curly hair, her splendid black eyebrows, her pretty little highbred mouth, beautiful white teeth, and horribly brown skin, he sighed, and only said

“Ay, ay! Well, well! What a pity!”

“What ees dat?” inquired the girl, with a look of grave simplicity.

“Did I speak?” returned Lawrence, a little confused.

“Yes you say, ‘Ay, ay. Well, well. What a pittie!’”

“Oh! ah! yes I was only thinking, Manuela. What will you have?”

“Som muttin,” replied the girl, with a pursing of the little mouth that indicated a tendency to laugh.

“It is not mutton. It’s beef, I think.”

“Well, beeeef very naicean’ som’ gravvie too, pleeeese.”

She went off at this point into a rippling laugh, which, being infectious in its nature, also set her companion off, but the entrance of the landlord checked them both. He sat down at a small table near to them, and, being joined by a

friend, called for a bottle of wine.

“Hotter than ever,” he remarked to Lawrence.

“Yes, very sultry indeed.”

“Shouldn’t wonder if we was to have a sharpish touch or two tonight.”

To which his friend, who was also an American if not an Englishman, and appeared to be sceptical in his nature, replied, “Gammon!”

This led to a conversation between the two which is not worthy of record, as it was chiefly speculative in regard to earthquakes in general, and tailed off into guesses as to social convulsions present, past or pending. One remark they made, however, which attracted the attention of our hero, and made him wish to hear more. It had reference to some desperate character whose name he failed to catch, but who was said to be in the neighbourhood again, “trying to raise men to join his band of robbers,” the landlord supposed, to which the landlord’s friend replied with emphasis that he had come to the right place, for, as far as his experience went, San Ambrosio was swarming with men that seemed fit for anything from “pitchandtoss to manslaughter.”

Not wishing, apparently, to hear anything more about such disagreeable characters and subjects, Manuela rose at the conclusion of the meal and retired to her apartment, while Lawrence continued to sip his coffee in a balcony which overlooked the vineyard behind the hotel.

It was evening, and, although unusually warm, the weather was very enjoyable, for a profound calm reigned around, and the hum of the multitudes in the distant square seemed hushed as the church bells rang the hour for evening prayers. As the twilight deepened, and the stars came faintly into sight in the darkblue vault above, the thoughts of Lawrence became strangely saddened, and, gradually quitting the scene of peaceful beauty on which he gazed, sped over the Cordillera of the Andes to that home of his boyhood which now lay in ashes. The frame of mind thus induced naturally led him to dwell on past scenes in which his mother had taken a part, and he was still meditating, more than half asleep, on the joys which were never to return, when he was roused into sudden and thorough consciousness by something he could not tell what a sort of sensation which caused him to leap from his chair.

At the same moment there arose from the streets a cry, or wail. Suddenly a rumbling noise was heard. Lawrence bounded towards the nearest door. Full well he knew what it meant. Before he could escape there was a tremendous upheaval of the solid earth, and in one instant, without further warning, the entire town fell with one mighty crash! Lawrence just saw the walls and roof

collapsing then all was dark, and consciousness forsook him.

Chapter Ten

Recounts some Terrible and some Vigorous Deeds

How long our hero lay in this state he could not tell, but on recovering his faculties he became conscious of the fact that he was in total darkness, lying on his back, with a tremendous weight pressing on his chest. For a few moments he remained still, quite unable to recollect what had occurred, or where he was.

Suddenly memory resumed its office the earthquake! the fall of the hotel! and, with a gush of horror, he realised the terrible truth that he was buried alive.

The reader must have been in the position we describe to understand fully the feelings of the poor youth at that moment. His first impulse was to make a violent effort to shake off the intolerable weight that almost suffocated him; but his efforts, strong though he was, proved in vain. It felt as if a mountain held him down. Then the thought of Manuela rushed in upon him, and he uttered a loud cry. The sound of his voice in the confined space was terrible. It seemed to rush in upon his brain with awful din. In his agony, a feeling of frantic despair came over him, and, with the strength of a giant, he struggled to be free, but still without success. Exhausted as much by his horror as by his efforts, he lay for some minutes quite still, his brain keenly alive and thirsting, as it were, for some sound that might convey hope. No sound was to be heard, save the intense beating of his own pulsations which seemed to throb into his ears, and down into his very extremities.

As he lay listening, it came strangely into his thoughts, with something like a feeling of regret, that it would be very hard for him to die! So much strong life as he possessed must, he thought, take long to destroy! But again, the memory of poor Manuela, perhaps in a similar condition, and certainly not far from him, banished the thoughts of self, and he listened once more intently.

All was still as the grave. The effort at self-control, however, calmed him a little, and, in a gentler mood, he tried to move his arms. The left arm was fixed as in a vice, and gave him so much pain, that he feared it had been broken. The right arm was also fast, but he felt that he could move his hand.

It was a feeble straw for the buried man to clutch at, yet it was strong enough to buoy up Hope in a stout heart. His courage returned, and with calm, resolute patience he set to work, uttering the fervent prayer, "Help me, O God!"

Where there was space for a hand to move freely, he knew there must be space

to remove rubbish, though it might be ever so little. In a few minutes some handful of earth were thrust aside. Then, by drawing his arm upwards and pushing it downwards, he loosened the rubbish around it, and by slow degrees set it partially free. If he had been entombed in solid earth, this, he was well aware, could not have been possible; but, rightly judging that in a mass of mingled bricks, mortar, and beams there must be spaces more or less open, he worked away, with patience and in hope. The result was that he was able at last to touch with his right hand the object which lay so crushingly on his chest. It was an enormous beam. The utter impossibility of even moving it filled him for a moment with despair, but again he cried to God for help. The cry was answered, truly and effectively, yet without a miracle, for the very act of trust in the Almighty calmed his mind and set it free to consider intelligently.

He could not hope to lift the beam. It was far too heavy. Being so heavy, he knew it would have killed him outright if it had not been checked in its descent, and partially supported somehow. Might he not, then, scrape away the rubbish on which he lay until he should, as it were, sink away from the beam? He tried at once, and managed to get his right hand slightly under him. He could reach his haunch. It was a terribly slow process, but by degrees the busy hand reached the waist, drawing the rubbish out by small portions at a time. It seemed to him as if hours were spent in these painful efforts. Still no appreciable difference was made in his position, and he had by that time pushed his hand as far up under his back towards his neck as it was possible to turn it. Finding that he could scrape away no more in that direction, he now sought to deepen the hollows already made. In doing so he got hold of a brick, which he wrenched out with a desperate effort. The result was instantaneous relief, for he seemed to subside, not much, indeed, but sufficiently to permit of his breathing freely.

With a fervent exclamation of thankfulness he turned slightly round, and drew his left arm out from the rubbish. He felt it anxiously. It was bruised a good deal, but not broken.

Although so greatly relieved that he felt for a few moments almost as if he had been delivered from death, the poor youth was still in a terrible case. The space in which he was confined did not admit of his sitting up, much less standing. What seemed to be a solid mass of the fallen wall was above him, prevented from crushing him by the beam before mentioned, while around him were masses of brick and mortar densely packed.

Again exerting his lungs, the youth shouted with all his might, and then paused to listen; but there was no reply. Then he shouted the name of Manuela, in the hope that she might hear, and answer, if still alive. But no

answering voice replied.

Believing now that nothing could save him but a fixed purpose and a prolonged desperate effort on an intelligent plan, he prayed again for help, and then proceeded to enlarge his tomb by scraping the rubbish back under the beam, from beneath which he had drawn himself, and packing it tightly down. This enlarged the space, enabling him to get upon his knees. To work upward through the fallen wall would, he knew, be an impossibility. He therefore worked horizontally for some time, throwing the rubbish between his legs behind him, as, we presume, the moles are accustomed to do. Then he passed his hand along over his head, and found that the solid wall was no longer above him, only disjointed bricks and beams.

With renewed hope and redoubled effort he now worked his way upwards, although wellnigh suffocated by dust, as well as by smoke arising from fires which had broken out in many places all over the ruined town. Suddenly, while thus engaged, he heard voices faintly. He shouted with all his might, and listened. Yes, he was not mistaken; he heard voices distinctly, and they appeared to be speaking in Spanish. With something like a bounding of the heart he repeated his shout, and renewed his labours.

If he had known the character of the persons who had thus encouraged him, his hopes would not have been so strong.

We have said that the entire town had been levelled by one tremendous convulsion, and that in many places fires had broken out among the ruins. These fires sent up dense volumes of smoke, which naturally attracted people from all quarters of the surrounding country. Among them came bands of desperate and lawless characters, who fastened on the ruins as vultures seize on carrion. They resembled the unclean birds in more respects than one, for they went about as long as there was anything of value to be seized, long after other people had been forced to quit the place owing to the horrible stench of the hundreds of corpses decaying, and in many cases burning, among the ruins. See note .

It was the voices of some of these lawless ruffians that Lawrence had heard. He soon became aware of their character by the terrible oaths which they used, and the fiendish laughter in which they indulged whenever he called for help. Knowing that he had nothing to hope from such miscreants, he ceased to call out, but toiled none the less vigorously to effect his deliverance. At last he managed to scrape through to the upper world; and a feeling of inexpressible relief filled his breast as a bright ray of sunshine shot into his prison.

That it was daylight did not surprise him, for the many hours which he had

spent under ground seemed to him like weeks. But he soon found that he was not yet free. The hole which he had scraped was much too small to admit of the passage of even a little boy. In trying to enlarge it, he found, to his dismay, that on one side of it was an enormous beam, on the other a mass of solid masonry, which could not be moved without aid. Looking out, he saw nothing but confused heaps of smoking ruins, save in one direction, where, in the far distance, for the hotel had stood on a mound, he could see a group of men engaged as if searching for something.

To these he shouted again, but did not attract their attention. Either they did not hear him, or did not care. Turning then to the beam, he tried with all his might to raise it, but failed, though it moved slightly. Encouraged by hope, and afterwards influenced by despair, he tried again and again, until his strength broke down.

At this juncture he heard footsteps, and saw a man passing near.

“Senhor! senhor!” he cried, in the best Spanish he could muster, “aid me to get out, for the love of God!”

A coarse insult was the only reply as the man passed on. A group of other men who passed soon after behaved as badly, for they only laughed at his entreaties.

It is difficult to say whether rage or indignation was more powerful in Lawrence’s heart, but both passions were equally unavailing in the circumstances. He felt this, and soon calmed down; so that when, half an hour later, another man passed that way, he addressed him in tones of respect and earnest entreaty.

The bandit, for such he was, seemed to be utterly unaffected; for although he must certainly have heard the appeal, he, like the others, passed on without taking the slightest notice.

“Senhor! senhor!” cried Lawrence, “I have a gold watch and chain, to which you”

The man stopped, for the bait took at once. Turning, and walking towards the place from which the sound came, he soon found the hole through which our hero looked.

“Hand out the watch, senhor,” he said.

“No, no,” answered Lawrence; “aid me first to lift the beam.”

Whether the man understood the bad Spanish or not we cannot say, but instead

of helping to lift the beam, he drew a pistol from his belt, and said

“Hand out the watch, or I shoot!”

“Shoot away, then,” cried Lawrence, savagely, as he drew quickly back into his hole.

The report of the pistol followed the words, and the ball caused a cloud of dust and rubbish to mingle with the smoke.

A wild laugh of defiance from within told that our Englishman was not hurt.

“Haha! Shoot again,” he cried, fiercely.

“No, senhor, no. You are brave. I will help you,” replied the miscreant.

Lawrence doubted the honesty of the man’s assurance, but of course thanked him, and expressed readiness to avail himself of his assistance. He kept carefully at the extreme end of the hole, however, while his murderous deliverer removed some of the rubbish from the beam, and so made it possible to raise it. Remaining quite still, Lawrence waited till he saw that the beam had been so far moved as to enlarge the space sufficiently for him to get through. Then, with a sudden spring à la Jackinthebox, he leaped out, and stood before the astonished bandit.

Lawrence, whose sense of honour taught him to hold his promise as sacred to a thief as to an honest man, had fully intended to give up his watch and chain to the man if he should remain peaceably disposed; but the bandit was not so disposed. Recovering from his surprise, he drew a second pistol from his belt and levelled it at Lawrence.

Thought is quick; quicker even than triggers. His length of limb happily flashed into the youth’s mind. Up went his foot with a sudden kick, and away went the pistol into the air, where it exploded after the manner of a skyrocket! The bandit did not wait for more. He turned and fled, much to the satisfaction of the victor, who, overcome by prolonged exhaustive toil and excitement, sank down on a heap of rubbish, and lay there in a semiconscious state. It seemed as if both mind and body had resolved to find rest at all hazards, for he lay perfectly motionless for nearly an hour, not exactly asleep, but without being fully conscious of connected thought.

From this state of repose, if it may be so called, he was partially aroused by the voices of men near him, talking in coarse, violent language. Raising his head languidly, he observed a band of about eight or ten villainous-looking fellows busy round a hole, out of which they appeared to be drawing some sort

of booty.

“A prize!” exclaimed one of the men; “be gentle; she’s worth taking alive.”

A loud laugh from the others roused Lawrence again, but a feeling of unwonted exhaustion oppressed him, so that he scarce knew what it was he heard.

Suddenly there arose a female voice, in a cry of pain. Lawrence started up on one elbow, and beheld Manuela struggling in the grasp of one of the band.

If electric fire had taken the place of blood in his veins, he could not have bounded up more quickly. The shock seemed to renew and double his wonted strength. Like the English bulldog, with terrible purpose, but in absolute silence, he rushed over the rubbish towards the man who held the struggling girl. The man seemed to be a leader, being the only one of the band who carried a cavalry sabre. The others were armed, some with short swords, some with carbines and pistols.

Swift though Lawrence was, the chief saw him coming. He let go the girl, and made a wild cut at him with the sabre.

Lawrence received the cut on his left arm. At the same moment he struck the villain such a blow with his clenched fist, that it seemed to crush in his skull, and sent him headlong into the hole out of which they had just dragged the Indian girl. Fortunately he dropped his sabre as he fell. With a shout of defiance our hero caught it up, just in time to arrest the descent of a carbine butt on his head. Next moment the man who aimed the blow was cleft to the chin, and a united rush of the robbers was for the moment arrested.

Manuela, helpless and horrorstruck, had stood motionless on the spot where the chief had released her. Lawrence caught her in his left arm, swung her into an angle of the broken wall, placed himself in front, and faced his foes.

The villains, though taken by surprise, were no cravens. Apparently they had already discharged their firearms, for only one fired at our hero with a pistol, and missed his aim. Flinging the weapon at his adversary with a yell of disappointment, he missed his aim a second time. At the same moment another of the bandone of the tallest and most ferociouslookingsprang upon the youth with terrible fury. He knew well, apparently, how to use his weapon; and Lawrence felt that his experience at school now stood him in good stead. As the weapons of these giants flew around with rapid whirl and clash, the others stood aside to see the end. Doubtless they would have taken unfair advantage of their foe if they could, but Lawrence, turning his back to the wall, where Manuela crouched, prevented that. At last one dastardly wretch, seeing that his

comrade was getting the worst of it, bethought him of his carbine, and began hurriedly to load. Our hero noted the act, and understood its fatal significance. With a bound like that of a tiger he sprang at the man, and cut him down with a backhanded blow, turning, even in the act, just in time to guard a sweeping cut dealt at his head. With a straight point he thrust his sword through teeth, gullet, and skull of his tall adversary, until it stood six inches out behind his head. Then, without a moment's pause, he leaped upon the nearest of the other bandits.

Awestricken, they all gave back, and it seemed as if the youth would yet win the day singlehanded against them all, when a shout was heard, and half a dozen men of the same stamp, if not the same band, came running to the rescue.

Lawrence drew hastily back to his protecting wall.

“Pray, Manuela, pray,” he gasped; “we are in God’s hands.”

At that moment two shots were heard away on their right, and two of the advancing bandits fell. An instant later, and Quashy bounded upon the scene with a high trumpetshriek like a wild elephant. Pedro followed, brandishing the rifle which he had just discharged with such fatal effect. Lawrence joined them with a genuine British cheer, but their adversaries did not await the onset. They turned, fled, and speedily scattered themselves among the ruins.

“T’ank God, massa, we’s in time,” said Quashy, wiping with his sleeve the perspiration that streamed from his face, as they returned quickly to Manuela.

“We must not wait a moment here,” said Pedro, hurriedly. “There may be more of the villains about. But you are wounded, Senhor Armstrong.”

“Not badly,” said Lawrence. “It might have been worse, but the fellow was in such a hurry that the edge of his sabre turned, and I got only a blow with the side of it. If I had only had my good cudgel by the way, it must be in the hole. It was in my hand when Stay, I’ll return in a few seconds.”

He ran back to his late tomb, and quickly returned in triumph with his favourite weapon.

“Come, we must get away from this at once,” said Pedro, turning to Manuela. “No time for explanations. Are you hurt?”

“No; thank God. Let us go,” replied the girl, who was pale and haggard, as she staggered towards them.

“Take my arm,” said Lawrence, presenting his wounded limb.

The girl pointed with trembling hand to the blood.

“It is nothing a mere scratch,” said Lawrence.

In his anxiety he forgot to speak in Spanish. Manuela appeared as if about to sink with fear. He caught her, lifted her in his arms as if she had been a little child, and, following Pedro’s lead, left the place which had been the scene of so many terrible events.

In the outskirts of the town there was a large low building of mud or sundried bricks, which had not been overthrown by the earthquake. To this Pedro conducted his companions. They found room in the place, though it was nearly full of survivors in all conditions of injury, from those who had got mere scratches and bruises, to those who had been so crushed and mangled that life was gradually ebbing away. There seemed to be about fifty people in the room, and every minute more were being brought in.

Here Lawrence set down his burden, who had by that time quite recovered, and turned quickly to the guide.

“Come, Pedro,” he said, “I can be of use here; but we must have my own wound dressed first. You can do it, I doubt not.”

Pedro professed to be not only able but willing. Before he did it, however, he whispered in a low tone, yet with much emphasis, to Manuela

“Don’t forget yourself! Remember!”

As he whispered pretty loud, and in Spanish, Lawrence overheard and understood him, and puzzled himself, not only that day, but for many days and nights after, as to how it was possible that Manuela could forget herself, and what it was she had to remember. But the more and the longer he puzzled over it, the less did he clear up his mind on the subject.

When it became known that Lawrence was a doctor, there was a visible increase of hope in the expression and bearing of the poor wounded people. And the youth soon justified their trustful feelings, for, with Pedro and Quashy as assistantsurgeons, and Manuela as headnurse, he went about setting broken bones, bandaging limbs, sewing up wounds, and otherwise relieving the sufferers around him.

While this was going on the poor people were recounting many marvellous tales of terrible risks run, escapes made, and dangers evaded. During all this time, too, frequent shocks of earthquake were felt, of greater or less violence, and these afterwards continued daily for a month, so that the few buildings

which had partially survived the first awful shock were finally levelled like the rest.

When Lawrence with his assistants had gone the rounds of the extemporised hospital, he was so completely worn out that he could scarcely keep his eyes open. Swallowing a cup of hot coffee hastily, he flung himself on a heap of straw beside one of his patients, and almost instantly fell into a profound lethargic slumber.

There was an unoccupied armchair in the room. Placing this beside the youth's couch, the Indian girl sat down with a fan, purposing, in her gratitude, to protect her preserver from the mosquitoes, which were having an unusual bout of revelry over the sufferers that night.

Quashy, observing this as he lay down in a corner, shook his head sadly, and whispered to himself:

“Ah! you brown gal, you's in lub wid massa. But it's useless. De ole story ob unrekited affection; for you know, pretty though you is, massa kin nebber marry a squaw!”

Thus thinking, Quashy went sweetly to sleep.

So did most of the others in that crowded place. But Manuela stuck to her colours nobly. She kept awake until her pretty black eyes became lustreless, until her pretty brown face became expressionless, until the effort to continue awake became hopeless. Then her little head fell back on the cushion of the chair, the little mouth opened, and the large eyes closed. The little hand which held the fan dropped by her side. The fan itself dropped on the floor, and, like the others, poor Manuela at length found rest and solace in slumber.

Note . A similar disaster, accompanied by dreadful scenes of lawlessness and horror, occurred in , when the city of Mendoza was totally destroyed by an earthquake, and ninetenths of the inhabitants perished.

Chapter Eleven **Outwitted by a Bandit**

Early next morning Pedro went round and quietly roused his friends.

“We must start at once,” he said in a low voice to Lawrence, when the wearied youth was sufficiently awake to understand. “Your wounded arm is better, I hope?”

“It is only stiff and painful; happily, no bones are injured. But why such haste?”

I don't like to leave my poor patients in this fashion."

"Will any of them die if you don't stay to nurse them?" asked the guide, with a grave, almost stern, expression.

"Why, no; not exactly," returned Lawrence; "but many of them will want their wounds dressed, and all of them will be the better for a little more skilled attendance."

"Will they not survive under ordinary attendance?" asked Pedro, with increasing severity of expression.

"Doubtless they will, but"

"Would you like," interrupted the inflexible guide, "to have them all roused up at this early hour to hear a little farewell speech from you, explaining the absolute necessity for your going away, and your extreme regret at leaving them?"

"Not if there is such necessity," returned Lawrence, yawning, and raising himself on one elbow.

"There is such necessity, senhor. I have been down to the village where my friend lives, and have got fresh horses. Manuela and Quashy are already mounted. I let you sleep to the last moment, seeing you were so tired. Don't forget your pistols; you may need them."

Without waiting for a reply, he rose and left the room. The young doctor hesitated no longer. Regret at quitting the poor people around him was overborne by the fear of being left behind, for he had by that time begun to entertain a vague suspicion that the stern and peculiar man by whom he was led would not permit any object whatever to stand in the way of what he believed to be his duty.

In a few seconds he issued from the hut, armed with his pair of doublebarrelled pistols and the faithful cudgel. The cavalry sabre, however, had been lost, not much to his regret.

The grey light of dawn was just sufficient to give a ghostly appearance to what may be truly termed the ghastly ruins around them, and to reveal in undefined solemnity the neighbouring mountains. Smoke still issued from the halfsmothered fires, and here and there a spectral figure might be seen flitting silently to and fro. But all was profoundly still and quiet, even the occasional tremors of the earth had ceased for a time, when they issued from the enclosure of the hut.

Without speaking, Lawrence mounted the horse which stood ready for him, and they all rode silently away, picking their steps with great care through the upheaved and obstructed streets. It was a scene of absolute and utter ruin, which Lawrence felt could never be effaced from his memory, but must remain there burned in deeply, in its minutest details, to the end of time.

When they had passed the suburbs, however, and reached the country beyond, the depressing influences passed away, and, a certain degree of cheerfulness returning with the sun, they began to chat and to explain to each other their various experiences.

“Of course, when I felt the earthquake,” said Pedro to Lawrence, “I knew that, although little damage was done to the village to which I had gone in search of my friends, it must have been very severe on the town with its spires and public buildings; so I saddled up at once, and set off on my return. I met Quashy just as I left the village, and we both spurred back as fast as we could. When we came in sight of it, we saw at once that the place was destroyed, but, until we reached it, had no idea of the completeness of the destruction. We could not even find the road that led to the inn where we had left you and Manuela; and it was not till the following morning that we found the inn itself, and came up, as you know, just in time to help you, though we had sought diligently all night.”

“Das so, massa,” broke in Quashy, who had listened with glittering eyes to Pedro’s narrative, which of course was much more extended and full, “an’ you’s got no notion how we’s banged about our poor shins among dese ruins afore we founded you. S’m my b’lief but for de fires we’d nebber hab founded you at all. And dem scoundrilsoh! dem scoundrils”

Quashy’s feelings at this point failed to find vent in words sufficiently expressive, so he relieved them to some extent by shaking his fist at scoundreldom in general, and grinding his teeth. No words could have expressed his feelings half so well. By way of changing a subject that appeared to be almost too much for him, he turned abruptly to the Indian girl; and said, in Spanish quite as bad as that of Lawrence

“But where were you, senhorina, all the time?”

“Ay, Manuela, let’s hear how it was that you escaped,” said Pedro quickly, in Indian.

“I escaped through the mercy of God,” replied the girl, in a low voice.

“True, Manuela, true,” replied the guide, “you never said a truer word than that; but by what means was His mercy displayed?”

“I can scarcely tell,” returned the girl; “when the earthquake came I was sitting on my bed. Then the wall of the room seemed to fall on me, and my senses were gone. How long I lay so, I cannot tell. When I recovered my mind I felt as if buried alive, but I could breathe, and although unable to rise, I could move. Then I heard cries, and I replied; but my strength was gone, and I think no one heard me. Then I prayed, and then, I think, I slept, but am not sure. At last I heard a spade striking the earth above me. Soon an opening was made, and I was dragged rudely out. The rest you know.”

On this being interpreted to her companions, Quashy gave it as his decided opinion that a miracle had been performed for her special deliverance; but Lawrence thought that, without miraculous interference, God had caused a mass of wall to fall over and protect her in much the same way that he himself had been protected.

While they were talking thus, and slowly descending one of the numerous richlywooded, though rugged, paths which traverse the lower slopes of the Andes, they encountered a party of horsemen from the Pampas. They were wellarmed, and from their looks might have been another troop of banditti, coming like human vultures from afar to swoop down on the carcass of the unfortunate town.

To have shown the slightest hesitancy or fearsupposing them to have been what they lookedwould have been to invite attack, but, as the reader knows, our travellers were not the men to betray themselves thus. Before starting, they had carefully examined their weapons, and had bestowed them about their persons somewhat ostentatiously. Pedro had even caused Manuela to stick a brace of small pistols and a large knife in her belt; and, as Indian women are sometimes known to be capable of defending themselves as vigorously as men, she was by no means a cipher in the effective strength of the party.

With a dignified yet freeandeasy air that would have done credit to a Spanish Don of the olden time, Pedro saluted the party as he rode past. His aspect, and the quiet, selfpossessed air of the huge Englishman, with the singularity of his cudgel, coupled with the look of graceful decision about the Indian maiden, and the blunt bulldoggedness of the square negro, were sufficient to ensure a polite response, not only from that party, but from several other bands of the same stamp that were met with during the day.

Diverging from the main road in order to avoid these bands, they followed a track wellknown to the guide. Towards the afternoon, from the top of a rising ground, they descried a solitary foot traveller wending his way wearily up the hill.

He was a man of middle age, and powerfully built, but walked with such evident difficulty that it seemed as if he were either ill or exhausted. Pedro eyed him with considerable suspicion as he approached. In passing, he begged for assistance. As he spoke in French, Lawrence, whose sympathies, like those of Quashy, were easily roused, asked in that tongue what was the matter with him.

He had been robbed, he said, by that villainous bandit, Conrad of the Mountains, or some one extremely like him, and had been nearly killed by him. He was on his way to San Ambrosio, where his wife and family dwelt, having heard that it had been greatly damaged, if not destroyed, by an earthquake.

“It has been utterly destroyed, my poor fellow,” said Lawrence, in a tone of pity; “but it may be that your family has escaped. A good number of people have escaped. Here are a few dollars for you. You will need them, I fear. You can owe them to me, and pay them when next we meet.”

The gift was accompanied with a look of pleasantry, for Lawrence well knew there was little chance of their ever meeting again.

Pedro sat regarding them with a grim smile. “You are a stout fellow,” he said, in a tone that was not conciliatory, after the beggar had accepted the dollars with many expressions of gratitude; “from all I have heard of Conrad of the Mountains, you are quite a match for him, if he were alone.”

“He was not alone, senhor,” replied the beggar, with a look that told of a temper easily disturbed.

To this Pedro replied contemptuously, “Oh, indeed!” and, turning abruptly away, rode on.

“You doubt that man?” said Lawrence, following him.

“I do.”

“He looked honest.”

“Men are not always to be judged by their looks.”

“Das a fact!” interposed Quashy; “what would peepil judge ob me, now, if dey hoed by looks?”

“They’d say you were a fine, genial, hearty, goodnatured blockhead,” said Lawrence, laughing.

“True, massa, you’s right. I’m all dat an’ wuss, but not always dat. Sometimes I’m roused; an’ I’m awful w’en I’m roused! You should see me w’en my back’s riz. Oh my!”

The negro opened his eyes and mouth so awfully at the mere idea of such a rising that his companions were fain to seek relief in laughter. Even the grave Manuela gave way to unrestrained merriment, for if she failed to thoroughly understand Quashy’s meaning, she quite understood his face.

That night they found welcome shelter in a small farm.

“Did you fall in with the notorious bandit, Conrad of the Mountains?” asked their host, after the ceremonious reception of his guests was over.

“No, senhor,” answered Pedro. “Is that fellow in this neighbourhood just now?”

“So it is said, senhor. I have not seen him myself, and should not know him if I saw him, but from descriptions I should think it must be he. I have a poor fellowa peonlying here just now, who has been robbed and nearly murdered by him. Come, he is in the next room; you can speak to him.”

Saying this, the host introduced Pedro and Lawrence into an inner chamber, where the wounded man lay, groaning horribly. He was very ready, indeed eager, to give all the information in his power. Fear had evidently given the poor fellow an exaggerated idea of the appearance of the man who had waylaid him; nevertheless, from his description our travellers had no difficulty in recognising the poor bereaved beggar whom they had met and assisted.

“Was he a large man?” asked Pedro.

“Yes, yes, senhor; tremendous! seven feet or more, and so” indicating about three feet “across the shoulders. Rough black head, huge black beard and moustache, hawk nose, with such awful eyes, and the strength of a tiger! I could never have been so easily overcome by one man if he had not been a giant.”

“You see,” said Pedro in English, turning to Lawrence with a smile, “the description tallies exactly, making due allowance for this poor fellow’s alarm. He must be a clever fellow this Conrad of the Mountains, for he has not only frightened a peon out of his wits, but roused the pity of an Englishman by asserting that he had been robbed by himself! Your charity, you see, was ill bestowed.”

“So, it seems we might have made this noted bandit prisoner if we had only

known!” exclaimed Lawrence, who seemed more distressed at missing the chance of becoming an amateur thiefcatcher than at misdirected charity. “But do you really think the fellow was Conrad of the Mountains?”

“I am certain he was not,” said Pedro.

“How do you know?”

“I have several grounds for my belief, but, even if I had not, I might easily judge from appearances. Conrad is said to be kind to women and children. The scoundrel we met with could not be kind to any one. Moreover, there is no clear proof that Conrad is a bandit, while this man certainly is one.”

“I’m sorry you seem so sure, because I should like much to be able to say I had seen this notorious fellow about whom every one appears to hear so much and to know so little.”

Although the bandit of whom we have just made mention was not Conrad of the Mountains, it may interest the reader to know that he was in truth a sufficiently notorious villain, named Fan, the captain of a band of twenty assassins, most of whom were escaped criminals from the prisons of Chili and Peru. Among other exploits, Fan once attacked the armed escort of a troop of mules conveying silver in bars from the mines to Chili. Fan and his men attacked them in a ravine so suddenly, and with such a deadly fire of musketry, that the few who survived laid down their arms at once, on the promise being made that their lives should be spared.

Banditti do not usually regard promises as binding. It would be surprising if they did. Fan made the survivors lie down on their faces, and was about to plunder the mules, when he changed his mind, and shot all the rest of the convoy in cold blood, except the last, who, seeing the fate that awaited him, leaped over a precipice, rolled down a steep slope many hundred feet deep, and, strange to say, escaped with his life. He then procured a dozen or two wellarmed men, and returned to the scene of the robbery, but found that the robbers had flown with as much silver as they could carry, the remainder being scattered about on the road.

These miscreants were afterwards captured, but, owing to disputes between the Peruvian and the Chilian Governments, the former of whom had hold of, while the latter claimed, the robbers, they all escaped their merited punishment, and were set at large.

Chapter Twelve

Thick Woods, Heat, Change of Scene, and Savages

We must change the scene now, and transport our reader to one of those numerous streams which convey the surplus waters of the Andes to the warmer regions of Bolivia, and thence, through many a wild, luxuriant wilderness and jungle, to the Parana river, by which they ultimately find their way to the sea.

It was approaching the afternoon of a very sultry day when Lawrence awoke from his midday siesta under an algarobatree, and slowly opened his eyes. The first object they rested upon was the brown little face of Manuela, reposing on a pillow formed of leopard skin. In those regions it was the practice, when convenient, to sling a network hammock between two trees, and enjoy one's siesta in that. The Indian girl lay in her hammock, with her eyes shut, and her little mouth open, not undignifiedly open, but just sufficiently so to permit of one seeing something of the teeth and tongue inside.

Fascinated apparently by the sight, a mite of a bluebird with a golden head sat on the edge of the hammock close to the little mouth, and looked in. Evidently it was a bird of an inquiring disposition, for, having gazed for a considerable time with one eye, it turned its head, and gazed a longer time with the other. Quashy lay close to Lawrence, with his back towards him. The latter, observing that the cheek of the former was more lumpy and prominent than usual, raised himself on one elbow to look at him, and found that the lump was the result of an expansion of the mouth from ear to ear. He was wide awake, gloating over the proceedings of that little bluebird, but he heard Lawrence move, and turning his head slightly round, whispered

“Dat am berry funnyi'n't it?”

The whisper slightly roused Manuela. She drew a long breath, vented a deep sigh, and effectually blew the bluebird away.

At the same moment the whole party was roused by a wild and indescribable scream, followed by a magnificent flash of what seemed to be coloured fire.

In his halfsleeping condition, Lawrence, believing it to be the warwhoop of wild Indians, leaped up and grasped his cudgel, but nothing was to be seen save the grinning face of Quashy and the amused looks of Manuela and Pedro.

“Purrits,” remarked the negro, by way of explanation.

“What do you mean by purrits?” demanded Lawrence, half ashamed of his alarm.

“I mean what I says, massa, purrits.”

“He means parrots,” said Pedro, with a grave smile, as he rose, and proceeded to fold up the poncho on which he had lain. “We’ve had many a song from these screamers, but I don’t remember ever seeing such a big flock come so near us, or scream so loud, before. They must have been attracted by your pretty face, Manuela, and could not help shouting with surprise at finding you asleep.”

Manuela laughed lightly as she stepped out of her hammock.

“They’ve just roused us in good time,” continued Pedro, looking up between the treetops at the sky, “for the hut of the tigerhunter is a long way off, and I’m anxious to reach it before dark.”

In a few minutes the hammock and other camp equipage was conveyed to one of the native canoes, which lay close to the river’s bank, our travellers embarked, and ere long were far from the spot where the siesta had been taken.

In the afternoon they stopped for a little to refresh themselves with roasted parrot, chocolate, and biscuit.

Parrots are found everywhere and in great numbers in those regions between the Atlantic and Pacific. They live and travel in large flocks, and, as every one knows, they are remarkably fond of using their discordant voices, much to the annoyance of sensitive travellers. Fortunately such travellers do not often go to the wild regions of South America, when they do, they soon become unsensitive. When parrots assemble in a flock on the trees, they keep fluttering their wings with a tremulous motion, bending down their heads and chattering, young and old, without regard to each other or to harmony. Each seems bent on giving his own opinion in the loudest key, and pays no regard whatever to the opinions of others. There is something almost human in this!

It is a curious fact that, while the plumage of the parrots’ breasts is always gaudy and brilliant in the extreme, that of their backs is usually the colour of the general tone of the region they inhabit. In woods, where the bark of trees is chiefly bright yellow and green, their backs are of these colours. In the plains they are a mixture of green and brown, so that when skimming over a country they are not easily distinguished, but if they chance to come unexpectedly on travellers, they sheer off with a shriek, and expose their gaudy breasts to view.

The large flock that had so suddenly come on our friends while taking their siesta had turned off thus with a horrible scream, and revealed their gay breasts, on which the sun chanced to shine at the moment with great power, thus producing, as we have said, a splendid flash of colour.

“Massa,” inquired Quashy, as they sat in the canoe enjoying the cold meal and floating slowly with the stream, “which you likes best, ros’ purrit or ros’ monkey?”

“Really, I’m not quite sure,” replied Lawrence; “it depends very much on appetite. If I’m very hungry, I prefer the one that comes first to hand. Which do you like best?”

“Well, I’s not kite sure needer. I t’ink sometimes dat monkey is best, but I can’t easy git ober de face.”

“How so, Quashy?”

“’Cause it am so like eatin’ a bit o’ my greatgran’ moder.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes. You’s no notion how like dey all is to dat ole lady. You see, she was uncommon old. She come ob a longlib race. Das whar’ it is. My moder was eightytwo, an’ my gran’ moder was ninetyseven, an’ my greatgran’ moder was a hun’r’d an’ sixteen, an’ dey was all alive togidder, an’ at fuss you couldn’ tell which was de oldest. Dey run neck an’ neck for a long time, but arter de greatgran’ one pass de hunr’ milestoneoh! she hoed ahead like a rattlesnake. De wrinkles an’ de crows’ foots, an’ dede colourjes’ like bu’nt leather! She lef’ de oders far behind, an’ looked like nuffin so much as dat poor little bleareyed monkey you shot de oder day, what Senhorina Manuela say was so nice to eat. What! you un’erstan’ Ingliss?” added the negro, looking at the Indian girl, who had given vent to a halfsuppressed giggle.

“Yesleetil,” replied Manuela, without attempting further to restrain her mirth.

Quite pleased that his remarks should afford amusement, Quashy was about to launch out extensively on the “greatgran’ moder” theme, when an exclamation from the guide checked him.

“Look, Senhor Armstrong,” he said, arresting the progress of the canoe by a slight turn of his paddle. “Yonder is a mode of fishing which no doubt is new to you.”

Pedro pointed as he spoke to a canoe which a sharp bend of the stream had just revealed to them. Its occupants were Indians. They were almost naked, and so intent on their occupation that the arrival of our travellers had not been observed. One of the Indians, a splendid specimen of muscular strength, stood up in the canoe with a bow and arrow in his hands and one foot on the gunwale, quite motionless. Suddenly he drew the bow, the arrow pierced the

water without causing a ripple, and next moment a transfixed fish was struggling on the surface.

The fish was barely secured when the presence of strangers was discovered. An exclamation followed. Instantly the dark savage bent his bow, with the arrow pointed this time full at the breast of Pedro.

That worthy did not, however, seem much alarmed. He at once pushed out into the stream, and gave a shout which induced the savage not only to lower his bow, but to fling it into his canoe and throw up his arms with exclamations of surprise and joy.

“He knows you?” said Lawrence, looking back at Pedro, who sat in the stern of their canoe.

“Yes, he knows me. I am pretty well known to most people in these regions. This is the tigerhunter of whom I have spoken. His dwelling is not far off.”

The meeting of the two friends was remarkably cordial, and it was evident to both Lawrence and Quashy that the white man and the brown were not only old friends, but more than usually fond of each other.

After the first salutations, both canoes were run to the bank of the stream, and when they had all landed, Pedro presented his friend to Lawrence, who shook hands with him in the English fashion.

“You have not mentioned your friend’s name,” said Lawrence.

“His name!” replied Pedro, with a laugh, “well, it is almost unpronounceable. Perhaps you had better call him by the name he goes by among his friends Spotted Tiger, or, more briefly Tiger.”

“Tell Spotted Tiger, then,” said Lawrence, “that I am happy to make his acquaintance.”

When the guide had translated this, and the Indian had returned a complimentary rejoinder, they continued to converse in the Indian tongue with much animation, and, on the part of Spotted Tiger, with some excitement. Of course Lawrence understood nothing, but he continued to watch the expressive features of the savage with interest, and observed, when their glances showed they were talking of Manuela, that Tiger first raised his eyebrows in surprise, and then smiled peculiarly.

“Strange,” thought Lawrence, “what can he mean by that? Perhaps he knows the chief, her father, but why look surprised and smile on that account? I wish Pedro was not so secretive. However, it’s his business, not mine!”

Consoling himself with this philosophic thought, Lawrence reembarked with his friends, and, accompanied by Tiger, proceeded down stream till they came to a beautiful spot where the banks widened out into a small lake or pond. On its shores, under the cool shade of many trees, stood the hut of the savage.

The scenery here was more than usually beautiful, being diversified not only in form, but in its wealth and variety of trees, and twining parasites and graceful ferns, with, in one place, groves of tall trees covered with balls of wild cotton, as large as an orange, and, elsewhere, inextricable entanglements of gorgeously flowering creepers, such as the most vivid imagination would fail to invent or conceive. Behind one part of the scene the setting sun shone with intense light, turning all into dark forms, while in other parts the slanting rays fell upon masses of rich foliage, and intensified its colour.

In front of the hut a handsome Indian woman stood awaiting the arrival of her husband. She held in her arms a naked little ball of whiteybrown fat, which represented the youngest Tigercub of the family. Other cubs, less whitey, and more brown, romped around, while up in the trees several remembrancers of Quashy's greatgreatgrandmother sat grinning with delight, if not indignation, at the human beings below.

After being hospitably entertained by the Indian with fish, alligator soup, roast parrot, and young monkey, the party assembled round a fire, kindled outside the hut more for the purpose of scaring away wild beasts than cooking, though the little Tigercubs used it for the latter purpose.

Then Pedro said to Lawrence

“Now, Senhor Armstrong, I am going to ask you to exercise a little patience at this point in our journey. The business I have in hand requires that I should leave you for two or three days. I fully expect to be back by the end of that time, and meanwhile I leave you and Quashy and Manuela in good company, for my friend Spotted Tiger is true as steel, though he is an Indian, and will perhaps show you a little sport to prevent your wearying.”

“Very good, Pedro. I am quite willing to wait,” said Lawrence. “You know I am not pressed for time at present. I shall be very glad to remain and see what is to be seen here, and learn Spanish from Manuela.”

“Or teach her Angleesh,” suggested the girl, bashfully.

“Certainly. Whichever pleases you best, Manuela,” returned Lawrence.

“But s'pose,” said Quashy, with a look of awful solemnity at Pedro “s'pose you

nebbber comes back at all! S'pose you gits drowned, or killed by a tiger, or shot by a Injin. What den?"

"Suppose," retorted the guide, "that an earthquake should swallow up South America, or that the world should catch fire what then?"

"Why den, we no care a buttin for not'ing arter dat," replied the negro, promptly, "but if you don' return, we nebbber reach Buenos Ayres."

"Never fear, Quashy. If I don't return, Spotted Tiger will guide you safely there."

That night Pedro and his friend left the hut in a canoe, lighted by a brilliant moon. Before morning the latter returned alone.

Meanwhile Lawrence had slung Manuela's hammock between two trees, with a fire on either side, yet screened from the chief campfire by a thick bush, so that though close at hand, and under his protection, she occupied, as it were, a separate chamber of her own. His own hammock and that of Quashy for they all used hammocks were hung side by side a little nearer to the large fire.

Mr and Mrs Tiger, with all the little Tigers, finding their hut rather warm, came outside, and also made their beds beside their visitors.

Chapter Thirteen **Deals with Spotted Tiger's Home, and a Hunting Expedition**

In spite of howling jaguars, and snarling pumas, and buzzing mosquitoes, and the whole host of nocturnal abominations peculiar to those regions, our weary travellers lay peacefully in their hammocks, and slept like hummingtops. In regard to Quashy, we might more appropriately say like a buzzingtop.

Once or twice during the night Quashy rose to replenish the fires, for the jaguars kept up a concert that rendered attention to this protection advisable; but he did it with halfclosed eyes, and a sort of semiwakefulness which changed into profound repose the instant he tumbled back into his hammock. Lawrence, not being so well accustomed to the situation, lay awake a short time at first, having his loaded pistols under his pillow; but, as we have said, he soon slumbered, and it is probable that all the jaguars, pumas, peccaries, tapirs, alligators, and wild cats in that district might have walked in procession under his hammock without disturbing him in the least, had they been so minded. As for Manuela, with that quiet indifference to mere prospective danger that usually characterises her race, she laid her head on her tigerskin pillow, and slept the sleep of innocence having absolute faith, no doubt, in the

vigilance and care of her protectors.

It might have been observed, however, that before lying down the Indian maiden knelt beside her hammock and hid her face in her hands. Indeed from the first it had been seen by her fellowtravellers that Manuela thus communed with her God, and on one occasion Lawrence, remarking on the fact, had asked Pedro if she were a Christian.

“She is a Christian,” was Pedro’s reply, but as he manifested an evident intention not to be communicative on the subject, Lawrence forbore to put further questions, although he felt his interest in the girl as well as his curiosity increasing, and he longed to know how and when she had been turned from heathen worship to the knowledge of Christ.

When daylight began to glimmer in the east, the bird, beast, and insect worlds began to stir. And a wonderful stir do these worlds make at that hour in the grand regions of Central South America; for although nocturnal birds and beasts retire and, at least partially, hide their diminished heads at daylight, the myriad denizens of the forests bound forth with renewed life and vigour to sing a morning hymn of praise to their Maker involuntarily or voluntarily, who can tell which, and what right has man to say dogmatically that it cannot be the latter? Thousands of cooing doves, legions of chattering parrots, made the air vocal; millions of little birds of every size and hue twittered an accompaniment, and myriads of mosquitoes and other insects filled up the orchestra with a high pitched drone, while alligators and other aquatic monsters beat time with flipper, fin, and tail.

Breakfast, consisting of excellent fish, eggs, maize, jaguarsteak, roast duck, alligatorragout, and chocolate, was prepared outside the Indian hut. The hut itself was unusually clean, Tiger being a peculiar and eccentric savage, who seemed to have been born, as the saying is, in advance of his generation. He was a noted man among his brethren, not only for strength and prowess, but for strange ideas and practices, especially for his total disregard of public opinion.

In respect of cleanliness, his hut differed from the huts of all other men of his tribe. It was built of sundried mud. The furniture consisted of two beds, or heaps of leaves and skins, and several rude vessels of clay. The walls were decorated with bows, arrows, blowpipes, lances, gamebags, fishinglines, and other articles of the chase, as well as with miniature weapons and appliances of a similar kind, varying its size according to the ages of the little Tigers. Besides these, there hung from the rafters if we may so name the sticks that stretched overhead several network hammocks and unfinished garments, the handiwork of Mrs Tiger.

That lady herself was a fat and by no means uncomely young woman, simply clothed in a white tunic, fastened at the waist with a belt the arms and neck being bare. Her black hair was cut straight across the forehead, an extremely ugly but simple mode of freeing the face from interference, which we might say is peculiar to all savage nations had not the highly civilised English of the present day adopted it, thus proving the truth of the proverb that “extremes meet”! The rest of her hair was gathered into one long heavy plait, which hung down behind. Altogether, Madame Tiger was clean and pleasant looking for a savage. This is more than could be said of her progeny, which swarmed about the place in undisguised contempt of cleanliness or propriety.

Stepping into the hut after kindling the fire outside, Quashy proceeded to make himself at home by sitting down on a bundle.

The bundle spurted out a yell, wriggled violently, and proved itself to be a boy!

Jumping up in haste, Quashy discommoded a tame parrot on the rafters, which, with a horrible shriek in the Indian tongue, descended on his head and grasped his hair, while a tame monkey made faces at him and a tame turtle waddled out of his way.

Having thus as it were established his footing in the family, the negro removed the parrot to his perch, receiving a powerful bite of gratitude in the act, and invited the wife of Spotted Tiger to join the breakfast party. This he did by the express order of Lawrence, for he would not himself have originated such a piece of condescension. Not knowing the dialect of that region, however, he failed to convey his meaning by words and resorted to pantomime. Rubbing his stomach gently with one hand, he opened his mouth wide, pointed down his throat with the forefinger of the other hand, and made a jerky reference with his thumb to the scene of preparations outside.

Madame Tiger declined, however, and pointed to a dark corner, where a sick child claimed her attention.

“O poor t’ing! what’s de matter wid it?” asked Quashy, going forward and taking one of the child’s thin hands in his enormous paw.

The little girl must have been rather pretty when in health, but there was not much of good looks left at that time, save the splendid black eyes, the lustre of which seemed rather to have improved with sickness. The poor thing appeared to know that she had found in the negro a sympathetic soul, for she not only suffered her hand to remain in his, but gave vent to a little squeak of contentment.

“Stop! You hold on a bit, Poppity,” said Quashy, whose inventive capacity in the way of endearing terms was great, “I’ll fetch de doctor.”

He ran out and presently returned with Lawrence, who shook his head the moment he set eyes on the child.

“No hope?” inquired Quashy, with solemnity unspeakable on his countenance.

“Well, I won’t say that. While there is life there is hope, but it would have been more hopeful if I had seen the child a week or two sooner.”

After a careful examination, during which the father, who had come in, and the mother looked on with quiet patience, and Manuela with some anxiety, he found that there was still room for hope, but, he said, turning to Quashy, “she will require the most careful and constant nursing, and as neither Tiger nor his wife understands what we say, and Pedro may not be back for some days, it will be difficult to explain to them what should be done. Can you not speak their dialect even a little?” he added in Spanish to Manuela.

She shook her head, but said quietly

“Me will nurse.”

“That’s very kind of you, and it will really be a charity, for the child is seriously ill. She is a strangely attractive little thing,” he continued, bending over her couch and stroking her hair gently. “I feel quite as if I had known her a long time. Now, I will give you instructions as well as I can as to what you have to do. Shall I give them in Spanish or English?”

Quite gravely the Indian girl replied, “Angleesh.”

“Very well,” said he, and proceeded to tell Manuela how to act as sicknurse. When he had finished, the girl at once stepped up to Tiger’s wife with a winning smile, patted her shoulder, kissed her forehead, and then, pointing to the little invalid with a look of profound intelligence, went out of the hut. Presently she returned with some of the gravy of the alligatorragout, sat down beside the little one, and began to administer it in small quantities. Evidently the child was pleased both with the food and the angel of mercy who had found her, for she nestled in a comfortable way close to Manuela’s side. Lawrence observed, when the latter looked round for something she wanted, that her eyes were full of tears.

“I knew I was right,” he muttered to himself as he returned to the fire, where Quashy had already spread out the breakfast, “she certainly must be a princess of the Incas. They were notoriously celebrated for their gentle and amiable

qualities, even at the time of Pizarro's conquest."

What more passed in his mind we cannot tell, for he ceased to mutter, and never revealed his subsequent thoughts to any one.

"Now, Quashy," said Lawrence, when breakfast was over, "we are left here in what we may style difficulties. The Indians don't understand Spanish or English, so until Pedro returns we shall have to get along as best we can by signs."

"Bery well, massa, I hope you knows how to talk by signs, for its more dan dis nigger do."

As he spoke he threw an ear of maize at a monkey which sat on a branch overhead gazing at the party with an expression of the most woebegone resignation. He missed his aim, but none the less did that monkey change its look into a glare of intense indignation, after which it fled shrieking, with hurt feelings, into the woods.

"I'm not much up in the language of signs," said Lawrence, "but we must try our best."

Saying which he arose, and, touching Tiger on the shoulder, beckoned him to follow.

With the lithe, easy motions of the animal after which he was named, the Indian rose. Lawrence led him a few paces from the fire, and then, putting himself in the attitude of a man discharging an arrow from a bow, suddenly let the imaginary arrow fly, looked at the savage, touched his own breast, and smiled.

So did Quashy, with compound interest. Spotted Tiger looked puzzled, shook his head, and also smiled.

"He t'ink you wants him to shoot you," said Quashy.

"No, no, that's not it," said Lawrence, with a somewhat abashed look at the Indian. "I want you to take us out shootinghunting, you knowhunting."

As Tiger did not know the word "hunting" he continued to shake his head with a puzzled air.

Every one who has tried it knows what a silly, almost imbecile, feeling comes over one when one attempts the communication of ideas in dumb show. Feelings of this sort affected our hero very keenly. He therefore, while continuing the pantomime, kept up a running or interjectional accompaniment

in the English language.

“Look here, Tiger,” he said, impressively, taking up two sticks which he made to represent a bow and arrow, and placing them in position, “I want to go hunting with youhuntingshooting the jaguar.”

“Yes, de jaguartiger, you know,” said Quashy, who, in his anxiety to get the savage to understand, imitated his master’s actions, and could not refrain from occasionally supplementing his speech.

As a tigerskin chanced to be hanging on a bush near to the fire, Lawrence completed his pantomime by throwing his mimic arrow against that.

A gleam of intelligence suffused the face of the savage. Stalking into his hut, he returned with a bow considerably longer than himself, and an arrow, also of great length. Retiring to a distance from the jaguarskin above referred to, he bent his bow quickly, and sent an arrow straight through the middle of it, thereafter raising himself with a look of pride.

“Why, the fellow thinks I want him to show off his powers of shooting,” said Lawrence.

“So he dode idjit!” said Quashy.

With much anxiety of expression, great demonstration of vigorous action, and many painful efforts of inventive genius, the two men tried to convey their wishes to that son of the soil, but all in vain. At last in desperation Quashy suddenly seized the jaguarskin, threw it over his own shoulders, placed a long pole in Lawrence’s hands, and said

“Now, massa, you look out, I’s agwine to spring at you, and you stick me.”

He uttered a mighty roar as he spoke, and bounded towards his master, who, entering at once into the spirit of the play, received him on the point of his spear, whereupon the human jaguar instantly fell and revelled for a few seconds in the agonies of death. Then he calmly rose.

“Now,” said he, with a look of contempt, “if he no understan’ dat, it’s ’cause he hain’t got no brains.”

At first the Indian had gazed at this little scene with a look of intense astonishment. When it was finished he burst into a fit of hearty laughter. Evidently it was the best piece of acting he had seen since he was born, and if he had been other than a savage, he must certainly have shouted “bravo!” perhaps “encore!” and clapped his hands.

“Boh! he’s a born idjit!” cried Quashy, turning away in disgust, but a new idea seemed to flash into his fertile brain.

“Stop a bit!” he suddenly exclaimed, seizing a piece of flat bark that lay at his feet. On this, with the point of a charred stick, he drew a triangular form, with three dots in it for two eyes and a nose. An oval attached to this represented a body; at the other end a long waving line served for a tail; four short lines below indicated legs. This creature he covered all over with spots.

“There,” he cried, sticking it into a bush, and glaring at the Indian, “jaguar!jaguar!”

Catching up the pole which Lawrence had thrown down, he rushed at this jaguar, and pierced it through the heart. Thereafter, in hot haste, he picked up Tiger’s bow and arrows, ran down to the river, put them into a small canoe, and thrust it into the water. Holding on with one hand, he waved with the other.

“Ho! hi! come along, you stuppud idjit!”

The “stuppud idjit” was enlightened at last. With a dignified smile, which would probably have been a frown if he had understood Quashy’s words, he went up to his hut, and selected a lance and a bow, with which, and a quiver of arrows, he returned to the little hunting canoe.

Seeing that they were now understood, Lawrence took his shotgun and pistols; the negro also armed himself, and in a few minutes more they found themselves paddling gently down the sluggish current of the river.

The scenery through which those curiously assorted hunters passed that day in their light canoe was singularly beautiful; and when, turning up one of the narrow streams that fed the main river, they came into a region of sweet, mellow twilight, caused by the overarching trees, where the very aspect of nature suggested, though it could not create, coolness, Lawrence felt as if he had been at last transported into those famous regions of fairyland which, if they really existed, and we were in very deed to get into them, would, perchance, not equal, and certainly could not excel, our own actual world!

Gigantic trees towered upwards till their heads were lost in the umbrageous canopy, while their stems were clasped by powerful snakelike creepers, or adorned with flowering parasites. The bushes grew so thick and tangled that it seemed as if neither man nor beast could penetrate them which indeed was the case, as regards man, in many places; yet here and there unexpected openings permitted the charmed eyes to rest upon romantic vistas where creepers, convolvuli, and other flowers, of every shape, hue, and size, hung in festoons

and clusters, or carpeted the ground. Fruit, too, was there in abundance. Everything seemed to bear fruit. The refreshing and not too luscious prickly pear; the oukli, an enormous cactus, not unlike the prickly pear but with larger fruit, whose delightful pulp was of a bloodred colour; the ancoche, with sweettasted pearlike drops, and many others.

There was plenty of animal life, also, in and around this stream, to interest the hunters, who were now obliged to exert themselves a little to make head against the sluggish current. Waterhens were innumerable, and other wildfowl flew or paddled about, enjoying, apparently, a most luxuriant existence, while brown anthills were suggestive of exceedingly busy life below as well as above ground. There are many kinds of ants out there, some of them very large, others not quite so large, which, however, make up in vicious wickedness what they lack in size.

At one bend in the stream they came suddenly on a boaconstrictor which was swimming across; at another turn they discovered a sight which caused Lawrence to exclaim

“There’s a breakfast for you, Quashy. What would you say to that?”

“I’d like to hab ’im cooked, massa.”

The reference was to an alligator which was crossing the stream a few yards ahead of them, with a live boa in his jaws. The huge serpent was about twelve feet long, and wriggled horribly to escape, but the monster had it fast by the middle. Evidently its doom was fixed.

Several tapirs and a band of grunting peccaries were also seen, but all these were passed without molestation, for the ambitions of our hunters that day soared to nothing less than the tiger of the American junglesthe sneaking, lithe, strong, and muchdreaded jaguar.

Spotted Tiger seemed to have at last become fully aware of the spirit of his companions, for he took no apparent note of the various animals seen as they passed along, and evidently was on the outlook for the monarch of the jungle. Having been told by Pedro that he was a celebrated hunter, Lawrence felt sure that he would lead them to success.

“Why you no shoot de deer an’ pepper de alligators, massa?” asked Quashy at last, after several of the creatures mentioned had been seen and passed.

“Because I don’t want them,” returned Lawrence, “and I have no pleasure in useless destruction of life. Besides, I am anxious to shoot a jaguar, having a strong wish to take home the claws and skull of onethe first for my friends, the

last for a museum. When we want food I will shoot deer, or anything else that's eatable."

Quashy remained silent. He seemed to be revolving his master's reply in a philosophical way, when something between a snarl and a growl turned his thoughts sharply into another channel.

Tiger quietly prepared his bow and arrows and laid his spears so that they should be handy. Lawrence and the negro also got ready their weapons, and then they advanced with caution, dipping their paddles lightly, and gazing earnestly into the jungle on the right bank of the stream.

Chapter Fourteen

The Hunt continued; one of the Hunters almost concluded. Explorations indulged in, and a Capture effected.

"Dar, massa, dar he is," exclaimed Quashy, in a hoarse whisper, pointing into the bushes.

"Nonsense, man," replied Lawrence, in a low voice, "it's only an anthill."

Even in that moment of excitement, Lawrence could scarce refrain from laughter at the face of his humble follower, for Quashy's business in life had not accustomed him to much sport at any time; and the prospect of actually assisting at the slaughter of a jaguar or a puma had stirred every nerve and fibre of his black being into intense excitation, so that his eyes and nostrils were dilated to the utmost, and he panted vehemently with hope, of course, not fear!

Tiger, on the contrary, was cool and calm, though watchful. He paid no attention whatever to his companions, being too well acquainted with his work to stand in need of either advice or assistance from them.

As guide, the savage occupied the bow of the canoe; Lawrence sat in the middle, and Quashy in the stern, for he understood how to steer. Having been admonished to hold his tongue, he crouched so as, if possible, to diminish his size. He also pursed his lips, and what a tight rounding and projecting of superfluous flesh that pursing was no tongue can adequately tell. He also glared, and this "talking with the eyes" was a mute sermon in itself.

Yet no jaguar could be seen. Silently, with dip of paddle that made no sound, and glide of craft through the water that produced only an oily ripple, they slowly ascended the stream.

At first Lawrence had seized his fowlingpiece, which was charged with ball for the occasion; but as time passed, and the Indian showed no intention of landing, he laid the gun down, and again took up his paddle.

After a time, through some inadvertence of Quashy, the canoe was sent rather close in among the reeds and giant leaves of the bank.

“That was stupid of you, Quash,” said Lawrence, as he stood up to assist Tiger in backing out.

“Das true, massa,” said the negro, in profoundest humility of selfcondemnation, “I’s a black idjit.”

As the fore part of the canoe had touched on a mudbank, Lawrence seized one of the Indian’s lances, and used the butt end as a pole with which to push off. Under this impulse the canoe was gradually sliding into deep water, when a rustling of the leaves was heard, and next instant a full-sized jaguar sprang upon the Indian with catlike agility. Whether the brute had slipped on the muddy bank we cannot say, but it missed its aim, and, instead of alighting on the shoulders of the man, it merely struck him on the head with one of its paws in passing, and went with a tremendous splash into the water.

Tiger fell forward insensible from the severe scalp-wound inflicted. Next instant the jaguar rose, grasped the edge of the canoe, and almost overturned it as it strove to climb in; and there is no doubt that in another moment it would have succeeded, for the attack was so sudden that Quashy sat paralysed, while Lawrence forgot his pistols, and his gun lay in the bottom of the canoe! Happily, however, he recovered enough of presence of mind to use the lance in his hands. Turning the point of the weapon to the jaguar’s mouth, he thrust it in with such tremendous force that it passed right down its throat and into its very vitals. With a gasping snarl the monster fell back into the stream, and was quickly drowned as well as impaled.

“Help me to haul him on board,” cried Lawrence.

Thus awakened, the negro, relieving his feelings by giving vent to a roar which partook somewhat of a cheer, seized the jaguar’s tail. His master grasped its ears, and in another moment it lay in the bottom of the canoe.

“Now, help to lay the poor fellow beside it,” said Lawrence.

“O massa! he not dead, eh?” groaned the negro, as he assisted in the work.

“No; nor likely to die yet a while,” replied Lawrence, with much satisfaction, as he examined and bound up the scalp-wound. “It is not deep; he’ll soon come

round; but we must get him home without delay. Out with your paddle, Quashy, and use it well. I'll take the bow."

The canoe, which, during these proceedings, had been floating slowly down stream, was now turned in the right direction, and in a short time was out upon the larger river.

Here, however, they had to labour with energy against the stream, and it was far on in the afternoon before they came in sight of the Indian's hut. By that time Spotted Tiger had partially recovered, as Lawrence observed during a pause made for rest. On reaching an eddy, which carried the canoe in the right direction, they rested again. The cessation of paddling appeared to rouse the wounded man, for he sat up, and, with a halfdazed look, stared at the head of the dead jaguar, on the haunch of which his elbow leaned. Then he cast an inquiring look at Lawrence, who replied to him with a nod and a smile, and went on to indicate, by means of pantomime, what had occurred.

He pointed to the animal's claws, and to Tiger's head; then to the bloody spear which lay at his side, and to the jaguar's bloodstained throat, after which he pointed to his own breast and nodded again.

The Indian evidently understood him, for an expression of gratitude overspread his countenance as he extended his right handEnglish fashionfor a shake. Our hero was not slow to grasp it, and the two exchanged a squeeze which told of lasting friendship and goodwill.

A few minutes later, and the canoe was run upon the bank in front of the hut, where all the children were assembled to receive them.

It did not seem as if any of the family were deeply affected by the shaky appearance of the father as he stepped on shore, but the younger members evinced feelings of intense delight when the jaguar was lifted out; and two of them, seizing the tail as a towrope, passed it over their shoulders, and dragged the carcass up to the hut to show it to their mother.

O mothers! loving repositories of childhood's joys and woes, ye are unquestionably the same in substance and in spirit all the world over!

Tiger's wife was more affected than Lawrence expected she would have been by her husband's accident, and tended him with anxious care. By taking hold of him, and laying him gently down in a corner opposite to that of his sick child, Lawrence gave him to understand that it was his duty to take rest. To say truth, he did not require much persuasion, but at once laid his head on his pillow, and quietly went to sleep.

“The hospital is filling rather quickly, Manuela,” said Lawrence, when he had finished tending his new patient, “and your duties are increasing, I fear.”

“No fear. Me likes to nuss,” replied the girl, with a look that puzzled the young doctor.

It was Manuela’s fascinating smile that came hardest on our poor hero. When she looked grave or sad, he could regard her as a mere statue, an unusually classical-looking bronze savage; but when she smiled, there was something so bewitchingly sweet in the lines of her little face that he felt constrained to shut his eyes, turn away, and groan in spirit, to think that she was brown, and a savage!

“Was there ever a case,” he thought, “so mysteriously miserable, so singularly sad, as mine! If she were only white, I would marry her at once, if she would have me, for the sake of her gentle spirit alone, ay, even though she were the child of a costermonger; but I cannot, I do not, love a savage, the daughter of a savage chief, with a skin the colour of shoe leather! No, it is impossible! and yet, I am in love with her spirit. I know it. I feel it. I never heard of such a strange thing before, a man in love with a portion of a woman, and that the immaterial portion!”

The last word changed the current of his thoughts, for it suggested the idea of another “portion” belonging to some girls with which men are too apt to fall in love!

“Massa, de grub’s ready,” said Quashy, entering the hut at that moment.

“Go to work then, Quash. Don’t wait. I’ll be with you directly.”

But Quashy did wait. He was much too unselfish a son of ebony to think of beginning before his master.

When they had seated themselves on the grass outside the hut, along with Manuela, who left her post of duty in order to dine, and had made a considerable impression on the alligatorragout and tigersteaks and other delicacies, Quashy heaved a deep sigh of partial satisfaction, and asked if Tiger would be well enough to go out hunting next day.

“I think not,” said Lawrence; “no doubt he may feel able for it, but if he shows any disposition to do so, I shall forbid him.”

“How you forbid him, when you not can speak hims tongue?” asked Manuela, in a mild little voice, but with an arch look to which her arched black eyebrows gave intense expression.

“Well,” replied Lawrence, laughing, “I must try signs, I suppose, as usual.”

“No use, massa,” said Quashy; “nebbber make him understan’. I gib you a plan. See here. You tie him up hand an’ foot; den we go off huntin’ by our lone, an’ let him lie till we comes back.”

Lawrence shook his head. “I fear he would kill us on our return. No, we must just go off early in the morning before he wakes, and get Manuela to try her hand at signlanguage. She can prevail on him, no doubt, to remain at home.”

“I vill try,” said Manuela, with a laugh.

In pursuance of this plan, Lawrence and Quashy rose before broad daylight the following morning, launched the little canoe they had used the day before, put gun, spears, etcetera, on board, and were about to push off, when one of the boys of the family ran down, and seemed to wish to accompany them.

“We’d better take him,” said Lawrence; “he’s not very big or old, but he seems intelligent enough, and no doubt knows something of his father’s haunts and sporting customs.”

“You’s right, massa,” assented the negro.

Lawrence made a sign to the lad to embark, and Quashy backed the invitation with

“Jump aboard, Leetle Cub.”

Instead of obeying, Leetle Cub ran up into the bush, but presently returned with a long stick like a headless lance, a bow and arrows, and an instrument resembling a large grappling anchor, made of wood. Placing these softly in the canoe, the little fellow, who seemed to be about ten years of age, stepped in, and they all pushed off into the river getting out of sight of the hut without having roused any one. Turning into the same stream which they had visited the day before, they pushed past the place where the jaguar had been killed, and entered on an exploration, as Lawrence called it.

“I’m very fond of an exploration, Quashy,” he said, dipping his paddle softly, and working gently, for there was so little current that it seemed more like the narrows of a lake than a stream.

“Yes, I’s bery fond ob ’sploration too, massa,” replied the negro, with a selfsatisfied nod. “It am so nice not to know whar you’s gwine to, or whar you’s comin’ to, or who’s dar, or who’s not dar, or what fish’ll turn up, or what beast’ll turn down, or what nixtoh! it am so jolly! what you sniggerin’ at, you dirty leetle cub?”

The question was put to the Indian boy, who seemed much amused by something he saw up among the trees.

Looking up they saw at least a dozen red monkeys grinning at them, and one of these small ones was hanging on by its father's tail.

"Oh! shoot! shoot!" cried Quashy to Lawrence, opening his great eyes eagerly. "Dey's so good to eat!"

"No, Quash, I won't shoot. We have shot enough of fat ducks to feed us all for one or two days at least. Besides, I can't bear to kill monkeys. It feels so like committing murder."

While he was yet speaking, Leetle Cub had taken up the long lancelike stick before mentioned and pointed it at the monkeys. It was a blowpipe. Before Lawrence could interfere, the short arrow with which it was charged had sped on its mission with deadly aim, and the smallest monkey, relaxing its hold of the paternal tail, fell without even a cry into the water shot through the heart.

Lawrence said nothing, but, resolving that if the boy should attempt such another shot, he would disturb his aim, he dipped his paddle vigorously, and pushed up the river.

Coming at last to an open space where the stream widened into something like a little pond, they observed an erection of timber on the bank which aroused their curiosity. It also seemed to arouse the Cub's interest, for he made somewhat excited signs that he wished to land there. Willing to humour him, they ran the canoe on the beach. Leetle Cub jumped out at once, and, taking up the anchorlike piece of wood before mentioned, went with it towards the timber erection.

"I do believe it is an alligatorhook," said Lawrence.

"Das a fact," said Quashy, "we'll washum," by which he meant, "we'll watch him!"

It was indeed interesting to watch that little fellow who was evidently in all respects a thorough chip of the old block as he went about his work, quietly, yet with an undercurrent of excitement which he was not entirely able to conceal. He took his bow and arrows, as well as the blowpipe, on shore, and laid them at his side, so as to be ready at hand in case of emergency, while he baited the alligatorhook with the dead monkey.

The hook was simple. It consisted of four pieces of tough hard wood, about a foot long, and the thickness of a man's thumb. These were tied to the end of a

stout rope made of raw hide, and so arranged that their points were directed backwards, and curved somewhat outward thus forming as it were four huge barbs. The dead monkey was placed on and around this horrible hook if we may so term it. The delicate morsel was then attached to the end of a pole which stretched over the stream, so that the bait, when fixed, remained suspended just above the water. The slack of the rope was then made fast to a tree. Thus the arrangement was such as to compel the alligator to raise himself well out of the water to obtain his mouthful.

While Leetle Cub was engaged in erecting this cumbrous machine, a young alligator, about a foot long, crawled out from under some leaves on the bank close to him. The urchin saw it instantly, seized his bow, and in a moment transfixed it with an arrow. The fury of the little creature, infant though it was, seemed tremendous. It turned round, snapping viciously at the arrow, and would probably have escaped with it into the water if another shot from the same unerring hand had not terminated its career.

After setting his line, the Cub carried the little alligator to the canoe, and put it carefully therein.

“Das what dey make de soup ob,” said Quashy.

“The ragout, you mean.”

“Dun’ know what’s a ragoo, massa. We calls it soup. Anyhow, it’s bery good.”

“Yes, Quash, it’s not bad. But look there, our daring and expert young hunter evidently wants us to land, for he is pointing to the bush. Shall we go?”

“P’r’aps it’s as well, massa. Ob course no alligator’s sitch a fool as swaller dat little mout’ful when we’s alookin’ at it. I s’pose Leetle Cub wants us to go away, an’ gib ’em a chance.”

Having made up their minds to gratify the little fellow, they landed and accompanied him into the woods. He seemed quite to expect that they would do so and follow his lead. He set off at a smart pace in advance of them, carrying his bow on his shoulder. Lawrence was well repaid by this walk, because it led him into and through scenery of a more striking and beautiful character than he had yet seen of its kind. In many places the trees formed long aisles and vaulted colonnades and arches so regular that it seemed as though they had been planted by the hand of man. Elsewhere the chaos of tree and shrub, flower and fern and twining root was so indescribable, that it seemed as if chance and haphazard had originated it all; but the mind of our hero was cast, if we may say so, in too logical a mould to accept such an absurd origin for anything.

“My Father made it all,” he said, mentally, with a glow of enthusiasm; “and although, like a little child gazing at an intricate machine, I see not the order or arrangement, certain am I that both must be there.”

Between the treestems they saw anthills fully five or six feet high. From the trees hung thousands of orchids of various colours, and so attractive was the aspect of things overhead, that Lawrence was more than once tripped up by the long tangled grasses through which, in some parts, they had to push their way. Of course, there were plenty of parrots and monkeys and other creatures to make the forest lively. Indeed, in some parts there seemed a prospect of its becoming still more lively, for their little guide pointed out in soft places the footprints of tapirs and jaguars, which seemed to be quite fresh. Lizards innumerable crossed their path at every point; snakes were seen gliding out of their way a fortunate tendency on the part of most snakes! and the woods resounded with the singing of the yapu, a bird something like a blackbird, with yellow tips to its wings, and somewhat like the mockingbird in that it imitated every other bird in the forest. Whether there is jealousy between the yapu and the parrot we have not been able to ascertain, but if birds are like men in their sentiments, we fear it is more than probable. Unlike man, however, the yapu prefers to sing upsidedown, swinging the while from the branch of a tree, and ruffling its plumage.

“Hallo! massa. Look dar!” said Quashy, pointing with intense surprise at a neighbouring treestem. “Did you ebber see a crab climbin’ up a tree?”

“I certainly never did,” replied Lawrence, as he looked in the direction indicated, where he saw, not a crab indeed, but a monstrous hairy spider as large as a goodly sized crab. Stepping forward to examine the creature, he was surprised to have his hat twitched off his head, and found that it was the web of the said spider which had done it! Afterwards he learned that the spider in question subsists by catching little birds, and that its bite is not so venomous as that of a smaller kind which abounds in the woods there. Not being desirous of testing the creature’s power in that way at the time, he contented himself with inspecting it, and listening to a learned dissertation on spiders in general from Quashy, as he afterwards walked on.

Good fortune seemed to smile on them that day, for they had not advanced a hundred yards further when two large jaguars crossed their path. It is probable that they did not see the hunters, for they did not look up, but, gliding catlike into the jungle, quickly disappeared.

Perhaps it was fortunate that Lawrence and his man recovered their presence of mind when too late, for if they had fired hastily and only wounded the

creatures, it might have brought to an abrupt end their terrestrial career. As it was. Quashy recovered with a gasp, drew his two doublebarrelled pistols, which in his eagerness he neglected to cock, and, with one in each hand, rushed yelling after the jaguars. Lawrence cocked his gun and followed at a smart, though more sedate, pace. Leetle Cub, who probably thought them both fools, ran after them with a broad grin on his dingy countenance.

We need scarcely say that the pursuit was useless. Quashy returned in a few minutes with labouring breath, and streaming at every pore. Lawrence, scarcely less blown, sat down on a fallen tree and laughed when his lungs permitted. Of course he was joined by the sympathetic black, echoed by the small boy, and imitated not badly by a number of parrots which wisely availed themselves of the rare opportunity to learn a lesson from man!

As they advanced the path became more encumbered and difficult to traverse, so they determined to return. Their little guide, however, seemed to object very strongly, and made wonderful gesticulations in his efforts to induce them to go on. Lawrence, however, remained firm. Seeing at last that his followers had determined to rebel, the Cub gave up trying to influence them, scooped a quantity of wild honey out of a hole in a tree, and, sitting down in a halfsulky mood, sought to console himself by eating the same.

“Come, we’ll follow you in that, at all events,” said Lawrence, seating himself beside the child and regaling himself with the sweet food. Quashy followed his example with right goodwill.

When their modest meal was over they returned to the river. The little boy, on nearing it, ran anxiously forward in advance, and soon they perceived by his frantic gesticulations and shouts that something of interest awaited them there.

“He’s cotched!” cried Quashy, and darted off as if shot from a catapult.

Lawrence followed, using his long legs to such advantage that he was not far behind his man; for although gifted with greater powers of selfrestraint than Quashy, our hero was not a whit behind him in strong enthusiasm.

They found that an alligator not, indeed, of the largest size, but nevertheless about six or seven feet long had swallowed the monkey, and was tugging at the rope like a mad thing turning round and round in its rage, and smacking the water with its resounding tail.

Instantly they all laid hold of the rope, and began to drag it towards the bank.

“How shall we manage to kill it?” said Lawrence, as the monster came close in.

“Stick ’im! shot ’im! hang ’im. Nebber mind dat. Git ’im fust, kill ’im arter,” gasped the negro, as he strained at the rope, ably seconded by his comrades.

It was a hard tussle, and might have been unsuccessful if Lawrence and Quashy had not possessed more than average physical strength. As it was, they pulled the monstrous animal just near enough to get his head clear of the water, and then, putting several balls into him, killed him outright.

“Plenty ragoon now, massa!” exclaimed the negro, with a broad grin, after they had stowed the carcass in the canoe.

“Yes, Quash, more than enough.”

Leetle Cub seemed to have his mind running in the same direction, for he eyed the alligator with longing looks, and licked his lips expressively as they reentered the canoe, shoved off, and directed the bow homeward.

Chapter Fifteen

An Unexpected Attack and an Unlookedfor Arrival

Thus excitingly, and, we presume, pleasantly, passed the time at Tiger’s hut during three days.

In that period the Indian hunter quite recovered from his wounds, and his little girl, Manca by name, began to show decided signs of amendment under Manuela’s careful nursing. During that period, also, Spotted Tiger conducted his visitors to many scenes of beauty, where the young doctor not only shot a variety of game, large and small, feathered and furred, but made acquaintance with many quite new species of plants. He collected and preserved a few of the rarest of these, but owing to the style of travelling, both past and prospective, he had to deny himself much in that respect.

Likewise, during those three days, he made acquaintance with the numerous pets of Tiger’s household not the human pets, although he became a great favourite with these also, but the lower animal pets the turtle, and the noisy parrot already mentioned, a fat little guinea pig, a most melancholy red monkey, a young jaguar, a very juvenile tapir, a flamingo, and other creatures.

The tapir was about the size of a six months’ old pig. Instead of the blackish brown hair peculiar to the adult tapir, its coat was striped longitudinally with black, grey, and yellow, and was so brilliant in colour that the animal was quite a dazzling pet! besides which, it was an affectionate little thing, and particularly susceptible to the pleasure of being tickled.

The tame jaguar, however, was a very different style of animal. It did indeed like to be caressed, but it had gradually grown too large to be a safe plaything, and there was an occasional gleam in its eye which rendered Lawrence uneasy when he saw the Indian children playing with it. It was about the size of a small Newfoundland dog, but had grown up so gradually with the family that they appeared not to realise the danger attending its great strength. Spotted Tiger himself had indeed perceived something of it, for at the time we write of he had tied the animal to a stake with a stout rope, which was long enough to permit of his ranging in a wide circle.

Little did Lawrence dream of the part that peculiar pet was to play before the period of three days closed.

It was on the evening of the third day. They were all seated round a fire at supper, in front of the hut. Lawrence sat beside Manuela, as usual, and was taking much pains to teach her the correct pronunciation of an English word, of which she made a wonderful bungle, and seemed to derive much amusement from the fact, to judge from her occasional peals of silvery laughter. We use the word advisedly, in deference to the feelings of our hero, who thought and called the laughter silvery!

Tiger sat on the girl's other side, and Quashy was seated opposite, with Little Cub and several of the lesser cubs beside him. The pet jaguar crouched close to its stake, glaring at them. There was nothing unusual either in the attitude or the glare to cause anxiety, yet Lawrence did not like it, and while engaged in imparting the difficult lesson referred to, kept his eye on the brute.

Suddenly, without warning or roar, the dangerous pet sprang at Manuela! Why it selected her we cannot imagine, unless it was that, being a brute of good taste, it chose her as the tenderest of the party. The strong cord by which it was fastened snapped like a piece of thread, but Lawrence threw himself in front of the girl, caught the animal by the throat, and held him with both hands, as if in a vice. Instantly every claw of the four paws was buried in the flesh of his legs and arms, and he would certainly have been fearfully rent by his powerful antagonist if Tiger had not, with lightning stroke, buried his long keen knife in the animal's heart.

So swiftly and effectually was the deed done, that the jaguar next moment hung limp and dead in our hero's grasp. Dropping it on the ground, he turned up his sleeves to examine the wounds.

"Deep enough, but not lacerated, thank God," he said. "They won't give me much trouble. Come, Quash, into the bush, and help me to look at the other scratches and dress them. I must appoint you assistantsurgeon for the

occasion!”

Manuela murmured her thanks in a deep, tremulous voice that said much for her power of gratitude, and, timidly taking the youth's hand as he passed, humbly touched it with her lips.

The wounds were soon dressed, and, thanks to Tiger's promptitude, they did not afterwards give much trouble.

That night, as they were about to retire to their several hammocks, Lawrence went up to the Indian girl, and, for the first time, held out his hand for a shake in the white man's fashion.

“I'm glad, Manuela,” he said, as she frankly grasped it, “that it has pleased God to make me the instrument of protecting you.”

“Twice,” replied the girl quickly, and then paused, with a confused look, “how you say, twice or two times?”

“Say which you like,” replied Lawrence, with a hearty laugh; “the words will sound equally well from your lips, but ‘twice’ is the right way.”

“Well, twice you have save me. I am gratitude. My father will be gratitude.”

“Tell me, Manuela,” returned Lawrence, earnestly, “is your father a chief?”

“Yes, a great chief.”

There was a peculiar smile on the girl's lips as she said this that disconcerted him. We have said that he was naturally shy. He had intended to follow up his first question by asking if her father was descended from the Incas, but the peculiar smile checked him. He bade her goodnight, and turned abruptly away.

While he was sitting by the fire meditating on this matter, he heard a step in the bushes. Tiger, who had already retired to his hammock, also heard it, and bounded to his feet. Next instant Pedro glided into the circle of light and saluted them.

He appeared to be worn out with exhaustion, for, flinging himself on the ground beside the fire, he rested his head in silence for a few minutes on a poncho. Then, observing a piece of manioca cake that had been dropped by some one at supper, he took it up and ate it almost ravenously.

“Why, you seem to be starving, Pedro,” said Lawrence, earnestly

“Not so bad as that,” returned Pedro with a faint smile. “A man can scarcely be said to starve with so many of the fruits of the earth around him. But I've

been hard pressed since early morning, and”

“Stay,” interrupted Lawrence, “before you say another word, I will go and fetch you some food.”

“No need, senhor. My old friend Spotted Tiger has forestalled you.”

This was true. The Indian, having seen at a glance how matters stood, had gone up to the hut without speaking. He now returned with a bowl of boiled maize, a bunch of bananas, and a jar of water.

While his friend was busy with these, he asked a few questions, which Pedro answered briefly.

From the expression of the Indian’s face, Lawrence gathered that these replies caused him some anxiety. As the guide’s appetite became gradually appeased his loquacity increased, but he made few remarks to Lawrence until the meal was finished. Then, turning to him with a sigh of contentment, he said

“I’ve been slightly wounded, senhor, but I doubt not that you can soon put me all right.”

Taking off his poncho as he spoke, and pushing aside his light cotton shirt, he revealed the fact that his left breast was bound with a piece of bloodstained calico.

Lawrence at once examined the wound.

“A slight wound, indeed,” he said, “but vigorously dealt. I can see that, and you’ve had a narrow escape, too. Half an inch higher up would have been fatal.”

“Yes, it was meant to kill,” was Pedro’s quiet rejoinder; “but, thank God, I had a friend near who meant to save, and he turned the knife aside in time. Sit down now, I’ll tell you how it happened.

“My business required me to visit a certain tribe of Indians at a considerable distance from here, where the country is somewhat disturbed, and the white inhabitants are threatening to cut each other’s throats by way of mending political affairs. They took me for a spy. It is not the first time that I have been taken for a spy, and I suppose it won’t be the last,” continued Pedro, with a grave smile. “Of course I protested my innocence, explained my object, and showed that my visit was one of peace. They would have let me go if an enemy had not been in the camp. You see, Senhor Armstrong, I have many enemies as well as friends everywhere.”

“That is always the case with men who hold decided principles, and try to act up to them with vigour,” returned Lawrence.

“So I have found it,” rejoined Pedro, looking earnestly at his young friend. “You have had a more varied experience of life than I. Has that been your experience too?”

“It has. But I suspect that my experience of life has not been so much varied as yours, Pedro, for it has been chiefly among civilised communities until now. Still, I have observed that it is only those who swim with the current of public opinion, and jostle nobody, who manage to keep friends with everybody. When a man ventures to think for himself, as he ought to do, and take action, he is sure to have enemies as well as friends, supposing, of course, that he is a man of any power or influence.”

“Well, I suppose it is because I try to have influence,” rejoined Pedro, “that I manage to have plenty of friends and foes, the last being sometimes unreasonably bitter.”

“That proves your influence to be powerful,” said Lawrence.

“H’m! it may be so. I know not. Time will show. At all events, this enemy of mine stirred up a number of men like himself in the camp to such an extent that they seized me, and carried me to the banks of their river, with the purpose of throwing me to the alligators. Some of those who were in my favour ran along with them, and among them I observed one man who I knew would be willing to risk his life for me. This gave me hope; but my enemy did not approve of the mode of my execution; he thought rightly that a chance of escape was involved in it; so, to make sure, I suppose, he came close up, and when they were on the point of throwing me into the river, he drew his knife and made a plunge at my heart. My friend must have suspected something of the sort, for he had also pushed close to me, and I saw him give the would-be murderer the jostle that turned his knife aside.

“Next moment I was in the river. I knew that it swarmed with alligators, and felt an uncomfortable thrill as I went in head foremost; but I knew also that I was a strong and swift swimmer, so I struck out for my life to the opposite bank, which was not more than forty yards off. I splashed as much as I could, for you know, senhor, that splashing tends to keep alligators off, though it is not always successful. Before I had made half a dozen strokes, however, I felt my flesh creep. Do you know what it feels like to have your flesh creep?”

“No, not exactly,” replied Lawrence; “but I have a pretty good guess as to what you mean.”

“Well,” resumed the guide, “I felt my flesh creep, for I heard a most awful puffing and splashing close behind me. At the same time I heard a wild cheer on the bank, as if my foes were rejoicing at the prospect of my being eaten up! I looked back quickly, expecting to see the terrible jaws and the long rows of teeth; but, to my great surprise, I saw only my friend pursuing me with his knife in his teeth, as if he wanted to finish me. I understood the thing at once. The good fellow knew that two could make a better splashing than one, and he also hoped, no doubt, that his comrades would give him credit for extreme bravery in thus jumping into such danger for the sake as they would suppose of killing an enemy! The cheer they gave him showed what they thought on that point.

“We both gained the opposite bank I a few yards in advance. You may be sure I was not slow in bounding up the bank. I could hear the howl of rage with which the villains saw the failure of their plan. What is more, I could both hear and see the arrows that were sent after me, but, through God’s blessing, none of them touched me, and I was soon in the shelter of the woods. I could also hear my friend panting at my heels.

“I’m a pretty fair runner,” continued Pedro, “but my friend is a better. He passed me like a deer. ‘Come on,’ he cried, ‘you’ve no time to lose.’ From which I knew he meant that the blackguards would cross the river in canoes and pursue me. He led me across a spit of jungleland where the river took a sudden bend, and came out on the bank at the head of a long rapid. On reaching the bank he pulled out a small canoe which had been concealed there, and told me to jump in. ‘You’ll have to run the rapid. It’s not much of a chance, but it’s your only one.’ I squeezed his hand, thanked him hastily, and was soon paddling quickly with the current. In a few moments I heard my friend shouting with rage and brandishing his knife. He was acting, I knew. Looking back I saw that a number of men had joined him, and again the arrows began to drop around me, but I was soon beyond their reach and battling with the rapid.

“Well was it for me that I have been much used to canoeing, for the words of my friend, ‘It’s not much of a chance,’ were literally true. For some minutes I was whirled about by eddies and shoots in such a way that it seems to me now a miracle that I escaped being dashed to pieces several times. I forgot all about my pursuers, so great was the danger; but when at last I ran out of the lowest shoot into the water below the rapids, I saw, on looking back, that they were still following me along the banks. I was going faster, however, than they were, so I felt easier in my mind, till I saw them jump into several canoes and push off in chase. By that time I had more than a mile of start, and the sun was setting. ‘Now, Pedro,’ said I to myself, ‘it’s a fair race for your life; so bend

your back to it, my boy.' I went on till it grew so dark that I could hardly see twenty yards ahead of me. Then I put ashore, hauled the canoe up among the reeds, climbed into a tree and went to sleep, for well I knew that it would be death both to them and me if we continued descending a stream like that in the dark.

"Well, I slept like a top, for I was dead beat; but two or three times I awoke with a tremendous start under the impression that I was falling. I've always found it so when obliged to spend the night in the branches of a tree. Did you ever sleep so, Senhor Armstrong?"

Lawrence confessed that he had never yet indulged in such birdlike repose.

"Well, it's not so difficult as you might think," continued Pedro, with a meditative gaze at the fire, "especially if you're very tired, hard pressed for time, and in some danger. Under these circumstances it's wonderful what a fellow can do to make the best of his opportunities. You find out, somehow, the surest way to twine your legs and arms in among the branches, and twist your feet and fingers into the forks and twigs don't you know?"

Yes, Lawrence knew well; at least, if he did not know exactly, he had a powerful imagination!

"Well, then, long before daylight I was up and off, feeling my way as best I could in the first grey glimpses of dawn, so that I got a good start at least I thought so; but soon I found my pursuers had also started early and were overhauling me; and no wonder, seeing that their canoes were large and well manned. I now felt that I had no chance of escaping by water, but I had by that time got into a part of the country with which I was well acquainted, and knew that if I could only reach a certain point before being caught, I might take to the bush and cross overland to my friend's hut here. That was early this morning. The only trouble I had was that my wound was beginning to give me considerable pain, and I felt losing strength for want of food. I had scarce time to eat, much less to search for food, they pressed me so hard. However, a man makes a hard struggle for life, so I tightened my belt, and set to work with such good will, that I was soon a long way ahead of them, and got out of sight at a place where the river takes a number of bends and is full of small islands. At last, about noon, I reached the desired point, paddled carefully in among the reeds, so as to prevent the savages seeing where I had landed, jumped ashore, hid the canoe, stepped out as hard as I could, and here I am."

"But," exclaimed Lawrence, with some excitement, "if you left the Indians so recently, won't they be close on your heels?"

"No fear. I came here in a straight line overland. By the windings of the river

they cannot be here, even at the soonest, before the afternoon of tomorrow. But they will probably give up the chase long before getting this length. Besides, if they did arrive, they would find a warm reception from four wellarmed men, instead of catching one poor unarmed fugitive. But we won't give them the chance. We will be up and away by daybreak. Tiger here has agreed to join us in our trip to Buenos Ayres. He will take his wife and family down stream to his fatherinlaw's tribe, where they will be safe till his return. Are you all well, and ready for a start?"

"Yes, all welland shall be ready as soon as you please."

"That's right. Where's Quashy?"

"Close alongside. Don't you hear him?"

Lawrence referred to a sound like the drone of a giant mosquito, which proceeded from the negro's nose, for that worthy was a heavy sleeperwhen not in dangerand had not been disturbed by the arrival of the guide.

Giving vent to a prolonged yawn, Pedro rose and stretched himself. Then he went up to the sleeping Quashy and took him by the nose, at the same time putting his hand on his mouth to smother the inevitable yell in its birth. When sufficiently awake to be released with safety, the amiable negro was permitted to raise himself, and when aware of who had grasped him, he beamed with goodwill, and gleamed with surprise.

"Get up, Quashy, and help them to pack," said Pedro, curtly, "we start at daybreak."

Quashy was on his feet in a moment. "Don't rouse me till it's time to start," added Pedro, who thereupon rolled into the vacant hammock, and was asleepperchance in the land of dreamsalmost as soon as his wearied head reposed on the negro's pillow.

Chapter Sixteen

Tells of Absurd, as well as Evil, Doings, and winds up with a Horrid Surprise.

Whether Pedro's pursuers continued the chase as far as the Indian hunter's hut we cannot tell, for long before noon of the following day our travellers were far from the huntinggrounds of the gallant savage.

Soon after the usual midday siesta, the canoe, which contained the whole of the hunter's worldly wealth, was run on the beach near to the spot where dwelt his fatherinlaw with many members of his tribe.

That worthy old man, in a light evening costume consisting of a cotton shirt and straw hat, came down to receive his children, who landed amid much noise with their boys and girls and household gods, including the red monkey, the parrot, the flamingo, the fat guineapig, the turtle, and the infant tapir. The old chief was quite willing to take care of the family during the absence of his son-in-law, and was very pressing in his offers of hospitality to the white travellers, but Pedro refused to delay more than an hour at the village.

The old man also evinced a considerable amount of curiosity in regard to Manuela, and made one or two attempts to engage her in conversation, but on being informed by Pedro that she belonged to a tribe living halfway between his huntinggrounds and the regions of Patagonia, and that she did not understand his dialect at all, he forbore to question her, and satisfied himself with simply gazing.

After a farewell which was wonderfully affectionate for savages, Spotted Tiger embarked in Pedro's canoe, and, pushing off into the river, bade the Indians adieu.

The canoe in which the party now travelled belonged to Tiger, and was larger as well as more commodious than that in which they had hitherto journeyed, having a gondolalike cabin constructed of grasses and palmleaves, underneath which Manuela found shelter from the sun. In the evenings Pedro could lie at full length on the top of it and smoke his cigarette. They were floating with the current, you see, and did not require to labour much at the paddles at that time.

It would weary the reader were we to continue our description of the daily proceedings of our adventurers in journalistic form. To get on with our tale requires that we should advance by bounds, and even flights not exactly of fancy, but over stretches of space and time, though now and then we may find it desirable to creep or even to stand still.

We request the reader to creep with us at present, and quietly listen while Pedro and Tiger talk.

Pedro lies extended on his back on the roof of the gondolalike cabin, his hands under his head, his knees elevated, and a cigarette in his mouth. Lawrence and Quashy are leaning in more or less lazy attitudes on the gunwale of the canoe, indulging now and then in a few remarks, which do not merit attention. Manuela, also in a reclining attitude, rests under the shade of the erection on which Pedro lies, listening to their discourse. Tiger is the only one on duty, but his labour is light: it consists merely of holding the steering oar, and guiding the light craft along the smooth current of the river. Pedro lies with his head to

the stern, so that his talk with the Indian is conducted, so to speak, upsidedown. But that does not seem to incommode them, for the ideas probably turn right end foremost in passing to and fro.

Of course their language is in the Indian tongue. We translate.

“Tiger,” said Pedro, sending a long whiff of smoke straight up towards the bright blue sky, where the sun was beginning to descend towards his western couch, “we shan’t make much, I fear, of the men of this part of the country.”

“I did not expect that you would,” replied the Indian, giving a gentle turn to his oar in order to clear a mudbank, on which a number of alligators were basking comfortably.

“Why so, Tiger? Surely peace and good government are as desirable to them as to others.”

“No doubt, but many of them do not love peace. They are young. Their blood is hot, and they have nothing to do. When that is so, war is pleasant to them. It is natural. Man must work, or play, or fight. He cannot lie still. Those who are killed cannot return to tell their comrades what fools they have been, so those that remain are greater fools than ever.”

“I agree with you, Tiger; but you see it is not the young men who have the making of war, though they generally get all the doing of it, and the poor women and children take the consequences; it is the governors, whom one would expect to show some sort of wisdom, and recognise the fact that union is strength, and that respect for Law is the only hope of the land.”

“Governors,” returned Tiger, in a deep voice, “are not only fools, but villainstyrants!”

The Indian spoke with such evidence of suppressed indignation that Pedro tried to look at him.

The aspect of his frowning countenance upsidedown was not conducive to gravity.

“Come, Tiger,” said Pedro, with a tendency to laugh, “they are not all tyrants; I know one or two who are not bad fellows.”

“I know one who is a fool and a robber.”

“Indeed. What has he done to make you so bitter?” asked Pedro.

“Made us wear spectacles!” replied the Indian, sternly.

“What do you mean?”

“Have you not heard about it?”

“No; you know I have been away in Chili for some time, and am ignorant of much that has been going on in these parts.”

“There is in Spain a white man, I know not who,” said Tiger, with an expression of ineffable contempt, “but he must be the chief of the fools among the white men, who seem to me to be all fools together.”

“Thank you for the compliment,” said Pedro, with a laugh.

“This white fool,” continued Tiger, paying no regard to his friend’s interruption, “thought that he would send out here for sale some spectaclesglass things, you know, that old white men look through when they cannot see. We Indians, as you know, never need such things. We can see well as long as we live. It is supposed that a mistake was made by some one, for something like a canoeload of spectacles was sent outso many that in a hundred years the white men could not have used them up. The trader knew not what to do. There was no sale for them. He applied to the governorthat robber of whom I have spoken. He said to the trader, with a wink of his eyethat sort of wink which the white fool gives when he means to pass from folly to knavery‘Wait,’ he said, ‘and you shall see.’ Then he issued an order that no Indian should dare to appear in his district, or in church during festivaldays, without spectacles! The consequence was that the spectacles were all sold. I know not the price of these foolish things, but some white men told me they were sold at an enormous profit.”

Although Pedro sympathised heartily with his brown friend in his indignation, he could not quite repress a smile at the ridiculous ideas called up. Fortunately the Indian failed to interpret an upsidedown smile, particularly with the moustache, as it were, below instead of above the mouth, and a cigarette in the lips. It was too complicated.

“And were you obliged to buy and wear a pair of these spectacles, Tiger?” asked Pedro, after a few silent puffs.

“Yeslook! here they are,” he replied, with inconceivable bitterness, drawing forth the implements of vision from his pouch and fixing them on his nose with intense disgust. Then, suddenly plucking them off; he hurled them into the river, and said savagely“I was a Christian once, but I am not a Christian now.”

“How? what do you mean?” asked Pedro, raising himself on his elbow at this,

so as to look straightly as well as gravely at his friend.

“I mean that the religion of such men must be false,” growled the Indian, somewhat defiantly.

“Now, Tiger,” returned his friend in a remonstrative tone, “that is not spoken with your usual wisdom. The religion which a man professes may be true, though his profession of it may be false. However, I am not unwilling to admit that the view of our religion which is presented in this land is false and false. Nevertheless, Christianity is true. I will have some talk with you at another time on this subject, my friend. Meanwhile, let us return to the point from which we broke off the disturbed state of this unhappy country.”

Let us pause here, reader, to assure you that this incident of the spectacles is no fiction. Well would it be for the South American Republics at this day, as well as for the good name of Spain, if the poor aborigines of South America had nothing more serious to complain of than the arbitrary act of the dishonest governor referred to; but it is a melancholy fact that, ever since the conquest of Peru by Pizarro, the Spaniards have treated the Indians with brutal severity, and it is no wonder that revenge of the fiercest nature still lingers in the breasts of the descendants of those unfortunate savages.

Probably our reader knows that the Peruvian region of the Andes is rich in gold and silver mines. These the Spanish conquerors worked by means of Indian slave labour. Not long after the conquest a compulsory system of personal toil was established, whereby a certain proportion of the natives of each district were appointed by lot to work in the mines. Every individual who obtained a grant of a mine became entitled to a certain number of Indians to work it, and every mine which remained unwrought for a year and a day became the property of any one who chose to claim and work it. As there were many hundreds of mines registered in Peru alone, it may be imagined what a host of Indians were consequently condemned to a degraded state of slavery.

The labour of the mines was so dreadful that each unfortunate on whom the lot fell considered it equivalent to his death warrant. And that there was ground for this belief is proved by the fact that not more than one in six of the Indians condemned to the mines survived the treatment there inflicted. Each mitayo, or conscript, received nominally two shillings a day. But he never actually received it. On his fate being fixed by lot, the poor fellow carried his wife and children to the mines with him, and made arrangements for never again returning home. His food and lodging, being supplied by his employers, owners? were furnished at such an extravagant rate that he always found himself in debt at the end of his first year if he outlived it. In that case he was not allowed to leave until his debt was paid, which, of course, it never was.

Usually, however, the bad air and heavy labour of the mines, coupled with grief, told so much on men accustomed to the fresh air and free life of the wilderness, that death closed the scene before the first year of servitude was out. It is said that above eight millions of natives have perished thus in the mines of Peru.

We have shown briefly one of the many phases of tyrannical cruelty practised by the conquerors of the land. Here is another specimen. At first there were few merchants in Peru, therefore privilege was granted to the Spanish corregidores, or governors of districts, to import goods suitable for Indians, and barter them at a fair price. Of course this permission was abused, and trade became a compulsory and disgraceful traffic. Useless and worthless articles and damaged goods razors, for instance, silk stockings, velvets, etcetera were forced on Indians who preferred naked feet and had no beards.

The deeds of the soldiers, miners, and governors were but too readily copied by the priests, many of whom were rapacious villains who had chosen the crucifix as their weapon instead of the sword. One priest, for instance, besides his regular dues and fees, received during the year as presents, which he exacted at certain festivals, sheep, head of poultry, guinea pigs, and , eggs, and he would not say mass on those festival days until a due proportion of the presents was delivered. And this case of extortion is not told of one of the priests of old. It occurred in the second quarter of the present century. Another priest summoned a widow to make declaration of the property left her by her husband, so that he might fix the scale of his burial fees! He made a high demand. She implored his mercy, reminding him of her large family. He was inexorable, but offered to give up his claim if she would give him her eldest son a boy of eight to be sold as a slave or given away as a present. It seems that the señoras of those lands want such boys to carry their kneeling carpets. The civil authorities could not be appealed to in this case. There was no redress, so the widow had to agree to give up her son! Doubtless both in camp and in church there may have been good men, but if so, they form an almost invisible minority on the page of Peruvian history.

In short, tyranny in every form was, and for centuries has been, practised by the white men on the savages; and it is not a matter of wonder that the memory of these things rankles in the Indian's bosom even at the present time, and that in recent books of travel we read of deeds of diabolical cruelty and revenge which we, in peaceful England, are too apt to think of as belonging exclusively to the days of old.

But let us return to our friends in the little canoe.

“To tell you the truth,” said Pedro to the Indian, “I am deeply disappointed with the result of my mission. It is not so much that men do not see the advantages and necessity for union, as that they are heartless and indifferent caring nothing, apparently, for the welfare of the land, so long as the wants and pleasures of the present hour are supplied.”

“Has it ever been otherwise?” asked Tiger, with grave severity of expression.

“Well, I confess that my reading of history does not warrant me to say that it has; but my reading of the good Creator’s Word entitles me to hope for and strive after better times.”

“I know not,” returned the Indian, with a faroff, pensive look, “what your histories say. I cannot read. There are no books in my tongue, but my memory is strong. The stories, true stories, of my fathers reach very far back to the time before the white man came to curse the land, and I remember no time in which men did not desire each other’s property, and slay each other for revenge. It is man’s nature, as it is the river’s nature to flow down hill.”

“It is man’s fallen, not his first, nature,” said Pedro. “Things were as bad in England once. They are not quite so bad now. God’s law has made the difference. However, we must take things here as we find them, and I’m sorry to think that up to this point my mission has been a failure. Indeed, the last effort, as you know, nearly cost me my life.”

“And what will you now do?” asked Tiger.

“I will visit a few more places in the hope that some of the people may support us. After that, I’ll mount and away over the Pampas to Buenos Ayres; see the colonel, and deliver Manuela to her father.”

“The whitehaired chief?” asked Tiger.

“Even so,” replied Pedro.

During the foregoing conversation Quashy had thrust his fat nose down on a plank and gone to sleep, while Lawrence and Manuela, having nothing better to do, taught each other Spanish and English respectively! And, strange though it may appear, it is a fact that Manuela, with all her quickwitted intelligence, was wonderfully slow at learning English. To Lawrence’s intense astonishment and, it must be confessed, to his no small disappointment, the Indian maiden not only made the same blunders over and over again, and seemed to be incapable of making progress, but even laughed at her own stupidity. This somewhat cooled his admiration of her character, which coolness afforded him satisfaction rather than the reverse, as going far to prove

that he was not really, as how could he be? in love with the brownskinned, uneducated, half-savage girl, but only much impressed with her amiable qualities. Poor fellow, he was much comforted by these thoughts, because, had it been otherwise, how terrible would have been his fate! either, on the one hand, to marry her and go and dwell with her savage relations perhaps be compelled to paint his visage scarlet with arabesque devices in charcoal, and go on the warpath against the white man; or, on the other hand, to introduce his Indian bride into the salons of civilisation, with the certainty of beholding the sneer of contempt on the face of outraged society; with the probability of innumerable violations of the rules of etiquette, and the possibility of Manuela exhibiting the squaw's preference for the floor to a chair, fingers to knives and forks, and pooh! the thing was absurd, utterly out of the question!

Towards sunset they came to a part of the river where there were a good many sandbanks, as well as extensive reaches of sand along shore.

On one of these lowly spits they drew up the canoe, and encamped for that night in the bushes, close enough to the edge to be able to see the river, where a widespreading tree canopied them from the dews of night.

Solemn and inexpressibly sad were the views of life taken by Lawrence that night as he stood by the river's brink in the moonlight, while his companions were preparing the evening meal, and gave himself up to the contemplation of things past, present, and to come, which is very much like saying that he thought about nothing in particular. What he felt quite sure of was that he was horribly depressed and dissatisfied with himself, his companions and his surroundings, and ashamed in no small degree of his dissatisfaction. As well he might be; for were not his companions particularly agreeable, and were not his surroundings exquisitely beautiful and intensely romantic? The moon in a cloudless sky glittered in the broad stream, and threw its rippling silver treasures at his very feet. A gentle balmy air fanned his cheek, on which mantled the hue of redundant health, and the tremendous puffs and longdrawn sighs of the alligators, with the growl of jaguars, croak and whistle of frogs, and the voice of the howling monkey, combined to fill his ear with the music of thrilling romance, if not of sweetness.

"What more could I wish?" he murmured, self-reproachfully.

A tremendous slap on the face dealt by his own hand, as a giant mosquito found and probed some tenderer spot than usual reminded him that some few things, which he did not wish for, were left to mingle in his cup of too great felicity, and reduce it, like water in overproof whisky, to the level of human capacity.

Still dissatisfied, despite his reflections, he returned to the fire under the spreading tree, and sat down to enjoy a splendid basin of turtle soup, soup prepared by Tiger the day before from the flesh of a turtle slain by his own hand, and warmed up for the supper of that evening. A large tin dish or tureen full of the same was placed at his elbow to tempt his appetite, which, to say truth, required no tempting.

Manuela, having already supped, sat with her little hands clasped in her lap, and her lustrous eyes gazing pensively into the fire. Perhaps she was attempting to read her fortune in the blazing embers. Perchance engaged in thinking of that very common subject nothing! If Pedro had smoked the same thing, it would have been better for his health and pocket; but Pedro, thinking otherwise, fumigated his fine moustache, and disconcerted the mosquitoes in the region of his nose.

Quashy, having just replenished the fire until the logs rose two feet or more from the ground, turned his back on the same, warmed his hands behind him, and gazed up through the overarching boughs at the starry sky with that wistfully philosophical expression which negroes are apt to assume when their thoughts are "too deep," or too complex, "for utterance."

Spotted Tiger continued to dally with the turtle soup, and seemed loath to give in as he slowly, with many a pause between, raised the huge iron spoon to his lips.

No one seemed inclined to break the silence into which they had sunk, for all were more or less fatigued; and it seemed as if the very brutes around sympathised with them, for there was a perceptible lull in the whistling of the frogs, the howling monkeys appeared to have gone to rest, and the sighing alligators to have subsided and sunk, so that the breaking of a twig or the falling of a leaf was perceptible to the listening ear.

Things were in this state of profound and peaceful calm when a slight rustling was heard among the branches of the tree above them.

The instant glare of Quashy's eyes; the gaze of Manuela's; the cock of Pedro's ear, and the sudden pause of our hero's spoon on its way to his lips, were sights to behold! The Indian alone seemed comparatively indifferent to the sound, though he looked up inquiringly.

At that moment there burst forth an earsplitting, marrowshrivelling bloodcurdling yell, that seemed to rouse the entire universe into a state of wild insanity. There could be no mistaking it the peculiar, horrid, shrieking, only too familiar warwhoop of the painted savage!

Quashy staggered back. He could not recover himself, for a log had caught his heel. To sit down on the fire he knew would be death, therefore he bounded over it backwards and fell into Lawrence's lap, crushing that youth's plate almost into the region where the soup had already gone, and dashing his feet into the tureen!

Lawrence roared; Manuela shrieked; Pedro sprang up and seized his weapons. So did Lawrence and his man, regardless of the soup.

Tiger alone sat still, conveying the iron spoon slowly to his lips, but with a peculiar motion of his broad shoulders which suggested that the usually grave savage was convulsed with internal laughter.

"Ghosts and crokidiles!what's dat?" gasped Quashy, staring up into the tree, and ready to fire at the first visible object.

Tiger also looked up, made a peculiar sound with his mouth, and held out his hand.

Immediately a huge bird, responding to the call, descended from the tree and settled on his wrist.

Quashy's brief commentary explained it all.

"Purrit!"

It was indeed the Indian's faithful petparrot, which he had taught thus to raise the warcy of his tribe, and which, having bestowed its entire affections on its master, was in the habit of taking occasional flights after him when he went away from home.

Chapter Seventeen

In which Ingenuity, Comicality, Ferocity, Eccentricity, Fecundity, and some other "Ities" in Man and Beast are mentioned.

Plain sailing, fair weather, perpetual calm and sunshine are not the lot of any man or woman here.

The weather, that fertile source of human intercourse, is occasionally boisterous as well as serene in the regions of Peru and Bolivia. A day or two after the events recounted in the last chapter our travellers experienced a sudden change.

We have said that they had come to a part of the river where there were occasional stretches of sand, and here they had evidence of the improvident

nature of Indians, in the number of turtleshells found lying on the sands with parts of the animals still adhering to them.

On one particular spot they found a space, of about seventy yards in diameter completely covered with the upper and under shells of turtles. These had evidently been cut asunder violently with hatchets, and reddishbrown furrows in the sands told where streams of blood had flowed during the massacre.

“What wanton slaughter!” exclaimed Lawrence, as he and his friends stood looking at the scene.

“And it is not long since it was done,” said Pedro, “for the fleshat least what’s left of itis still fresh.”

“Ugh, you brutes!” exclaimed Quashy, referring to a number of urubu vultures which stood on the shells, all more or less gorged, some still tearing sleepily at the meat, others standing in apoplectic apathy, quite unable to fly.

They counted upwards of three hundred dead turtles, and this carnage, it was afterwards ascertained, had been the work of only a dozen or so of Indiansnot for food, but for the sake of the fine yellow fat covering the intestines, which formed an article of commerce at the time between the red men and the white.

That night after supper time the party busied themselves in making mosquitocurtains out of a small quantity of green muslin obtained from Spotted Tiger’s fatherinlaw, who had received it from the missionaries. The supply being quite insufficient to make curtains for them all, Quashy had set his fertile brain to work and devised a species of net which, having never been seen in that country before, deserves special notice. It may serve as a hint to other mortals similarly situated and tormented.

“You mus’ know,” remarked Quashy to his friends, who watched him while he fabricated the first of these curtains, “dat my gran’fadder was a injineer, an’ some ob his geenus comed down to me. Dat’s why I’s so clebber wid my hands. Has you got dem hoops tied, massa?”

“All right, Quashy, I’m just finishing the last one. Thereare these the right sizes?”

“Das right, massa. Biggest two one futt six in dameter; oder two leetle ones, one futt. Now, you looks here, ladies an’ gen’lemen. See, I’s made a bag ob dis muzzlin ’bout two futt six long an’ ’bout two futt wide. Well, one end ob de bag is close upas you see. ’Tother end am openas you b’hold. Vwalla! as de Frenchman says. Now, I puts into de closed end one small hoopso. Den de two large hoopsso’bout six inches apart. Den de leetle hoopso. Which makes my

bag into what you may call a gauzebarrel, wid de hoops inside 'stead ob outside. Nixt, I puts it ober my head, lets de bottom hoop rest on my shoulders, shoves de slack ob de veill calls it a veil, not a curtin, down my neck under my poncho, so's nuffin can git inside, an' dere you are. No skeeters git at me now!"

"But, Quash," said Lawrence, who had watched the making of this ingenious device, as well as lent assistance, "there are mosquitoes inside it even now; and with such swarms as are about us, how will you keep them out while putting the thing on."

"Don' call it a 't'ing,' massa," said Quashy, with a dignified look, "call it a 'veil.' Dere's nuflin easier. See here."

He rose, took off the veil, and flattened the hoops down on each other, so as to drive out all that might be inside. Then he stepped to leeward of the fire, held his breath for a few seconds while in the smoke, quickly adjusted his novel headpiece, and stood up fully armed against the "skeeters."

"But," still objected Lawrence, "how can you lay your head on your pillow with such a thingbeg pardon, such a veil on?"

"Nuffin easier, massa."

He illustrated his point by rolling over into one of the nearest hammocks which had already been hung and laying his head down, when, of course, the machine bulged away from his black face, and the discomfited millions kept thrusting their probosces and, doubtless, making faces at him ineffectually.

"But how if you should want to roll about in your sleep?" asked Pedro.

"Don't want to roll about in your sleep!" replied the negro, curtly.

It is right to say that, in spite of the advice thus firmly given, Quashy did roll in his sleep that night, with the result that his nose at last got close to the veil and pressed against it. No malignant foe ever took advantage of an enemy's weak point more promptly than did the "skeeters" of Quashy's nocturnal trumpet. They settled on its point with a species of triumphant hum. They warred with each other in their bloodthirsty desire to seize on the delicate but limited morsel. It was "cut and come again" at least it was "cut away and let others come on" as long as the chance lasted. And the consequence was that Quashy rose next morning with two noses! His natural nose being a mere lump of fat and the lump raised on it being much the same in form and size with the original, we feel justified in saying that he had two noses nearly.

Notwithstanding, it is but fair to add that the veils were afterwards pronounced a great success.

But to return.

That night, after the veils in question had been made and put on by all except Tiger, who was skeetproof, and the happy wearers were steeped in blissful repose, a tremendous hurricane burst upon them, with thunder, lightning, and rain. The wind came in furious gusts which tore away some of the veils, overturned the hammocks, scattered the bedding, extinguished the fire, drenched them to the skin, and otherwise rendered them supremely miserable.

Retiring to a thicker part of the jungle, they cut down branches and made a temporary erection which they covered with ponchos and blankets; but as everything had to be done in the dark, it was a wretched affair, and, at the best, only a partial protection. Into the furthest extremity of this hut poor Manuela crept. The others followed, and there they all sat or reclined, shivering, till morning.

About daybreak Lawrence heard Pedro and the Indian girl conversing in the Indian language and in unusually earnest tones, which were interrupted once or twice by slight laughter. He wondered much what they found to laugh at, but having become by that time accustomed to the guide's little touches of mystery, and being very sleepy, he did not trouble himself about it long.

The storm happily was shortlived, and when the sun appeared, enabling them to dry their garments, and a good breakfast had been eaten, the discomforts of the past night were forgotten, and Quashy even ceased to growl at the "skeeters" and lament his double nose.

Hitherto they had met with few Indians, and these few were friendly, being acquainted either personally or by report with Spotted Tiger, for the man's reputation as a jaguar and puma slayer had extended far beyond his own tribe. That day, however, several native canoes were passed, and in the evening they found that the place on which Tiger had made up his mind to encamp was in possession of Indians.

"Friendly?" asked Pedro, as they approached the shore.

"Yes, friendly," replied Tiger.

"Would it not be better to go a little further and encamp away from them?" asked Lawrence, who retained unpleasant memories of the dirtiness of Indian encampments.

“Tiger wishes to speak to them,” said Pedro, as the canoe was run on shore.

It was found that the party consisted of several families of Indians who were out on a turtlehunting expedition, for the season had arrived when turtles lay their eggs.

This laying season of the turtle sets the whole population of those regions, civilised and savage, in motion, searching in the sands for eggs, and capturing or killing the animals. The Indians now met with were on the latter business. Upon the weather depends the commencement of this season of unwonted activity among the turtles and wild excitement among the riverside Indians, for the snows must cease to fall on the summits of the Andes, and the rivers must decrease in volume so as to lay bare vast spaces of sand, before the eggs can be laid.

No alderman in London city ever equalled much less excelled a South American savage of that region in his love of turtle, or in his capacity for devouring it. But the savage goes immeasurably further than the alderman! He occupies altogether a higher and more noble position in regard to the turtle, for he not only studies, with prolonged care and deep interest, its habits and manners, but follows it, watches it, catches it, kills it, and, finally, cooks it with his own hands, before arriving at the alderman’s comparatively simple and undignified act of eating it.

So exact are these Indians in their observations and knowledge of the turtle question, that they can tell almost to a day when and where their unsuspecting victims will land and lay. There was an extensive stretch of flat sand close to the spot where our voyageurs put ashore, on which the Indians had observed numerous clawmarked furrows, which had been traced by the turtles. Here, therefore, they had called a halt, built a number of ajoupas, or leafy sheds, about two hundred yards from the edge of the river, under the shelter of which to sit at night and watch for their prey.

The turtles, it was found, were expected to land that night. Meanwhile, the savages were regaling themselves with a splendid dish, or rather jar, containing hundreds of turtles’ eggs, mixed with bananas.

These they hospitably shared with their visitors. The mess was very palatable, though “heavy,” and our travellers did justice to it especially the negro, whose gastronomic powers were equal to all emergencies.

“How do they know,” asked Lawrence, as he and Pedro busied themselves in tying up the hammocks in a suitable part of the jungle, “when to expect the turtles?”

“Who can tell?” said Pedro. “Instinct, I suppose.”

“But dey not stink at all,” objected Quashy, “anyhow, not till arter dey’s dead, so’t can’t be dat.”

“It’s not that kind of stink I mean, Quashy; quite another sort,” said Pedro, who felt unequal to the task of explanation. “But look sharp; we must lend the Indians a helping hand tonight.”

“But I don’t know nuffin about it,” said Quashy, “an’ a man what don’t know what to do is on’y in de way ob oder peepil.”

“You take a just view of things, boy,” returned Pedro, “but you won’t find it difficult to learn. Five minutes looking at what the Indians do will suffice, for they only turn the turtles.”

“How you mean? Turn ’im upsidedown, or outside inw’ich?”

“You’d find it hard to do the last, Quashy. No, you’ve only to turn them over on their backs, and let them lie; that’s all.”

While the negro was thus gathering useful knowledge, the Indians amused themselves in various ways until darkness should call them forth to the business of the hour. Some, with that amazing tendency to improve their personal appearance, which is common alike to civilised and savage, plucked out the little beard with which nature had endowed them by means of tweezers, deeming it no doubt wiser on the whole to pluck up the beard by the roots than to cut it off close thereto, as indeed it was, seeing that the former process did not need regular repetition. Others were still busy with the turtleegg ragout, unable, apparently to decide whether or not appetite was satisfied. Two somewhat elderly but deeply interested savages whiled away the time with a game of cupandball, turn and turn about, with imperturbable gravity.

This game was different from that of Europe to the extent of being played on precisely opposite principles. It was not he who caught the ball on the point of the sharp stick that won, but he who failed to catch it, for failure was more difficult to achieve than success! The explanation is simple. The handle was a piece of pointed wood, about the thickness of a ramrod, and a yard or so in length. To this, by a piece of string made from fibres of the palm, was attached the ball, which was formed of the skull of a turtle, carefully scraped. There was no “cup” in the game. It was all point, and the great point was to touch the ball a certain number of times without catching it, a somewhat difficult feat to accomplish owing to the dozen or more natural cavities with which the skullball was pierced, and into one of which the point was almost always

pretty sure to enter.

At last the shades of night descended on the scene, and the Indians, laying aside ragout, tweezers, cupandball, etcetera, went down to the sandflats, and crouched, kneeled, or squatted under the leafy ajoupas. Of course their visitors accompanied them.

It was a profoundly dark night, for during the first part of it there was no moon, and the stars, although they lent beauty and lustre to the heavens, did not shed much light upon the sands. There is a weird solemnity about such a scene which induces contemplative thought even in the most frivolous, while it moves the religious mind to think more definitely, somehow, of the near presence of the Creator. For some time Lawrence, who crouched in profound silence beside Pedro, almost forgot the object for which he was waiting there. The guide seemed to be in a similarly absent mood, for he remarked at last in a low voice

“How striking would be the contrasts presented to us constantly by nature, if we were not so thoroughly accustomed to them! Storm, and noise, and war of elements last night, tonight, silence, calm, and peace! At present, darkness profound, in half an hour or so the moon will rise, and the sands will be like a sheet of silver. This moment, quiet repose, a few moments hence, it may be, all will be turmoil and wildest action that is, if the turtles come.”

“True,” assented Lawrence, “and we may add yet another illustration: at one moment, subjects of contemplation most sublime, next moment, objects the most ridiculous.”

He pointed as he spoke to Quashy, whose grinning teeth and glaring eyes alone were distinctly visible in the background of ebony. He was creeping on his hands and knees, by way of rendering himself, if possible, less obtrusive.

“Massa,” he said, in a hoarse yet apologetic whisper, “I’s come to ax if you t’ink de turtles am comin’ at all dis night.”

“How can I tell, Quash, you stupid fellow? Get away to your own ajoupa, and keep quiet. I wonder the Indians haven’t let fly a poisoned arrow at you. Go, and have patience.”

Poor Quashy shut his mouth and his eyes it was as if three little lights had gone out while his dusky frame melted into its native gloom.

No sound was to be heard on the sandflats after that until about midnight, when the moon appeared on the horizon. Just then a sound was heard on the

river.

“Here they come,” whispered Pedro.

The sound increased. It was like a swirling, hissing noise. Soon they could see by the increasing light that the water of the river seemed actually to boil. Immediately afterwards, thousands of turtles came tumbling clumsily out of the water, and spread themselves over the flats.

Evidently egg-laying was no joke with them. The well-known sluggishness of the creatures was laid aside for this great occasion, and wonderful activity marked their every movement from first to last. You see, they had to manage the business in a wholesale sort of fashion, each turtle having from thirty to forty eggs, or more, to deposit in the sand, on which sand, in conjunction with the sun, devolved the duty of subsequent maternal care.

That the creatures acted on prearranged principles was evident from the fact that they worked in separate detachments, each working party devoting its energies to the digging of a trench two feet deep, four feet broad, and sometimes yards long. Their zeal was amazing; as well it might be, for they allowed themselves less than an hour in which to do it all. Each animal dug like a hero with its forefeet, and sent the sand flying about it to such an extent that the whole flat appeared to be enveloped in a thick fog!

When satisfied that their trench was deep enough they stopped work, deposited their soft-shelled eggs, and, with their hind feet, soon filled up the trench. So great was their eagerness and hurry, that during the operation more than one turtle, tumbling over her companions, rolled into the trench and was buried alive. No sooner was the stupendous work accomplished than they made a disorderly rush for the river, as if aware of the fate which threatened them.

And now at last came the opportunity of the savage. The Iron Duke's “Up, guards, and at 'em!” could not have been more promptly or gladly obeyed than was the signal of the red-skinned chief. Like statues they had awaited it. Like catapults they responded to it, with yells of mingled madness and joy.

But there was method in their madness. To have run between the shelly host and the river, so as to cut off its retreat, would have been sheer lunacy, at which Luna herself by that time shining superbly would have paled with horror, for the men would have certainly been overthrown and trampled under foot by the charging squadrons. What the Indians did was to rush upon the flanks of the host, seize the animals' tail, and hurl them over on their backs, in which position they lay flapping helplessly. Before the retreating “miserables” reached the river, hundreds of captives were thus obtained.

You may be sure that Lawrence and Pedro and Spotted Tiger acted their part well that night, and that Quashy was not long in learning his lesson!

The first tail the negro grasped slipped through his hands, so mighty was his effort, and, as a consequence, he sat down with that sudden involuntary flop which one associates irresistibly with nurseries. Jumping up, and rendered wise, he took a better grip next time, turned the turtle over, and fell on the top of it, receiving a tremendous whack on the cheek from its right flipper as a reward for his clumsiness. But practice makes perfect. Even in the brief space of time at his disposal, Quashy managed to turn ten turtles with his own hands, besides turning himself over six times, if not more.

Rendered wild by success, and desperate with anxiety, as the fugitives neared the river, the negro fixed his glittering eyes on a particularly huge turtle, which was scuttling along in almost drunken haste. With an impromptu warhowl, Quashy charged down on it, and caught it by the tail. With a heave worthy of Hercules he lifted his foe some inches off the sand, but failed to turn it. Making a second effort, he grasped the edge of the creature's shell with his left hand, and the tail more firmly with the right.

"Huyp!" he shouted, and made a Herculean heave. A second time he would have failed, if it had not been that he was on the edge of a part of the trench which the turtles had not had time to fill up. The weight of the creature caused a foreleg to break off part of the edge, and over it went, slowly, on its side, almost balancing thus, and flapping as it went. To expedite the process Quashy seized it by the neck and gave another heave and howl. Unfortunately, the edge of the trench again gave way under one of his own feet, and he fell into it with a cry of distress, for the turtle fell on the top of him, crushing him down into the soft watery sand!

Well was it for Quashy that night that Lawrence Armstrong had good ears, and was prompt to respond to the cry of distress, else had he come to an untimely and inglorious end! Hearing the cry, Lawrence looked quickly round, guessed the cause, shouted to Pedro, who was not far off, and was soon on the spot, yet not a moment too soon, for poor Quashy was almost squashy by that time. They dragged the turtle off, dug the negro out, and found that he had become insensible.

Raising him gently in their arms, they bore him up to the camp, where they found Manuela ready to minister to him.

"Dead!" exclaimed the horrified girl when she saw the negro laid down, and beheld the awful dirtygreen colour of his countenance.

“I hope not,” replied Lawrence, earnestly.

“It’s shsqueesh!sure not!” exclaimed Quashy himself, with a sneeze, as he opened his eyes.

And Quashy, we need scarcely add, was right. He was not dead. He did not die for many years afterwards. For aught that we know, indeed, he may be living still, for he came of a very longlived race.

His accident, however, had the useful effect of preventing his giving way to too exuberant felicity, and rendered him a little more careful as to the quantity of turtleegg ragout which he consumed that night for supper.

It would be pleasant to end our chapter here, but a regard for facts compels us to refer to the slaughter of the unfortunate turtles next morning.

There is in the interior of the turtle a quantity of yellow fat, which is said to be superior in delicacy to the fat of the goose, and from which is obtained a fine oil, highly prized as an article of commerce. To secure this fat, the animals which had been “turned” were killed at daylight the following morning. The axes of the Indians caused the shells to fly in splinters; the intestines were then torn out and handed to the Indian women, whose duty it was to remove from them the precious fat, after which the carcasses were left to the vultures and fishereagles, which flocked from afar to the scene of carnage with that unerring instinct which has so often been commented on by travellers, but which no one can understand.

Chapter Eighteen

Pedro becomes communicative; Manuela vocal; Lawrence preposterous; Quashy and Tiger violentThe Whole ending in a Grand Catastrophe.

“Senhor Armstrong,” said Pedro, the evening after that on which the capture of turtles took place, “I have received some bad newsat least unsatisfactory newswhich will necessitate a change in our style of travelling, and a more rapid progress towards our journey’s end.”

“I’m sorry for that,” Lawrence answered, “for, to my mind, our style of travelling is very agreeable, and the rate quite fast enough, especially for one who has no definite purpose in view.”

“That may be so, senhor,” returned Pedro, with a grim smile, “but as I have something of a definite purpose in view, the case is different.”

“True, Pedro,true. I do not object to any change in your plans; I merely

comment on the very pleasant time we are having, and shall be ready to act as you desire; so, you see, I am as I promised to be an obedient follower. But where did you get this news from? I have seen no one arrive in the camp since we came. What may the nature of the news be, if I may venture to ask of one who is so very reticent?"

The guide pondered some time before replying to these questions. Then, with the air of one who has made up his mind on an uncertain point, said

"I had no intention of rousing your curiosity by needless secrecy. I have not very many or very profound secrets. Only, in a disturbed country it behoves a man to hold his tongue in regard to his affairs. But I feel that you are a friend, Senhor Armstrong, who may be trusted; not that I have much to trust to you, and yet, my doings are so mixed up with the affairs of other people that to some extent I am tongue-tied. I may tell you, however, that I am a secret agent of the government, to which I have volunteered my services solely because I love peace and hate war, and am desirous of doing all I can to promote the first and abate the last. The idea may appear to you Quixotic, but"

"Pardon me, Senhor Pedro," interrupted Lawrence, promptly. "I think you the reverse of Quixotic. I honour you for your sentiments, and sympathise with you most heartily. Do I not remember that it is written, 'Blessed are the peacemakers,' and also, 'Scatter thou the people that delight in war?'"

"Yes, I have gathered from your conversation that such are your sentiments, but do not misunderstand me. I am not of those who would have peace at any price. I believe in the right of self-defence. I recognise the right of oppressed nations to rise up and draw the sword in order to free themselves from tyrants; in short, I believe that there are some things that are worse even than war; but while I concede so much, I hold that most of the wars recorded in history have been undertaken without just cause, many of them without any real or obvious cause at all, too many of them with a distinctly bad cause. Even in the present day, and among Christian nations, there is far too little tendency to appeal to arbitration, which is the only legitimate way for reasonable men to settle any dispute or quarrel. Does your sympathy go with me thus far?"

Lawrence, with a glow of enthusiasm on his face, extended his hand, and, grasping that of his companion, shook it warmly.

"I go with you in every word, Pedro. You are a man after my own heart; and I say, God prosper you in your good work wherever you go!"

Manuela, who was standing near at the time, looked up at the enthusiastic youth quickly. Her knowledge of English must have been improving, despite the badness of her pronunciation, for she seemed to understand the

conversation, and to regard Lawrence with profound interest.

The youth was so carried away with his feelings, however, that he did not observe the girl's look or expression.

"That is well," Pedro said, with a pleased look, as he returned his friend's grasp; "but I fear you won't find many of our way of thinking in this unhappy country. You are aware, no doubt, that it is frequentlyI might almost say every three or four yearsdisturbed by factious quarrels which too often end in riot and bloodshed, though these are not often on so large a scale as to be styled civil war. Well, there is a party of peacelovers even here, who do their best to bring about a better state of things, and a more settled and powerful government. Some of the men of influence at Buenos Ayres, and some even of the military men, are of this party. I am, as I have said, their secret agentsecret, because if I were to attempt the thing openly, or as a government agent, I should be treated with ridicule by some, or be murdered perhaps by others, in either of which cases my influence would be gone. Of course, as you have seen, I run considerable risk in travelling through the land on my mission, for I have been several times taken for a spy, but I don't object to run risk, the cause being a good one.

"As to the news, which I have received by mere chance from a passing Indian, it is another outbreak in the San Juan district which makes a change in the disposition of troops necessary; and as I have particular business with one of the officers, I must change my route and make for Buenos Ayres as straight as possible. That is all the mystery about it; so you see, as I said, it is not very profound."

"It is very interesting, however," returned Lawrence, "and you may depend on my falling in with your plans, whatever they are."

"Well, then," returned the guide, "the first part of my plan is simple enoughmerely to start off tomorrow by the first peep of day. Will you go, therefore, and tell Quashy to get ready, while I have a talk with Manuela?"

We do not intend to inflict on the reader the whole of the conversation that took place in the Indian tongue between the little brown maiden and the guide. A small portion of it will suffice.

"I repeat, Manuela," said the latter, in a remonstrative tone, "that you are not wise."

"My kind protector forgets," replied the girl, with a modest look, "that I have never set up any claim to wisdom."

“But what will your father say?”

“I really cannot guess what he will say,” she answered, with one of her prettiest little smiles.

“But you may be quite sure that the thing is impossible. Consider the immense difference between you, and, forgive me, Manuela, but I think it is not fair.”

“Now my protector forgets himself,” returned the maiden, drawing herself up and bestowing a look on the guide which was quite worthy of an Inca princess supposing Lawrence to have been right in his conjecture on that point!

“Well, well, please yourself, Manuela,” returned Pedro, with a laugh, in which exasperation slightly mingled, “but do me the justice to tell your father when you meet that I fairly remonstrated with and warned you. After all, nothing would please me better, if it should ever come about.”

He turned on his heel and went off, with a mingling of expressions on his handsome face, to look after the canoe and make preparations for an early start in the morning.

Canoe travelling appears to be rather slow work while it is going on, even when descending the current of a river. Each point of land seems to be reached and passed so gradually; every vista of the river seems so extensive, and the trees on shore drop so leisurely astern, that when you think of the hundreds of miles which lie in advance, you are apt to feel as if the journey or voyage would never come to an end. But when you forget the present and reflect on the past, when you think how many hundreds of miles now lie behind, although it seems but yesterday that you set out on the journey, then you realise the fact that the “power of littles,” of steady, daily unremitting perseverance, has had too little weight with you in your estimates, and that, just as fast as your startingpoint recedes from you, exactly so fast does your goal approach, although those misleading factors, your feelings, may have induced you to think otherwise.

Five days after the occurrence of the events on what we may style Turtlebeach, Lawrence found himself wondering at what appeared to be the faroffness of the spot, considering the slowness of the hourly progress, yet at the same time wondering if they should ever traverse the nine hundred or a thousand miles that yet intervened between him and Buenos Ayres.

To do Lawrence Armstrong justice, however, he was by no means impatient. He was quite satisfied that things should go as slowly as they pleased, for was he not travelling through the most interesting of countries, in which the flora and the fauna and the geological features furnished abundantay,

superabundant food for the satisfaction of his scientific appetite, while his companions were of the pleasantest character? Pedro, since the opening up of his heart to him, had laid aside much though not all of his reserve, and shown himself to be a man of extensive information and profound thought.

Spotted Tiger was a splendid specimen, physically and mentally, of the sons of the soil, in the contemplation of whom he could expend whatever smattering he possessed of ethnological science. Then Quashy was not that negro the very soul and embodiment of courage, fidelity, and good humour, the changes of whose April face alone might have furnished rich material for the study of a physiognomist or a Rembrandt.

And as for Manuelawe cannot analyse his thoughts about her. It is probable that he could not have expounded them himself. Take the following sample of them, as overheard by us one day when he had strayed into the wild woods alone, and was seated on the roots of a mighty tree, pencil in hand, attempting unsuccessfully to make a sketch.

“I do believe,” he murmured, with a gesture of impatience for he had drawn a small convolvulus, hanging from a tree, with such disregard for the rules of linear perspective that it was the proportionate size of an omnibus “I do believe that that girl has come between me and my wits. Of course it is not love. That is quite out of the question. A white man could not fall in love with a black woman.”

Yes, he did the poor girl the injustice, in his perplexed indignation with himself, to call her black, although it must have been obvious to the most careless observer that she was only reddish brown, or, to speak more correctly, brownish red.

“I can’t understand it,” he continued to murmur in that low, slow, absent faraway tone and manner characteristic of artists when at work. “No doubt her nose is Grecian, and her mouth small, as well as exquisitely formed, her chin full and rounded, her teeth faultless, her eyes gorgeous, and her whole contour perfect, but but she’s black at least,” correcting himself with a touch of compunction, “she’s brown. No; I see what it is it’s well that’s more like a balloon than a water lily yes, it must be that I am in love with her spirit. That’s it! I’ve said so before, and and I say it again.”

He drew back his head at this point, and looked critically even sternly at the sketch. There was room both for criticism and indignation, for the display, in so small a compass, of bad drawing, vile composition, ridiculous chiaroscuro, and impossible perspective, could only have been justified by the supposition that his intellect had been warped through the heart, in consequence of an

unheard of perplexity connected therewith.

“Yes,” he continued, resuming his work with the air of an invincible man, “there is something distinctly and exasperatingly wrong here. I am in love with her spirit, and not with her person! Is it possible that the human race, descending from Adam and Eve, should have reached the nineteenth century without such a case ever having been heard of before, and that I should be the first wretched example or victim! It is like loving the jewel without caring for the case, that’s a bad simile, for one could throw away a casket and keep the jewel, which could not conveniently be done in this case. I wonder what it is that makes the rules of perspective so difficult, and the practice so im”

His meditations were checked at this point by a sound so sweet that his heart almost stood still, his pencil remained suspended over the sketch, and the half-formed word remained in the half-opened mouth. It was as if an angel had come to earth, and were warbling the airs of paradise.

Peeping through the bushes, Lawrence saw that it was Manuela! She was sauntering along pensively, humming as she went. He sat still, amazed and silent. From what cause we know not, but the Indian girl had not until that day opened her mouth in song. The youth’s surprise was increased when she came near enough to let him hear that the words were Spanish; but suddenly remembering that English girls sometimes learned Italian songs by rote, like parrots, his surprise partly abated why should not an Indian girl learn Spanish songs by rote?

Manuela passed close to the tree behind which our hero sat. On observing him she stopped, and blushed intensely red. Evidently she had thought herself quite alone, and experienced the usual dislike of humanity to being caught in the act of singing to itself!

In a burst of great enthusiasm Lawrence sprang up, overturned his drawing materials, seized the girl’s hand, and dropped it again as if it had burnt him, as he exclaimed

“I wish! I wish, Manuela, that I were your brother!”

The lightning flash is said to be quick, and we suppose, relatively speaking, it is so, but we are quite sure that lightning cannot hold a candle to thought in this respect. Lawrence, as the reader has doubtless observed, was not a man of much more than average intelligence, or action of mind, yet between the first “wish” and the word “brother,” he had perceived and condemned the impropriety of exhibiting strong feeling in thus grasping Manuela’s hand; the unmanliness of doing or saying anything to her that had the remotest approach to lovemaking while in circumstances where the poor girl could not get out of

his way, however much she might wish to do so, and the meanness, not to say absurdity, of showing anything like a lover's affection for a spirit which could only make itself known through the medium of a brown visage. Hence Lawrence, who was the soul of honour and gallantry, got out of the dilemma by suddenly conceiving and expressing the above intense wish to be Manuela's brother!

It did not occur to him that the gratification of his wish might have involved warpaint and feathers, a seminude body, a wild unlettered life, and a predilection for raw meat and murder. No, rapid though thought is, it did not convey these ideas to his mind. His one desire after the first unguarded "exclamation" and impulsive grasp of the hand, was to escape from his false position without committing himself, and without giving pain or annoyance to the unprotected girl. And his success was in proportion to his boldness, for Manuela burst into a hearty laugh, and said

"Why you wants be my brudder?"

"Brother, Manuela, not brudder," replied Lawrence, joining in the laugh, and much relieved in mind. "The word is spelt with th, not with two d's. The reason is that I should then have the right to order you to sit at my feet and sing me these pretty songs whenever I liked. And I fear I should be a very tyrannical brother to you, for I would make you sing all day."

"Whatist'rannical?" asked the girl, whose tendency to laugh was evidently not yet quite subdued.

"Hallo! hi! Quashy!" came the guide's strong voice at that moment, ringing through the arches of the forest, and preventing the explanation, that might have been, of "t'rannical."

But Quashy replied not. It was the end of the noontide siesta. While Lawrence, as we have seen, had taken to sketching and Manuela to singing, the negro had gone off on his own account, and Pedro was now anxious to have his assistance in getting ready to start.

As Lawrence hurriedly collected his pencils the Indian girl stood admiring his workpoor ignorant thing! Just then there arose in the forest a sound which filled them both with mingled surprise and alarm.

It was a peculiar, dull sound, almost indescribable, but something like what one might expect to hear from a hundred spades or pickaxes working together in the depths of the forest. After a minute or two it ceased, and profound silence reigned. Dead silence in critical circumstances is even more alarming than definite noise, for then the imagination is allowed full play, and only

those who have got the imagination powerfully developed know of what wild and terrifying vagaries it is capable!

Lawrence and Manuela looked at each other. The former had often before admired the gorgeous black orbs of the latter, but he had not till then thought them to be so very large.

Suddenly the earth trembled under their feet; it seemed as if a volcano were heaving underground. The memory of San Ambrosio rushed upon them, and they too trembled at least the girl did. At the same time a shout arose which seemed to them not unfamiliar. The noise increased to something like the galloping of a distant squadron of cavalry.

“Let me lift you into this tree,” said Lawrence, quickly.

Manuela did not object. He lifted her by the waist with his two large hands as if she had been a little child, and placed her on a branch that happened to be just within his reach. Scarcely had he done so when a host, a very army, of American wildhogs, or peccaries, burst from the bushes like a tornado and bore down on them. They were so near that there was no time for Lawrence to climb up beside Manuela. He could only seize the branch with both hands and draw up his long legs. The living torrent passed under him in a few seconds, and thus thanks to his gymnastic training at school he escaped being ripped up in all directions by the creatures’ tusks.

It was these same tusks digging round trees for the purpose of grubbing up roots that had produced the strange sounds, and it was the shouts of Quashy and Tiger in pursuit that had awakened the echoes of the forest.

On the heels of the large animals came galloping and squealing a herd of little ones, and close upon these followed the two hunters just named panting, warwhooping, and cheering. Several of the little pigs were speared; some were even caught by the tail, and a goodly supply of meat was obtained for at least that day and the next. But before noon of that next day an event of a very different and much more serious nature occurred.

It was early morning at the time. They were traversing a wide sheet of water, both banks of which were high, richly wooded, and all aglow with convolvuli and other flowers, and innumerable ropelike creepers, the graceful festoons and hanging tendrils of which gave inexpressible softness to the scene. In the middle of the lakelike expanse were numerous mudflats, partly covered with tropical reeds and rushes of gigantic size.

The course our voyagers had to pursue made it necessary to keep close under the right bank, which was unusually steep and high. They were all silent, for

the hour and the slumbering elements induced quiescence. A severe thunderstorm accompanied by heavy rains had broken over that district two days before, and Lawrence observed that deep watercourses had been ploughed among the trees and bushes in several places, but every other trace of the elemental war had vanished, and the quiet of early morning seemed to him sweet beyond expression, inducing his earnest spirit to wish that the mystery of sin had never been permitted, and that it were still possible for man to walk humbly with his God in a world of peacefulness as real as that of inanimate nature around him.

When the sun arose, a legion of living creatures came out from wood and swamp and reedy isle to welcome him. Flamingoes, otters, herons white and grey, and even jaguars, then began to set about their daily work of fishing for breakfast. Rugged alligators, like animated trunks of fallen trees, crawled in slimy beds or ploughed up the sands of the shore in deep furrows, while birds of gorgeous plumage and graceful sometimes clumsy form audibly, if not always visibly, united to chant their morning hymn.

Such were the sights on which our travellers' eyes rested, with a sort of quiet delight, when Pedro broke the silence in a low voice.

"You'd better keep a little farther out into the stream," he said to Tiger.

The Indian silently obeyed.

It was well that he did so promptly, for, in less than a minute, and without the slightest premonition, the immense bank above them slid with a terrific rumbling noise into the river. The enormous mass of sand and vegetable detritus thus detached could not have been much, if at all, less than half a mile in extent. It came surging and hurling down trees and roots and rocks and mud intermingling in a chaos of grand confusion, the great cablelike creepers twining like snakes in agony, and snapping as if they were mere strands of packthread; timber crashing; rock grinding, sometimes bursting like cannon shots, and the whole plunging into the water and raising a great wave that swept the alligators from the mudflats, and swallowed up the reeds and rushes, sending herons, kingfishers, and flamingoes screaming into the air, and dashing high into the jungle on the opposite shore.

As we have said, the canoe got out of reach of the terrible avalanche just in time, but it could not escape the wave. The Indian, however, was prepared for that. It was not the first time he had seen such a catastrophe. Turning the bow of the canoe instantly towards the falling bank, he thus met the wave, as it were, in the teeth, and rode safely over it.

If he had been less alive to the danger, or less prompt to meet it, or if he had

underestimated it, and allowed the wave to catch them on the side of the canoe, the adventures of our five friends had that day come to an abrupt close, and, what is probably of greater consequence to the reader, this faithful record would never have been written!

Chapter Nineteen

In which, among other things, Lawrence refuses an Invitation, and bids a Final Farewell to Manuela.

A jump of several hundreds of miles at one mighty bound may seem difficult, perhaps impossible, but if the reader will kindly put on the grasshopper legs of imagination which we now provide, such a jump will be found not only possible, but, perchance, agreeable.

We pass at one fell spring, then, from the thick forests of Bolivia to the wide rolling pampas, or plains, of South America.

You are still within sight of the Andes, good reader. You may travel from north to south if you will from the equatorial regions of the Mexican Gulf to the cold and stormy cape at Tierra del Fuego without losing sight of that magnificent backbone of the grand continent.

We have reached a frontier town which lies among the undulating hills at the base of the mountains, yet within sight of the outskirts of the grassy pampas. A small town it is, with little white houses and a church glittering in the sunshine. A busy town, too, with a mixed population fluttering in the streets in the variegated trappings and plumage of merchants, and priests, and muleteers, and adventurers, and darkeyed senhoras, enveloped in all the mysterious witchery that seems inseparable from Spanish mantillas and fans.

It was evening when our travellers arrived at the town. They were on horseback now, having, a considerable time previously, forsaken the rivers for the roads if we may call by such a name those unmade highways which are merely marked out through the wilderness by the passage of men. Bells were ringing in the steeple as they entered the town, for some fête or holiday was in process of celebration, and the presence of a considerable number of men in uniform gave to the place the appearance of a garrison town.

There were so many oddlooking and striking characters in the streets that the arrival of our party made no particular impression on the people, save that Manuela's elegant little figure and pretty brown face drew some attention and admiration on the part of the men, scorn on that of a few very few of the senhoras. You see, in all parts of the world some people are found who

seem to hold, though they would find it difficult to say why, that God's creatures with brown and black skins ought to be looked down upon and held in contempt by His creatures who chance to have white skins! You will generally find that the people who think thus also hold the almost miraculous opinion that those who wear superfine clothing, and possess much money, have a sort of indefinable, but unquestionable, right to look down upon and lord it over those who own little money and wear coarse garments!

You will carefully observe, unprejudiced reader, that we use the word "some" in speaking of those people. We are very far from pitting the poor against the rich. We are bound to recognise the fact that amongst both classes there are gems of brightest lustre, irradiated by rays from the celestial sun, while in both there are also found qualities worthy of condemnation. But when we record the fact that some of the white senhoras looked with jealousy and scorn upon our sweet little Indian heroine, we ought to recognise the undeniable truth that they themselves, so long as actuated by such a spirit, were beneath contemptfit subjects only for pity.

As they passed along, much interested and somewhat excited by the comparatively novel sights around them, Pedro rode up to a mounted soldier and accosted him in Spanish.

He returned to his party with a gleam of stronger excitement in his eyes than Lawrence had observed since they became acquainted. Riding alongside of Manuela, who was in advance, he entered into earnest and animated conversation with her. Then, reining back until he was abreast of Lawrence, he said

"Part of the object of my journey has been accomplished sooner than I had expected, Senhor Armstrong."

"Indeed? I hope it has been satisfactorily accomplished."

"Well, yes, as far as it goes. The fact is, I find that there has been a raid of the Indians into this part of the country, and a body of troops has been sent to quell them under Colonel Marchbanks. Now this colonel, as his name will suggest, is an Englishman, in the service of the Argentine army, under whose orders I have been serving, and to communicate with whom was one of my chief reasons for undertaking this journey."

"Will that, then, render your journey to Buenos Ayres unnecessary?" asked Lawrence, a slight feeling of anxiety creeping over him.

"No, it won't do that, but it will greatly modify my plans. Among other things, it will oblige me to leave Manuela behind and push on alone as fast as

possible. I suppose you will have no objection to a tearing gallop of several hundred miles over the Pampas?" said Pedro, while a smile of peculiar meaning played for an instant on his handsome face.

"Objections!" exclaimed our hero, with great energy, "of course not. A tearing gallop over the Pampas is almost"

He stopped, for a strange, unaccountable feeling of dissatisfaction which he could not understand began to overwhelm him. Was it that he was really in love after all with this Indian girl, and that the thought of final separation from her impossible! No, he could not credit such an idea for a moment. But he loved her spirithier soul, as it were and he could not be blamed for being so sorry, so very sorry, to part with that thus suddenly thus unexpectedly. Yes, he was not in love. It was a fraternal or paternala Platonic feeling of a strong type. He would just see her once more, alone, before starting, say goodbye, and give her a little, as it were, paternal, or fraternal, or Platonic advice.

"Senhor Armstrong is in a meditative mood," said Pedro, breaking the thread of his meditations.

"Yes, I was thinking was wondering that is by the way, with whom will you leave Manuela?"

"With a friend who lives in a villa in the suburbs."

"You seem to have friends wherever you go," said Lawrence.

"Ay, and enemies too," returned Pedro with a slight frown. "However, with God's blessing, I shall circumvent the latter."

"When do you start?" asked Lawrence, with an air of assumed indifference.

"Tomorrow or next day, perhaps, but I cannot tell until I meet Colonel Marchbanks. I am not, indeed, under his command being what you may call a sort of freelance but I work with him chiefly, that is, under his directions, for he and I hold much the same ideas in regard to most things, and have a common desire to see something like solid peace in the land. Look, do you see that villa with the rustic porch on the cliff; just beyond the town?"

"Yes it is so conspicuous and so beautifully situated that one cannot help seeing and admiring it."

"That is where the friend lives with whom I shall leave Manuela."

"Indeed," said Lawrence, whose interest in the villa with the rustic porch was suddenly intensified, "and shall we find her there on our return?"

“I was not aware that Senhor Armstrong intended to return!” said Pedro, with a look of surprise.

Lawrence felt somewhat confused and taken aback, but his countenance was not prone to betray him.

“Of course I mean, will you find her there when you return? Though, as to my returning, the thing is not impossible, when one considers that the wreck of part of my father’s property lies on the western side of the Andes.”

“Ah! true. I forgot that for a moment. Well, I suppose she will remain here till my return,” said Pedro, “unless the Indians make a successful raid and carry her off in the meantime!” he added, with a quick glance at his companion.

“And are we to stay tonight at the same villa?”

“No, we shall stay at the inn to which we are now drawing near. I am told that the Colonel has his headquarters there.”

The conversation closed abruptly at this point, for they had reached the inn referred to. At the door stood a tall, goodlooking young man, whose shaven chin, cut of whisker, and Tweed shooting costume, betokened him an Englishman of the sporting class.

Addressing himself to this gentleman with a polite bow, Pedro asked whether Colonel Marchbanks was staying there.

“Well I’m not quite sure, but there is a I believe, a military man of a sort staying in the place.”

Without meaning to be idiotic, this sporting character was one of those rich, plucky, languid, drawlywaully men, who regard the world as their special huntingfield, affect freeandeasy nonchalance, and interlard their ideas with “aw” to an extent that is absolutely awful.

The same question, put to a waiter who immediately appeared, elicited the fact that the Colonel did reside there, but was absent at the moment.

“Well, then,” said Pedro, turning quickly to Lawrence, “you had better look after rooms and order supper, while I take Manuela to the villa.”

For the first time since they met, Lawrence felt inclined to disobey his friend. A gush of indignation seemed to surge through his bosom for a moment, but before he could reply, Pedro, who did not expect a reply, had turned away. He remounted his steed and rode off, meekly followed by the Indian girl. Quashy

took the bridles of his own and his master's horse, and stood awaiting orders; while Spotted Tiger, who was not altogether inexperienced in the ways of towns, led his animal and the baggagemules round to the stables.

“So,” thought Lawrence, bitterly, “I am ordered to look after things here, and Manuela goes quietly away without offering to say goodbyewithout even a friendly nod, although she probably knows I may have to start by daybreak tomorrow, and shall never see her again. Bah! what else could I expect from a squawa black girl! But no matter. It's all over! It was only her spirit I admired, and I don't care even for that now.”

It will be observed that our poor hero did not speak like himself here, so grievous was the effect of his disappointment. Fortunately he did not speak at all, but only muttered and looked savage, to the amusement of the sportsman, who stood leaning against the doorpost of the inn, regarding him with much interest.

“Will you sup, senhor?” asked a waiter, coming up just then.

“Eh! nothat isyes,” replied Lawrence, savagely.

“How many, senhor?”

“How many? eh! How should I know? As many as you like. Come here.”

He thundered off along a passage, clanking his heels and spurs like a whole regiment of dragoons, and without an idea as to whither the passage led or what he meant to do.

“Awquite a wemarkable cweature. A sort ofawlonglegged curiosity of the Andes. Mad, I suppose, or drunk.”

These remarks were partly a soliloquy, partly addressed to a friend who had joined the sportsman, but they were overheard by Quashy, who, with the fire of a free negro and the enthusiasm of a faithful servant, said

“No more mad or drunk dan you'selfyou whitefaced racoon!”

Being unable conveniently to commit an assault at the moment, our free negro contented himself with making a stupendous face at the Englishman, and glaring defiance as he led the cattle away. As the reader knows, that must have been a powerful glare, but its only effect on the sportsman was to produce a beaming smile of AngloSaxon goodwill.

That night Lawrence Armstrong slept little. Next morning he found that Pedro had to delay a day in order to have some further intercourse with Colonel

Marchbanks. Having nothing particular to do, and being still very unhappy though his temper had quite recovered he resolved to take a stroll alone. Just as he left the inn, a tall, powerfully built, soldierly man entered, and bestowed on him a quick, stern glance in passing. He seemed to be between fifty and sixty, straight as a poplar, and without any sign of abated strength, though his moustache and whiskers were nearly white.

Lawrence would have at once recognised a countryman in this old officer, even if the waiter had not addressed him by name as he presented him with a note.

At any other time the sociable instincts of our hero would have led him to seek the acquaintance both of the Colonel and the awful sportsman; but he felt misanthropical just then, and passed on in silence.

Before he had been gone five minutes, Quashy came running after him.

“You no want me, massa?”

“No, Quash, I don’t.”

“P’r’aps,” suggested the faithful man, with an excess of modesty and some hesitation, “P’r’aps you’d like me to go wid you for company?”

“You’re very kind, Quash, and I should like to have you very much indeed; but at present I’m very much out of sorts, and”

“O massa!” interrupted the negro, assuming the sympathetic gaze instantly, and speaking with intense feeling, “it’s not in de stummik, am it?” He placed his hand gently on the region referred to.

“No, Quash,” Lawrence replied, with a laugh, “it is not the body at all that affects me; it is the mind.”

“Oh! is dat all?” said the negro, quite relieved. “Den you not need to boder you’self. Nobody ebber troubled long wid dat complaint. Do you know, massa, dat de bery best t’ing for dat is a little cheerful s’iety. I t’ink you’ll be de better ob me.”

He said this with such selfsatisfied gravity, and withal seemed to have made up his mind so thoroughly to accompany his young master, that Lawrence gave in, and they had not gone far when he began really to feel the benefit of Quashy’s light talk. We do not mean to inflict it all on the reader, but a few sentences may, perhaps, be advantageous to the development of our tale.

“Splendid place dis, massa,” observed the negro, after they had walked and

chatted some distance beyond the town.

“Yes, Quash, very beautiful.”

“Lots ob nice shady trees an’ bushes, and flowers, an’ fruits, an’ sweet smells ob oranges, an’”

He waved his arms around, as if to indicate a profusion of delights which his tongue could not adequately describe.

“Quite true, Quash,” replied Lawrence, who was content to play second violin in the duet.

“Is you gwine,” inquired Quashy, after a brief pause, “to de gubner’s ball tonight?”

“No. I did not know there was a governor, or that he intended to give a ball.”

The negro opened his eyes in astonishment.

“You not know ob it!” he exclaimed; “why eberybody knows ob it, an’ a’most eberybody’s agwineall de ’spectable peepil, I mean, an’ some ob dem what’s not zactly as ’spectable as dey should be. But dey’s all agwine. He’s a liberal gubner, you see, an’ he’s gwine to gib de ball in de inn at de lan’lord’s expense.”

“Indeed; that’s a curiously liberal arrangement.”

“Yes, an’ a bery clebber ’rangement for de lan’lord. He’s a cute man de lan’lord. I s’pose you’s agwine?”

“No, I am not going. I have received no invitation; besides, I have no evening dress.”

“Bless you, massa, you don’t need no invitation, nor evenin’ dress needer! You just go as you are, an’ it’s all right.”

“But I have no wish to go. I would rather prepare for an early start tomorrow.”

“Das a prutty house we’s acomin’ to, massa,” said Quashy, not hearing, or ignoring, the last remark.

Lawrence looked up with a start. Unwittingly, quite unwittingly, he had rambled in the direction of the villa with the rustic porch!

“An’ dere’s de missis ob de villa, I suppose,” said Quashy. “No, she’s on’y a redskin. Why, massa!” he continued, opening his eyes to their widest, “it’s

Manuela or her ghost!”

It was indeed our little Indian heroine, walking alone in the shrubbery. She had not observed her late companions, who were partly concealed by bushes.

“Quashy,” said Lawrence, impressively, laying his hand on the negro’s shoulder, “get out of the way. I want to speak to her alone, to say goodbye, you know, for we start early tomorrow.”

The negro promptly threw himself on the ground and nodded his head.

“You go ahead, massa. All right. When you comes dis way agin, you’ll find dis nigger am vanisht like a wreat ob smoke.”

A few seconds more, and Lawrence suddenly appeared before Manuela. She met him without surprise, but with an embarrassed look. Instantly a dark chilling cloud seemed to settle down on the poor youth’s spirit. Mingled with a host of other indescribable feelings, there was one, very strong, of indignation; but with a violent effort he controlled his features, so as to indicate no feeling at all.

“This is an unexpected meeting, Manuela. I had hardly hoped for it, as we set off very early tomorrow; but I’m glad we have met, for I should never have got over the feeling that I had been unkind in going off without saying goodbye. Do you make out what I mean? I think you understand English better than my bad Spanish.”

“Yes I understand. I very sorry we part. Very, very sorry. Goodbye.”

She put out her hand, and Lawrence mechanically took it. There was something so ridiculous in this prompt and cool way of parting, after having been so long together, that the youth could scarcely believe he was awake. Had this pretty little Inca princess, then, no feeling whatever no touch of common tenderness, like other girls? Did the wellknown stoicism of her race require that she should part for the last time from the man who had twice saved her life, with a simple “I’m very sorry. Goodbye?”

He felt cured now, completely. Such a spirit, he thought, could not command esteem, much less affection. As neither body nor spirit was now left to him, he began to feel quite easy in his mind almost desperately easy and that paternal, fraternal Platonic interest in the child which we have before mentioned began to revive.

“Well, Manuela,” he said at last, with a stupendous sigh, as though he were heaving the entire Andes off his rugged old shoulders, yet with a brotherly

smile as he patted the little brown hand, “you and I have had pleasant times together. I could have wished oh! how I well, hem! but no matter. You will soon, no doubt be among your own people again. All I would ask of you is sometimes, when faraway, to think of me; to think of me as perhaps, the presumptuous young fellow who did his best to make a long and rather trying journey agreeable to you. Think of me, Manuela, as a father, and I will think of you as my little Indian girl!”

“I will think,” she said, dropping her grave eyes on the ground, and the stoicism of all the Incas seemed to be concentrated in her look and bearing at that moment, “t’ink of you as a fadder.”

“Goodbye,” he said again.

“Goodbye,” she replied.

He had intended to print a fatherly kiss on the little brown hand, but this parting was too much. He dropped her hand, and, turning abruptly away with a final “Farewell God bless you,” quickly left the spot, in a sort of bewildered amazement that a heartless Indian girl should ever have been able to obtain, even for a time, so powerful an influence over him.

Chapter Twenty **Is cumulatively Astonishing**

There are, we suppose, in the lives of all men, critical periodstestingpoints, as it werewhen their faith in everything true is shaken almost, if not quite, to the foundation, and when they are tempted to ask with more or less of bitterness, “Who will show us any good?”

Well is it for such when, in the hour of trial, they can look up to the Fountain of all good and, in the face of doubt, darkness, difficulty, ay, and seeming contradiction, simply “believe” and “trust.”

When Lawrence Armstrong slowly sauntered back to the inn after his final interview with Manuela, it surprised even himself to find how strong had been his feelings, how profound his faith in the girl’s goodness of heart, and how intensely bitter was his disappointment.

“But it’s all over now,” he muttered, thrusting his hands deep into the pockets of his coat, and frowning ferociously at some imaginary wrong, though he would have been puzzled, if required, to state exactly what the wrong was. “All over,” he repeated, and then continued with an affected air of indifference, “and what of that? What matters it to me that I have been

mistaken? I never was in love with the girl. How could I be with a blackwell, a brown squaw. Impossible! It was only admiration—strong admiration I admit of what I had fancied were rarely fine qualities, especially in a sav an Indian; and I've been mistaken; that's all. That's all. But," after a pause, "have I been mistaken? Does this unaccountably callous indifference at saying goodbye to one who is nothing to her—who never can be anything to her—argue that all the good qualities I have admired so much are nonexistent, or bad qualities? Surely not! Let me consider. Let me look this perplexing matter straight in the face, and see what is to be made of it. What are the good qualities that I seem to have been so mistaken about?"

Frowning still more ferociously, as if with a view to constrain himself to the performance of a deed of impartial justice, our hero continued to mutter

"Earnest simplicity—that's the first, that's two qualities. Be just, Lawrence, whatever you are, be just. Earnestness, then, that's the first point. Whatever else I may have been wrong about, there can be no mistake about that. She is intensely earnest. How often have I noticed her rapt attention and the eager flash of her dark eyes when Pedro or I chanced to tell any anecdote in which injustice or cruelty was laid bare. She is so earnest that I think sometimes she has difficulty in perceiving when one is in jest. She does not understand a practical joke well, to be sure there was that upsetting of the coffee on Quashy's leg! But after all I must have been mistaken in that. So much, then, for her earnestness. Next, simplicity. No child could be more simple. Utterly ignorant of the ways of the world—the nauseous conventionalities of civilised life! Brought up in a wigwam, no doubt, among the simple aborigines of the Pampas, or the mountains—yes, it must have been the mountains, for the Incas of Peru dwelt in the Andes."

He paused here for a few minutes and sauntered on in silence, while a tinge of perplexity mingled with the frown. No doubt he was thinking of the tendency exhibited now and then by the aborigines of the Pampas and mountains to raid on the white man now and then, and appropriate his herds as well as scalp himself!

"However, she had nothing to do with that," he muttered, apologetically, "and cannot help the peculiarities of her kindred. Gentleness; that is the next quality. A man may mistake motives, but he cannot mistake facts. Her gentleness and sweetness are patent facts, and her modesty is also obvious. Then, she is a Christian. Pedro told me so. She never omits to pray, night and morning. Of course, that does not constitute a Christian, but well, then the Sabbath day she has all along respected; and I am almost sure that our regular halts on that day, although ordered by Pedro, were suggested by Manuela. Of course, praying and Sabbathkeeping may be done by hypocrites, and for a bad

end; but who, save a consummately blind idiot, would charge that girl with hypocrisy? Besides, what could she gain by it all? Pshaw! the idea is ridiculous. Of course there are many more good qualities which I might enumerate, but these are the most important and clearly pronounced very clearly.”

He said this very decidedly, for somehow a counteracting suggestion came from somewhere, reminding him that he had twice saved the Indian girl's life; that he had tried with earnest devotion to help and amuse her in all their journeyings together, and that to be totally indifferent about final separation in these circumstances argued the absence of even ordinary gratitude, which is clearly one of the Christian virtues!

“But, after all,” he muttered, indignantly, “would not any young fellow have done the same for any woman in the circumstances? And why should she care about parting from me? I wouldn't care much about parting from myself just now, if I could. There, now, that's an end o' the matter. She'll go back to the wigwam of her father, and I'll go and have a jolly good splitting gallop across the Pampas with Pedro and Quashy.”

“Dat's just de bery best t'ing what you can do, massa.”

Lawrence turned round abruptly, and found that his faithful servant was hurrying after him, and grinning tremendously.

“Why, you're always laughing, Quash,” said the youth, a little sharply.

“O massa!” exclaimed the negro, turning his mouth the other way. “I's nebber laugh no more if you don' like it.”

“Like it, my good fellow!” exclaimed Lawrence, himself giving way to a short laugh to conceal his feelings, “of course I like it, only you came on me unexpectedly, and, to say truth, I am”

“Still out ob sorts, massa?”

“Yes, that's it exactly.”

“Well, for a man out ob sorts, you walk most awrful irriglarone time slow, noder time so quick. I was 'bleeged to run to obertake you.”

Further converse was checked by their arrival in the town. On reaching the hotel they found the place in considerable confusion and bustle owing to preparations for the governor's ball, about to take place that evening.

They met Pedro at the door.

“You’ll go, I suppose?” he said to Lawrence, referring to the ball.

“Indeed I will not. I’ve had no invitation, and have no evening dress.”

“Why, Senhor Armstrong forgets he is not now in England,” said Pedro. “We require neither invitation nor evening dress in an outo’theway place like this. You’ll find all sorts of people there. Indeed, a few are likely to be of the class who prefer to dance with their coats off.”

“No matter, I’ll not go. Nothing will induce me to go,” returned Lawrence, firmlyalmost testily.

“Don’t say that,” rejoined Pedro, regarding his companion with a peculiar smile. “You may perhaps meet friends there.”

“You know that I have no friends here,” returned our hero, who thereupon went off to his own room to meditate over his uncomfortable feelings.

But when he had reached his room and shut his door, Pedro’s reference to meeting with friends, coupled with his peculiar look, recurred to him. What could the fellow mean? What friends had he in the country except Pedro himself and Quashy and Spotted Tiger andandManuela, but of course he could not refer to the last, for who ever heard of a governor inviting an unknown Indian girl to a ball! No; Pedro must have been jesting. He would not go!

But the longer he thought over the matter, the more were his perplexity and curiosity increased, until at last he wavered in his firm determination not to go, and when the ball was about to begin, of which the sounds of hurrying steps and musical instruments apprised him, he changed his mind. Combing his hair slightly, he tried to brush his rough garments with his hands, arranged his necktie and flannel collar a little, dusted his long boots with a towel, washed his hands, laid aside his weapons, and went off to the hall with the intention of at least looking in at the door to see what was going on.

He met Pedro in the corridor.

“Ha! Senhor Armstrong has changed his mind?”

“Yes, I have.”

Lawrence said this in the slightly defiant tone of a man who gives in with a bad grace. He was altogether “out of sorts” and unlike himself, but Pedro, like a true friend, took no notice of that.

“I’m glad you have given in, senhor,” said Pedro, “for it saves me the trouble

of dragging you there by force, in order that I may have the pleasure of seeing how you will look under the influence of a surprise.”

“A surprise, Pedro?”

“Yes. But come; the ball is about to begin.”

At the end of the corridor they encountered the English sportsman, who at the same moment chanced to meet his friend, to whom he said

“I say, just come and have a look at the company. All free and easy, no tickets required, no dress, no aw there goes the governor”

The remainder was lost in distance as the two sporting characters sauntered to the ballroom, where they stood near the door, looking on with condescending benignity, as men might for whose amusement the whole affair had been arranged.

And truly there was much to be amused at, as Lawrence and his companion, standing just within the doorway, soon found. Owing to the situation of the little town near the base of the mountains, there were men there of many nations and tongues on their way to various mines, or on business of some sort in or on the other side of the mountains Germans, French, Italians, English, Spanish, and Portuguese. All strangers were welcomed by the hospitable governor and landlord the latter of whom felt, no doubt, that his loss on food was more than counterbalanced by his gain on drink. Among the guests there were Gauchos of the Pampas, and the head men of a band of peons, who had just arrived with a herd of cattle. As these danced variously, in camp dresses, top boots, silver spurs, ponchos, and shirt sleeves, and as the ladies of the town appeared in picturesque and varied costumes with mantillas and fans, Lawrence felt as if he were witnessing a fancy dress gathering, and soon became so absorbed as to forget himself and his companion entirely.

He was aroused from his reverie by the drawling exclamation

“Aw! indeed?”

“Yes,” replied the landlord to the sportsman, “the colonel’s coming. He’s a jolly old man, and likes to see other people enjoyin’ a bit o’ fun. An’ what’s more, he’s goin’ to bring his daughter with him, and another girla niece, I suppose. They say they’re both splendid creatures.”

“Aw! indeed,” languidly replied the sportsman, twisting his moustache.

It was evident that the landlord had failed to arouse his interest.

At that moment the first dance came to an end, and there was a stir at the upper end of the room, where was another door of entrance.

“It’s the colonel,” exclaimed the landlord, hurrying forward.

Colonel Marchbanks entered with a lady on either arm. He was a splendid old manso tall that Lawrence could distinguish his fine bald head, with its fringe of white hair, rising high above the intervening guests.

People became silent and fell away from him, as if to have a better look at him.

“Come,” said Pedro, suddenly, “I will introduce you.”

There was a strange gleam in Pedro’s eyes, and unwonted excitement in his manner, as he pushed his way through the crowd.

Lawrence followed in some surprise.

Suddenly he heard a sharp, strange, indescribable shout. It was the voice of Pedro, who was only a few yards in advance of him. Our hero sprang forward and beheld a sight which filled him with surprise. One of the girls who leaned on the colonel’s arm was a beautiful blonde of about fifteen, with flowing golden hair and rich brown eyes. She stood as if petrified, with the brown eyes gazing intensely at Pedro, who also stood transfixed returning the gaze with compound interest.

“Mariquita!” he murmured, holding out both hands.

“Yes,” said the delighted colonel, “I felt quite sure she was your child, but said nothing about”

“Father!” burst from the girl, as, with a cry of joy, she bounded into Pedro’s arms.

“Just so,” continued the colonel, “I didn’t like to mention my suspicions for fear of raising false hopes, and thought the surest way would be to bring them face to face. Wasn’t it so, Manuela?”

Lawrence turned as if he had received an electric shock. He had been so absorbed in the scene we have just described, that he had not looked at the girl who leaned on the colonel’s other arm. He now turned and beheld not the Indian girl of his travels, but a fairskinned, darkeyed senhorina. Yet as he gazed, the blood seemed to rush to his brain, for these were the eyes of Manuela, and the slightly open little mouth was her the straight Grecian nose, and the graceful figure. It seemed as if his wildest dream were realised, and

that Manuela had become white!

He clasped his hands and gazed, as Pedro had just done, with such intensity that the sportsman, observing the rudeness, said to his friend

“Awdon’t you think it would be as well toawkick the fellow out of the room?”

“Hallo! what’s this?” exclaimed the old colonel, turning sharply on Lawrence with a magnificent frown.

It was quite evident that he, as well as Pedro and our hero, had also received a most unexpected surprise, for, not only did the youth continue to stand gazing, with clasped hands, but the young lady did not seem in the least offended. On the contrary, she looked up at the colonel with an incomprehensible expression and a bewitching smile, as she said, in excellent English

“He is not rude, father, only astonished. Let me introduce my friend and preserver, Mr Lawrence Armstrong.”

But Lawrence heard not, and cared nothing for the introduction.

“It is Manuela!” he exclaimed, with a hesitating step forward, and a look of unbelief still lingering in his eyes.

She held out her little white hand!

He grasped it. The same hand certainly! There could be no doubt about that.

“Pon my honourawthe most interesting tableau vivant I everawsaw!”

“Come, come,” cried the colonel, whose pleased smile had given place to unimaginable astonishment. “Youyou should have prepared me for this, Manuela. II’m obliged to you, senhor, of course, forfor saving my daughter; butcome, follow me!”

He turned and left the room with rapid strides, and would have dragged Manuela after him, if that young lady had not been endued with a paceneat, active, and what is sometimes called “tripping,”which kept her easily alongside of the ancient man of war.

Lawrence followed mechanically.

Pedro, with an arm round Mariquita’s waist, brought up the rear.

As they vanished through the doorway the people gave them a hearty cheer, and resumed dancing.

The sportsman found himself so much overcome that he could only ejaculate, "aw!" But presently he recovered so far as to say, "Let's go an' have a ciga'," and he also melted from the scene.

Chapter Twenty One **Hopes, Fears, Perplexities, Joys, and Explanations**

Two conversations took place shortly after the scene in the ballroom, and to these we now draw attention. The first was in the hotel in the private apartment of Colonel Marchbanks.

Having got rid of the ladies, the fiery man of war led his victim if we may so style him into the apartment referred to, and shut the door. Without asking Lawrence to be seated, he stalked into the middle of the room.

"Now, senhor," he said, wheeling round suddenly, and confronting Lawrence with a tremendous frown, "what do you mean by this?"

The look and the tone were such as the youth would in ordinary circumstances have resented, but he was far removed from ordinary circumstances just then. He was a victim! As such he looked at his questioner with perplexity in his countenance, and said

"I beg pardon?"

"What do you mean by your conduct, I say?" repeated the colonel, fiercely; for he mistook and was rendered more irritable by the youth's apparent stupidity. "You have insulted my daughter in the ballroom"

"Your daughter?" said Lawrence, with the air of a man whose eyes are dazzled by some sudden burst of strong light which he does not quite understand.

"Yes, sir. You know quite well what I mean," cried the colonel, waxing angrier. "It may be true, for all I know or care, that you have saved her life more than once, as Pedro tells me, but"

"I saved the life of an Indian girl," interrupted Lawrence, gently, and gazing wistfully in the colonel's angry face, as if he saw a distant landscape of marvellous beauty through it, "the daughter of a great chief, and a descendant of the Incas."

"A descendant of the Hottentots, sir!" exclaimed the colonel, becoming furious, for he now thought the young man was attempting to jest; "the fact that my daughter my daughter, sir, was persuaded to assume that useless and ridiculous disguise, and the fact that you rendered her assistance when so

disguised, gives you no right to insult her in public, and I have heard, sir, from Manuela herself, that”

“Manuela!” interrupted the victim, in a soft, unbelieving voice, and with an eager, wistful look at the exquisite landscape again, “is it possible?”

“Sir, you’re a fool!” shouted the old soldier, unable to contain himself. “Pedro told me much about you, but he did not say you were a fool!”

“Impossible! I knew it must be a dream,” murmured Lawrence, as if to himself, “I was never called a fool before. No gentleman would have done it least of all an English gentleman.”

This shot, although not aimed, hit the mark fairly.

“Forgive me, senhor,” said the colonel, modifying his tone, though evidently still much annoyed, “but your manners and language are so strange that, really”

He stopped, as a new light broke upon him.

“Surely,” he said, “you cannot have been in ignorance all this time that Manuela is my daughter?”

“Tell me,” cried Lawrence, suddenly shaking off the dream of unbelief, advancing a step, and gazing so intensely into the colonel’s eyes that the man of war made a quick, involuntary, motion with his right hand towards his sword, “Tell me, Colonel Marchbanks, is Manuela, who, I thought, was an Inca princess, really your daughter!”

“I know nothing about the Inca princesses, senhor,” replied the old man, sternly, but with a perplexed air; “all I know is that the disguised girl with whom you have been unfortunately travelling of late is my daughter, and, although your ignorance of the fact accounts in some degree”

He got no further, for Lawrence gave a full, free, shout of joy, such as he had not vented since he was a schoolboy, raised himself to his full height, and threw up his arms, clearing off a very constellation of crystal gimcracks from a chandelier in the mighty stretch, and exclaimed

“I’ll have her: I’ll have her! Yes, in spite of all”

The door opened at that moment and he stood transfixed, for there was Spotted Tigerglaring horribly, and obviously charged with important tidings.

“Come in,” cried the colonel in Spanish.

“Come out,” cried the savage in some other language, which Lawrence did not understand, but which the colonel evidently did, for he clapped on his hat, and, without a word of explanation, hurried with Tiger out of the room, leaving Lawrence to solitary meditation.

The other conversation that we have referred to was held in the garden of the hotel, under a thick overhanging tree, between Pedro and the lovely lady who had been the cause of Lawrence’s little affair with the colonel.

“What have you done with her, Pedro?” asked the lovely lady.

“Taken her to the villa, where she will be well cared for.”

“But why so quickly? Why not wait for me?” The voice was in very truth that of Manuela, though the countenance was that of a Spanish senhorina!

“Because time is precious. We have received news which calls for speedy action, and I must be in close attendance on your father, Manuela. As I am likely to have quarter of an hour to spare while he holds a palaver with Tiger, I have sought you out to ask an explanation, for I’m eager to know how and where my darling was found. I can wait as well as most men, but”

“Yes, yes, I know,” said Manuela, drawing her mantilla a little more closely over her now fair face. “You shall hear. Listen. You know that my father loves you?”

Pedro smiled assent, and nodded.

“His is a loving and loveable nature,” resumed our heroine.

“So is his daughter’s,” thought Pedro, but he did not say so.

“And he never forgets a friend,” continued Manuela. “He has often, often spoken to me about you, and your dear ones, and many a time in his military wanderings has he made inquiries about the dear child who was stolen so long agoten years now, is it not?”

“Ay, not far short of eleven. She was just turned five when last I beheld her angel faceno, not last, thank God.”

“Well, Pedro, you may easily believe that we had many raisings of our hopes, like yourself, and many, many disappointments, but these last arose from our looking chiefly in wrong directions. It somehow never occurred to us that her lot might have fallen among people of rank and wealth. Yet so it was. One day when out on the Pampas not far from Buenos Ayres, visiting a friend, and never thinking of dear Mariquita, we saw a young girl coming towards us

down the garden walk.

“As she came near, my father stopped short, and laid his hand on my shoulder with such a grasp that I nearly cried out. I looked up in surprise, and never before saw such an expression of eager inquiry on his face.

“‘Manuela!’ he said, in a low, tremulous voice, ‘if Mariquita is alive I see her now. I see our friend Pedro in every line of her pretty face.’

“I looked, but could not see the likeness. You know how differently people seem to be affected by the same face. I failed to see in the sweet countenance framed in curling fair hair, and in the slight girlish figure of surpassing grace, my swarthy friend Pedro. She seemed startled at first by my father’s abrupt manner. He questioned her. What was her name ‘Mariquita,’ she said. ‘I was sure of it,’ rejoined my father. ‘Your surname, my girl?’

“‘Arnold, senhor,’ she replied, with surprise.

“My dear father is very impulsive. His hopes sank as fast as they had risen. ‘Of course,’ he said afterwards, ‘Mariquita is a common name, and should not have raised my expectations so quickly, but the likeness, you see, staggered me.’

“Dear father!” continued Manuela, casting down her eyes, and speaking in a pensive tone, “I do love him so, because of his little imperfections. They set off his good points to so much greater advantage. I should not like to have a perfect father. Would you, Pedro?”

She raised her eyes to the guide’s face with an arch look and those eyes had become wonderfully lustrous since the skin had lost its brown hue.

“Really, Manuela,” returned the impatient guide, “I have not yet considered what degree of perfection I should like in my father but how about”

“Forgive me, yes Mariquita. Well, finding that we were going to the house where she dwelt, Mariquita walked with us, and told us that she had lived with our English friends, Mr and Mrs Daulton, since she was a little child. Did she remember her parents? we asked. Yes, she remembered them perfectly, and tried to describe them, but we could make nothing of that for evidently she thought them handsomer, grander, and more beautiful than any other people in the world. She did not remember where they dwelt except that it was in the woods and among mountains.

“‘That corresponds exactly,’ cried my father, becoming excited. ‘Forgive me, child; I am an eccentric old fellow, but did you quit your home amid fire and

smoke and yells’

“My father was stopped at this point by our arrival at the house, and the appearance of our friends. But he was too much roused by that time to let the matter drop, so he carried Mrs Daulton off to the library, and learned from her that the child had been lent to her by a priest!

“‘Lent, my dear madam?’ said my father.

“‘Yes, lent. The priest laughed when he presented her, but said the child was the orphan daughter of a distant relation of his who had left her to his care. He did not want her, or know what to do with her, and offered to give her to us. My husband said he could not accept such a gift, but he would gladly accept her as a loan! We both disbelieved the priest, for he was a bad man; but, as we were much in want of a companion for our own little girl at the time, we accepted her, and brought her here. The priest died suddenly, and as there was no one else to claim her, we have kept her ever since, and right glad we are to have her.’

“‘You won’t have her long,’ said my sweet father, in his usual blunt and pleasant way. ‘I am convinced that I know her father. Of course Arnold is a name you gave her?’ ‘No; when she came to us she said her name was Mariquita, but she knew of no other name. It was the priest who told, us her surname was Arnold.’

“Well, Pedro, to bring my story to an end, my father told the Daultons all about you, and got them to lend Mariquita to us. That was two years ago. Since then she has dwelt with us as my very dear sister. My father knew you were in Peru at the time, and his purpose was to wait till you should return, and present Mariquita unexpectedly to you to see if you would recognise each other. Therefore he did not mention her when he wrote asking you so urgently to return here. Neither did he mention his suspicions to Mariquita herself. We just led her to understand that we found her company so pleasant that we wished her to remain with us for a long visit. Then came news of the illness of a dear relation of mine in Chili. I was sent by my father to see and nurse her. At parting he told me if I should by any chance meet with you, I was on no account to speak or even hint at this matter. Little did either of us think at the time that I was destined to make so long a journey under your care. And you know, Senhor Pedro, that I am not bad at keeping secrets. I not only obeyed my father in this matter, but I faithfully obeyed yourself when you imposed on me the necessity of keeping my disguise secret from Senhor Armstrong.”

“You did, Manuela, faithfully.”

“And it was very hard to do, let me assure you, as well as needless,” returned

Manuela, in a slightly hurt tone. "Over and over again I have been on the point of betraying myself. Why did you require me to maintain such secrecy, and afflict myself with such constant care and watchfulness?"

"Because I knew full well," replied Pedro, with a twinkle in his eye, "that if poor Senhor Armstrong knew your true character, he would infallibly fall in love with you in spite of your brown skin."

"And pray, senhor, why should you object to Senhor Armstrong, or any one else, falling in love with me in spite of my brown skin?"

"You know very well, Manuela, that, your father being my friend, it is my duty in all circumstances to be faithful to him. You are also aware that your father entertains a strong objection to very young men, who have no money or prospects, presuming to think of marriage with his daughter, and that he would never consent to your being engaged to Senhor Armstrong in present circumstances. It was my simple duty, therefore, when I saw the danger, to warn and protect you. Indeed I saw, almost the first day after we met the youth, that I had made a great mistake in asking him to join us; but it was too late then to change, so I imposed secrecy on you, and admit that you have acted your part well; but my wellmeant efforts have been utterly in vain."

"How so!"

"Why, because the poor wretch has fallen hopelessly in love with you in spite of your disguise, and in spite of his own efforts to the contrary, for I have watched him carefully, and regard him as an uncommonly fine specimen of an amiable, selfdenying, and honourable man. And now, as I had feared, your father is furious at his presuming even to think of you, though I have done my best to show him that he has acted nobly all through our journey; that, after all, he may not really care for you at all, and that at all events you have given him no encouragement whatever, and do not care a straw for him."

Manuela flushed deeply at the last words, and there was the slightest possible contraction of her fine eyebrows as she replied, somewhat loftily

"Senhor Pedro, you are a kind friend and a faithful guide, but you pretend to a greater knowledge of these matters than you possess. You do not understand my beloved father as well as I do, and you are totally ignorant of the state of my feelings. However, I believe you have done all for the best, and my earnest request now is that, having discharged what you conceive to be your duty on this point, you will say and do nothing more."

"Your will would be law in this matter, even if I were not under such a deep debt of gratitude to you," returned Pedro, "and it is all the more easy to obey

you now that I have handed you over to your father and am no longer responsible. Are you aware that we start immediately in pursuit of the Indians who have attacked and murdered the poor people of Rolland's Ranch?"

"Yes, my father has told me all about it."

"Has he told you that you and Mariquita are to accompany the force so far on the road, and that when we get beyond the disturbed district I am to carry you on with a small party to Buenos Ayres, while the main body pursues the savages?"

"Yes, he told me that too," replied Manuela; "but," she added, with a little hesitation, "he did not say who was to go with our small detachment."

The slightest possible twinkle in Pedro's eye indicated suppressed feeling as he replied that he also was ignorant on that point the only things which he was quite sure of being, that Senhor Armstrong and Quashy were to go with the main body.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the maiden in surprise. "I had thought Senhor Armstrong objected to fighting."

Pedro laughed. "So he does, senhorina; but when the rescue of captive women and children is in the case, he holds fighting to be a duty, as you are aware. But I must go now," continued Pedro, becoming grave and earnest as he took the girl's hand. "Words can never express my feelings towards you and your father, dear Manuela. Indeed I have never been in the habit of saying much least of all when I have felt much. Mariquita and I will bless you both to the latest hour of our lives. Adieu. We meet in the morning at the house in which you are staying Lawrence has named it the house with the rustic porch and we start from there. You are all ready, I suppose?"

"Yes. You know I have little luggage to look after," said Manuela, with a laugh, "and I shall continue to travel as an Indian girl as an Inca princess!"

"Indeed. Why so?"

"That, Senhor Pedro, is a matter with which you have nothing whatever to do!"

Chapter Twenty Two

Colonel Marchbanks proves to be not so Good a General as he gets Credit for, and Lawrence stands selfconvicted.

It has been stated that our hero had agreed to join Colonel Marchbanks in the pursuit of the Indians, not because the troops sought to avenge the murders which had been committed, but because several women and children had been carried off, and the rescue of these formed the main object of the expedition.

There can be no doubt, however, that the desire of Lawrence to join in such a praiseworthy adventure was not a little stimulated by the fact that Manuela was to accompany her father, at least a part of the way, and he naturally hoped to have some opportunities of speaking to her perhaps of riding beside her, as he had so often done when he imagined her to be a daughter of the Incas.

But alas! the course of his love being true and deep remarkably deep was doomed to run in its proverbially rugged course.

Colonel Marchbanks, when leading his men to “glory” or otherwise like a true soldier, as he was, invariably moved with an advance and rearguard. Like a cautious father, he placed Lawrence in the rearguard, and arranged that there should be a considerable distance between it and the main body.

We may remark in passing that when the first burst of the old gentleman’s anger with Lawrence was over he had generously resolved, in consideration of what the young man had done for his daughter, to make no further allusion to the ballroom scene, but merely to hold the presumptuous youth politely at arm’s length, and take especial care that the two young people should not again have an opportunity of meeting alone. He laid no command on either of them, but simply trusted to his own wisdom and watchfulness.

Being as it were a freelance, Lawrence, he knew, would naturally ride in the force very much where he pleased. He had therefore cleverly provided against the evil consequences that might flow from such freedom by making a little arrangement at a brief and final interview the evening before they set out.

“Now, young senhor,” he said, in his usual abrupt way, “although a volunteer in this expedition, and not versed in military matters, you must of course put yourself under my orders, and consider yourself one of my troopers.”

Oh! of course, of course, Lawrence had not the slightest objection to do so. He was quite ready to do whatever was required of him, if only he might assist in the rescue of hapless captives; and although he knew nothing of military matters, still, in the event of an engagement, he might prove himself useful as a surgeon.

“Humph! We don’t deal much in surgeons in this country. It is usually do or die with us,” replied the colonel, with a grim smile. “However, we shall see. Meanwhile, I have appointed you to the charge of some of the baggage mules.

Your late experience must have made you somewhat expert in such matters, and your duty will be with the rearguard. One of my officers will show you your position in the morning. Goodnight.”

Lawrence left with a quiet “Goodnight, colonel,” and with a very unquiet feeling that somehow things might not turn out precisely as he had hoped.

Later that night Manuela appeared before her stern father dressed in the old familiar costume of an Indian girl, and with her fair skin stained dark brown. Usually the old soldier met his child with a beaming smile, that lit up his rugged visage with tenderness, as a gleam of sunshine sometimes illumines the rugged peaks of the Andes, but on this occasion he received her with a frown compounded of love and annoyance.

“How now, child? This is an unseasonable time for such foolery.”

“I want to travel in my old dress, father,” she replied, with a winning smile that almost tore the old man’s heart in twain; and there are such smiles, reader, let us assure you, though you may not have had the good fortune to see them yet!

“You certainly shall do nothing of the sort, my dear,” returned the stern old man, as if he were laying down one of the MedoPersic laws for he was very tough, you know, and had great power of control over his feelings, especially the softer ones.

“Oh, I’m so sorry you don’t like it!” said the Inca princess, with a little look of humble disappointment which was infinitely more heartrending than the smile; “but do you know, father, I have ridden so long in this costume, and in the gentleman fashion, that I feel quite sure at least, I think I should be utterly knocked up the first day if I were to begin a long hard journey in the ladies’ position. Then, you know, I could not dare to ride so in ordinary female dress and with a white face; the thing would look ridiculous wouldn’t it? And, of course, everybody knows that Pedro arrived here with an Indian girl in his band, so the thing will seem quite natural, and nobody will notice me, especially if I keep near to Pedro; and the soldiers will just think if they think at all that you have left your daughter behind.”

“Ah, well, that alters the case, Manuela,” said the colonel, with most unMedoPersic hesitancy, and still frowning a little at his inkbottle not at his daughter. “Of course, if it had been merely one of your whims, nothing would have induced me to let you go in such guise, but there is truth in what you say, and yes a good thought, you shall travel near Pedro. Goodnight. Go to bed, love. You will need all the rest you can obtain between now and morning.”

“Goodnight, darling father. I would kiss you if I had not just put on the stain.”

She retired, and soon after laid her pretty brown cheek on her pillow in placid contentment, while her grim father arranged his war plans so that Pedro should travel with the advanceguard.

There was a soft, fresh, exhilarating breeze blowing from the Pampas as the troop issued from the little town at a gallop, when the first streak of dawn became visible.

There was order, doubtless, in all the arrangements, but all seemed utter confusion to Lawrence as he assisted the young officer under whose special command he was placed to look after the mules. Some faint evidence of order, however, began to reveal itself to his uneducated mind when he observed that the confusion abated on the main body moving off and leaving him with a small band behind. His perception of order might have been still further though unpleasantly increased had he known that the advanceguard, with Manuela in its train, had started a considerable time previously. But he had not much time to think, for the command was almost immediately given to mount and ride.

Quashy was beside him, for, being his servant, Colonel Marchbanks had said he might do with him as he pleased. But Quashy was silent, for his spirit was chafed. His master observed the fact after the first halfhour’s gallop.

“What ails you, Quash?”

“I can’t abide peepil,” growled the negro, “what says ‘aw!’”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that Aw’s agwine wid us.”

“Whatthe sportsmaneh?”

“Yes, massa. On’y I don’t b’lieve he ever sported nuffin but a swagger, andand‘aw!’ W’en I git up dis mornin’ I heerd ’im say to his friend: ‘I say, Jack, wouldn’t itawbe dooced good fun to go andawhab a slap at de Injins?’ If de Injins send a spear troo his libberawhe’ll not t’ink it sitch fun!”

“That’s true, Quash, but the same may be said of ourselves.”

“Not so, massa, ’cause we nebber said it would be ‘dooxed good fun.’”

“There’s something in that, Quash, but you shouldn’t let feelings of illwill to any one get the mastery of you. Men of his stamp are often very good fellows

at bottom, though they do 'aw' in a most ridiculous and unaccountable manner. Besides, he has done you no harm."

"Done me no harm!" repeated the negro, indignantly, "didn't he say you was mad or drunk?"

"Well, well," said Lawrence, laughing, "that was a very innocent remark. It did no harm to either of us."

"You's wrong, massa," returned Quashy in a magnificently hurt tone. "It dood no harm to you, but it hurt my feelin's, an' dat's wuss dan hurtin' my body."

At this point in the conversation the troop passed over the brow of an eminence, and beheld the wide rolling sea of the illimitable South American Pampas, or plains, stretching away on all sides to the horizon. During the whole morning they had been galloping through the region of the Monte, or bush, that borderland which connects the treeless plains with the tropical forests of the north, where thorny shrubs covered the ground in more or less dense patches, where groves of the algarobaa noble tree of the mimosa species, and trees laden with a peachlike but poisonous fruit, as well as other trees and shrubs, diversified the landscape, and where the ground was carpeted with beautiful flowering plants, among which were the variegated blossoms of verbena, polyanthus, and others.

But now, all was changed. It seemed as if the party had reached the shores of a great, level, grassy sea, with only here and there a seeming islet, where a thicket grew, to break the skyline of the horizon. For a few minutes the rearguard drew up to collect the straggling baggagemules, and then away they went with a wild shout, as if they were moved by the same glad feeling of freedom that affects the petrel when it swoops over the billows of the mighty ocean.

The scene and the sensations were absolutely new to Lawrence and Quashy. Both were mounted on very good horses, which seemed to sympathise with their riders, for they required no spur to urge them over the grassy plain. The sun was bright, and Lawrence had been too long accustomed to the leaden skies of old England to quarrel with the sunshine, however hot it might be; besides, he rather enjoyed heat, and as for Quashy, heat was his native element. A pleasant air was blowing, too. In short, everything looked beautiful, especially to our hero, who knew at least supposed that a certain princess of the Incas was in the band immediately in front of him. He was not aware, you see, that she was with the advanceguard!

"Das am mugnifercent!" exclaimed Quashy, as his horse put his foot into a biscachohole, and only escaped a fall by making a splendid bound, where by

its haunch, striking the negro's back, sent him plunging on to its neck.

“Oh! I does like to be shook like dat, massa.”

“If you get shook much worse than that,” cried Lawrence, “I'll have to stop to pick you up.”

“No fear, massa. Howebber much I wobbles I nebber comes off.”

An islet of bushes at this point necessitated a slight *détour*. On the other side of it they found that the main body of the troop had halted for rest and food.

Right glad was Lawrence to find that Colonel Marchbanks's humour was entirely changed, that the asperity of the previous night had passed away, and that the natural urbanity of his nature had returned.

“A pleasant gallop, was it not, Senhor Armstrong?” he said, as our hero joined the group of officers around him.

“Delightful, and quite new to me,” said Lawrence. “I have often read of but never seen the Pampas till now.”

He looked furtively about as he spoke. The colonel marked the look, and with a somewhat grim smile observed that they should see more than enough of the Pampas for some days to come.

“The sea of long yellowbrown grass and thistles,” he added, “gets to be rather monotonous at last; but I never weary of the feeling of immensity and freedom which it inspires. Come, dine with us, senhor.”

Lawrence gladly accepted the invitation.

“We make but a brief halt,” said the colonel, “for time presses and distances are great. Our next shall be at the Estancia Algaroba, where we shall spend the night. Your friend Pedro will make arrangements for us. He is with the advanceguard.”

“Oh, indeed,” said Lawrence; then, feeling that he ought to say something more, “I suppose his newlyfound daughter is with him?”

“Yes,” replied the colonel, curtly, as he shot a suspicious glance at the youth from under his shaggy brows.

After dining, Lawrence returned to the baggagemules with an unaccountable depression of spirits upon him, and deeply absorbed with the question whether rearguards ever overtook advanceguards, and what, if they did, usually became of intervening main bodies. With such puzzling military questions on

his mind, the remainder of that day's journey was not equal to the first part, and even Quashy, the sympathetic, failed to interest him!

The estancia, previously referred to by the colonel, stood on a slight eminence surrounded by the grove of algarobatrees from which it derived its name. The fruit of this tree forms excellent food for cattle, and Lawrence found himself busily engaged during the first hour after arrival in procuring it for his mules, and otherwise looking after his charge. When this duty was done, feeling no disposition to join his comrades at supper, he sauntered into a garden in rear of the estancia, where he found a rustic seat under an algarobatree, and sat down to meditate.

It was a calm, peaceful, moonlight night, with an air, so he felt, of sadness about it which harmonised with his melancholy thoughts. He now believed he saw through Colonel Marchbanks's plan, and had given up all hope of seeing Manuela again. In these circumstances, being a man of submissive spirit yet powerful will, he set himself resolutely to think of the important object in which he was engaged. Somewhat thus his meditations ran

"I am no soldier, but I am a man, and I should be less than a man unworthy to live if I were not ready to help in the rescue of women and children. Some of the girls, poor things, may be like Manu that is. Now, although I hate war, and do not approve of settling disputes by the sword, I feel that self-defence, or the defence of the helpless, justifies war, ay, to the knife. Of course it does. Was I not thoroughly justified in fighting the robbers when Manu. Well, then, let me think it out. A thing is not properly thought at all until it is thought out, and found out. Talking of that, how fortunate that Pedro's little daughter was found out. It is most interesting! I delight to think of her. And she's so pretty, too quite beautiful, though, of course, not so beautiful as Man"

"Bother Manuela!" he exclaimed aloud, starting up.

As he spoke, Manuela herself the princess of the Incas stood before him!

In order to account for this sudden miscarriage of the colonel's plans, we must turn aside to state that the princess, being of an active disposition, and not easily tired, had said to Pedro that evening, when his detachment was encamping under a group of trees not far from the estancia, that she would ride back to the main body to see her father.

"But my strict orders are," said Pedro, "that I am to keep you with the advance guard, and you know that your father is not a man to be disobeyed."

"Quite true," returned the princess, looking with a solemn expression down at Pedro for she was still on horseback, while he and his men were dismounted,

preparing the camp. "You must on no account disobey my father, Pedro."

"Well then, you see," returned the guide, with an amused look, "I cannot give you permission to leave us."

"Of course not. That would be insubordination, Pedro, would it not? which, in time of war, is punishable, I think, with death. I would never think of asking permission, or tempting you to disobey. I will be sure to tell my father that you positively refused to let me go. Adieu, Senhor Pedro. A good appetite and sweet repose!"

She touched her splendid horse with a switch, and next moment was flying over the Pampas at a pace that rendered pursuit useless.

Dismounting and fastening her steed to a tree, she passed through the garden towards the house, and naturally, as we have seen, came upon Lawrence.

"Manuela!" he exclaimed.

"Si, senhor," she replied.

He advanced a step with outstretched arms, and then, checking himself, clasped his hands.

"Is it can it be a dream?"

"What does you dream, senhor?" asked the girl, in the old familiar broken English.

"Manuela, dear girl, do not trifle with me. It seems like magic. Did I not see you in the ballroom with the daughter of Colonel Marchbanks?"

"Well, Senhor Armstrong," said Manuela, earnestly, and in good English, "I admit that I am the daughter of Colonel Marchbanks, but I did not indeed I did not wish to deceive"

"Deceive!" interrupted Lawrence, quickly, "as well might you tell me that one of the unfallen angels did not mean to deceive. O dear one, forgive me! I know not how to tell it but but can you believe that a great stupid fellow like myself loves you so that that I well it's of no use. I'll never act wisely if I try to to"

He seized her hand. She did not withdraw it. He drew her to him. She did not resist; and there followed a sound a very slight sound; yet it was not so slight but that it sent a shock of alarm and anger to the soul of Colonel Marchbanks, who came up at that awkward moment.

"Sir! sirrah! senhor, rascal!" spluttered the old man, as Manuela ran away from

the scene, “whatwhywhat do you mean?”

Drawing himself up, Lawrence said, with a look of dignity

“Colonel Marchbanks, I can look you honestly in the face, and say that neither in word nor deed have I done you or your daughter wrong.”

“Nohave you not?” shouted the colonel. “Sir! rascal!there is a lookingglass over the mantelpiece in the estancia. Go there, look yourself in the face, and say, if you dare, that you have done me no wrong!”

He wheeled about violently and strode away, fuming.

Lawrence went to his chamber, wondering at such a display of wrath in one so genial.

He glanced at the lookingglass in passing through the chief room of the estancia. The glance revealed to him the fact that there was a large rich brown patch in the region of his mouth and nose!

Chapter Twenty Three

Treats of Savages, Captives, Chases, Accidents, Incidents, and Perplexities

Not unfrequently, in human affairs, evil consequences are happily averted by unforeseen circumstances. It was so on the present occasion.

What Colonel Marchbanks’s wrath might have led to no one can tell, for, a little before dawn on the following morning, there came a messenger in hot haste from Pedro stating that one of the scouts had come in with the news that the Indians were encamped with their captives and booty not half a day’s ride in advance of them.

The result was an immediate order to advance and to close up.

It is interesting to consider how small a matter will cheer the spirits of some men. The order to mount and ride naturally produced some excitement in the breast of Lawrence Armstrong, being unaccustomed to the dash and whirl of troops eager to meet the foe; but the succeeding order to “close up” did more, it filled his heart with joy, for did it not imply that the advance and rearguards must come nearer to each other? At least to his unmilitary mind it seemed so.

In a brief space of time, and with marvellously little noise, the troops were in motion, and at dawn, sure enough, he saw the figures of the ladies galloping with the advance party, with Pedro leading the wayfor he had been appointed to the responsible duty of guide.

Venturing to push a little ahead of his special charge, Lawrence soon found himself with the main body, and heard the colonel order one of his officers to ride forward and tell the ladies to fall to the rear of the force.

Hearing this, Lawrence, almost imperceptibly to himself, tightened his reins, but, before he had dropped many strides behind, the colonel turned his head slightly and summoned him by name.

With something like a guilty feeling Lawrence rode forward.

“We have heard of the whereabouts of the savages, Senhor Armstrong. You are a civilian, and as surgeon to the force it is your duty, of course, to keep as much out of danger as possible, but as brave men usually prefer the front, I absolve you from this duty. You are at liberty to go there if you choose.”

The blood rushed to our hero’s face. He knew well what the old soldier meant. With a simple “Thank you, colonel,” he put spurs to his steed, and was in a few seconds galloping alongside of Pedro.

“You ride furiously, senhor,” said the guide, with a twinkle in his eye which was characteristic of him when amused.

Lawrence made no reply.

Just then they overtopped a slight ridge or rising ground, and beheld a few mounted men on the horizon. These were evidently the scouts of the Indian band, for on seeing the soldiers they drew hastily together and stood in a group as if to consult for a few seconds. Then, turning, they galloped over the next rising ground and disappeared.

The soldiers of course increased their speed. On gaining the top of the ridge, they beheld a large band of Indians mounting and galloping off in hot haste. Evidently they did not intend to give battle at least at that time.

With a mighty shout the soldiers bore down on them at their utmost speed Lawrence, Pedro, the colonel, and Quashy leading, for they were the best mounted of the party. It was soon perceived that captives were with the Indians, for women in civilised dress were seen on horseback, and some of the savages had children in front of them.

At this sight every thought of self fled from the warm heart of Lawrence Armstrong, and he was impressed with but one idea “Rescue the helpless!” Urging his steed to its utmost, he was soon far ahead of the troop, closely followed by Quashy, whose eyes and teeth seemed to blaze with excitement.

There was a savage straight ahead of them who carried something in his arms.

It seemed to be a child. Fixing his eye on this man, Lawrence spurred on, and grasped his sword with deadly intent. Quashy, ever observant, did the same.

The man, perceiving their intentions, diverged a little to the right of his comrades, probably thinking that his pursuers would be unwilling to quit the main band, and might thus be thrown off. He was mistaken, for Lawrence possessed, with immense power of will, a strong spice of recklessness. The more, therefore, that the savage diverged, the more did his pursuers diverge in their determination to have him. Finding himself hard pressed, he dropped his load. It proved to be only a sack, which, bursting, revealed, not a child, but a quantity of miscellaneous property!

Enraged as well as disappointed by the discovery, our hero, being fallible, permitted evil feelings to enter his bosom, and spurred on with a tighter grasp of the sword under the influence of revenge, but the savage being now lightened held on with still greater speed, diverging more and more until, in a short time, he raced almost at right angles from his companions towards a part of the plain which was somewhat elevated above the surrounding level.

It was a wise move on his part, for the place, he knew, was riddled with biscachoholes. Among these he steered his course with consummate skill. Of course Lawrence's steed ere long put its foot into a hole and rolled over, sending its rider headlong to the ground, where he lay on his back insensible, alike to pity for captives and impulses of revenge.

After lying thus for a considerable time he slowly opened his eyes, and, looking up, met the solemn gaze of Quashy. His head rested on the knee of his sable follower.

"What's wrong, Quash?" was his first inquiry.

"Nuffin's wrong, massa, now you talk. I was begin to t'ink your mout' was shut up for ebber."

"Have they caught the rascals?" asked Lawrence, suddenly recollecting what had passed, and raising himself on one elbow.

"I not know, massa. Nobody here to tell."

"Howwhatwhere are the troops?"

"Dun know, massa; gone arter de Injins, I s'pose, an' de Injins gone arter deir own business, an' bof gone off de face ob de art' altogidderso far as I can see."

Lawrence started up in great anxiety, and although still giddy from the effects of his fall, could see plainly enough that neither troops nor Indians were to be

seen only a mighty sea of waving grass with a clear horizon all round, and nothing to break the monotony of the vast solitude save their two horses browsing quietly a few yards off.

“Quashy, it strikes me that we shall be lost,” said Lawrence, with anxious look.

“Smy opinion, massa, dat we’s lost a’ready.”

“Come,” returned Lawrence, rising with some difficulty, “let’s mount and be off after them. Which way did they go that is, at what point of the compass did they disappear?”

Quashy’s face assumed the countless wrinkles of perplexity. He turned north, south, east, and west, with inquiring glances at the blank horizon, and of course gave a blank reply.

“You see, massa,” he said, apologetically, “you hoed a rollin’ ober an’ ober in sitch a way, dat it rader confused me, an’ I forgits to look whar we was, an’ den I was so awful cut up for fear you’s gone dead, dat I t’ink ob nuffin elsean’ now, it’s too late!”

“Too late indeed,” rejoined Lawrence, with a feeling of bitterness, “nevertheless, we must ride somewhere. Catch our horses, Quashy, and I will wait for you and think.”

Having applied himself to that most difficult process thinking out a plan with insufficient material for thought, our hero resolved to ride in what he supposed judging by the position of the sun was an easterly direction, hoping to strike the trail of the pursuers and fugitives before night.

“You see, Quashy,” he remarked, as they galloped swiftly over the flowering plains, “we are almost sure to find the trail in a short time; for although neither you nor I have had much experience in following trails in the wilderness, we have got some sort of idea at least I have, from books of how the thing should be done, and even the most stupid white man could scarcely ride across the track of several hundred horsemen without observing it.”

“Das true, massa. Eben the stoopidist black man am equal to dat. But what if you’s mistook de d’rection, an’ we’s ridin’ west instead ob east?”

“Why then, Quashy, we’d discover our mistake sooner or later by arriving at the Andes,” returned Lawrence, with a bland smile.

“Hi! I don’ mean west,” returned the negro, with a reciprocal grin; “you couldn’t be so mistook as dat but s’pose you’s go souf by mistake?”

“Why, then the straits of Magellan would bring us up.”

“Ahwell, massa, I dun know whar de straits ob Majillum is, but it would be a comfort to be brought up anywhar, for den you couldn’t go no farder. An’ if we’s on de right track, we’re sure to come to de Atlantic at last, eben if we miss de Injins an’ de sodjers altogidder. Das pleasant to t’ink oni’n’t it?”

Apparently Lawrence did not think it remarkably pleasant, for he paid no further attention to the remarks of his companion, but proceeded along with a profound, almost stern, gravity, and with his eyes glancing keenly right and left after the most approved manner of the Indian brave or the backwoods scout.

No track or trail, however, of any kind was to be seen. For more than an hour they sped along, down in the flowering hollows, over the grassy waves steering carefully past the riddled townships of the biscachos, now and then diverging a little to avoid some larger shrubs or tangled masses of herbage, sometimes uttering a word of comment on passing objects, and occasionally craning their necks on observing some buzzard or other bird on the horizon, but never drawing rein until they came to a rising ground, from the highest point of which they could have a commanding view of the region all round. Here they pulled up.

“Quashy,” said Lawrence, in a deep, solemn tone, “we are indeed lost.”

“It ’pears to me you’s right, massa.”

“And yet we must be on the right track,” continued Lawrence, as if communing with himself, “unless, indeed, the Indians may have changed their direction and turned off to the south.”

“Or de nort’,” suggested Quashy, in the same selfcommuning tone.

“Come, there’s nothing for it but to push on,” cried Lawrence, galloping away.

“Das so. Nuffin else,” said Quashy, following.

And so they continued on for another hour or more in grim silence, after which they rode, as it were, in grim despair at least Lawrence did so, for he felt bitterly that he was now separated, perhaps for ever, from Manuela, and that he could render no further aid in rescuing the captives from the savages. As for the negro, despair was not compatible with his free and easy, not to say reckless, happygolucky temperament. He felt deeply indeed for his young master, and sympathised profoundly; but for himself he cared little, and thought of nothing beyond the interests of the passing hour. Possibly if both

horses had broken their legs and Lawrence had broken his neck, Quashy might have given way to despair, but it is probable that nothing less severe could have overcome his buoyant spirit.

At last the sun began to descend behind the Andes, which were by that time turned into a misty range of tender blue in the far, far distance. The steeds also showed signs of declining power, for, in his anxiety to overtake the troops, Lawrence had pressed them rather harder than he would otherwise have done.

Opportunely at that time they came in sight of a small clump of bushes, like a low islet in the sea of grass.

“We will camp here,” said Lawrence, brusquely, as he pulled up and dismounted. “The game is up. We are fairly lost, that’s quite clear, and it is equally clear that we and our horses must rest.”

He spoke in a tone of cynical joviality, as if defying his misfortunes. The simpleminded Quashy, accepting it as genuine, said, “All right, massa,” in a tone of cheerful satisfaction, as he slid off his steed and set about preparing the encampment.

If our hero’s mind had been more at ease, it is probable that he would have enjoyed his surroundings greatly, for, although lost on the wide Pampas, they had not begun yet to suffer physically from that misfortune. Their wallets were still supplied with food sufficient for at least three full meals, the weather was serene, and the situation, viewed in one aspect, was exceedingly romantic. From the top of the rising ground where the fire was burning and the steaks of mare’s flesh roasting, the complete circle of the horizon could be seen, and the yellowbrown grass of the Pampas, at that time about a foot high, rolled with a motion that strangely resembled the waves of the liquid ocean itself.

But poor Lawrence was incapable of enjoying the beauties of nature just then. After one long, anxious look round to see if any object should present itself which might raise the faintest echo of hope, he returned to the camp, and sat down on a mound with a profound sigh.

“Chee’ up, massa,” said Quashy, raising his face, which glittered with his efforts to blow the fire into a glow. “You’s git her in de long run.”

“Get who?” demanded Lawrence, in surprise, not unmingled with a touch of severity, for this was the first time that his humble follower had dared to touch on the theme that was uppermost in his mind.

With a strange compound of what is well named “cheek” and humility, Quashy replied, “Her, you know, de Inca princessManuela. It’s all right!”

“And pray, Quashy, how do you know that it’s all right, or that I want anything to be all right. In short, what business have you to presume toto”

“Oh, it’s all right, massa,” replied the negro, with a wink and what a wink that was! “I knows all about it, bein’ zactly in de same state wid Sooz’n.”

Lawrence sought refuge from conflicting feelings in a loud laugh, and asked what hope Quashy could by any possibility entertain of ever seeing Susan again she having, as it were, vanished from off the earth.

“Oh, nebber fear,” was Quashy’s comfortable reply. “I’s sure to find Sooz’n, for she no can git along widout me, no more nor I can git along widout her. We’s sure to find one anoder in de long run.”

Envyng his man’s unwavering faith, Lawrence sat for some time silently contemplating the gorgeous sunset, when an exclamation drew his attention to the opposite side of the landscape.

“Look, massa. Suffin movin’ dar.”

There was indeed a moving speckor rather two speckson the horizon. As they drew nearer it was soon seen to be a Gaucho of the Pampas in full chase of an ostrich. They did not come straight towards our wanderers, but passed within half a mile of them. The picturesque hunter, bending over his steed’s neck, with his scarlet poncho streaming behind him, and the bolas whirling round his head, was so eager in the pursuit that he either did not observe, or did not mind, the thin smoke of the campfire. The giant bird, stretching its long legs to the utmost and using its wings as additional propellers, seemed quite able to hold its own and test the powers of the horse. Gradually pursuer and pursued passed out of the range of vision, and were seen no more.

“Just as well,” remarked Lawrence, as he afterwards sat eating his maresteak by the starandfire light, “that fellow might be one of the many robbers who are said to infest the plains; and although we could no doubt have protected ourselves from him, he might have brought a swarm of his comrades about our ears.”

“Yes, massa,” was Quashy’s brief reply, for he was engaged at that moment with a large and tough mouthful.

A long ride, and a hearty though frugal supper, disposed both master and man for rest that night. When the last gleam of sunset had faded from the western sky, and the last scraps of mare’s flesh had vanished from their respective bones; when the stars were twinkling with nocturnal splendour, and all nature

was sinking to repose, Lawrence and Quashy lay down on the grass, spread their ponchos above them, pillowed their weary heads upon their saddles, and slept profoundly.

Chapter Twenty Four

Lawrence and his Man fall in with Strangers, hear Good News, and experience Rough Usage.

“Lost on the Pampas!” thought Lawrence, on awaking next morning. It was romantic, no doubt, but well, he did not follow up the “but” with very definite conceptions.

As he lifted his eyes towards the horizon, where the rays of the rising sun were suffusing the sky with a tinge of rosy light, his first feelings partook of gratitude for a night of unbroken rest, which had restored a bounding sensation of physical life and strength and energy. Awaking in such a condition of mind and body leads one, contradictory though it may seem, to spend the first few minutes of reviving consciousness in restful contemplation and enjoyment of one’s surroundings. Raising himself on one elbow, our hero let his eyes wander dreamily over the vast plain. There was much monotony about it, no doubt, but the majesty of illimitable space neutralised that impression. On the horizon the intensifying tone of the rapidly increasing light harmonised with the varying greens and yellows of the herbage. Here and there one or two uplands in the far distance caught the sheen of day and relieved the prospect with streaks of varied hue. Still nearer a few clumps of low shrubbery increased this diversity a little. In the middledistance the varied colours and forms of the grasses became distinct enough to invest the scene with character, while in the immediate foreground additional force and interest were given to the landscape by the person of Quashy lying flat on his back, with his great eyes closed and his huge mouth open.

The state of dreamy contemplation did not last long. The stern realities of the situation seemed to rush in upon his mind with sudden power. Lost! lost! The captives perhaps still unrescued from the savages! Manuela in danger! It was a dreadful state of things.

“Come, Quashy!” cried Lawrence, leaping up and giving the negro a rough shake that brought him instantly to a sitting and blinking condition. “Get up. We must be off. Saddle the horsesthe hor why, where are the horses?”

He finished the sentence in tones of anxiety, for no horses were visible.

Bounding into the patch of bushes, on the edge of which they had passed the

night, Lawrence ran through it hastily, followed by his man, who had shaken off lethargy in a moment.

The patch was small. Moreover, the shrubs were barely tall enough to conceal a horse. In five minutes it became quite certain that the horses were not there.

From the highest point of the rising ground they had a clear view of the plains all round, but after the keenest scrutiny not a speck resembling a horse was to be seen. The searchers looked at each other in dismay.

“Lost! and our horses gone!” said Lawrence, in a voice which excess of alarm had reduced to a sort of low, hoarse whisper.

“Most awrful!” murmured Quashy.

Lawrence cleared his throat and paused, while his sympathetic servant gazed.

“Now, Quashy,” he said, “it seems to me quite impossible that our animals could have strayed in a few hours quite out of such an enormous circle of vision. They must be somewhere about, though we can’t see them.”

“Yes, massa, dey must be somewhar, as you say.”

“Well, then, it follows that they must be concealed in one of the few clumps of bushes that lie around us. So we must search these instantly, for our only hope lies in finding the horses.”

“Das so, massa.”

Even our negro’s elastic spirit seemed to be subdued to some extent by the prospect before them; for, apart from the fact that the bushy islets in the grassy sea were scarcely high enough to entirely conceal so large an object as a horse, they were scattered about at such immense distances from each other that a complete search of them implied toilsome labour for at least the whole of that day. Lawrence felt, however, that it had to be done, and arranged that his man should search towards the east, while he should take the west. To prevent the risk of their losing the mound on which they stood, one of their ponchos was thrown over the top of the highest bush and fixed there as a signal. So eager were they to begin, that both started off without a thought of breakfast.

It is not necessary to follow the steps of each. In regard to Lawrence, it may suffice to say that he wandered during the whole of that sultry day over the boundless plain, wearily but persistently examining the few bushislets that lay to the west of their bivouac without finding a trace of the lost steeds. As the sun began to decline towards the east he gave up in despair, and, with weary limbs and something like wolfish hunger, returned towards the rendezvous.

Very different had been the experience of his sable servant.

Starting off, as we have said, at the same time with his master, Quashy found the two horses, after a two hours' search, quietly grazing in a grassy hollow. A low shrubcovered mound lying close to this hollow intervened between it and the spot where our adventurers had spent the night, thus effectually concealing the lost steeds from view.

The instant Quashy made the discovery he ran to the nearest elevation on the plain with the intention of shouting the news to his master, but by that time Lawrence was two or three miles away on the other side of the bivouac, quite beyond the range of sight and hearing.

Quashy, therefore, ran back to the hollow with the intention of catching the horses, mounting his own, and driving the other before him to the camp.

And now began that interesting but somewhat exhausting and heartbreaking process which may be styled coquetting with a free horse.

Full of glad enthusiasm, the negro ran towards his own steed, holding out his right hand, and exclaiming, "Come along, Ole Scrubby."

He had named the horse Ole Scrubby owing to some sort of facetious perversity of his own temperament, for the horse, instead of being "ole," was quite young, and, far from being scrubby, it was a remarkably fine animal.

"Come now, Ole Scrubby," repeated the man, "we's got no time to waste. D'ee hear?"

Evidently it heard, for, after allowing its master to advance within three feet of it, and even putting out its nose to smell his black hand, it gave a snort, turned round, tossed up its heels, and trotted away. Stopping short suddenly it turned again and looked at its master with a high head, as if to say, "There! what think you of that?"

"You ole scoundril," growled the negro, with an injured look, "di'n't I say we's got no time to waste? eh! Come, now. Das enuff o' your fun."

He had again approached to within three feet or so, and again the playful steed had protruded its nose and even touched his hand, but before that hand could grasp the halter, tail and heels were in the air, and away it went a second time.

Indignation, intensified to the uttermost, sat on Quashy's countenance. "Scrubs," he said, solemnly modifying the name a little, as he became more serious "you nebber doo'd dat before! Come, sar, you 'bey orders, an' stan'

still.”

But the horse refused to obey orders, and declined to stand still. His master began to lose temper if we may so speak of one who only became a little less amiable than usual. Under the influence of the condition, however, whatever it was, he became unjust, and began to call his horse names.

“What! you not ’bey orders? you ole screwyou unnat’ral villinyou obs’nit lump o’ hossflesh! Stan’ still, I say!”

Need we say that the horse refused to stand still?

Again, and again, and over again, the negro tried to lay hands on the animal, and as often did he fail. Quashy, however, was not to be easily beaten. His was a resolute and persevering nature; but the misfortune on that occasion was that he had to do with a creature possessed of greater resolution and perseverance than himself. He spent hours over the effort. He coaxed the horse. He wheedled it. He remonstrated with and reproved it. He tried the effect of the most endearing entreaties, and assurances of personal esteem. Losing no, becoming less amiable, he flew round to the other extreme, and accused it of ingratitude, indefensible even in an ass. Then he sought to bribe it with offers of free forgiveness. After that he tried to frighten it with threats of the most painful and every way horrible consequences; but whatever effect all these varied influences might have had upon the horse’s mind, the one unvarying effect on its body was to send its tail and heels towards the sky, while it neighed joyously and trotted around. Poor Quashy went up to it smilingly after that, frowningly; he cringed towards it; he advanced straightforwardly; he sidled slyly; he ran at it; he rushed at it; he bounced at it; he yelled at it; he groaned at it; he perspired after it; he went nearly mad over it, and, finally, he sat down before it, and glared in deadly silence in its innocent face!

Then the unfortunate man, having spent a very considerable part of the day thus, bethought him of trying to catch the other horse, but with it he was also unsuccessful indeed, the failure was even more emphatic, for Lawrence’s steed refused to let him come within even hopeful distance of it.

At last, in the profoundest state of despair to which he was ever known to have sunk, he returned to camp. Lawrence had got there before him, saw him coming, and advanced to meet him.

“Well, Quashy, I have failed,” he said, with a sigh.

“So’s I,” returned Quashy, with a growl.

“This losing of our horses,” remarked Lawrence, “is the worst that could have

befallen us.”

“No, massa,” said the negro, with more of sulkiness or less of amiability than he had exhibited since they first met on the western side of the Andes, “breakin’ our legs would be wuss mashin’ our necks would be wusser still. But de hosses is not lost. Dey’s on’y spunkerblued.”

“How? What d’you mean?”

“Dey’s down dar,” returned the negro, pointing with his finger, “down in dat hollerspunkerblued.”

“Not killed, I hope,” asked Lawrence, anxiously.

“Oh no, massa, on’y spunkerblued stuffed to de muzzle wid deir own selfwill.”

Lawrence received this explanation with a light laugh. “Come,” he said, quickly, “lead the way, Quash, and I’ll show you how to get them out of the spunkerblues.”

Comforted and reassured by his master’s hearty tone and manner, the negro led the way to the spot where he had spent such a busy day.

Now, we do not know whether we have made it obvious to the reader that Lawrence Armstrong’s kindness of nature embraced not only the human race but the whole animal kingdom. At all events it is true that wherever he came in contact with the lower animals he managed by some species of fascination to gain their affections. The mode of fascination began, no doubt, with their stomachs, but this does not alter the fact. Among other creatures Lawrence had gained the affections of Quashy’s steed, and also of Manuela’s and Pedro’s horses, as well as his own, by means of sugar. With this simple appliance he went into the hollow, and held out his hand.

“Come, Ole Scrubby,” he cried, using Quashy’s words.

With a cheerful neigh the rebellious one trotted up, received the sugar, and suffered himself to be led once more into servitude.

“Even among the brutes, Quash,” he remarked, as he patted the nose of his own steed, “we are meant to ‘overcome evil with good.’ Come, we must spend another night here, for it is too late to start off now; besides, I am tired out, and starving.”

“Massa,” returned Quashy, as they mounted, “I’s done up to dat extent, an’ so hungry, I could sleep on prickly pears, an’ heat my wittles raw.”

In this condition of body and mind they galloped back to camp, and took particular care that the horses should not again stray.

Next morning, after breakfasting on the remains of their food, they mounted, and, taking the sun as their guide, headed away eastward at full gallop.

Silently and steadily for two hours or more they swept along over the Pampas waves, turning aside only a little once or twice to avoid ground that had been riddled and rendered unsafe by the biscachos.

As noon approached Quashy gave a shout, and pointed to the horizon ahead of them, where living objects of some kind were seen moving along.

“Ostriches,” said Lawrence.

“Dey’s a noo kind ob ostriches wid four legs,” returned the negro, “an’ wid peepil on deir backs.”

“I believe you are right. A party of mounted men, apparently. Come, this is well. Whoever they are we shall at least be able to gather some information from them, and, at the worst, we can follow them to some inhabited spot.”

“True, massa, an’ if dey’s rubbers we kin fight dem.”

On drawing near they found that the riders belonged to a family of Gauchos. There were six of them all fine looking fellows, clad in the graceful, though ragged costume of the Pampas. One of their number was a little boy of about five years of age, who rode his horse with all the elegance and ease of a Spanish grandee, though only about the size of a large monkey.

They turned out to be honest and friendly men, who said that they were returning home after assisting in a successful chase after Indians.

Had they been assisted by troops in the chase, Lawrence asked, eagerly.

Yes, they had troops under a tall, whitehaired colonel, and the captives had been rescued, the savages scattered, and the soldiers had gone off in the direction of Buenos Ayres.

“So, Quashy, they’ve managed the job without our assistance,” said Lawrence, on hearing this. “Now we must spur after the troops as hard as our steeds can go.”

On this being stated to the leading Gaucho he shook his head, and advised the senior to go to their hut for the night. It was only a little way out of the line of march; there the travellers could feed and rest well, and start refreshed in the

morning. Besides, a storm was coming on which would prevent all travelling for some hours.

As he spoke he pointed to a part of the sky which had become dark with clouds, and, without further remark, galloped away, followed by his companions. Lawrence deemed it wise in the circumstances to accept the invitation.

The day had been very sultry, and if our travellers had not been ignorant of the signs of the Pampas they might have known that the day was heavy with the presage of storm.

Before the Gaucho home, to which they were hastening, appeared on the horizon, the whole sky had become overclouded and vivid forked lightning began to play. From the way in which the Gauchos spurred and the horses trembled it was clear that they feared being caught in the storm; and little wonder, for both men and beasts are filled with alarm when overtaken on the unsheltered Pampas by one of these terrific tempests. The blast, sweeping unchecked over hundreds of miles of wilderness, often acquires a force that drives all before it. Sometimes great herds of cattle have been driven bellowing before the gale, tumbling over each other in wild confusion till some swollen river has checked their flight and ended their career.

Race, and spur, and shout as they might, however, the storm was too quick for them on this occasion. The wind seemed to rush down upon them with evil intent and fury, changing the temperature from sultry heat to sudden and bitter cold. Dust, too, was stirred up, and swept along so thickly that the day became as dark as night. Then the rain burst upon them like a waterspout, and, mingling with the flying dust overhead, came down in the form of mud, mixed with flying sticks and stones, and grass, and prickly thistleheads.

So fierce was the hurlyburly that it seemed as if man and horse must perish under it. Thunder also cracked and roared in terrific peals, while ever and anon the lightning flashed like gleaming steel through the darkness.

In the midst of this elemental war the party reached the Gaucho huts. What they were like Lawrence could not tell. He had galloped like the rest wildly along, with his face buried in his poncho, and saw nothingsave once or twice, when, raising his head slightly and opening one eye, he saw, or fancied he saw, the Gauchos, like dark phantoms, flying before him, and Quashy at his side, bending flat on his horse's neck. The stout negro seemed to care nothing for his body so long as his face was safe, for he had let his poncho go, and as it was fastened only at the neck, it flapped wildly above his head.

Presently they passed through an opening in what seemed a mud wall. Then

they stopped so suddenly that Lawrence almost went over his steed's head, while his man effectually did so, and, throwing a complete somersault, alighted by good fortune on his feet.

They all tumbled promiscuously into a mud hut, and then, clearing their eyes, found that the Gaucho leader and a woman, apparently his wife, were smiling welcome beside them; that the shortlived storm was already passing away, after having done its worst, and that they were drenched to the skin as well as covered with mud and thistleheads from top to toe.

Chapter Twenty Five

Begins with Gaucho Homes and Domestic Concerns; continues with two Fights, and ends with a Friend and a "Puzzler."

That a hard ride and a thorough soaking do not interfere much with the comfort of the young and healthy was proved that night in the Gaucho camp by the intense devotion paid by Lawrence and Quashy to the ample supper set before them, and by the profundity of their slumbers thereafter.

True, the supper was not luxurious. It consisted of only one dish, roasted mutton's flesh and one beverage, water; but, happily, the tastes of our adventurers were simple.

The Gaucho hut in which they had found shelter was a very humble dwelling built of mud. It contained only one room, in which the whole family resided. Like other Gaucho huts which are nearly all alike it was covered with long yellow grass, and bore so strong a resemblance to the surrounding country, that, at a little distance, it might easily have been mistaken for a hillock. The kitchen of the establishment was a detached shed a few yards off. After sunset the hut was lighted by a feeble lamp, made of bullock's tallow, which brought into strong relief the bridles, spurs, bolas, and lassos which hung from bone pegs on the walls. Other objects of interest were revealed by the primitive lamp. In one corner a large dog lay sleeping. A naked negro child lay asleep beside it, with its little head pillowed on the dog's haunch. In another corner a hen was sitting on eggs, while its companions, guarded by a noble cock, roosted on one of the rafters, and several children, of ages ranging from four to sixteen, were seated or standing about awaiting supper. Last, but not least in importance, a Gaucho infant hung suspended from the rafters in a primitive cradle of bullock's skin, the corners of which were drawn together by four strips of hide. The place would have been insufferably close but for the fortunate circumstance that a number of holes in the dilapidated roof allowed free ventilation. They also allowed free entrance

of rain in bad weather, but Gauchos are not particular!

Although indifferent as to appearances, those Gauchos of the Pampas many of whom are descendants of the “best” old families in Spain retain much of the manners of their forefathers, being hospitable and polite not only to strangers but to each other.

When supper was ready the great iron spit on which the beef had been roasted was brought in, and the point of it stuck into the dried mud floor. The master of the hut then stepped forward with the air of a hidalgo and offered Lawrence the skeleton of a horse’s head to sit upon. Quashy having been provided with a similar seat, the whole household drew in their horseheads, circled round the spit, and, drawing their long knives, began supper. They meant business. Hunger was the sauce. Water washed the viands down. There was little conversation, for large mouthfuls were the order of the evening. Lawrence and his man acquitted themselves creditably, and supper did not terminate till the roast was gone. Then they all spread their beds on the floor and retired for the night. Each covered his or her head with a poncho, or other garment nothing of the sleepers being left visible save their bare feet after which silence reigned around.

In summer, abodes of this kind are so animated with insect life that the inhabitants usually prefer to sleep on the ground in front of their dwellings, but in the present case the recent storm had rendered this luxury for the time impossible.

Little cared Lawrence and his man for that. Where they lay down to repose, there they remained without motion till daylight. Then the magnificent cock overhead raised his voice, and proclaimed the advent of a new day. Quashy sat up, split his face across, displayed his internal throat, and rubbed his eyes. Immediately the cock descended on his woolly head, flapped its wings, and crowed again. The people began to stir, and Lawrence went out with Quashy to saddle their horses, being anxious to follow in the trail of the troops without delay. A prolonged search convinced them that their horses had either strayed or been stolen, for they were nowhere to be found.

Returning to the hut, they observed that the Gauchos were exceedingly busy round their corral, or enclosure for cattle.

“What can they be about?” said Lawrence, as they drew near.

“Killin’ pigs, I t’ink.”

“I think not; there seems too much excitement for that.”

There certainly was a considerable noise of piggish voices, and the Gauchos were galloping about in an unaccountable manner, but, as is usually the case, a little investigation explained the seemingly unaccountable. The men were engaged in driving some cattle into the enclosure, and as these were more than half wild and selfwilled, the process entailed much energy of limb and noise. As to the porcine yells, the whole of the almost superhuman skirling arose from one little pig, which the ebony cupid before mentioned had lassoed by the hind leg.

Gaucha child after being delivered from the cradle before described, and after passing through the crawling period of infancy and attaining to the dignity of the staggerbegin to copy their seniors. With lassos and bolas made of twine, they practise on little birds, or on the dogs and fowls of home. Our ebony cupid, though not indeed a Gaucho, but a negro infant, partook of the Gaucho spirit, and, although little more than four years of age, had succeeded in catching his first pig. Violence seemed to have reached a white heat in the heart of that little pig! Besides giving vent to intensified shrieking, it dragged its captor along, in a state of blazing triumph, until it overturned him, snapped the twine, and got away.

But cupid was not to be balked of his prey. With a staggering rush to where several horses were standing ready bridled, he caught hold of the tail of a meeklooking animal, and scrambled by means of that appendage on to its back. Seizing the bridle, he uttered a wild though tiny shout, and dashed away after the fugitive.

Whether he recaptured it or not Lawrence never found out, for at that moment a subject of greater interest claimed his attention.

Besides the hut in which they had spent the night, there were several other huts near the corral, and Lawrence now perceived that the place was a sort of hamlet, surrounded by a small ditch by way of defence. While our hero was glancing round him he observed that Quashy stopped suddenly, and gazed at something in front of him as if transfixed with a surprise which threw quite into the shade all his previous expressions of astonishment, and convinced his master that he had not yet fathomed half the depth of meaning that could be thrown into that sable countenance. Quashy bent slightly forward, extended his arms, spread out his ten fingers, opened his mouth, and tried to speak.

“SSSo!” he began, and gasped.

“SSooSooz’n!” he shouted.

Yes, there she stood, in the doorway of a hut, as black as life, and with a glare of joyful surprise that was only surpassed by that of her admirer.

A moment later they recovered. They rushed into each other's arms, and their lips met.

Pistols and carbines! what a smack it was!

In his joy Quashy lifted Susan fairly off her feet and danced with her until he was exhausted, then he set her down and danced round her.

Susan had recovered her composure by that time. Whether Quashy's mode of treatment is characteristic of negroes of the Pampas we do not pretend to say, but the girl stood there with a modestly pleased expression of face, while Quashy continued to dance round her.

Susan's modesty and blackness were alike set off by her costume, which consisted of a short white frock, while her simple adornments were a pair of gold earrings and a necklace of red coral.

Alas for the fleeting nature of human joys! While Quashy was thus evincing his delight at the unexpected recovery of his betrothed, a wild shouting was heard, and several horsemen were seen flying over the plains towards the huts at a speed and with an action that betokened them the bearers of important news. They proved to be men of the village who had encountered a large band of Indians on their way to attack the place.

Instantly all the men of the hamlet, amounting perhaps to about fifty, prepared for defence, placing the women and children in the huts for safety. Of course Lawrence and his man would have volunteered their services even if selfdefence had not required that line of conduct.

We have said that the hamlet was surrounded by a shallow ditch. This was backed by a hedge of prickly pears. Behind the hedge the men dispersed themselves, armed with several rusty flintlock guns, some old swords, a few Indian spears, and other less warlike weapons.

Lawrence and Quashy took up a position at the entrance to the little fortress, the opening of which was blocked by cactusbushes. Their host of the previous night stood beside them. Light though such defences seemed, they were more effective than might have been supposed, for Indian horses as a rule will not leap even a shallow ditch, and cannot be made to burst through prickly pears, though, doubtless, there may be some exceptions.

The defenders had not long to wait. Their preparations were barely completed when horsemen were descried on the horizon, and in a very brief space of time a band of above a hundred naked savages came thundering down on them,

uttering terrific screams or yells, and brandishing long spears. They rode straight towards the opening in the defences.

The chief Gaucho was evidently a man of courage, for although he knew well that capture meant death perhaps with torture he stood firm without blanching, his eyes fixed sternly on the approaching foe, and his strong hands grasping the stock of a rusty old musket, the very look of which might have caused anxiety to its handler.

“Now Quash,” whispered Lawrence, “don’t fire till I do and keep cool.”

“Yes, massa. I’s cool as a lump o’ hicc.”

The savage who led the assailants was a tall, powerful fellow on a splendid horse. When within about sixty yards of the defences he levelled his spear and made a tremendous rush as if resolved to bear down all obstacles. The Gaucho chief if we may so style him presented his musket and pulled the trigger. It missed fire!

“I’ll try him with shot first,” remarked Lawrence to Quashy, presenting his doublebarrelled gun.

At the distance of fifty yards or so the shot, when it entered the savage leader, was well scattered, so that horse and man were peppered all over. The latter dropped his lance and almost fell off, while the former, getting on its hindlegs, executed a pirouette which brought its tail to the rear and sent it charging wildly back upon its friends. The second in command, receiving the other barrel, at even shorter range, went through the same performance with greater impetuosity. At the same moment the old musket was prevailed on to go off, and Quashy delivered four pistolshots in quick succession, with the result that several men and horses were wounded, and the entire body of Indians turned and fled in a state of frenzied surprise.

They soon pulled up, however, and held a momentary consultation out of range. Then, being bold fellows, they charged again, but this time in two bands, one of which attacked the place in rear.

As before, the band which attacked the front was vigorously repelled, but in rear the defenders were less successful. How it was managed Lawrence never found out, but he had barely succeeded in driving off the foe in front, and was congratulating Quashy on his coolness, when he found himself suddenly surrounded by yelling savages.

The Gaucho chief made a desperate fight towards his own hut, which he gained and entered in safety. Lawrence and Quashy tried to follow, but were

too much pressed by numbers. Back to back they fought, and Quashy used his sword with such agility and vigour that in a few seconds he sent several Indians bleeding to the rear. Lawrence, despising the weapons of civilised warfare, held his now empty gun in his left hand, using it as a sort of shield, and brandished his favourite cudgel with such effect that he quickly strewed the ground around him with crown-cracked men. Unfortunately a stone struck him on the temple, and he fell. Thus left unsupported, Quashy, after slicing the nose half off a too ardent savage, was struck from behind, and also fell.

When our hero recovered consciousness, he found himself lying on the ground, afflicted with a strange inability to move hand or foot, and conscious, chiefly, of a splitting headache. Presently a voice beside him whispered

“Is you bery bad, massa?”

Lawrence turned his head with great difficulty and beheld his faithful follower lying like himself on the ground, firmly bound to a stout spar or pole. His own inability to move was at once explained, for he soon perceived that he was in the same bound condition.

“D’you know what has happened, Quashy?”

“Ho yes, massa. De reptiles has took de place, an’ tied you an’ me to sticks. What for I don’ know, but I s’pose dey means to skin us alive, or roast us, p’r’aps, to ’muse deir women an’ child’n.”

“More likely that they hope to have us ransomed,” returned Lawrence, with a shudder.

“What’s ramsumd, massa?”

“Try to get our friends to give them money for us. Have they killed many of the menor got hold of the women and children?” asked Lawrence, anxiously.

“Yes, dey’s kill a few ob de men, but not many, for some hab got into de huts, an’ some into de corral, an’ dey’ll fight to de last. De savages am holdin’ a palaver jist nowsee, dey’s agwine to begin again. Screw your head roun’ to de right an’ you see.”

Lawrence obeyed, and saw the savages assembled on a knoll. After driving the defenders into the huts, they had held a brief consultation, and seemed on the eve of renewing the attack. Filled with deep anxiety for the fate of the poor women and children, our hero made a desperate struggle to snap his bonds.

“No use, massa,” remarked Quashy. “I’s tried dat till I nearly bu’sted. Better

lie still. P'r'aps dey forgit us."

Lawrence groaned. He felt so helpless, and consequently hopeless, that he almost gave way to despair.

The spot where they had been flung down after their capture was so covered with rank grass that they could not see far in any direction. What they did see, however, aroused curiosity, if it did not inspire hope, for the savages seemed suddenly to have changed their plans. They were talking excitedly together on the knoll, and pointing eagerly towards the horizon.

"Das funny, massa," remarked the negro.

"It is indeed. Perhaps they see some of their friends coming."

"Or inimies," suggested Quashy.

The latter was right. In a few minutes the Indians were seen to run down to the defences of the place. Our unfortunates lost sight of them in a few seconds, but they could hear the sound of horsemen approaching at full gallop. In a few minutes they heard shouting; then the yells, fearful cries, and imprecations of men in mortal combat. Soon after that a savage passed the place where they lay, at full speed. Then another and another. It became quickly evident that the defenders of the place were getting the worst of it. At last there was a general flight, and as the savages passed by, the new assailants appeared. It was easy to see that they were composed of all classes, a band of runaway soldiers and escaped convicts.

"Banditti!" exclaimed Lawrence, bitterly.

"Dey've got pris'ners. Look, massa."

Our poor hero looked, and his hearts nearly stood still with horror, for he saw a horseman pass whose figure was strangely like to that of Colonel Marchbanks. His arms were bound, and a villainous-looking man led his horse. Immediately after another banditlike fellow rode past with a female form seated in front of him. Of course it could be no other than Manuela, and in the agony of the moment Lawrence was about to renew his frantic effort to burst his bonds, when a man on foot ran close past him. Recognising him at once, Lawrence shouted

"Ignacio!"

The old hunter, for it was he, stopped abruptly, and listened.

Another shout brought him to the side of our hero.

“Good luck!” exclaimed Ignacio, heartily.

“We have been bound by the scoundrels you are chasing,” cried Lawrence, quickly; “cut us free, good Ignacio.”

The hunter drew his long knife and knelt with the apparent intention of releasing them, but suddenly paused.

“Nobetter as you are,” he muttered, hurriedly, “your friends are in danger”

“I know it,” interrupted Lawrence, almost wild with anxiety and surprise; “why not, then, release us?”

“There is no time to explain,” said Ignacio, quickly, almost fiercely. “Listen. I and others are secret enemies in this band of outlaws. When you are free be silent, be wise. You will need all your manhood. You must not know me be silentwise, but”

The old hunter leaped up hastily, sheathed his knife and ran on, for at the moment he saw a group of the bandits running towards him. Diverging a little and hailing them, he drew them away from the spot where Lawrence and his man still lay bound.

“Das a puzzler, massa,” gasped Quashy, who had been rendered almost speechless by surprise, “if de bu’stin’power what’s in my heart just now would on’y go into my muscles, I’d snap dem ropes like Samson.”

As the burstingpower referred to declined to go into the muscles of either master or man, they were fain to lie still with as much patience as they could assume, and await the course of events.

Chapter Twenty Six

In which Old Friends and Enemies turn up in quite a Surprising Manner, and Quashy’s Joy overflows.

They had not to wait long. A few minutes later and old Ignacio returned with several men, one of whom, from his manner and bearing, appeared to be a chief among the outlaws.

“Who are you, and who bound you?” asked this chief, with a stern look.

Answering in his best Spanish, Lawrence explained how he fell into the hands of the savages.

The chief did not speak for a few seconds, but looked inquiringly at Ignacio.

“It won’t do to make more prisoners, you know,” said the old hunter, replying to the look; “we have too many on our hands as it is. The troops are already on our track, and you may be sure they won’t lose time. Besides, these men are unknown, and won’t fetch a ransom.”

“What would you advise, then?”

“Cut their throats,” suggested Ignacio, coolly.

“You old fool!” returned the outlaw, “what good would that do? Isn’t it clear that these men are the enemies of the savages, and we want such to join us.”

“Ay,” returned Ignacio, “but they may be friends of the troops, and you don’t want such to join us.”

“There’s truth in that, old man. Well, we’ll just let them lie. They’re safe enough, as they are, not to do either good or evil. As you say, it is of no use burdening ourselves with prisoners who won’t fetch a ransom. The colonel and his women will fetch a good price, but these nothing. I suppose that is why Cruz has ordered Conrad to be shot before we leave the place.”

“Why, I thought,” said Ignacio, with a look of surprise, “that Conrad of the Mountains was an outlaw like yourselves.”

“Not he. He’s a spy, and he’ll meet a spy’s doom, if he has not met it already.”

“Come I’ll go and see this Conrad,” said Ignacio, “I should like to see a spy get his deserts.”

He turned quickly and hurried away, followed by the outlaw.

“Most awful!” groaned Quashy, when they were gone.

“Awful indeed, to think that Manuela and her father are in the hands of such villains!” returned Lawrence.

“An’ Sooz’n,” said Quashy, with a deeper groan.

“But, massa, what’s come ober de ole hunter? He not in arnest, ob course.”

“Of course not,” replied Lawrence, “that is our one ray of hope now. He is only acting a part. He will assuredly help us, and means us to help him, but he takes a strange way to do it.”

He ceased to speak, for at that moment a man was seen approaching. He

moved about like one who was searching for something. At last he caught sight of the bound men, and ran towards them, drawing his knife as he did so. For one instant a feeling of horror shot through the hearts of Lawrence and Quashy, but next moment they were relieved, for they recognised in the approaching man the features of their old acquaintance of the Andes, the robber Antonio.

“I come to pay my debt,” he said, going down on one knee, and severing the cords which bound Lawrence, who heartily showered on him all the Spanish terms for thanks and gratitude that he could recall. Of course Quashy was also set free, and was equally profuse in his grateful expressions, but Antonio cut them both short.

“Come, we must be quick,” he said, and hurried away.

As they crossed the spot where the recent fight with the Indians had taken place, Quashy picked up one of the spears which lay on the ground, and Lawrence, to his great satisfaction, discovered his favourite cudgel lying where he had been knocked down. He picked it up, almost affectionately, and hurried on.

Antonio was in evident haste. Leading them through the hamlet, he went towards the corral, where, it could be seen, a party of the bandits were standing as if in wait. Suddenly they heard a noise behind them, and observed a party of men with muskets on their shoulders surrounding a prisoner. Antonio drew his companions into the shelter of a bush till they should pass.

“It is Conrad of the Mountains,” he whispered, while a fierce expression lighted up his eyes. “They go to shoot him. He must not die!”

As what seemed to be the firingparty advanced, followed by a straggling group of ruffians, Lawrence looked with profound interest and pity towards one of whom he had heard so much. The prisoner’s head hung down as he approached the bush, but on passing it he looked up. The sight of his face sent a shock of surprise and consternation to the hearts of Lawrence and Quashy, for the doomed man was no other than their friend Pedro!

Lawrence turned quickly to Antonio. “Conrad?” he asked, pointing to Pedro.

“Si, senhor,” replied the outlaw.

When the procession had passed, Lawrence stepped from behind the bush, and quietly joined it without being recognised by Pedro. He had not at that moment the most remote idea of what he intended to do; but one feeling was powerfully dominant in his breast, namely, that Pedro must be saved at all

hazards. Of course Quashy and Antonio followed him.

The sudden appearance of the two strangers did not cause much surprise among the band who followed the prisoner, for, besides their being in the company of one whom they knew, the men who had been gathered together by Cruz on this occasion were not all known to each other. What they knew for certain was, that the country was up in arms because of some political convulsion, and that Cruz was a great leader, who knew how to make the most of such circumstances for the benefit of himself and his followers.

In a state of feverish anxiety, but with a calm outward appearance, Lawrence marched on, quite incapable of forming any plan of rescue, but not incapable of prayer, or of forming a resolve to do something, though he should die in the attempt. On reaching the corral, he saw Cruz, and recognised him at once. The bandit chief was obviously in haste, for he at once ordered Conrador, as we still prefer to call him, Pedro to be placed with his back against the corral, and the firingparty to draw up in front of him at about twenty yards distance.

Pedro offered no resistance while being led towards the mud wall of the corral. There was neither bravado nor fear in his bearing. Evidently he had made up his mind to die like a Christian, and had given up all hope of deliverance from the foes by whom he was surrounded. But friends were near whom he little dreamed of.

Having up to that point kept his eyes on the ground, he had not observed Lawrence; and the first intimation he had of his presence was on hearing his voice as he stepped forward, placed his tall and stalwart frame in front of him, and said sternly to the firingparty

“Villains! you will have to send your bullets through my breast before they harm Conrad!”

“Yes, an’ troo dis buzzum too,” cried Quashy, planting himself in front of Lawrence, and glaring defiance in his own peculiar and powerful manner.

“What! two more enemies?” exclaimed Cruz, with a look of pleased surprise and triumph; “seize them, men; but no, stay, we can as easily kill the three birds at one shot. Ready!”

The firingparty cocked and raised their guns, but were suddenly arrested by seeing the wall of the enclosure behind Pedro lined, as if by magic, with human heads, all of which carefully levelled an equal number of muskets. At the same moment Antonio, Ignacio, Spotted Tiger, Colonel Marchbanks, and the sporting Englishman sprang to the front, and the old hunter, cutting Pedro’s bonds, put a musket into his hands.

“Traitor!” exclaimed Cruz, grinding his teeth with passion, as he scowled at Antonio.

“Fool! do you not know,” retorted Antonio, contemptuously, “that traitors are the offspring of tyrants? I acknowledge you as father in this respect. But I am not here to bandy words. Colonel Marchbanks will speak.”

“Yes, Cruz,” said the old colonel, stepping a pace to the front, “I will speak, and that to the purpose. You see those men?” pointing to the heads looking over the corral wall “ten of the best shots among them have their weapons pointed at your heart. If a single musket is fired by your blackguards, you know what the result will be.”

Bold as Cruz undoubtedly was, this speech of the colonel had an obviously quieting effect on him, as well as on his followers, who, however, being numerous, and not wanting in courage, stood ready to obey orders.

“Now, I will tell you in few words what I have got to say,” continued the colonel, addressing Cruz. “When you locked the villagers here in their own huts, you forgot, or did not know, that, being a tyrant as well as a scoundrel, you had enemies among your own followers. These have not only set us, your prisoners, free, but have done the same good turn to the villagers, who have been persuaded to join us against you. And now, as our numbers are pretty equal, we give you the option of going away quietly wherever you please, or, if you prefer it, having a fair fight. I may add that if I were backed by my troops, instead of these villagers, I would not give you this option; but as I have no official right to command these men, I now make you the proposal either to retire quietly or fight.”

“Awjust so,” said the sporting Englishman. “And let me add, as a sort of a freelance that I and my friend here hope sincerely that you will choose to fight.”

“You’s a brick!” exclaimed Quashy, with emphasis, regarding the sportsman for the first time with favour.

Cruz hesitated. He was swayed by a burning thirst for vengeance and a prudent regard for his personal safety. By way of hastening his decision, Colonel Marchbanks added

“It may be well to remind you that when you unfortunately succeeded in decoying me and my friends into your snares, and captured us, you did not leave my troops without officers. The gentleman now in command will not lose time in following us up, and he is aided by Gauchos who could trace you

out though you were to hide your rascally head in the darkest retreats of the Andes. So, you'd better be off at once, or come on."

"Awyes. If I might advise come on!" suggested the sportsman.

"Das so. Come on!" urged Quashy.

But Cruz refused their wellmeant advice. Regarding discretion as the better part of valour, and resolving, no doubt, to "fight another day," he elected to "be off." Collecting his men in sulky silence, he speedily rode away.

"Sorry he's so chickenhearted," said the sportsman, forgetting even to "aw" in his disappointment.

"You ought rather to be glad of it," remarked Lawrence; "you forget that there are women and children behind us, and that our defeat would have ensured their destruction."

"Oh no!" replied the Englishman, who had recovered his quiet nonchalance, "I did not forget the women and children dear creatures! but I confess that the idea of our defeat had not occurred to me."

Colonel Marchbanks did not give his opinion at the time, but his air and expression suggested that, fireeater though he was, he by no means regretted the turn events had taken.

Holding out his hand to Lawrence, in a condescending manner, he thanked him for the service he had just rendered.

"You have quite a talent for turning up unexpectedly in the nick of time," he added, with a peculiar smile, as he turned and walked off towards the huts, around which the men who had sided with Antonio were by that time assembling. Among them Lawrence, to his ineffable joy, found Manuela and Mariquita. He was too wise, however, in the presence of the colonel to take any demonstrative notice of her. He merely shook hands with both ladies, and congratulated them on their escape from the banditti.

"You have rendered us good service, senhor," said Mariquita, with a brilliant smile a smile that was indeed more brilliant than there seemed any occasion for.

"II have been very fortunate," stammered Lawrence, glancing at Manuela.

But that princess of the Incas, with an aspect of imperturbable gravity, kept her pretty eyes on the ground, though the brown of her little cheeks seemed to deepen a trifle in colour.

“Now, Antonio,” cried the colonel, coming forward at the moment, “what do you intend to do? If my men were here, you know, I should be under the necessity of making you and your fellows prisoners, notwithstanding your good services today. As it is, those of us who stick together must be off without delay eastward. I suppose you will rather take to the mountains.”

“Indeed no, Colonel Marchbanks. I am willing to give myself up and to take service under you if that may be allowed. And if you will take my advice, comrades,” added Antonio, turning to his companions, “you’ll do the same, for depend on it no good can come of our late style of life.”

Antonio’s comrades did not feel disposed to take his advice. Indeed they had only rebelled against their late captain because of his tyrannical nature, but were by no means desirous of changing their mode of life. Seeing this, the colonel accepted Antonio’s offer and gave his comrades a few words of serious warning and advice, mingled with thanks for the service they had rendered him, after which the two parties separated and went on their respective ways, leaving the Gauchos to fortify their village more carefully, and get into a better state of readiness to resist the attacks alike of outlaws and Indians.

Before leaving, however, Quashy had a noteworthy interview with Susan. It occurred at the time that Antonio and his men were holding the above conversation with the colonel.

The negro lovers were affectionately seated on a horseskull in one of the huts, regardless of all the world but themselves.

“Sooz’n, my lub,” said Quashy, “I’s agwine to carry you off wid me.”

“Quashy, my b’lubbed, I expecs you is,” replied Susan, simply, passing her black fingers through her lover’s very curly locks.

“O Sooz’n, how I lubs you! I know’d I’d find you. I always said it. I always t’ought it, an’ now I’s dood it.”

“Das so,” returned Susan, with a bashfully pleased look. “I always know’d it too. I says, if it’s poss’ble for me to be found in dis worl’, Quashy’s de man to found me.”

“Zactly so!” said the gratified negro. “Now, Sooz’n, tell me. Is you free to go ’way wid me?”

“Yes. I’s kite free. I’s bin kotched by rubbers an’ rescued by Gauchos, an’ stole by Injins, an’ I’s runned away an’ found myself here, an’ dey’s bin good to me

here, but dey don't seem to want me muchso I's kite freebut I's awrful heaby!"

"What's dat got to do wid it?" inquired the lover, tying a knot of perplexity on his eyebrows.

"Why, you an' me's too heaby for one hoss, you know, an' you said you hab on'y one."

"Das true," returned Quashy, entangling the knot with another.

"Well, nebber mind," said Susan, with a little nod of assurance. "I's put it all right. I'll stole one."

"Sooz'n!" exclaimed her lover, with inexpressible solemnity, "you'll do nuffin ob de sort. I b'longs to a good man now, so I knows better dan dat. You mus' nebber steal no morenebber. But I'll get massa to buy you a hoss. Das what I'll do."

Quashy had scarcely given utterance to his intentions, when a shout from Lawrence summoned him. The party under Colonel Marchbanks was about to start on their journey eastward.

The negro soon informed his master of his difficulty. As he had anticipated, it was removed at once. Horseflesh is cheap on the Pampas. A lady's wardrobeespecially a black lady'sdoes not take long to pack in those regions. In less than half an hour a passable steed was purchased from the Gauchos, and Susan mounted thereon. Her little all, in a bundle, was strapped to her truelover's saddle, and she fell into the cavalcade, which soon afterwards left the village and rode out upon the illimitable plains.

It was not a large band, but it was composed of rare and strong materials. Our friend Pedroalias Conrad of the Mountainsalias the Rover of the Andesof course took the lead. Colonel Marchbanks, Manuela, and the fair Mariquita followed. Antonio, Spotted Tiger, the sportsman and his friend came next, and Lawrence with Quashy and Sooz'n brought up the rear.

In this order they set off at full gallop over the roadless plains, diverging a little here and there as the nature of the ground required, but otherwise steering a straight line in the direction of the rising sun.

Chapter Twenty Seven

Describes several Interesting and somewhat Violent Proceedings

Over the flowering plains! Oh, there is something soulstirring in a free,

furious, prolonged gallop, where obstructions are few, where the land is almost level, and Nature reigns unfettered by the influence of man! No fences, no ditches, no ploughed lands, no enclosed estates, nothing to check even for a moment the grand onward sweep through illimitable space save the capacity of endurance in steed and rider.

Of course it has its drawbacks, but we will not pause to meditate on these. Life has its drawbacks everywhere, and if we were to attempt an enumeration of them our tale would become unreasonably long, and also somewhat unprofitable.

Perhaps it adds to the zest of life the fact that many of its incidents are of such a nature that we find it difficult to say whether they are drawbacks or advantages. For instance, the jovial garrulity of Quashy was a drawback at times. At other times it was a decided advantage, and his friends and companions held such interchangeable opinions on the point that they could not readily have expressed them if called on to do so at a moment's notice.

A runaway tendency in a horse is considered by most people a disadvantage. Yet there are some people whose nerves and spirits are so constituted that they have a sneaking fondness for a horse of this disposition.

Strange though it may seem, Manuela belonged to this class. It is said that men whose characters form a contrast are more likely to draw towards each other than those whose characters are similar. May the same principle not operate between man and the lower animals? Was it not the gentleness, tenderness, womanliness, softness of Manuela which caused her to dote upon and delight in her steed, though it was a huge, high stepping, archnecked, rearing, plunging animal something between an Irish hunter and a Mexican warhorse?

The steed in question had been purchased for her by her father from the Gauchos, who assured him that the animal was a remarkably good one to go. They told the simple truth, but not the whole truth, for sometimes it would "go" with its hindlegs doing double service in the way of kicking, and, at other times, it balanced that feat by giving its forelegs a prodigious flourish while in the act of rearing. To do the creature justice, however, it could and did go ahead of its companions on the journey, and retained that position without fatigue, as was evinced by the flashing eye, distended nostril, pawing and snorting with which it received every proposal to halt.

Being a splendid rider, Manuela managed this spanking charger with infinite grace and ease, all the more that it happened to have a tender mouth, and only succeeded in getting beyond her control when it chanced to get the bit between its teeth. At first her father and the others were alarmed, and offered to change

her steed for another; but she refused to change, and when they saw how fearlessly she rode, they became reconciled all except Lawrence.

“It is the fearlessness of innocence combined with ignorance,” he muttered to himself one afternoon, as Manuela’s horse, without apparent provocation, presented first its tail and then its nose to the sky. The Inca princess patted the playful creature approvingly, and induced it to adopt a bounding, indiarubberlike pace. In a few minutes this was reduced to a springy walk.

Lawrence could not resist the temptation to ride forward and offer his own horse, although Colonel Marchbanks rode alongside of his daughter like an inflexible guardian.

“You will find my horse much easier to manage, Miss Marchbanks,” he said, “and quite as strong and fleet as your own.”

The colonel frowned, and his daughter said, “No, t’ank you, senhor,” with a little bow and a brilliant smile.

It was one of Manuela’s little fancies to revert sometimes to the broken English peculiar to her colour and costume. This was not at all relished by Lawrence. It seemed to argue a want of earnestness, which was not at all in harmony with the tremendous depth of his love for her! He drew rein immediately and fell behind, but at that moment Manuela’s horse put its foot in a biscachohole and stumbled. Evidently it had received a violent surprise, for, after having a second time presented its tail and nose alternately to the skies, it gave vent to an indignant snort, performed what seemed to be a pirouette on one leg, took the bit in its teeth, and bolted.

Of course the colonel put spurs to his steed, and gave chase. Instantly Lawrence did the same. As a consequence Quashy followed, and, not wishing to be left behind, the whole cavalcade went after them at full speed. The thunder of numerous hoofs acted as a sharp spur to the wild runaway. At once it became a fair race, in which each gradually took his place according to ability. The course was clear from the Andes to the Atlantic, almost, and horses and riders were fresh!

In a remarkably short time the party straggled, and the line extended. Soon it became evident that the colonel, Lawrence, Pedro, and Quashy were the best mounted of the troop, for these four drew far ahead of all the others; yet the runaway kept its advantage, despite the utmost efforts of Manuela’s fair little arms to check it. Gradually Pedro and the colonel were left behind. Despite the utmost application of voice and spur, Quashy also dropped to the rear, and the race lay at last between our hero and the Inca princess!

Mile after mile was passed as they flew like the wind over the rolling plains, scarcely impeded at all by the Pampas grass, which was not long at that season, but at last they came to a ridge on which there was a line of low bushes. By that time, by dint of hard spurring, Lawrence had managed to get up almost alongside of the girl, whose look of gleeful excitement was now changed to one of wild anxiety.

“Try to pull just a little harder!” cried Lawrence, “your horse won’t be able to jump it.”

Manuela tried, but she had already put forth all her strength, and if that had been twice what it was, the effect on the powerful creature would probably have been just the same.

As the danger drew nearer, Lawrence made desperate efforts to increase his speed. He was so far successful that when they finally came to the line of bushes, the horses were almost abreast of each other. Horses of the Pampas are not usually jumpers, but Manuela’s horse must have had a touch of the hunter in him, for he rose to the leap, and went up like a rocket. Lawrence, on the other hand, went crashing through the obstruction like the shot of an eightyton gun! The leap evidently took more time than the crash, which was fortunate, for it enabled Lawrence to get well alongside at the moment the forefeet of Manuela’s horse touched the ground, and just as the poor girl herself, unused to leaping, fairly lost her balance as well as her presence of mind and fell backward half fainting. She would have fallen to the ground if Lawrence had not caught her round the waist, and dragged her to the pommel of his own saddle. It was one of those cases of rescue which men are apt perhaps justifiably to style providential, for no planning or judgment or energy on the part of Lawrence could have arranged that Manuela should have been at the apex of her leap when her powers failed, so that she should fall from that height, as it were, almost into his arms!

A few bounds more and they were safe. As if it had understood this, and felt that further effort was needless, the runaway steed stopped abruptly, and, after looking round in unreasonable surprise, began quietly to crop the herbage at its feet.

One by one the rest of the party came up, full of congratulations.

“You dood dat well, massa,” said Quashy, who was the first to arrive, grinning all over; “and dat was a bu’ster,” he added, surveying the gap in the bush through which Lawrence had crashed.

“Please set me down before the others come up!” whispered Manuela, who, having, as we have said, half fainted, had allowed her head to fall on her

rescuer's shoulder.

Lawrence wished that circumstances might have admitted of his continuing the journey as they were then situated, but propriety required him to say

“Here, Quash, lend a hand.”

The negro vaulted to the ground, and received Manuela into his arms just as Pedro and the colonel galloped up.

“Thank you, Senhor Armstrong, thank you heartily,” said the latter, as he dismounted, and, sitting down on a mound, drew his child to his side.

“I'm not hurt, not a bit,” sighed Manuela, with a slight attempt at a smile.

“Thank God for that, but you are shaken a little,” returned the old soldier with an anxious look. “Here Pedro, Quashy, fetch me the flask from my saddle.”

By the time a cup of the flask's contents was administered to Manuela, Mariquita and Susan were kneeling beside her, and the rest were standing round.

“A splendid leap!awcouldn't have been much better done ifawit had been an English hunter,” remarked the sportsman in an undertone to his friend. “But, I say, don't it strike you that the colonel is uncommonlyawsweet on that little Indian girl.”

“She's no more an Indian girl than you are,” replied his friend, with a laugh.

“Awyou don't say so?” returned the sportsman, with a slight elevation of his eyebrows.

“Let us go,” said Manuela, rising; “I am much better, only a little shaken by such a leap. Butbut I should like another”

“Yes, to be sure, another horse,” interrupted the colonel; “who will exchange?a quiet one, of course.”

“Here you is, kurnel,” said Quashy, with a beaming countenance, as he led forward his horse. “Quiet as a lamb, 'cept when you aggrawates him. Nebber goes no faster dan you wants him to,sometimes not so fast! an' wouldn't run away even if you was to ax him on your knees.”

“After such recommendation,” said the colonel, turning to Manuela, “I suppose you will accept of this steed.”

The Inca princess accepted it with a beam of gratitude to Quashy, who

thereupon mounted the runaway horse, and in a few minutes the whole cavalcade was sweeping over the plain as swiftly as ever.

Afternoon brought them to a solitary Gaucho hut. They came first upon the corral rather suddenly, for it was concealed in a hollow. It was an enclosure of strong rough posts stuck into the ground, on many of which were perched a number of gorged vultures and hawks.

The ground around it was covered with bones, bullocks' horns, wool, carcasses of horses, and other refuse, which induced the travellers to keep carefully to windward of it. On a slight rising ground, close at hand, stood the mud hut of the family to which it belonged.

Although living in a state little short of savagery, this family, being descended from one of the best old families of Spain at least, so they believed maintained much of the dignity, good manners, and ceremony that characterised the old Spaniards. It comprised several generations, of whom a greatgreatgrandfather, blind, deaf, and benignant, formed the head, and a baby, fat, wide awake, and uproarious, formed the tail. Between these there was a band of men, women, girls, and boys, whom we will not even attempt to describe, further than to say that they were all blackeyed, sunburnt, and more or less pretty and handsome.

The travellers rode up to the door of the mud mansion, and, according to Pampas etiquette, awaited permission to dismount. This was quickly given with much urbanity by a handsome middleaged man, who was the active head of the household.

The intention of Colonel Marchbanks was to take a hasty meal here, and push on as far as possible before night. Finding that the Gauchos were engaged at that time in breaking in some young horses, he ordered his party to offsaddle, and went with Pedro, Lawrence, and some others towards the corral while food was being prepared.

Quashyever mindful of the welfare of others, and ever thoughtful in regard to what he esteemed the most important things of life hung behind to advise a daughter of the house to prepare a specially tender fowl for Susan, Manuela, and Mariquita. He even remained a few minutes to receive from the damsel a lesson in cookery.

This daughter of the Pampas whispered something to a very small brother beside her, who was remarkable chiefly for the size of his gorgeous eyes and the scantiness of his costume. With ready obedience the urchin unhooked a miniature lasso from the wall, and lassoed a large hen. How the brother and sister executed that hen was not obvious.

It was, however, quickly and effectively done between them. Then the sister took the bird to a pot of water, which chanced to be boiling at the time, and put it therein, feathers and all. To civilised people this might have seemed rather a savage process, but it was not so. The object was merely to simplify the plucking. After scalding, the feathers came off with wonderful facility, and also stuck to the girl's wet hands with equally wonderful tenacity. Washing her hands, she next cut off the wings and legs of the fowl, and then separated the breast from the back. These portions she put into a small pot with some suet and water, and threw the rest away.

“Das bery good,” remarked Quashy, nodding his head in approval, after which he advised the girl to treat another fowl or two in a similar manner, and then followed his master to the corral.

Here a very animated scene was being enacted. Half a dozen young horses were about to be mounted for the first time and broken in. What modern horsetrainers of the tender school would have said to the process we cannot tell. Having had no experience in such matters, one way or another, we hazard no opinion. We merely state the facts of the case.

The father of the family, mounted on a strong and steady horse, commenced the business by riding into the corral, and throwing his lasso over the head of a young horse, which he dragged forcibly to the gate. Every step of the process was forcible. There was nothing equivalent to solicitation or inducement from beginning to end. Opposition, dogged and dire, was assumed as a matter of course, and was met by compulsion more dogged and more dire!

At the gate of the corral the end of the lasso was received by the eldest son of the family, a tall, strapping, and exceedingly handsome youth, of about twentythree, who had been named Pizarro, no doubt after the conqueror of Peru. He certainly resembled his namesake in courage, vigour, and perseverance, if in nothing else. The young horse displayed great unwillingness at first to quit its companions, shaking its magnificent mane, and flourishing its voluminous tail in wild disdain as it was dragged out.

But the moment it found itself outside the corral, its first idea was to gallop away. A jerk of the lasso checked him effectually. Another member of the household then deftly threw his lasso in such a manner that the prancing steed put its feet in it, and was caught just above the fetlocks. With a powerful twitch of this second lasso its legs were pulled from under it, and it fell with tremendous violence on its side. Before it could rise the young Gaucho forced its head to the ground and held it there, then drew his long knife, and therewith, in a few seconds, cut off its mane. Another Gaucho performed the same operation on the hair of its tail both acts being done, as they explained, to

indicate that the horse had been once mounted.

Meanwhile Pizarro quickly put a strong hide halter on the animal's head, and a piece of hide in his mouth to serve as a bit. He also girthed a saddle on him, and, when all was ready, ordered the men who held him to let go. At the same moment he sprang into the saddle and held on.

Holding on was the point on which Pizarro had to concentrate all his attention and power during the next few minutes, for the way in which that outraged and intensely fierce creature strove to unseat him is alike beyond the power of description and conception. Jumping, plunging, kicking, rearing, bounding, and pirouetting are all sufficiently expressive terms in their way, but they are mild words with which to describe the proceedings of that creature of the Pampas while under the influence of temporary insanity. With ears flat on its neck, nostrils distended, and eyes emitting something almost like flames, the young horse absolutely screamed in its fury; but all was in vain. As well might it have tried to shake off its own tail as Pizarro!

Suddenly it changed its plan, and stretched out its sinewy length to its longest stride. Pizarro fell in with the idea, encouraged it with his long sharp spurs and heavy lash, and away they went over the mighty plain like a streak of personified lightning.

It is useful sometimes to let wilful people not only have their way, but compel them to continue it. John Gilpin's spirit, when he said

“’Twas for your pleasure you came here;

You shall go back for mine.”

is not unknown on the Pampas and the prairie:

After sailing away over the plain, like a ship going out to sea, until it was a mere speck on the horizon, Pizarro's horse thought it time to reduce its pace; but here Pizarro did not agree with it. He applied whip and spur until his steed was quite exhausted. Then he turned homewards, and galloped back to the corral, into which he turned the animal in a very broken and humble state of mind. There it found several young friends who had just been subdued in a similar manner, and it is not altogether improbable that they spent the remainder of that evening in comparing notes!

“A roughish method, butaweffective,” remarked the sportsman to his friend.

This was true. Perhaps Quashy's remark to Lawrence was equally true:

“Dat dood it pritty slick, massa; but I've seed it as well dood, p'r'aps better, by

kindness.”

There is this, at all events, to be said in regard to the rough system, that no man but an athlete could endure the fatigue of the process, while any man or even woman has physical strength sufficient to conquer by love, if only he, or she, possess the requisite patience and milk of human kindness.

Chapter Twenty Eight **Treats of a Gaucho Youth**

From these Gauchos Colonel Marchbanks learned that his troops had been seen searching for him by the eldest son, Pizarro, and that handsome youth professed himself willing to guide the party to the place where the soldiers were likely to be found. Without delay, therefore, they resumed their journey after supper, and that night encamped on the open plain.

While the party was busy making arrangements for the night, Pedro sauntered to the top of a neighbouring knoll to have what he styled a look round.

It was a clear moonlight night, and Lawrence, recognising the figure of the guide, followed him.

“Pedro,” he said, on overtaking him, “how is it possible that Pizarro can guide us to where the troops are, seeing that it is some time since he saw them, and he did not know in what direction they meant to travel? Besides, they may have changed their intentions and their route several times.”

“You forget, senhor, that troops leave a broad trail, and you do not yet, I see, fully appreciate the wonderful powers of some Gauchos in tracking out men. This Pizarro, although so young, is already celebrated in that way.”

“You know him, then? Why, you seem to know everybody!”

“I know every one of note,” replied the guide, “for my travels have been extensive, and my memory is pretty strong. Let me give you one or two instances of Pizarro’s powers. I was in this part of the country two years ago. Having occasion to pass this way, I fell in with Pizarro, and we travelled together a short time. One forenoon we were riding over the plains, when he stopped suddenly, pointed to a footprint, and said, ‘That is the little grey horse that was stolen from my father three years ago!’ ‘Are you sure?’ said I, almost laughing at him. ‘Sure!’ said he, ‘of course I am; moreover, I’m certain that the horse passed here not more than half an hour ago.’ ‘Let’s follow it up, then,’ said I, more in jest than earnest. But we did follow it up, and recovered the little grey horse that same evening.”

“A wonderful power of observation indeed, as well as memory,” said Lawrence, looking with increased interest at the young Gaucho, who could be seen, by the light of the neighbouring campfire, moving about in a graceful, free and easy manner, assisting in the preparation of supper.

“It was pretty well in its way,” returned Pedro, “but he did a sharper thing than that last year. A gold escort was attacked somewhere in the west, and the robbers, after killing most of the men, escaped with the bags of gold. The authorities being very anxious to trace out and punish the robbers, offered a high reward for any useful information as to their whereabouts. Now it chanced that Pizarro was moving about the country at that time, and, hearing of the adventure and the reward, kept his eyes open and his wits about him a little more sharply than usual though he does that pretty well at all times by nature. One day he saw a little child leading a mule laden with raw hides along a narrow path. This is a common enough sight, in no way calculated to attract particular attention; nevertheless it did attract the attention of Pizarro. I don’t pretend to understand the workings of a Gaucho’s mind. Perhaps it was the extreme smallness of the child that struck him, causing him to think that as no father or mother would risk such a little thing with the charge of a loaded mule without a special reason, it would be as well to find out what that special reason might be. Perhaps it was something else. Anyhow, suspicion being awakened, he followed the mule for a short distance, and soon observed that it stepped as if it carried a much heavier weight than a mere pack of hides. At once the stolen gold flashed into Pizarro’s mind. He stopped the mule, cut the bandages off the hides, and there, concealed among them, found the stolen bags!”

“After that,” said Lawrence, “I have no doubt whatever that he will soon find the troops.”

“Neither have I,” returned Pedro; “but Pizarro, and men like him, can do much more than I have told you. By a flight of birds they can tell of an approaching band of men before they are in sight, and by the cloud of dust they make when they appear they can form a close estimate of their numbers. When the Indian hordes are about to make a raid, Gauchos are warned of it by the ostriches and llamas and other timid beasts of the Pampas all travelling in one direction, and in many other ways that seem little short of miraculous they act the part of wilderness detectives.”

While continuing their journey next day, Lawrence resolved to have a chat with the Gaucho youth. Riding up alongside, he saluted him, and received a reply and a graceful bow that would have done credit to a Spanish grandee. He discovered ere long that the young man’s mind, like his body, had been cast in a noble mould, and that, although ignorant of almost everything beyond his

own wild plains, he was deeply imbued with reverence for Truth and Justice in all the relations of life. Indeed, his sense of these attributes of God was so strong that the constant violation of them by those around him roused in him occasional bursts of hot indignation, as Lawrence very soon found when he touched on a recent revolution which had taken place in the province of San Juan.

“Are the troops we search for sent out to aid the government of Mendoza?” demanded Pizarro, turning an earnest and frowning glance on his companion.

“I believe not,” answered Lawrence; “at least I have not heard the colonel talk of such an object; but I am not in his confidence, and know nothing of his plans.”

Pizarro made no rejoinder, and Lawrence, seeing by the continued frown that the youth’s spirit was somewhat stirred, sought for further information by asking about Mendoza.

“Do you not know,” said the Gaucho, with increased vehemence, and a good deal of fine action, “that the people of San Juan have deposed their governor, because he is a bad man?”

“I had not heard of it,” said Lawrence, “but what has that to do with Mendoza?”

“You shall hear, senhor. The governor of San Juan is dishonest. He is bad in every way, and in league with the priests to rob the people. His insolence became so great lately that, as I have said, the people arose, asserted their rights, and deposed him. Then the government of Mendoza sent troops to reinstate the governor of San Juan; but they have not yet succeeded! What right,” continued the youth, with grand indignation, “What right has the government of Mendoza to interfere? Is not the province of San Juan as free to elect its own governor as the province of Mendoza? Have its men not brains enough to work out their own affairs? ay, and they have arms strong enough to defend their rights, as the troops shall find when they try to force on the people a governor of whom they do not approve.”

Lawrence felt at once that he was in the presence of one of those strong, untameable spirits, of which the world has all too few, whose love of truth and fairplay becomes, as it were, a masterpassion, and around whom cluster not only many of the world’s good men, but unfortunately for the success of the good cause also multitudes of the lower dregs of the world’s wickedness, not because these dregs sympathise with truth and justice, but simply because truthlovers are sometimes unavoidably arrayed against “the powers that be.”

“I don’t know the merits of the case to which you refer,” said Lawrence, “but I have the strongest sympathy with those who fight or suffer in the cause of fairplay for those who wish to ‘do to others as they would have others do to them.’ Do the people of San Luis sympathise with those of San Juan?”

“I know not, senhor, I have never been to San Luis.”

As the town referred to lay at a comparatively short distance from the other, Lawrence was much surprised by this reply, but his surprise was still further increased when he found that the handsome Gaucho had never seen any of the towns in regard to which his sense of justice had been so strongly stirred!

“Where were you born, Pizarro?” he asked.

“In the hut where you found me, senhor.”

“And you have never been to Mendoza or San Juan?”

“No, senhor, I have never seen a town or a village ever gone beyond the plains where we now ride.”

“How old are you, Pizarro?”

“I do not know, senhor.”

As the youth said this with a slightly confused look, Lawrence forbore to put any more personal questions, and confined his conversation to general topics; but he could not help wondering at this specimen of grand and apparently noble manhood, who could neither read nor write, who knew next to nothing of the great world beyond his own Pampas, and who had not even seen a collection of huts sufficiently large to merit the name of village. He could, however, admirably discern the signs of the wilderness around him, as he showed by suddenly pointing to the sky and exclaiming

“See! there is a lion!”

“Lions have not wings, Pizarro,” said Lawrence, with a smile, as he looked upward; “but I see, very high in the air, a flock of vultures.”

“Just so, senhor, and you observe that they do not move, but are hovering over one spot?”

“Yes, I see that; what then?”

“A lion is there, senhor, devouring the carcass from which he has driven the vultures away.”

In a short time the correctness of the youth's observation was proved by the party coming upon, and driving away, a puma which had previously disturbed the vultures at their banquet on the carcass of an unfortunate ox.

The next morning Pizarro's capacity for tracking the wilderness was proved by the party coming on the broad trail of the troops. Soon afterwards they discovered the men themselves taking their midday siesta.

Not long after that the united party came within scent of the Atlantic, and on the afternoon of the same day galloped into the town of Buenos Ayres.

Chapter Twenty Nine

Describes several Mysterious Meetings and Conversations

Descriptions, however graphic or faithful, are for the most part misleading and ineffective. Who ever went to a town or a region, and found it to resemble the picture of it which had been previously painted on his imagination by description?

For an account of Buenos Ayres we refer the inquiring reader to other books.

Our business at present is with Quashy and "Sooz'n."

That sable and now united couple stand under the shade of a marble colonnade watching with openmouthed interest the bustle of the street in which men and women of many nations French, Italian, Spanish, English, and other are passing to and fro on business or pleasure.

This huge, populous town was not only a new sight, but an almost new idea to the negroes, and they were lost alike in amusement and amazement.

"Hi!" exclaimed Quashy in his falsetto, "look, look dar, Sooz'ndas funny."

He pointed to a little boy who, squatted like a toad on a horse's back, was galloping to market with several skins of milk slung on either side of the saddle, so that there was no room for his legs.

"O Quash!" exclaimed the bride, "dar's pumpkins for you. Look!"

They were indeed notable pumpkins so large that five of them completely filled a wagon drawn by two oxen.

"But come, Sooz'n, da'ling," said Quashy, starting as if he had just recollected something, "you said you was gwine to tell me suffin as would make my hair stan' on end. It'll be awrful strong if it doos dat, for my wool am stiff, an' de curls pritty tight."

“Yes, I comed here wid you apurpose to tell you,” replied the bride, “an’ to ax your ’pinion. But let’s go ober to dat seat in de sun. I not like de shade.”

“Come along, den, Sooz’n. It’s all one to me where we goes, for your eyes dey make sunshine in de shade, an’ suffin as good as shade in de sunshine, ole gurl.”

“Git along wid your rubbish!” retorted Susan as they crossed the street. It was evident, however, that she was much pleased with her gallant spouse.

“Now, den dis is what I calls hebben upon art’,” said Quashy, sitting down with a contented sigh. “To be here afrizzlin’ in de sunshine wid Sooz’n asmilin’ at me like a black angel. D’you know, Sooz’n,” he added, with a serious look, “it gibbs me a good deal o’ trouble to beliebe it.”

“Yes, it am awrful nice,” responded Susan, gravely, “but we’s not come here to make lub, Quashy, so hol’ your tongue, an’ I’ll tell you what I heard.”

She cleared her throat here, and looked earnest. Having thus reduced her husband to a state of the most solemn expectancy, she began in a low voice

“You know, Quashy, dat poor Massa Lawrie hab found nuffin ob his fadder’s fortin.”

“Yes, I knows dat, Sooz’n,” replied her husband, with an expression of the deepest woe.

“Well, den”

“No, Sooz’n, it’s ill den.”

“Quashy!” remonstratively.

“Yes?” interrogatively.

“Hol’ your tongue.”

“Yes, da’ling.”

“Well, den,” began Susan again, with serious emphasis, “don’ ’trupt me agin, or I’ll git angry. Well, massa, you know, is so honoribic dat he wouldn’t deceive nobodyn not even a skeeter.”

“I knows dat, Sooz’n, not even a nigger.”

“Ob course not,” continued Susan; “so what does massa do, but goes off

straight to Kurnel Muchbunks, an' he says, says he, 'Kurnel, you's a beggar.'"

"No, Sooz'n, he di'n't say dat. Dough you says it wid your own sweet lips, I don' believe it."

"Right, Quashy. You's allers right," returned the bride, with a beaming smile. "I made a 'stakedas all. I should hab said dat massa he said, says he, 'Kurnel Muchbunks,' says he, 'I's a beggar.'"

"Dat was a lie, Sooz'n," said Quashy, in some surprise.

"I's afeard it was," assented Susan, gravely.

"Well, an' what says de kurnel to dat?" asked the saddened negro, with a sigh.

"Oh! he beliebed it, an' he says, says he, 'I's grieved to hear it, Mis'r Amstrung, an' ob course you cannot 'spect me to gib my consent to my darter marryin' a beggar!' O Quash, w'en I hears datIbu'sted a'most! I do believe if I'd bin 'longside o' dat kurnel at dat momint I hab gib him a most horrible smack in de face."

"De skownril!" muttered Quashy between his clenched teeth. "But what happen arter dat, Sooz'n?"

"Nuffin happen. Only poor massa he look bery sad, an' says, says he, 'Kurnel, I's come to say farewell. I would not t'ink ob asking your consent to such a marriage, but I do ask you to hold out de hope dat if I ebber comes back agin wid a kumpitincy, don' know 'zactly what dat is, but dat's what he called itwid a kumpitincy, you'll not forbid me payin' my 'dresses to your darter.' What he wants to pay her dresses for, an' why he calls dem his dresses, is more nor I can guess, but das what he say, an' de kurnel he says, says he, 'No, Mis'r Amstrung, I'll not hold out no sich hope. It's time enough to speak ob dat when you comes back. It's bery kind ob you to sabe my darter's life, but' an' den he says a heap more, but I cou'n't make it rightly out, I was so mad."

"When dey was partin', he says, says he, 'Mis'r Amstrung, you mus' promise me not to 'tempt to meet my darter before leaving.' I know'd, by de long silence and den by de way he speak dat Massa Lawrence no like dat, but at last he says, says he, 'Well, kurnel, I do promise dat I'll make no 'tempt to meet wid her,' an' den he hoed away. Now, Quashy, what you t'ink ob all dat?"

"I t'ink it am a puzzler," replied the negro, his face twisted up into wrinkles of perplexity. "I's puzzled to hear dat massa tell a big lie by sayin' he's a beggar, an' den show dat it's a lie by offerin' to pay for de kurnel's darter's dresses. It's koorious, but white folk has sitch koorious ways dat it's not easy to

understan' dem. Let's be t'ankful, Sooz'n, you an' me, that we're bof black."

"So I is, Quash, bery t'ankful, but what's to be dooed? Is massa to go away widout sayin' goodbye to Miss Manuela?"

"Cer'nly not," cried the negro, with sudden energy, seizing his wife's face between his hands, and giving her lips a smack that resounded over the placeto the immense delight of several little Gaucho boys, who, clothed in nothing but ponchos and pugnacity, stood gazing at the couple.

Quashy jumped up with such violence that the boys in ponchos fled as he hurried along the street with his bride, earnestly explaining to her as he went, his newborn plans.

At the same moment that this conversation was taking place, Lawrence Armstrong and Pedroalias Conrad of the Mountainswere holding equally interesting and perhaps more earnest converse over two pots of coffee in a restaurant.

"I have already told you, senhor," said Pedro, "that old Ignacio followed us thus hotly, and overtook us as it happened so opportunely, for the purpose of telling me of a piece of good fortune that has just been sent to me."

"True," returned Lawrence, "and in the bustle of the moment when you told me I forgot to congratulate you, whatever the good fortune may be. What was it?"

"Good old Ignacio little knew," continued Pedro, sipping his coffee with an air of supreme contentment, "what glad news I had in store for himself about my little Mariquitathe light of my eyes, the very echo of her mother! The good fortune he had to tell me of was but as a candle to the sun compared with what I had to reveal to him, for what is wealth compared with love? However, the other piece of good news is not to be sneezed at."

"But what is this good news, Pedro?" asked Lawrence, with a touch of impatience, for his curiosity was aroused, and Pedro's mode of communicating glad tidings was not rapid.

Before he could reply their attention was attracted by the noisy and selfassertive entrance of two jovial British sailors, who, although not quite drunk, were in that condition which is styled by some people "elevated"by others, debased. Whatever view may be taken of their condition, there could be only one opinion as to their effusive goodhumour and universal goodwilla goodwill which would probably have expanded at once into pugnacity, if any one had ventured to suggest that the couple had had more than enough of

strong drink.

“Now then, Bill,” cried one, smiting the other with facetious violence on the back, “what’ll you have?” Then, without waiting for a reply, he added, to the waiter, “Let’s have some braryan’warer!”

The brandy and water having been supplied, Bill nodded his head, cried, “Here’s luck, Jim,” and drained his first glass. Jim responded with the briefer toast, “Luck!” and followed the other’s draining example.

“Now, I’ll tell you wot it is, Jim,” said Bill, setting down his glass and gazing at the brandy bottle with a solemnly virtuous look, “I wouldn’t go for to see another bullfight like that one we saw just before we left Monte Video, no, not if you was to give me a thousan’ pound down.”

“No more would I,” responded Jim, regarding the waterjug with a virtuously indignant air.

“Such disgusting cruelty,” continued Bill. “To see two strong men stand up o’ their own accord an’ hammer their two noses into somethin’ like plum duff, an’ their two daylights into one, ain’t more nor a or’nary seaman can stand; but to see a plucky little bull set to gore an’ rip up a lot o’ poor blinded horses, with a lot o’ cowardly beggars eggin’ it on, an’ stickin’ darts all over it, an’ the place reekin’ wi’ blood, an’ the people cheerin’ like madwhyitit made me a’most seasick, which I never was in my life yet. Bah! Pass the bottle, Jim.”

“You’re right, Bill,” assented Jim, passing the bottle, “an’ it made poor young Ansty sick altogether. Leastwise, I saw his goodlookin’ face turn a’most green as he got up in a hurry like an’ left the place, for you know, big an’ well made as he is, an’ able to hold his own wi’ the best, Dick Ansty has the heart of a woman for tenderness. His only fault is that he’s a teetotaller.”

“Ay, a ggreat fault that,” said Bill, pouring out and spilling most of another glass. “I wouldn’t give much for him.”

“You couldn’t help likin’ him, though, if you’d sailed with him as I’ve done,” returned Jim. “He’s a reg’lar brick, though he don’t smoke neither.”

“Don’t smoke?” exclaimed Bill, aghast. “Then he ain’t fit for this world! Why, what does he think ’baccy was made for?”

“I dun know as to that, Bill, but I do know that he’s goin’ to leave us. You see, he’s only a sort of halfhandworked his passage out, you know, an’ well he did it too, though he is only a landlubber, bein’ a Cornishman, who’s bin lookin’ arter mines o’ some sort ever since he was a boy. He says he’s in great luck,

havin' fallen in wi' a party as is just agoin' to start for the west under a feller they call Conrad o' the Mountains."

Lawrence and Pedro, who had been trying to ignore the presence of the sailors, and to converse in spite of their noise, became suddenly interested at this point, and the former glanced inquiringly at the latter.

"Listen," said Pedro, in a low voice, and with a nod of intelligence.

"It's a queer story," continued Jim. "I heard all about it this very mornin' from himself. He'd bin givin' some on us a lot o' good advice. You see, he's a sort of edicated chap, an' got a tremendjous gift o' the gab, but none of us could take offence at 'im, for he's such a quiet, modest feller although he is big! Well, you must know thatthatwhat was I sayin'?"

"Ppash th' bottle," said Bill.

"No, that's not what I was Oh yes, I was goin' to say he'd bin givin' us good advice, 'because you must know, shipmates,' says he, 'that I've bin in good luck on shore, havin' fallen in with a most interestin' man, whose right name I don't know yet, because everybody speaks of him as Conrad of the Mountains, though some calls him Pedro, and others the Rover of the Andes, and a good lot say he's a robber. But I don't care twopence what they say, for I've seen him, and believe him to be a firstrate feller. Anyhow, he's a rich one, and has bin hirin' a few men to help him to work his silvermine, and as I know somethin' about mining, he has engaged me to superintend the underground work.'

"You may be sure we was surprised as well as pleased to hear all this, an' we pumped him, in course, a good deal, an' he told us that the mine was in the Andes somewheres, at a place called Murrykeety Valley, or some such name. This Conrad had discovered the mine a good while ago, and had got an old trapper an' a boy to work it, but never made much of it till a few months back, when the old man an' the boy came suddenly on some rich ground, where the silver was shovelled up in buckets. In course I don't rightly know what like silver is when first got hold on. It ain't in readymade dollars, I dare say, but anyhow, they say this Conrad'll be as rich as a nabob; an' he's got a pretty darter too, as has bin lost the most of her life, and just turned up at the same time wi' the silver. I don't rightly know if they dug her up in the mine, but there she is, an' she's goin' up to the mountains too, so young Ansty will be in good company."

"Jim," said Bill at this point, looking with unsteady solemnity at his comrade, and speaking slowly, "I ddon' bb'lieve a single word on't. Here, give us a light, an'an'pash th' borle."

Rising at this point, Lawrence and Pedro left those jovial British tars to their elevating occupations.

“Well, senhor,” said the latter as they walked away, “you have heard it all, though not just in the way I had intended!”

“But tell me, Pedro, is this all true?”

“Substantially it is as you have heard it described, only I have had more people than old Ignacio and his boy to work my silvermine. I have had several men at it for a long time, and hitherto it has paid sufficiently well to induce me to continue the works; but when Ignacio visited it a few weeks ago, in passing on his way here to meet me, he found that a very rich lode had been found so rich, indeed, and extensive, that there is every reason to expect what men call ‘a fortune’ out of it. There is a grave, as you know, which dims for me the lustre of any fortune, but now that it has pleased the Almighty to give me back my child, I will gladly, for her sake, try to extract a little more than the mere necessities of life out of my silvermine. Now, my friend,” added Pedro, suddenly stopping and confronting our hero with a decided air, and an earnest look, “will you join me in this venture? I would not give up my life’s work here for all the mines in Peru. In order to raise the people and improve the condition of this land, I must continue to be a Rover of the Andes to the end of my days. So, as I cannot superintend extensive mining operations at the same time, I must have a manager, and I know of no one whom I should like to have associated with me half so well as Senhor Lawrence Armstrong. Will you go with me to the Mariquita Valley?”

Lawrence paused a minute, with his eyes on the ground, before answering.

“I am flattered by your good opinion, Pedro,” he said at length, “and will give you an answer tomorrow, if that will do. I never take any important step in haste. This afternoon I have an appointment with Quashy, and as the hour is near, and I promised to be very punctual, you will excuse my leaving you now.”

“Certainly tomorrow will do,” said Pedro, “I hope to take Quashy also with me. He is a queer fellow.”

“He is particularly queer just now,” returned Lawrence. “I think his marriage with Susan has turned his brain. So, goodbye, Pedro till tomorrow.”

They shook hands heartily, and parted.

That same afternoon Quashy paid a formal visit to Manuela at her father’s

residence in the suburbs of Buenos Ayres, and told her, with a visage elongated to the uttermost, and eyes in which solemnity sat enthroned, that a very sick man in the country wanted to see her immediately before he died.

“Dear me, Quashy,” said Manuela, an expression of sympathy appearing at once on her fine eyebrows, “who is it? what is his name? and why does he send for me?”

“I can’t tell you his name, miss. I’s not allowed. But it’s a bad case, an’ it will be awrful if he should die widout seein’ you. You’d better be quick, miss, an’ I’ll promise to guide you safe, an’ take great care ob you.”

“That I know you will, Quashy. I can trust you. I’ll order my horse im”

“De hoss am at de door a’ready, miss. I order ’im afore I come here.”

Manuela could not restrain a little laugh at the cool presumption of her sable friend, as she ran out of the room to get ready.

A few minutes more and the pair were cantering through the streets in the direction of the western suburbs of the town.

Chapter Thirty

The Last

We regret to have to record the fact that Quashy’s deeplaid schemes in behalf of Manuela and the “sick man” miscarried.

That same night, by the light of the full moon, he revealed to Susan his account of the affair, with a visage in which the solemnity of the wondering eyes seemed to absorb the expression of all the other features.

“Sooz’n,” he said, “de white folk is past my compre’nshin altogidder, an’ I ha’n’t got words to tell you how t’ankful I am dat you an’ me was born black.”

“Das true, Quash. We’s got reasin to rejoice. But what went wrong?”

“What went wrong? why, my lub, eberyt’ing went wrong. Look here, dis was de way ob it. When me an’ Miss Manuela got to de place whar I had fix on, dar was de lubsick man sure ’nuff, an’ you may b’liebe he look ’stonished to see Manuela, but he wasn’t half so ’stonished as me at de way dey hoed on. What d’ee t’ink dey dooed, Sooz’n?”

“Dun know. S’pose dey run into each oder’s arms, an’ hab a dance roundlike me an’ you.”

“Nuffin ob de sort. I wouldn’t hab bin suprised at dat at all. No, arter de fust look o’ suprise, Massa Lawrence looked orkerd, an’ Miss Manuela looked orkerder!”

“It had bin in my mind,” continued Quashy, “arter I had bring ’em togidder, to turn about, an’ enter into conbersation wid my hosswhat’s pritty well used to my talk by dis timebut when I see how t’ings went, I forgot to turn about, so ob course I heard an’ saw’d.”

“You wasn’t innercent dat time, Quashy.”

“I di’n’t say I was, Sooz’n, but I cou’n’t help it. Well, Massa Lawrence, who’s too much of a man to remain orkerd long, goes up to Miss Manuela wid a leetle smile, an’ holds out his hand. She shakes it quite gentlylike, zif dey was on’y noo acquaintances jest interdooed. Ob course I di’n’t hear rightly all dey said”

“Ha! wantin’ to keep up a leetle innercence?”

“Jest so, Sooz’n, but I couldn’t help hearin’ a good dealsomet’ing like dis:

“Says Massa Lawrence, says he, ‘Arternoon, Miss Muchbunks.’ ‘Ditto to you, sir,’ says Manuela”

“No, she didn’t say dat,” interrupted Susan, with decision.

“Well, no, p’r’aps not ’zactly dat, Sooz’n, but suffin wid de same meanin’. You know it i’n’t possible for me to speak like dem. An’ dey bof seemed to hab got deir gotomeetin’ langwidge onall stiff an’ stuck up grammar, same zif dey was at school. Well, arter de speech about de wedder, dey bof blushedI could see dat, dough I was tryin’ hard not to look, and dey was so long silent dat I begin to t’ink ob offerin’ to help, when Massa Lawrence he plucked up heart all ob a suddent, an’ went in like a good un.

“‘Manuela,’ says he, quite boldlike, ‘I promised your fadder dat I would not make any ’tempt to meet you before leabing for de mountains, an’ I hab fait’fully striben to keep dat promise. It is by mere chance, I assure you, dat I hab meet you here now, and I would not, for all de wurl’ break my word to your fadder. But as chance hab t’rown you in my way, it cannot be wrong to tell youwhat you knows a’readydat I lub you, and dat, God permittin’, I will return ere long to Buenos Ayres. Farewell.’

“Wid dat he wheel round, zif he was afraid to trust hissself to say more, an’ went off at full gallop.”

“An’ what did Miss Manuela say?” asked Susan.

“She say not’ingnot one wordon’y she smile a leetle, an’ kiss her hand to him when he hoed away. It passes my compre’nshin, kite. An’ as we rode home she says to me, says she, ‘Quashy, you’s a good boy!’ I bery near say to her, ‘Manuela, you’s a bad gurl,’ but I di’n’t feel kite up to dat.”

“Quashy, you’re a fool,” said Susan, abruptly.

“Das no news,” returned the amiable man, “I’s said dat ob myself ober an’ ober again since I’s growed up. De on’y time I feel kite sure I wasn’t a fool was de time I falled in lub wid you, Sooz’n.”

As the negro’s account of this inflecting and parting was substantially correct, we feel indisposed to add more to it, except to say that our hero stuck manfully to his resolve, and finally went off to the distant valley in the Andes without again meeting the Inca princess.

He was accompanied by Pedro and his daughter, Quashy and Susan, Ignacio, the old hunter, and his boy, as well as Spotted Tiger. In addition to these there was a pretty large followingsome engaged in the service of Pedro, others taking advantage of the escort. Among them were Dick Ansty, the Cornish youth, Antonio, the exbandit, and the English sportsman withawhis friend.

It is not our purpose to drag the patient reader a second time over the rolling Pampas, or to introduce him to the mysteries of silvermining in the Andes. Our end shall be sufficiently explained by stating the fact that as Lawrence was faithful to his promise to Colonel Marchbanks, he was not less faithful to his promise to the daughter.

A year had barely elapsed when he found himself once again in Buenos Ayres, with the faithful Quashy at his side, and presented himself before the old colonel, not now as a beggar, but as part owner of one of the richest silvermines in Peru.

Colonel Marchbanks, although a prudent man, was by no means avaricious.

“The chief bar which prevented my listening to your proposal,” he said to Lawrence at their first interview, “is now removed, but I have yet to learn from my daughter’s own lips that she will have you. I have carefully avoided the subject from the very first, because I have no faith whatever in forcing, or even leading, the affections of a young girl. And let me tell you flatly, young senhor, that your being the richest man in Peru, and the greatest man as well, would not influence me so much as the weight of a feather, if Manuela does not care for you. So, you will prepare yourself to abide as well as you can by her final decision.”

“I am prepared to abide by Manuela’s decision,” replied Lawrence, with what may be termed a modest smile.

“Pon my word, young man, you seem to be unwarrantably sure of your position,” said the colonel, somewhat sternly. “However, you have heard all I mean to say on the subject just now. Leave me, and return here in the evening.”

When Lawrence was gone, the old soldier found his daughter in a tastefully arranged closet which she called her boudoir, the miniature glassdoor of which opened on a luxuriant garden, where wood, water, sunshine, and herbage, wild and tame, seemed to revel for the mastery.

“That young fellow Armstrong has come back,” said the old man, abruptly.

“I know it,” was Manuela’s brief reply. She did not look up, being too busily engaged at the moment in the hideously commonplace act of darning the smallest possible hole in one of her dear little stockings.

“You know it, child?”

“Yes, father.”

“Do you also know that he has just been here, and formally asked your hand in marriage?”

“Yes, father, I know it.”

“Why, child, how could you know that? You surely have not been tempted to condescend to eavesdropping?”

“No, father, I have not condescended to that, but I have heard it on the best authority. Have you not yourself just told me?”

“Ohahwell,” exclaimed the stern man, relaxing into a smile in spite of himself, as he observed the calm, quiet, earnest way in which that princess of the Incas applied herself to the reparation of that little hole. “Now Manuela, my darling,” continued the colonel, changing his tone and manner suddenly as he sat down beside her and put a hand lovingly on her shoulder, “you know that I would not for all the world permit, or induce you to do anything that would risk your happiness. I now come to ask you seriously if youif you are inin short, if you admire this young fellow.”

Instead of answering, Manuela, while searching carefully for any other little hole that might have been made, or that was on the eve of being made, by any

other little toe, asked the astounding question

“Is he rich, father?”

A mixture of surprise and annoyance marked the old man’s tone and look as he replied

“Why, what has that got to do with it?”

“Have you not over and over again warned me, father, to beware of those gay young fellows who haven’t got two sixpences to rub against each other, but have presumption enough to trifle with the affections of all the silly girls in the world. And are you sorry that I should have laid your lessons to heart?”

“Tut, child, don’t talk nonsense. Whether he is rich or poor is a mere matter of moonshine. The question I have to settle just now is Are you fond of him?”

“Well, no, father, I can’t exactly say that I”

“I knew it! I was sure of it! The presumptuous puppy!” shouted the old man of war, jumping up, overturning a worktable with its innumerable contents, and striding towards the door.

“Stay, father!” said Manuela, in a tone that military discipline forbade him to disobey, and holding out both her hands with an air and grace that love forbade him to resist. “I don’t admire him, and I’m not fond of him,” continued the Inca princess, vehemently, as she grasped her parent’s hands; “these terms are ridiculously inadequate. I love him, father I adore him!”

She stopped abruptly, for a noise at the glass door caused her to turn her eyes in that direction. It was Quashy, who stood there staring at them with all his eyes, and grinning at them with more than all his mouth to say nothing of his ears!

“You black baboon!” shouted the colonel, when able to speak.

“Oh, nebber mind me, kurnel,” said Quashy, with a deprecatory air, “’skuse me. I’s on’y habin’ a stroll in de gardin an’ come here kite by haxidint. Go on wid your leetle game, an’ nebber mind me. I’s on’y a nigger.”

Colonel Marchbanks could not decide whether to laugh or storm. Manuela decided the question for him by inviting the negro to enter, which he did with humble urbanity.

“Shake hands with him, father. He’s only a nigger, as he says, but he’s one of the very best and bravest and most faithful niggers that I ever had to do with.”

“You’s bery good, Missa’most as good as Sooz’n.”

“Oh, well, have it all your own way,” cried the colonel, becoming reckless, and shaking the negro’s hand heartily; “I surrender. Lawrence will dine with us this evening, Manuela, so you’d better see to having covers laid for three or, perhaps, for four. It may be that Senhor Quashy will honour us with”

“T’ankee, kurnel, you’s bery kind, but I’s got a prebious engagement.”

“A previous engagement, eh?” repeated the colonel, much tickled with the excuse.

“Yes, kurnel; got to ’tend upon Massa Lawrence; but if you’ll allow me to stan’ behind his chair an’ wait, I’ll be much pleased to listen to all you says, an’ put in a word now an’ den if you chooses.”

And so, good reader, all things came about as the little princess of the Incas had arranged, long before, in her own selfwilled little mind. Shall we trouble you with the details? Certainly not. That would be almost an insult to your understanding.

But we will trouble you to mount one of the fleetest steeds of the Pampas and fly with us over the mighty plains into the wildest regions of the Andes.

Though wild, we need not tell you that it is a lovely region, for you have been there already. It is the Mariquita Valley. No longer a silent wilderness, however, as when we saw it last, for, not very long after the events which we have just described, Lawrence Armstrong and his blooming bride, accompanied by the whitehaired colonel and the irrepressible Quashy, and another band of miners and selected emigrants, entered that valley in a sort of triumphal procession, and were met and escorted to the head of it by another triumphal procession, which was under the command of Conrad of the Mountains, whose pretty daughter was the first to welcome Manuela to her new home.

But now dismount. Put on these wings and soar with us to the brow of yonder cliff, from which we can have a grand bird’s-eye view of the vale almost from its entrance to the point where it is lost and absorbed in the majestic recesses of the higher Andes.

See you yon cottagelike edifice, close to Pedro’s old home, with the rustic porch in front, and the wellstocked garden around? That is the residence of the overseer of the silvermine, Lawrence Armstrong, Esquire. The residence as well as the garden is wellstocked; for we have ventured to gallop with you over Time as well as Space one result being that there are at least three

descendants of the Incas, by the mother's side, romping in the garden.

On that mound a little way on the other side of Pedro's cottage stands another building. It resembles the home of Lawrence, but with enough of difference to afford the charm of variety. It is the home of the fine young Cornish youth who worked his way across the sea as a sailor, and accompanied Pedro to the mountains. That trip effectually settled his business, and resulted in the conversion of Mariquita into Mrs Ansty. The change may not strike ordinary readers as being very romantic, but it was attended with much felicity.

In the small clump of wood just behind Pedro's cottagewhere you see the lakelet or tarn glittering in the sunlight, and sending its infant waters to brawl over the neighbouring precipices and scamper down the valleystands a group of huts. These form the homes of Ignacio, the old hunter, and Spotted Tiger with his family. Ignacio, you see, still tough and straight, as though he had made up his mind to live and hunt for everhas a strange power of attracting men to him, and has induced his Indian friend to forsake his old home in the low grounds and dwell with him in the mountains. Of course Spotted Tiger has brought his wife with him, and Leetle Cub, no longer little, and all the other cubs, including poor Manca, the sick girl, whothanks to Dr Armstrong's skill, and change of scene, and God's blessing on allis no longer sick, but, on the contrary, robust and grateful.

Strange to say, our English sportsman is living with Ignacio just now, with several sporting friends. He has been back to England and out again since we last saw him, and goes awing all over the settlement with as much nonchalance and latent vigour as everwhen not better engaged with Ignacio and Spotted Tiger, and Leetle Cub, in the mountains.

In Lawrence's garden, among the romping descendants of the Incas, by the mother's side, may be seen four whiteybrown creatures. These are the children of Quashy and Susan. Two of them are little Quashys and two are little "Sooz'ns." They are not, of course, all named so, but Quashy says if he had "fifty little bustin' gurls he'd regard 'em all as little Sooz'ns," and Susan retorts that if she had "five hundred little bad boys she'd call 'em all Quashys." They dwell in a small hut in rear of the cottage of Massa Lawrence, for Quashy is his gardener and "Sooz'n" his washerwoman, and the little Quashys and "Sooz'ns" are playmates of the little Incas, by the mother's side.

Antonio, the exbandit, is assistant gardener to the Armstrongs, and it is said that that once ferocious man has become so changed under the influence of Christian treatment, that he not only serves his master faithfully, but has even made more than one attempt to rescue an old enemy named Cruz from his evil ways. He has not yet been successful, but he is strong in faith and hope.

Colonel Marchbanks, who has finally retired from the army, dwells with the Armstrongs, and has organised the miners and settlers into a local force of which he is the chief.

For the place has grown much of late in importance as well as in numbers, and in such a wild region there is need for defensive arrangements. It has other arrangements, also, of a much more important kind in which the Word of God plays the chief part, and Conrad of the Mountains lends a helping hand. That earnest rover has built a church and a schoolhouse, and, when at home, does what in him lies to advance the cause of true religion and education. But he has not ceased to wander in the mountains. True to his instincts as a reformer and lover of mankind, he visits with ceaseless activity the great and widely separated centres of population in South America, never losing sight of the great object he has set before him in the amelioration of the condition of the people.

Most people think him a mysterious madman. Some, who know him well, think him an oversanguine enthusiast, but all agree in regarding him as a calm, gentle, amiable man, with a determination of purpose that nothing can turn aside, and with an intense desire for the welfare and advancement of the country which Mariquita the elder called her native land. Indeed it is thought by some that Pedro must have made to his wife some pledge or promise with reference to that subject, but no one can ascertain the truth of that now.

There is ground for this belief, however, for, as we sit on our perch, overlooking the valley, we see this Pedro, this Conrad of the Mountains, seated in the bower on the mound behind his dwelling, resting contemplatively at the wellloved spot, after one of his periodical returns. Mariquita the younger is beside him. They are both looking earnestly at the grave, and conversing about the time when they shall once again meet the lost one by the side of Jesus in the better land.

Till that day came, Pedro continued unflinchingly to prosecute his selfimposed task, whatever it might be. Whether or what success attended his efforts we cannot tell; yet have we reason to hope that his labour was not in vain. But of this much we are certainly sure, that, to the end of his days on earth he continued to be known as the Rover of the Andes; and when Death at last overtook him and arrested his benignant course, it found him advancing with trembling steps towards the old place, and closed with him, finally, as he pillowed his head on Mariquita's grave.

The End



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