Title: The Young Llanero: A Story of War and Wild Life in Venezuela

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"The Young Llanero"

Chapter One.

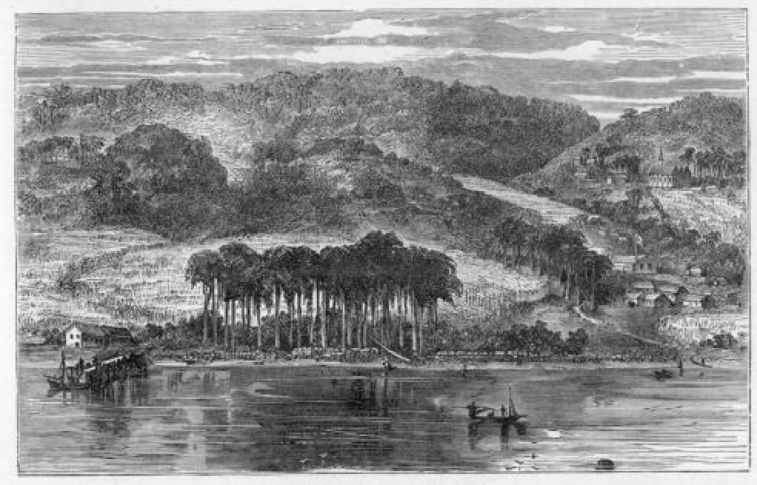
The home of my childhood in South America—My father's history—Sent to school in England—Life at school—Summoned back to America—Voyage with my uncle to Jamaica—Sail for Venezuela—Chased by a Spanish man-of-war—Cross the bar of the Magdalena River—Driven on shore by a storm—Boat nearly wrecked—Our night encampment—Repair boat—A deer shot—Disturbed by Goahira indians—Flight—Pursued—Reach the port of Cervanos—Meet Tim Molloy—His delight at seeing us—Hospitably received by the Commandant, but very inhospitably by the mosquitoes.

I should like to draw a picture, though I may succeed but imperfectly, of the grand scenery amid which I passed my childhood's days.

Far in the west rose upwards in the intense blue sky the snow-capped peaks of the Cordilleras, or Andes, of South America, with range beyond range of lofty mountains intervening, the more distant rugged and barren, the nearer clothed to their summits with trees, glittering cascades leaping down their side? from rock to rock; while here and there could be seen the openings of deep glens, at the bottom of which copious streams came rushing forth, forming the headwaters of the mighty Orinoco. Palms and other tropical trees surrounded our house, which stood on a slightly elevated plateau, below which appeared a shining lake of considerable dimensions fed by the mountain-streams, its waters finding an outlet at one end, and from whence they flowed in a more gentle current towards the western branch of the great river. Far to the east and north extended a vast plain, in some parts covered with dense forests, in others presenting an arid desert; while beyond were to be found the wide-stretching llaños of Venezuela, bordered on the south by the Orinoco.

The region I have described will be seen marked on the map, in the more northern part of the South American continent. It is, indeed, a grand country, abounding in valuable trees of various descriptions, and wild animals and game of all sorts—jaguars, pumas, tapirs, and peccaries; reptiles innumerable—alligators, anacondas, rattlesnakes; and birds of various species, from the majestic condor and towering eagle down to the diminutive humming-bird. But as I shall have to describe all sorts of curious adventures, in which they and other animals played conspicuous parts, I will not further particularise them at present.

As I was born in the country, it may be concluded that my father and mother resided there. To my



THE HOME OF MY CHILDHOOD

father, Barry Desmond, might have been applied those touching lines of the poet Campbell:—

> “There came to the beach a poor exile of Erin,
> The dew on his thin robe was heavy and chill;
> For his country he sighed, when at twilight repairing
> To wander alone by the wind-beaten hill.
> But the day-star attracted his eyes’ sad devotion,
> For it rose o’er his own native isle of the ocean,
> Where once, in the fire of his youthful emotion,
> He sang the bold anthem of Erin-go-bragh.”

When a very young man,—scarcely eighteen years of age,—being a friend of Thomas Addis Emmett and Lord Edward Fitzgerald (though his family were firm Protestants), and carried away by mistaken patriotism, he had been induced to take a part in the lamentable Irish rebellion of 1798, which stained their beloved country with blood, and left her in a far more deplorable condition than she had previously been. Young as he was, my father had been actively engaged in the various skirmishes and battles which occurred between the insurgent forces and the royal troops. He was present at Arklow, Ross, and Vinegar-hill, where he was wounded; and had it not been for the resolute courage of a devoted follower, Tim Molloy, he would have fallen into the hands of the victors. Carried off the field of battle, he was concealed for many weeks in a mud hut by the faithful Tim; who, when a price was set on his head, went forth nightly to obtain provisions, and finally assisted him to reach the coast. He there, accompanied by Tim, embarked on board a vessel bound for the West Indies; but unable to remain with safety in any of the English islands, after long wanderings they landed on the shores of Venezuela, then belonging to the Spaniards. Tim, fearing that should his beloved master remain at any of their ports the Spanish authorities might deliver him up to the English Government, urged him to push farther inland. At length they reached the region I have described, where their wanderings were over; for my father here found a fellow-exile, Mr Denis Concannan, who had some years before arrived in the country and married the daughter of a Spanish hidalgo of considerable wealth. He was cordially received by Mr Concannan and his wife, who had several sons and daughters,—one of whom, in the course of time, became my father’s wife and my mother.

His friends at home, to whom he at length divulged the place of his retreat, might probably have obtained a pardon for him on the plea of his youth, but, though still entertaining a warm affection for his native land, he had become much attached to the country of his adoption, which my mother also was unwilling to leave. My uncles, moreover, had been sent to England for their education, where one of them continued to reside; and my family thus kept up communication with the old country.

When I was old enough to go to school, my father determined to send me also to the care of my Uncle Denis. As we had always spoken English in our family, I did not feel myself completely a stranger in a strange land; and brought up among English boys, I imbibed their ideas and assumed their manners, and was, indeed, more of an Englishman than an Irishman, and certainly more of either than of a Spaniard.

I need not mention any of the incidents of my school-life. They were much like those other boys meet with,—nothing extraordinary. I made a good many friends, and fought two or three battles. One was on the occasion of Tom Rudge, a big fellow, calling me an Irish rebel, and saying that my father had been hanged. I gave him the lie direct, and replied that if he had been shot he would have died the death of a gentleman, which was more than Rudge himself was; but that he had neither been shot nor hanged, for he was alive and well, and that I hoped to see him again before many years were over. I thereon planted my fist between Rudge’s eyes, which drew fire from them, and left them both swollen and blackened. We then set to, and I was getting the best of it, driving my antagonist backwards, when one of the ushers appeared, and seizing hold of me carried me up to the doctor. I pleaded that I had been grossly insulted. He replied that it was my duty to forgive insult, and asked what Tom Rudge had said to me. I told him.

“I thought that you were an orphan,” he observed, “the son of Mr Concannan’s sister, and that your father was dead.”

“Mr Concannan is my uncle, sir,” I replied; “but my father is alive and well, I hope, in South America.”

The expression of surprise which passed over the master’s countenance made me fear that I had said something imprudent.

“If your father were dead, that would only have aggravated Rudge’s fault,” he said. “I do not excuse him; I will see what he has to say for himself.”

Rudge was sent for, and appeared with his two black eyes. The doctor looked at him sternly, and reprimanded him for the language he had made use of. “He has been punished, I see,” he observed, “and I will therefore remit the flogging he deserves, and which you, Master Desmond, are liable to for fighting. Now, shake hands, and remember that the next time you take to your fists I shall be compelled to punish you both.”

We shook hands as directed, and were sent back to the playground; and neither did Rudge nor any one else again make any reflection on my family. How he had found out that my father had been engaged in the Irish rebellion I could not discover. He after this, for some time, fought very shy of me, though from that day forth he gave up bullying, and we became very good friends. Indeed, by the wise management of the head-master, our school was really a very happy one, though fights occasionally took place in spite of the punishment which we knew would be inflicted were we discovered infringing its laws.

I had been there rather more than four years, and was now nearly sixteen years of age, when one day the doctor sent for me.

“I am sorry that I am going to lose you, Desmond,” he said. “I have just received a letter from your uncle, desiring me to send you up to town immediately, as he wishes you to accompany him to South America, for which country he purposes forthwith setting out. I feel it my duty to advise you as to your future conduct. The native inhabitants have, I understand, for some years been engaged in a fearful struggle with the Spaniards to become independent of the mother-country; and by the last advices I see that it still continues. You may very probably be tempted to take part with the insurgents; but I would urge you to remain neutral. I do not enter into the point as to whether people have a right to fight for their independence—and from what I know of the Spaniards I fear their rule of their American provinces has been a most tyrannical and unjust one; but I do know that those who draw the sword are liable to perish by the sword, and I should be very sorry to hear that such has been your fate.”

“I am much obliged to you, sir, for your kind wishes,” I answered, and I felt the blood mantling my brow as I spoke; “but I cannot promise to sit at home among the women and children when those I love are hazarding their lives on the field of battle. I have heard enough of the way the Spaniards have treated the inhabitants of Venezuela and New Granada to make my heart burn with indignation and a desire to emancipate the country my father has adopted from the cruel yoke pressing on it; and if I am called on to fight in the cause, I cannot refuse through fear of risking my life.”

The doctor smiled, looking on me still as a boy.

“I suspect, Desmond, that the reason you have been sent for is, that you may assist in protecting your mother and sisters should the older members of your family be engaged elsewhere. Such I gather from the tenor of your uncle’s letter. However, remember what I have said, I beg of you; and may a blessing accompany you wherever you go, as assuredly my prayers will follow you.”

I heartily thanked the kind doctor; and that very day—having said good-bye to my school-fellows, including Rudge, who all heartily expressed their hopes that I should not get shot, or be swallowed by an anaconda, or eaten by a jaguar, and who regarded me with some little jealousy on hearing that I was going to a country where I should meet with all sorts of adventures—I set off for London.

My uncle, I found, had already engaged a passage on board a vessel bound for Jamaica, whence he intended proceeding to the coast of Venezuela. I had but little time to get an outfit, for two days afterwards we were dropping down the Thames on board the good ship *Betsy*, bound out to Kingston in Jamaica, to bring back a cargo of sugar. Next morning, when I awoke, I could scarcely believe my senses. It seemed but an hour since I had been at school, and I at first expected to hear the morning-bell ring to call the boys up.

I quickly dressed and went on deck, when I found that we were already at sea, and under all sail doubling the North Foreland. But I remembered enough of my former voyage to be perfectly at home; and I felt as happy as a bird let out of a cage, as it spreads its wings and soars into the free air.

I told Uncle Denis what the doctor had said. He looked rather grave. “I must leave you to be guided by your father,” he said at length. “Perhaps by the time we reach home the Spaniards may have been driven out of the country, and the blessings of peace secured. We shall know more about the matter when we get there.” And he dropped the subject.

On the voyage, however, when it was calm, Uncle Denis gave me instruction in the use of firearms. We aimed at bottles thrown overboard as marks, and sometimes had a target rigged out at the end of a studdingsail-boom; so I soon became a good shot, both with rifle and pistol.

“Now, Barry,” said my uncle, “let us try what we can do with the sword.” And producing some sword-sticks, he made me take one. Somewhat to my surprise I found that he was an expert swordsman. He quickly initiated me into the mysteries of attack and defence, which gave us plenty of occupation, as it was seldom so rough that we could not practise with our weapons; and many of the other passengers followed our example. I did not, however, altogether forget my books, and employed myself in studying Spanish grammatically. Altogether, we had a pleasant voyage, and arrived safely at Port Royal.

Leaving the ship, we took up our abode at Kingston, which I thought a remarkably hot and unpleasant place.

My uncle laughed at my complaints of the heat. “You’ll find your native land much hotter, my boy,” he observed. “You’ve been so long getting cooled down in England that you forget what heat is.”

I suppose that I had done so; though my father's house being on elevated ground, the atmosphere round it was much cooler than in the low plains.

We had to wait for some time till my uncle could secure a passage on board a schooner, the *Flying Fish*, Captain Longswill, bound for the coast of Venezuela. She was a fast, rakish craft, carrying four long guns, and a parti-coloured crew of determined-looking fellows. Soon after we got on board, she made sail out of the harbour and stood away for her destination.

"You should know how to load and work a gun," said my Uncle Denis to me, after we had got clear of the land; "you may some day have to use one in earnest."

I, of course, was perfectly ready to be instructed; and the captain directing three of the crew to assist us, we cast the gun loose, loaded it, and fired it off. This we did several times, Uncle Denis desiring me to watch carefully how each movement was made. I worked away with him till my arms and back ached. By that time I began to feel myself an accomplished gunner. We then ran in the gun and secured it.

We performed the same operation the next day, the whole crew being also exercised at the guns. We then took a turn at rifle-shooting and sword-exercise.

The *Flying Fish* had a full and valuable cargo of merchandise which was worth protecting; and as pirates at that time swarmed in those seas, it was important to be able to beat them off, though few would have dared to attack so stout a vessel as our schooner.

We were frequently becalmed, but in about a week we sighted the lofty summits of the eastern range of the mighty Cordilleras, which sweeps round along the northern coast of that portion of South America. As we drew nearer, the view was indeed grand and sublime, some of the mountains being of so great a height as to be at all times covered with snow; while their bases, adorned with the finest trees and shrubs, are clothed with perpetual verdure. We were expecting to get in close enough the next day to land part of our cargo, when a perfect calm came on, and the sun went down in a blaze of glory, shedding a golden hue over the sky, reflected in the glass-like ocean.

The next morning, as I was about to turn out, I heard several persons come into the cabin, and found that they were taking down the arms arranged against the after bulkhead. My uncle was placing a brace of pistols in his belt and girding on a sword.

On my asking what was the matter. "You'll know presently," he answered. "Arm yourself as I have done;" and he hurried from the cabin.

I quickly dressed, and doing as he directed me, followed him on deck. I there found the guns cast loose, and the crew at their quarters; and on looking out astern I saw a large vessel, a man-of-war corvette, under all sail, standing towards us. The wind was scarcely strong enough to blow out her canvas, while we were still becalmed, but she was apparently bringing up the breeze with her; while between us and her were two large boats full of men, approaching evidently with the intention of boarding us. The headmost fired a shot at the schooner—to try the range, I suppose—but it fell short.

"What can that vessel want with us?" I asked of my uncle. "We are not now at war with any country, and she looks too large a ship to be a pirate."

"She is a Spanish man-of-war," he answered. "She takes us to belong to the Republicans, and, though we have shown English colours, wishes to overhaul us."

"But if the Spaniards were to come on board, what harm could they do us?" I asked.

"They might find articles they would object to among the cargo; and the captain has no wish to have the vessel searched," he answered.

Uncle Denis was perfectly composed, and seemed to take the matter as nothing unusual. I felt as I had never felt before, for I fully expected before many minutes were over to be engaged in a desperate fight.

The schooner had all her sails set, though at present they were useless; but on looking over the side I observed cat's-paws playing on the surface of the ocean. Now they appeared, now they vanished, but as yet we had not felt the slightest breath of wind. Presently, however, I saw the dog-vane rise and flutter slightly; again it drooped.

The corvette meantime was stealing up, and the boats were getting nearer and nearer. A shot from the headmost one could now have reached us, but she appeared to be waiting for the other to get up with her. Captain Longswill every now and then took a glance astern to watch them. Suddenly, in a cheery voice, he ordered the crew to trim sails, and our canvas bulging out slightly, the schooner began to glide slowly through the water. Just then I saw a puff of smoke issue from one of the boats, and a shot came ricochetting over the water, passing close to our quarter. The captain laughed. "You're a little too late, my boys," he observed; "you should have pulled harder than you did if you wished to get up with us."

The shot now came flying towards us as fast as the Spaniards could load their guns, but they all either dropped into the water astern or went whizzing by on either side. Though a gun had been slewed round and pointed through one of the after-ports, we had not fired a shot. "We might probably knock the boat to pieces, but there is no object in so doing if we can escape them with our heels," observed Uncle Denis. "You see, Barry, we are peaceably disposed, though we don't wish to be interfered with."

I now suspected, what I afterwards found to be the case, that the *Flying Fish* had arms and stores on board for the insurgents, which she was to land at any port in their possession, or else at a part of the coast where some of their troops could collect to receive them. The difficulty was to ascertain the places in the hands of the republicans, for they might have possession of a town one day, and it might be taken from them the next.

I was perfectly ready to fight, but I had no special wish to do so if it could be avoided; and I was therefore glad to see our sails fill out with the steady breeze, and to find that we were dropping the boats astern. The corvette was still coming on, but she no longer gained on us; and the wind still further increasing, we found that the *Flying Fish* was much the faster craft. We were compelled, however, to haul our wind and stand off the coast; and soon after noon had run the corvette out of sight.

This adventure delayed us. After standing off for some days, we hove to, keeping a sharp look-out. The next morning, having a good breeze, we again stood in towards the coast. No sail like the corvette appearing, we stood on till we reached the mouth of the magnificent river Magdalena, inferior only in size to the Orinoco and Amazon on that part of the continent. After forming numerous lakes, it empties itself, by three mouths, into the Caribbean Sea. Off one of these mouths we brought up, my uncle proposing to land with our property, and ascertain the places held by the Republicans at which the *Flying Fish* could safely discharge her cargo. We were afterwards to ascend the stream as far as it was navigable, a voyage which would occupy us some weeks. The spot where we were to leave the river was about three days' journey by land from Santa Fé de Bogotà, the capital of the province of New Granada. After the boat had put us on shore, she was to return to the schooner with the information we could obtain.

Wishing good-bye to our friends, who gave us three cheers, we shoved off; the captain crying out, "Be smart, my lads, and be back as soon as possible; I don't quite like the look of the weather."

"Ay, ay, sir!" was the answer; and we pulled away towards the passage, which led into one of the large lakes through which the river Magdalena passes.

There was some sea on the bar, but not sufficient to make us hesitate to attempt it. On we pulled, the water foaming and leaping up. As we approached the more dangerous part, I saw my uncle looking astern at a large roller roaring up after us. "Pull for your lives, my lads!" he shouted. The men gave way, and though the water rushed over the quarter and half-filled the boat, the stern lifted, and shooting forward, in another minute we were on the calm surface of the lake.

We pulled up, keeping towards its western shore. It was fringed with a broad belt of mangrove-trees standing on numberless branching roots which extended far into the water. So dense and tall were these trees that the view beyond them was completely shut out, while not a spot of dry ground appeared which would have afforded us a landing-place had we wished to get on shore. The scenery, indeed, was altogether unattractive and gloomy,—very different from that which I had expected to see.

We had not gone far when the weather, as the captain had predicted, suddenly changed. Dark clouds chased each other at a rapid rate across the hitherto blue sky; the wind came in fitful gusts, increasing every instant; and the water, before so calm, rose in foaming waves with extraordinary suddenness,—the cause of which, my uncle observed, was the shallowness of the lake. Still we continued our course, hoping to get to the village of Cervanos, where we could procure a bongo, or native canoe, in which we could perform our voyage of eight hundred miles up the Magdalena; and where also, should it, as we hoped, be in the hands of the Republicans, we might obtain the information we required to send back to the schooner. The fury of the wind, which, now shifting, blew partly across and partly down the lake, made it impossible for us to proceed in the direction we desired; and an opening among the mangrove-trees, which my uncle hoped might prove the mouth of a stream, appearing, he steered towards it.

Scarcely had we got the boat's head round when the gale came down upon us with redoubled fury, and sent her flying along with only two oars out at a furious speed. A small palm-branch which, floating by, my uncle picked up, was almost blown out of his hands as he held it in the air. We were fortunately right in conjecturing that we were entering the mouth of a stream; so we went on some distance with unabated speed, when a crash was heard, and the water came rushing into the boat. We had run against a sunken log or projecting root. Still we ran on, while the man in the bows attempted to stop the leak with his jacket and the boat's sail, and my uncle and I bailed as fast we could with our hats. Every moment we expected the boat to fill; but presently we saw a narrow opening, through which we rushed, with only space sufficient for the oars on each side to avoid the roots of the mangrove-trees, while the dense foliage formed a wall of verdure high above our heads.

We had no provisions with us, and we could not tell whether the region into which we were penetrating was inhabited by hostile Indians or wild beasts and venomous serpents. After going some way, however, the stream widened, and at the same time became shallower; and the mangrove-trees ceasing, we found ourselves in the midst of a dense forest. Looking out anxiously on both sides, we observed a bank which would afford us a small space on which to land; so pulling up to it, we hurriedly sprang on shore. In spite of all our efforts, the boat was nearly half-full of water.

Our first care was to land our baggage, and especially to keep our guns and ammunition dry. We then, having piled our property together, by our united efforts hauled up the boat, and the extent of the damage she had received was soon discovered. A hole had been made through a plank, a portion of which had

A STORM ON THE LAKE.

also been ripped off. It was a wonder the boat had not filled and gone down. We had no tools—not even a marling-spike to serve as a hammer—with which to repair her. The crew took the matter very coolly, only observing that they wished they had some grog and grub.

“I will try what I can do for you in the way of getting provisions,” said my uncle, “and I hope to be able to shoot some birds, or an animal of some sort; but in the meantime we must endeavour to repair the boat. We can draw some nails from the seats, where they are of less consequence; and we must cut some canvas out of the sail, if we can find no plank to fasten over the hole.”

Encouraged by my uncle, the men set to work to draw some nails out of the stern-sheets with their knives; and we then managed to turn the boat over. The canvas alone, it was evident, would not keep the water out of the boat, even though backed by a piece of one of the bottom boards which was broken off. My uncle, however, after examining the trees in the neighbourhood, found a large one with a smooth bark; in this he made a hole with one of the men’s knives, and immediately a thick white liquid issued from it. Sending for the piece of canvas, he allowed the liquid to flow over it till it had formed a thick, hard cake.

“Now, my lads,” he said, “stick that plaster over the hole, and nail the board tightly over it. I will answer for it that no water gets through, whatever it may do round the edges.”

The plan succeeded; but still, only the most foolhardy would have attempted to recross the bar in so unseaworthy a boat; indeed, with our baggage on board, it was very doubtful whether we could accomplish the rest of our voyage in her.

We had been so busily engaged in endeavouring to repair our boat, that night came suddenly down on us before we were aware of its approach, and we had no time to make preparations for encamping. Fortunately, however, we had a tinder-box and matches; but it was difficult to collect fuel in the dark, and we were afraid, when groping about, that we might put our hands on a venomous snake, as we knew that such creatures usually abound in the forests on level ground near the water. I could not help recollecting the tales I had heard in my childhood from my good nurse Josefa; and I thought it more than probable that a jaguar or puma might attack us while asleep, or an alligator come out of the stream and make his supper off one of us, or that an anaconda might come crawling by and swallow the whole party at a gulp. Still, it was important that we should have a fire; and my uncle suggested that we should kindle a small one, the light from which would enable us to obtain fuel with greater ease. We followed his advice, and in a short time had collected dried branches sufficient, as we hoped, to keep the fire burning during the night.

The men then began to cry out for something to eat, when Uncle Denis remembered that he had a tin of biscuits and a case of wine, which he had brought for emergencies. We had a tin cup and a small breaker; but the men, supposing that they would not be long absent from the schooner, had neglected to fill it with water, while that in the stream, as the tide was then rising, was brackish. They continued grumbling for some time, till Uncle Denis produced the biscuits and a bottle of wine, which he divided among them and ourselves. Our scanty supper being finished, the men threw themselves down by the side of the fire, hoping that the smoke would keep off the mosquitoes, which swarmed round us in myriads.

“Hallo, my lads!” observed Uncle Denis; “you take things too easily. We must set a watch, or our fire will go out, and by the morning some one among us may have lost the number of his mess.”

This hint aroused them, and they agreed that we should each keep watch for two hours at a time, and draw lots who should keep the first watch. The lot fell upon me. So, while the rest of the party lay down, I stuck a brace of pistols in my belt, took a fowling-piece in my hand, and prepared to do the duty of a sentry.

The scene to me was strange and novel. The dark forest towering above our heads, the flickering flames casting an uncertain light on the giant trunks, and the tracery of sepos or twisting vines, which interlaced the branches and hung down in festoons and ropelike lines to the ground, along which they ran, often assuming the appearance of huge serpents; indeed, more than once, as I paced up and down, I could not help fancying that an anaconda, or boa-constrictor, or rattlesnake was creeping towards us. In the centre of the small open space was the fire, with my companions sleeping round it; near them the pile of baggage and the overturned boat; while the dark stream flowed by with a murmuring sound. Beyond, though we were sheltered from the wind, I could see the lofty summits of the trees waving in the gale, which howled amid their branches, making them rattle and creak; while from the depths of the forest came strange unearthly cries. At first they seemed almost supernatural, and a feeling of awe, somewhat allied to alarm, crept over me; till I recollected that they were probably produced by howling monkeys and other wild animals.

I kept, as may be supposed, a very sharp look-out, with my eyes constantly turned to one side or the other, generally towards the forest. Every now and then I threw a few sticks on the fire, to keep up a bright blaze, so that I might not be caught unawares. Still, every moment I half expected to see a jaguar or serpent, or perhaps a band of wild Indians, creeping amid the trees towards us. All the time the detestable mosquitoes were buzzing about my head, effectually preventing me from going to sleep; and I wondered how my companions could contrive to do so.

At length, at the end of two hours, my uncle awoke, and told me to lie down. He was to take the next watch. I wrapped my face in a handkerchief, and in spite of my apprehensions was soon fast asleep.

When morning broke, the gale was still blowing as hard as ever, as we saw by the way the tree-tops moved. We were unable, therefore, to continue our voyage. We could not help also feeling some anxiety about the fate of the schooner; till the men observed that, as the wind was off the shore, she would probably have run out to sea, or might have remained safely at anchor.

Matters were now growing unpleasant, if not serious. My uncle told me that he was more apprehensive of an attack from Indians than from wild beasts, as a large and savage tribe—the Goahiras—inhabited the whole region bordering the coast; and should any wandering party discover us, and suppose that we were Republicans, they would certainly attack us and put us to death, as they had been induced to side with the Spaniards. We accordingly launched our boat, but found the water leak in so rapidly that it was evident it would not do to put the baggage on board till the last moment. As we had no more nails, we could not expect effectually to stop the leak.

We had now exhausted all the biscuits, and were again very hungry. Uncle Denis and I accordingly took our fowling-pieces and endeavoured to make our way through the forest, in the hope of shooting some birds or monkeys—indeed, any creature with flesh on its bones would have been welcome. It was only with the greatest difficulty that we could advance even a few steps, in consequence of the numberless creepers. Now and then we caught a glimpse of gay-plumaged birds amid the few openings between the branches; but to shoot them was impossible, and we heard the monkeys chattering, and nuts and broken twigs came rattling down on our heads as the nimble creatures leaped from tree to tree.

We dared not venture far into the forest, for fear of losing our way; besides which, it was necessary to proceed very cautiously, lest we should be surprised by a jaguar or tread on any venomous serpent. We neither of us at that time, it must be remembered, had any experience of tropical forests, or we might have been more successful.

At length we were making our way back to the river, when just as we got in sight of it we heard a rustling among the foliage. My uncle signed to me to stop, and I fully expected to see a jaguar springing towards us. He advanced

UNCLE DENIS AND THE STAG

cautiously a few paces; then stopped a moment, and fired. At the same instant I saw a good-sized deer, which had been going towards the water to drink. The animal made one spring, and then fell over dead. With an exulting shout of satisfaction my uncle dashed forward, and I followed him; while the men, hearing our voices, came running up, and quickly bore the deer to our camp.

While Uncle Denis and I relighted our fire, which had gone out, the men skinned and cut up the animal, and we soon had some slices roasting on forked sticks.

“If we had had some nails, this deer-skin would have assisted famously to patch up our boat,” observed one of the men.

“Though we have no nails, we may secure it under her bottom with ropes, and perhaps it will answer as well,” said my uncle.

His suggestion was acted on; and again hauling up the boat, we covered the hairy side of the skin thickly with mud, and then lashed it to the bows, bringing one end up above water. On once more launching the boat, we found that the plan succeeded beyond our expectations, but little water leaking in.

Our patience was still to be tried: as yet the gale gave no signs of abating. As we had a good supply of food, we had no cause to complain, except on account of the delay. No one expected us at Cervanos, and the captain of the schooner knew well that his boat could not cross the bar. Our principal cause of anxiety was, that the Goahira Indians might discover us, and perhaps commence an attack before we had time to let them know that we were English. Uncle Denis thought it prudent, therefore, to reload the boat, that we might be ready to shove off at a moment's notice. We accordingly prepared everything for a start; but as the wind was still violent, there was but little chance of our getting away that evening. We therefore, before dark, collected a good supply of fuel, so that we had enough to maintain a blazing fire during the hours of darkness.

As on the previous night, we kept vigilant watch. The earlier watches were kept by the men, and my uncle and I agreed to take those of the morning. I was to succeed him. When he called me, I got up and examined the priming of my pistols, and, taking my gun in my hand, began to pace up and down. My uncle, instead of lying down, joined me.

"I will keep you company, Barry," he said; "though the bright fire we have had may have scared away the jaguars, it may have attracted the notice of the Indians, and perhaps at daylight they may be coming this way to ascertain its cause. The wind appears to have gone down considerably, and we shall be wiser to shove off as soon as we have light to see our way, without waiting for breakfast. I will put some steaks to roast and we can eat them in the boat."

I replied that I thought his suggestion a good one; and while he was occupied as he proposed, I kept marching up and down. Some time had passed, when I fancied that I heard a rustling noise among some thick bushes near me. I cocked my gun, ready to fire, and pointed it in the direction from whence the sound I had heard proceeded. Uncle Denis, seeing this, came forward, and we stood for some time watching the spot; but as nothing appeared, we thought that we must be mistaken. Still, at every turn I took an inquisitive look in that direction; and before long I again heard the sound. I stepped back and told my uncle.

"If a jaguar or puma were there, the creature would come forward. I suspect that some Indians are watching us; and if so, depend on it they will have sent to collect their companions to attack us," answered my uncle. "I will rouse up the men, and the sooner we get on board the better."

He on this shook each seaman, and in a low voice told them to collect the few things remaining on shore, and creep quietly down to the boat; directing me to retire in the same direction. The men obeyed him, and I followed, glancing round every now and then at the suspected point. They had got out the oars, and I was in the act of stepping on board, when a fearful yell rent the air. At the same moment a number of half-naked savages, armed with bows and spears, tall feathers ornamenting their heads, and the skins of wild beasts floating from their shoulders, dashed out of the forest. My uncle took the helm, and the seamen gave way with might and main. The current was strong, and the savages had some distance to traverse before they could reach the margin of the stream. As they saw us escaping, they let fly a shower of arrows; but from the uncertain light—for the dawn was only just breaking—their aim was, fortunately, bad; and by the time they reached the edge of the water we had got some way down the stream. We did not relax our exertions, for they might possibly follow us along the banks, and, as the river took two or three turns, cut us off at some narrow part. Their arrows, my uncle afterwards told me, he believed were poisoned. The Indians shot another flight, several of which dropped unpleasantly close astern of us; but they now saw that we were beyond their reach, though their fierce shouts and cries still followed us.

The wind had by this time completely fallen. We made rapid way down the stream, happily escaping any sunken logs, and once more saw the broad surface of the lake extended before us. Still, there was no time to be lost, as the Indians might possibly have canoes concealed along the banks, and might follow us; though, unless they had the agility of monkeys, there was little probability of their making their way among the mangrove-trees.

"If they do come, we must try and keep them at bay," observed my uncle. "None of them appear to have firearms, and our guns will tell upon them before they can get us within reach of their arrows."

The men, having no wish to fight where nothing was to be gained, pulled away as fast as they could lay their backs to the oars; and we soon shot through the narrow opening, and rounding the extreme point of the bay into which the stream emptied itself, we steered for the village for which we were bound. We had a long pull before us; but fortunately the deer-skin kept the water out very well, and we had only occasionally to bail to keep her clear. I could not refrain from giving a glance astern every now and then, to ascertain if the Indians were coming; but we saw nothing more of them.

We had brought away a supply of the cooked venison, and after rowing some distance the oars were laid in, and we turned to to breakfast. My uncle served out a cup of wine to each of the men; it was the only liquid we had, as the water of the lake was salt. We would gladly have exchanged the wine for a cup of tea or even fresh water, as the rays of the sun, striking down from a cloudless sky, made us suffer greatly from thirst; the men, especially, who had to row, felt the want of water.

We at length, some time past noon, came in sight of the village, which stood close to the edge of the lake. Part of it consisted of Indian huts, scattered about without much order. At the further end, on slightly elevated ground, was a sort of fortification, surrounded by a mud wall, with loopholes for musketry, high palisades, and a chevaux-de-frise; while above it floated the Republican flag. We saw sentries posted at each angle, who were evidently keeping a sharp look-out.

We steered for a landing-place under the fort. Just before we reached it, a large native boat, which had apparently come down the stream, had arrived, and the passengers were landing from her. Among them was a middle-aged man; from his complexion, even when I saw him at a distance, I guessed that he was a European. He stopped when he saw our boat touch the shore, and came slowly forward, eyeing us narrowly. The peculiarity of his features and costume, and the thick stick he carried in his hand, showed unmistakably that he was an Irishman. He now stopped, and looked first at my uncle and then at me; then, giving a flourish of his shillelagh and two or three wild leaps, he shouted, "Erin-go-bragh!—shure it's the young masther and Misther Denis themselves, and no other," and came bounding towards us.

I at once recognised my father's faithful follower, Tim Molloy; who, in spite of his age, had lost none of his youthful spirits or activity.

"Shure, it's wonderful, isn't it, Misther Denis, that I should fall in with you the very moment I had come, expecting to have to wait many a month, maybe, before my old eyes would be gladdened with the sight of you," he exclaimed, after we had got on shore. "And as the look of the place isn't altogether over-pleasant, shure you'll be willing to start away again up the river, without spending any time down here?"

Uncle Denis said he should be ready to commence our voyage the following day but one, as he hoped by that time to have got through some business he had to transact at Cervanos; on hearing which Tim expressed his satisfaction.

We immediately, as may be supposed, made inquiries about all at home.

"As to health, the masther, and misthress, and the childher, are all mighty well," replied Tim; "and Misthress Nora is as bright and blooming as a May morning in the 'old country,' and as tall almost as you, Masther Barry—not a young lady in the land to equal her. And Masther Gerald is as fine a boy as you can set eyes on for his age in any part of the country: he can handle a rifle or paddle a canoe as well as any Indian. And the rest, who were mere babies when you went away, are now grown into fine, hearty childher. But, to tell you the truth, I would rather see the masther wear a more cheerful countenance than he does. He's throubled about the times, which are unquiet enough, it must be owned; though we have never yet had a visit from the Spanish troops, it's more than we can say when they may be upon us."

Tim gave us much more information about the state of affairs at home than I need here repeat, and answered numerous questions which Uncle Denis put to him, after we had reached our quarters. We found about a hundred and fifty soldiers garrisoning the fort, the commandant of which received us very civilly, and offered us a room in the house he inhabited; while Tim took charge of our baggage, and saw it safely stowed away. Uncle Denis wished to have the boat properly repaired before she returned, although the crew declared that she was quite fit to make the passage back to the schooner.

As soon as my uncle had gained the information he required, and had written his despatches to the captain, they put off, with such provisions as we were able to obtain for them,—having also filled their breaker with water. Whether they got back we could not ascertain; but I know that the schooner landed her cargo, which was much wanted by the patriots. It was not till long after this that I again heard of Captain Longswill, when he rendered me an essential service, as I shall narrate in due course.

Tim lost no time in seeking a boat and crew, and making other preparations for our long river-voyage.

We spent the evening with the commandant, who gave us many interesting accounts of the war which had long been raging in the country. On the whole, the patriots had been successful, though the forces of the King of Spain were better drilled, and were well supplied with arms and ammunition. The Spaniards had also made an alliance with numerous Indian tribes; and by spreading among them false reports regarding the objects of the patriots, the Goahira Indians, whose territory was at no great distance from Cervanos, had been induced to side with the Royalists. Several severe encounters had already taken place between them and the patriots, and it was expected that they would before long attack the fort itself. Our friend the commandant described them as a peculiarly savage and warlike race, possessing more than the usual intelligence of the native tribes, and able to bring several thousand men into the field.

"I hope that they may not be induced to attack Cervanos," observed my uncle; "though I doubt not that your soldiers would fight bravely, it is but a small place to resist so powerful a force."

"We shall give a good account of them if they venture to come," answered the commandant gaily; "we fear neither them nor any troops the Spaniards can bring against us. We have scouts out in all directions to give due notice of their approach, and are not likely to be taken by surprise. Some of the scouts are Indians, others Sambos or whites; but we depend most on the Indians, who know the habits of their people, and are likely to bring us the most correct intelligence of their movements."

After further conversation we retired to our room—I cannot say to our couches; for, with the utmost wish to be hospitable, the commandant could supply us with neither bedsteads nor bedding. Our saddles, which were to be used in our overland journey, served us for pillows; and some horse-cloths and cloaks answered the purpose of mattresses and coverlets. Notwithstanding this, we should have slept soundly enough had it not been for the mosquitoes, which hummed round our ears all night, darting down and running their trunks into every spot they could find exposed. It was a severe lesson, and reminded us that we must obtain mosquito-curtains to surround out beds at night, or we should be eaten up before we had performed half our voyage.

Chapter Two.

Alligator or shark—A shooting expedition—We witness the death of a scout—Make our escape—Preparations for our voyage up the river—Night—Aroused by an attack on the Fort—Indians enter it—Escape to the boat—

Followed by the doctor—Voyage across the lakes—Camp on the shore of the lake—The doctor shoots an alligator—Pursued by Indians—Enter the Magdalena—Beautiful scenery—Magnificent trees—Gay flowers—Gorgeous plumage of birds—The doctor catches an alligator—Voyage continued—Mountains in sight—A tempest at night—End of voyage—We part with the doctor.

As soon as morning came I got up and sauntered out into the fort. The sentries were at their posts, but no one else was astir. Both within and without the fort a perfect silence reigned, broken only now and then by the cries of water-fowl as they rose from the bank, or the screaming of parrots as they flew out of the neighbouring forest, from whence also proceeded the suppressed chattering of a tribe of monkeys.

I was on my way to the gate, intending to go to the landing-place and take a bath, when a stranger approached me. He wore a large broad-brimmed straw hat with a Republican cockade, a short tunic of blue and white striped cotton, light blue trousers, jack-boots with immense spurs; a long French dragoon sword with brass basket-hilt fastened to his waist-belt was dangling at his side, while a powder-horn was slung over his shoulders, and he carried in his hand an enormous old French silver-mounted gun. His hair was light, and so would have been his complexion, had it not been burned red by exposure to the hot sun of the tropics. His beard was carefully trimmed to a point. I may further say that he had prominent black eyes, an aquiline nose of considerable dimensions, a mouth not very small, a long face with a sharp chin; while I judged by his features that he was German. Such, I found, was the case, when he addressed me, and introduced himself as Dr Rudolph Stutterheim.

After wishing me good-morning, he inquired where I was going. I told him.

“Then you will be gobbled up by either one alligator or one shark,” he replied; “for though the water is brackish, the alligators come down here to pick up any morsels they can find, and the sharks come for the same purpose.”

I thanked him for his warning, but still felt rather doubtful if he was right. To convince me, he procured two pieces of offal, which he carried at the end of his stick, and accompanied me down to the landing-place, a rough stone pier which projected into the lake. Taking a piece, he jerked it some distance into the water, when in an instant a huge pair of jaws with rows of sharp teeth rose above the surface and snapped it up. He then took the other piece and threw it in an opposite direction, when just as it reached the water another pair of jaws, the lower part of silvery-whiteness, rose above the water, and the meat was gone.

“You see, my young friend, you can have your choice,” he said; “but I don’t think you will wish just now to bathe in this place.”

I assured him I did not; and he having lighted a big meerschaum pipe which he drew from his pocket, we returned to the fort. I inquired whether he was the surgeon of the forces stationed there.

“Such an occupation would not suit my fancy,” he answered, shrugging his shoulders; “though, while I am here, I willingly cooper up those who require my services. I am a traveller and naturalist, desirous of seeing the country and the strange creatures it contains, and in search of adventures, which I may perhaps some day narrate for the enlightenment of the world.”

I, of course, replied that I hoped he would do so, as I should like to read the work of one who had rendered me so essential a service; and I added that I felt deeply grateful to him, as he had certainly saved my life by preventing me from venturing into the water.

“It was at no great cost to myself,” he answered; “but I should have grieved to see one so young swallowed by a saurian, and who is, at all events, capable of becoming food for powder, if for nothing else—eh? What do you say, my young friend?”

Somewhat uncertain whether or not the doctor was quizzing me, I replied that I hoped I might some day become fit for a better fate than he suggested.

“Yet such has been the lot of many a fine man with a head on his shoulders, who has run it into a quarrel not his own,” he observed. “I know what war is—a horrible, detestable affair at the best. Take my advice: Have nothing to do with it. Both parties now striving for the mastery are savages. You will find that out before long—though do not tell the commandant what I say, or he may chance to order me out to be shot, as a traitor to the cause of liberty. Bah!—there is only liberty where good laws exist, which all obey! Here, the only laws obeyed are those administered at the point of the bayonet. But don’t repeat this,” he added, putting his finger to his lips and turning away.

After parting from the doctor, I returned to the house of the commandant, whom, with my uncle, I found at breakfast. I at once made inquiries about my friend of the morning.

“He is a wonderful man—a genius, a philosopher, a professor of astrology, a magician,” answered the commandant, shrugging his shoulders. “More I cannot say; he is a wonder—a mystery; but he understands the art of brewing punch to perfection, and that is something in his favour.”

I had not long taken my seat when Dr Stutterheim appeared at the door.

“What! still at breakfast, gentlemen!” he exclaimed, with a look of surprise.

“You must have been up early, to have had the advantage of us,” observed the commandant.

“Except in the matter of obtaining an appetite, I cannot acknowledge that such is the case,” said the doctor, advancing farther into the room towards a vacant chair.

“Sit down, then,” said the commandant, “and satisfy your hunger, my friend.”

“Ten thousand thanks,” answered the doctor, gliding into the chair. “As in duty bound, I willingly obey your orders;” and he forthwith began shovelling scraped salt beef, fried eggs, and plantains, of which our breakfast was composed, at a rapid rate into his capacious mouth, adding half a basketful of tropical fruits, and washing the whole down with a bowl of thick chocolate. “I follow the advice of a great philosopher, who insists that no men can be considered wise who fail when they have an opportunity early in the day to lay in a store of provision, lest they should be unable to secure a further supply,” he observed.

Turning to my uncle, he inquired whether he purposed remaining any length of time at Cervanos; and on hearing that he did not intend to start till the following morning, invited me to accompany him on a shooting excursion along the shores of the lake.

“I go for two reasons,” he said: “to increase my knowledge of the natural history of the country, and likewise to fill my pot. Señor commandante, I shall have the honour of presenting you with the result of our sport.”

I was naturally eager to accept the invitation of my new friend, and my uncle making no objections, I agreed to accompany him.

After smoking his meerschaum for the best part of an hour, he declared himself ready to start. When I went to get my gun, Tim said that he would go too—not that he distrusted the doctor, but that, as I was unaccustomed to sporting in that region, he might assist me. I might by chance be pounced upon by a jaguar, or, should I venture into the water in search of wild-fowl, be carried off by an alligator.

We at once set out with our guns and game-bags, accompanied by the doctor’s dog, Jumbo, who was almost as curious-looking as was his master—a perfect nondescript; but the doctor boasted that he had not his equal, was afraid of neither quadruped nor biped, and would face a jaguar, a bear, or a tamanoir (the large ant-eater), while he would stand to his point till he died of starvation, provided the bird chose to stay and be pointed at. We were now to try his powers.

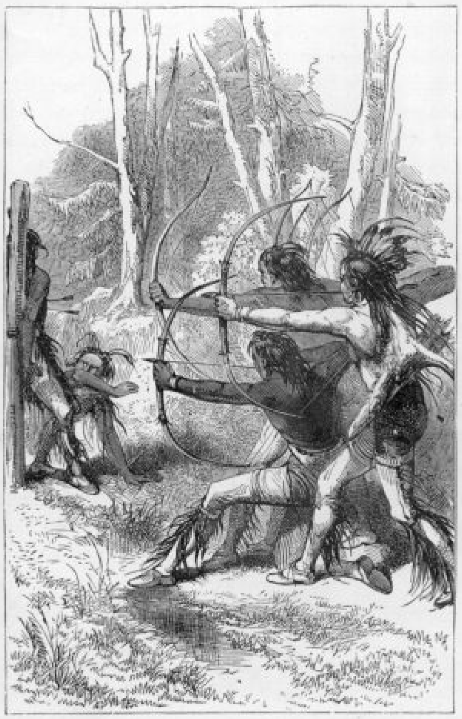
We had intended to go along the bank of the lake, for the sake of more easily finding our way back; but the ground was so marshy that we were compelled to strike inland.

We were tolerably successful, having before long killed seven large birds of the plover species, two ground doves of a beautiful plumage, three parrots, and a monkey, which the doctor said he preferred to any members of the feathered tribe.

We were making our way through the forest, when between the trunks of the tall trees I saw Tim, who was some distance ahead, turn round and make a sign to us. It seemed to me that he intended to signify that we should go back; but instead of doing so, the doctor advanced, treading very cautiously, and making Jumbo follow at his heels. Tim put his finger to his lips to indicate that we must keep silence, while he pointed ahead. In front of us was a thick, low mass of wood, over a portion of which we could look, our heads being concealed by the branches above it; and we soon saw what had caused his anxiety.

At some distance, in an open spot of uneven ground, with their backs turned towards us, were a party of Indians armed with bows and arrows; while farther on, at a distance of thirty yards or so, was a single Indian bound by his arms to the trunk of a tree, and in front of him several Indian squaws, their eyes intently fixed on his countenance. I felt my blood freeze in my veins as I observed what was about to take place; for of their intentions there could be no doubt,—they were on the point of putting to death the unfortunate man bound to the tree. To interfere would have been madness; it was a question, indeed, whether we could retreat without being discovered. Still, we stood, rivetted to the spot. Tim made signs that he knew the man, and whispered in my ear that he was one of the Indian spies who had been sent out from the fort to gain intelligence, and had now fallen into the hands of the Goahiras.

Not a sound did he utter, but with Indian stoicism prepared to meet his fate. All hope of escape must have deserted him. The Indians stood watching him to see if he would show any sign of fear, while the squaws advanced closer and closer, shrieking, and jeering, and making hideous faces, to induce him to speak. At length three of the Indians stepped before the rest; and in an instant one shot his arrow, which went quivering into the breast of the victim. Still the man did not utter a cry. After waiting a minute, another shot an arrow, which also pierced the body of the unhappy wretch. After a third shot, I saw that he was still alive. The first Indians now retired to the main body, when I heard a groan escape from the scout’s tortured frame, on which the squaws set up a loud jeering laugh.



DEATH OF THE SCOUT

The doctor, who had with difficulty been able to keep back Jumbo, now began carefully to retreat, beckoning to Tim and me to do likewise. It was the best opportunity, while the savages were engaged in their butchery. Still, I much regretted that we had not boldly rushed forward and endeavoured to save the man's life. We might, by surprising the Indians, have succeeded, as they would probably have fancied that we were followed by a larger party, and have taken to flight.

We continued our course without speaking, carefully endeavouring to make no noise, and as rapidly and cautiously as possible. The doctor led the way, taking huge strides over the ground; I followed, and Tim brought up the rear. Not for an instant did he stop to say a word, even after we had got to a considerable distance, and our voices could not possibly have been heard by the foe. I had great difficulty in keeping up with him at the rate he went; but not till we got within sight of the fort did he slacken his pace and allow me to come up with him.

I then told him that I wished we had tried to save the scout.

"We should probably have had our scalps hanging at the end of their spears long ere this, had we made the attempt," he answered; "you've run a narrow chance a second time this day of losing your life, young gentleman, and you should be thankful. It is as well, however, that we caught sight of the Indians; depend on it, they are in force at no great distance, and we may expect an attack from them before many days are over—perhaps before many hours are past—and we must lose no time in warning the commandant."

On entering the fort, the commandant, who happened to be near the gate, and saw our game-bags full, greeted us warmly, and invited the doctor to dinner.

"Very happy to do myself that honour," he answered. "And perhaps, señor commandante, you will allow me to present you with these birds, some of which it may be as well to cook forthwith; and in the meantime I will relate to you our adventures, and you can form your own conclusion."

The doctor then described our having seen the scout shot by the Indians, and expressed his belief that the place would be attacked ere long. The commandant took the information very coolly. He prided himself, I observed, on his dignified behaviour on all occasions; for though he had joined the Republicans, he could still boast that the bluest of blue blood of the ancient hidalgoes of Castille flowed in his veins.

"Care shall be taken that the sentries keep their eyes open," he replied; "and we will be prepared for the savages."

The news we brought very soon spread through the fort, and I observed that the sentries were doubled; but otherwise the people occupied themselves as before, in smoking, gambling, and cock-fighting, which seemed especially to interest all classes. My uncle listened attentively to the account I gave him.

"Possibly the enemy may not approach the fort for several days, and we shall lose the opportunity of assisting to defend it, for I cannot possibly delay beyond to-morrow," he remarked. "I hope, however, that our friends will be successful."

My uncle had made arrangements, I found, for starting at daybreak the next morning, and Tim was busily employed in getting the bongo—the boat we had engaged—ready for the voyage, and having our luggage conveyed on board. Finding that we were really about to start, the doctor asked leave to accompany us a part of the distance, observing that he liked good society, and that he hoped by his agreeable conversation to repay us for our kindness.

Tim had procured some mosquito-curtains, which we were to take with us on our voyage, when we should require them even more than at Cervanos. We accordingly lay down within them at an early hour. It was pleasant to hear our abominable tormentors of the previous night humming about outside, and trying in vain to get at us; but we had to be very quick in closing the opening, or a host would otherwise have made their way in, in spite of us.

Having wished my uncle good-night, and ascertained that not a living mosquito was inside the curtain, I closed my eyes, and was in another instant asleep. Tim was to call us half-an-hour before daybreak, that we might take some chocolate before starting.

I had been asleep for some time, when I was awakened by the report of a musket, rapidly followed by several others; and the next instant the air was rent by the most terrific shrieks and yells, which seemed to come from all directions round the fort, while the voices of the officers shouting out their orders, and the tramp of the soldiers, were heard as they rushed to the ramparts.

“What can be the matter?” I exclaimed, as I crept from under my mosquito-curtain.

“The fort has been attacked, and I much fear that the sentries have been surprised,” answered my uncle, who had at the same instant jumped up, and was hurriedly putting on his clothes. I followed his example; and we were thus engaged when Tim burst into the room.

“Quick, quick, Masther Concannan!—quick, Masther Barry, dear! and just come along with me,” he exclaimed. “There’s not a moment to be lost; the Indians are getting the best of it, and climbing over the walls in thousands, like so many imps, and the soldiers, do all they can, can’t stop them.”

“We must go and assist our friends,” cried my uncle, buckling on his sword and seizing his rifle.

“Oh, Masther Denis, now don’t,” exclaimed Tim; “you’ll be kilt entirely if you do that same. Come with me now; it’s all up with the garrison, but we may have still time to get on board the boat and shove off into the lake. It’s wiser to live and fight another day than get knocked on the head by an Indian tomahawk; and that’s sure to be the lot of one and all of us if we stop.”

Tim wrung his hands and leaped about in his agitation while speaking; and then, apparently doubting whether his arguments would prevail with my uncle, he seized my arm with one hand, while he picked up my gun and various other articles with the other, and dragged me along, determined at all events to try and save my life, though he might not induce my uncle to make his escape.

The din had by this time greatly increased; the roar of the heavy guns, the rattle of musketry, and the clashing of steel, were heard amid the shrieks and shouts of the combatants. At first the reports of firearms gave me hope that the garrison were driving back their assailants; but suddenly the sound of the musketry ceased. Looking back, I was thankful to see my uncle following, carrying his portmanteau on his shoulder and my carpet-bag in his hand.

Tim took the way to the part of the fortifications nearest the landing-place. We quickly scrambled over the intrenchments, and my uncle, throwing his burdens to us, speedily followed. It was the only spot not assailed by the Indians; for what reason I could not tell, as they might have got in with little more difficulty than we had found in getting out. The triumphant yells of the Indians and the shrieks of the hapless garrison sounding in our ears, showed us too plainly what would have been the consequence of delay. We rushed down to the landing-place, and reached it just at the moment when the terrified crew of the bongo were shoving off, intending to leave us to our fate. Tim, springing forward, seized the gunwale of the boat and hauled her back, tumbling me in with an energy which almost sent me over on the other side.

“Jump in, Masther Denis, jump in; here come a whole host of Indians,” he exclaimed, “and they’ll be after scalping every mother’s son of us if we stop a moment longer.”

My uncle sprang into the boat, and Tim, following, was giving her a shove off, when, as I gazed through the darkness, I saw a number of figures brandishing their tomahawks, and rushing towards us. In front of them came a person evidently flying for his life.

“Stop, my friends, stop,” he cried out, “or the fellows at my heels will have me scalped!”

I recognised the voice of Dr Stutterheim. He sprang after us; but his foot failing to reach the boat, heavily laden as he was with his gun and various articles, he fell into the water. Tim, however, leant over the bows and caught his hand before he sank: and my uncle and I assisting, we hauled him with all his traps on board, while the crew were paddling with might and main to escape from his pursuers, who in another minute would have been up with us. The doctor was too much exhausted to speak, and threw himself down in the bottom of the boat.

Before the Indians had time to stop and draw their bows, we were some distance from the shore; but that another minute’s delay would have been fatal, was proved by the flight of arrows which followed us. Our black, brown, and swarthy rowers, however, did not cease their exertions till we had got far enough off to be invisible from the shore.

My uncle now gave the crew orders to cease paddling, that he might judge from the sounds what was taking place in the fort. Musketry shots were still heard, and the roar from several heavy guns proved that the garrison were still holding out in some part of the fort—the war-whoops of the Indians, which continually rent the air, giving us hopes that though fighting desperately they had not succeeded in mastering the place. My uncle expressed his regret that he had come away so suddenly, and feared that he should be accused of cowardice in not having afforded more assistance to his friends.

“Set your mind at rest on that score,” observed the doctor; “had you remained, you would now have been numbered with the dead. Depend on it, the garrison have retreated to the citadel, and are there holding out; but as no reinforcements are likely to appear, they must ultimately yield and be cut to pieces—which is sure to be their fate, as no one in this war thinks of asking or giving quarter. We may, then, congratulate ourselves on our escape.

“This is the third time, young gentleman, in as many days, that you have run the risk of losing your life,” he observed, turning to me.

I acknowledged that he was right, and felt that I ought to return thanks to Heaven for my having been so mercifully preserved.

Still, my uncle wished to go back, but the crew positively refused to obey him—Tim and the doctor siding with them.

“Let us be wise, Mr Concannan,” observed the latter; “it is useless running our noses into danger when it can be avoided. And even if we were to go back, we could not save the lives of the commandant and the garrison. Let us console ourselves with the reflection that, should they be killed, they have died doing their duty.”

At length my uncle yielded to the doctor’s advice, and directed the crew to paddle on towards the upper part of the lake. As there were several narrow passages to be passed, leading from one lake into another, it was important that we should get through them before the Indians could reach the shore, whence they could pick us off with their arrows. It was satisfactory to know that they had no canoes in which to follow us, else our chances of escape would have been small indeed.

It was still dark when we reached the first passage. Not a word was spoken, and we hoped, even if our enemies were on the shore, that we should get through without being perceived. Still, I could not help keeping an anxious watch on the banks, expecting every instant to see a party of Indians start out from behind the trees and send a flight of arrows after us.

I breathed more freely when, emerging from the channel, we were once more making our way across a broad expanse. Here daylight burst on us. There would probably be less risk in passing the next channel, as the Indians would not have had time to get so far from Cervanos; but it was possible that a party might have been despatched, before the attack was made, to prevent any boats going up or down. Still, as our four guns would hold in check a strong party armed only with bows and arrows, we had not much cause to fear.

The crew laid in their paddles to breakfast, that they might paddle with greater vigour through the channel; and we at the same time took our morning meal, washing it down with some water from the lake, which was here perfectly fresh. While I was dipping my cup in the water, a long dark snout darted towards it; and I had barely time to withdraw my hand, letting the cup slip, when a pair of hideous jaws closed on it. They were those of a monstrous alligator. A blow from a paddle and the shouts of the men made the brute disappear; but I took good care not again to put my hand overboard while the boat was motionless. Several others rose a few feet from us, though none came so near the boat as the first had done; and as soon as the men began to move their paddles, the monsters, who are arrant cowards, kept their distance.

A short time after this we entered the channel leading to a yet more southern lake. We eagerly peered among the trees on both sides, but no Indians could be seen, so we had reason to hope that we had completely distanced them. Among the numberless shrubs which adorned the shores were wild plantains and fig-trees, decked with flowers of brilliant and beautiful colours, which grew on the creepers, festooning the boughs, and often hanging down in long lines into the water. Birds of all sorts, and of magnificent plumage, flew amid the branches, or stood on the fallen trunks floating near the margin—beautiful milk-white herons, scarlet spoonbills, flamingoes, and various other water-fowl.

We were paddling on, when I caught sight of several figures moving among the trees. “Are those Indians?” I exclaimed, getting my gun ready to fire should they prove to be enemies.

“Save your powdher, Masther Barry,” answered Tim; “shure they’re only monkeys. We shall hear them howling loud enough at night-time; you might then fancy that they were a whole troop of Indians coming down to scalp us.”

The animals at which we were looking were of considerable size, with a reddish tinge on their rough hair. The Spaniards called them “monas coloradas;” but they are generally known as howling monkeys. We saw many more among the trees as we paddled forward.

Having performed a long distance before night approached, it was considered that we might with safety land and sleep on shore, our bongo affording us no room to stretch our legs. We accordingly landed at the end of a canal through which we had been passing; and a space was quickly cleared for an encampment. Having the channel on one side and the lake on the other, we had only two sides to guard. A fire was soon lighted, and Tim set to work to cook our supper; while we put up our mosquito-curtains, and collected some dry leaves to form our couches.

The mosquito-curtains, I should say, were supported on four short poles stuck in the ground, on which rested four others, so that the whole arrangement looked like a long narrow box covered with fine muslin. Without these contrivances it is utterly impossible to sleep with any degree of comfort on the banks of the Magdalena, or indeed of most of the rivers in that part of the country. There is only one opening, through which the person must creep, and then close it tightly on the inside.

To prevent surprise, we agreed to keep a vigilant watch. The first turn fell to me. I wondered that anybody could go to sleep with the terrific noises which came out of the forest. The howling monkeys were the most vociferous—now uttering loud groans, now yells of laughter and other strange sounds, truly making night hideous. Nearer at hand I could hear the alligators snapping their jaws as they caught some unfortunate fish or wild-fowl; while their snorts, as they chased each other, came from all sides. I kept my eye on the bank, for I had heard that the savage creatures often climb out of the water, and carry away the first person they can find. The doctor’s dog seemed to be well aware of this; for he crouched down close to the fire, with one of his eyes always open, either at the water, or towards the forest, from whence a jaguar might spring and carry him off.

I soon got accustomed to the sounds of the howling monkeys, the cries of the night-birds, and any other noises which came out of the forest; but I never could feel comfortable while I heard that horrible snapping and crunching made by the alligators. While on the watch, there was no chance of becoming drowsy, for the mosquitoes all the time made the most


MOSQUITO-CURTAINS: A NIGHT ENCAMPMENT

determined assaults on my face, and I had to keep my handkerchief constantly on the move to prevent them from settling. Fortunately, they cannot bite till then; but when once they have settled, it is better to allow them to suck their fill, for otherwise the inflammation is far worse.

The doctor was to follow me; so, after two hours, I called him, and remarked on the number of alligators I had heard near us.

“To-morrow morning we will put a stop to the snapping of some of them,” he answered. “I shall awake before dawn, as I always do, and will call you, if you wish to exercise your skill on some of them.”

I begged that he would do so; and having placed my gun safely under the curtains, I crept in and closed them. Two or three mosquitoes had managed to follow me; but the light from the fire streaming through enabled me to catch them and kill them, and in a few moments I was fast asleep.

I felt unwilling to get up when I heard the doctor’s voice, till I remembered that we were to make war on the alligators. The feeling of utter detestation with which those creatures are regarded is not surprising, when it is recollected what a scourge they are to the people inhabiting the banks of the rivers and lakes of that part of the country. I was soon on foot; and having loaded my gun with ball, I accompanied the doctor to a little creek which ran at no great distance from the camp. Jumbo went with us. He knew exactly what to do. First he went to the shore of the lake and barked several times; then ran along, barking occasionally, till he reached the entrance of the creek, along the bank of which he ran. Soon after he barked several long snouts appeared above the surface; but Jumbo was wide-awake, never for a moment withdrawing his eyes from the water, so that should an alligator make a dash at him he might bound off out of harm’s way.

After some time we saw a huge monster appear, who quickly put the other alligators to flight, and then came swimming up the creek towards Jumbo. The dog barked, and then bounded off close to where the doctor and I lay hid. Once more Jumbo showed his nose among the weeds; when the alligator, opening his immense jaws, made a dash at him. At the same moment the doctor, starting up, fired down the creature’s throat, and stopped him in mid career. His head and shoulders rose above the surface, and then he rolled over dead. I shouted with satisfaction, and Jumbo barked his approval.

“We have not yet finished our sport,” said the doctor; “we must kill half-a-dozen before breakfast. Go, good Jumbo, and entice a few more up here.”

Jumbo understood his master, and was proceeding to execute his orders, when we heard my uncle’s voice shouting

THE DOCTOR AND THE ALLIGATOR.

to us to return, in tones which showed that he had good reason for doing so. Making our way through the tangled forest, we soon reached the camp, where we found every one astir, our mosquito-curtains and sleeping-rugs packed up, and the men busy loading the boat.

"Jump on board, and I'll tell you all about it afterwards," said my uncle.

We obeyed him, Jumbo leaping in after us; when the men, shoving the boat off with their poles, began to paddle rapidly across the lake.

"I will now tell you the reason why I was in a hurry to be off," said my uncle. "One of our crew, Choco, a quick-witted fellow, going to the further end of yonder point, observed a canoe with several Indians in her coming along the canal. As soon as they saw him, they paddled back at a rapid rate; but he was convinced that the canoe was one of several in pursuit of us, and that the Indians have gone back to summon their companions, believing that they will find us sitting at breakfast. He may have been mistaken; but discretion is the better part of valour, and though we might beat them off, it would be unwise to run the risk of a fight when it can be avoided."

"You are a wise man, Mr Concannan," observed the doctor. "Why should people spend their lives in fighting, when they would be so much happier living at peace with each other? It appears to me that the world is full of great fools, and that they are its rulers."

"I hope you don't include us in the category?" said my uncle. "If one set of people will attack another, what are the peaceably disposed to do?"

"They must fight to defend themselves, I own," answered the doctor; "and that proves to me that the fools rule the world, for they compel the wise, who must of necessity love peace, to go to war. The world will never be at rest till not only the great majority, but the whole have become wise; and as I never expect to see that, I believe it will continue to the end the same troublous, unhappy world it is."

The doctor, I thought, took matters very coolly.

I very frequently looked out astern, expecting to see a fleet of canoes full of Indian warriors emerging from the canal; but as none appeared, I began to suppose that Señor Choco had made a mistake.

We had still another narrow passage or canal to pass through before we could enter the main branch of the river; and the doctor urged the men to make good speed across the lake, as he was excessively hungry, and wanted his breakfast. He amused us in the meantime by recounting some of his adventures with alligators. He had the most unbounded antipathy towards the monsters; which arose, he said, from once seeing a poor girl, who was stooping down to fill her pitcher with water at a river's brink, seized by one of them. The horrible saurian, darting out of the water and grasping her arm, dragged her off before he could go to her rescue. He fired, but his bullet glanced off the scaly head of the creature, which in an instant carried the unfortunate female, who was shrieking loudly, under the surface. "There lay her pitcher on the river's brink," said the doctor; "but she whom I had just before seen full of health and strength, and singing gleefully, was nowhere visible. I thereupon vowed vengeance against the whole race, and have never lost an opportunity of slaughtering them."

The alligators and jaguars, the doctor told us, are mortal enemies. The latter wages perpetual war against the former. Whenever a jaguar can find an alligator asleep on a hot sand-bank, it attacks the saurian under the tail, which, being soft and fat, is the most vulnerable part; and such is the alligator's alarm, that it will scarcely move or make the slightest resistance. If, however, it gets its enemy into the water, its more peculiar element, then the tables are turned, and the jaguar is in most instances drowned and devoured. The jaguar being well aware of its inferiority to the saurian in the proper element of the latter, when it has to cross a river it sets up a tremendous howl on the bank previous to entering the water, in the hope of scaring the alligator to a distance.

The native villages on the banks of a river in which alligators abound are guarded by strong palisades, to prevent the monsters from creeping on shore; which they will frequently do when pressed by hunger, and will carry off any persons or animals they may encounter. An alligator has been known to dash into the midst of a crowd collected on the shore and carry off a strong man, in spite of every effort made to rescue the poor fellow. Scarcely a year passes in the neighbourhood of places frequented by them without two or three women being thus destroyed. The doctor mentioned a remarkable instance of intrepidity and presence of mind exhibited by a young girl, who, on going to the margin of the river to fetch water, felt one of her hands suddenly seized in the jaws of a huge alligator. Knowing that death must be her inevitable fate should she not find means to rescue herself, she plunged her fingers into the eyes of the animal with such violence that the pain compelled it to let her go; though not, however, till it had bitten off the lower part of her arm. Notwithstanding the enormous quantity of blood which flowed from the fearful wound, the girl struck out, swimming with the hand that still remained to her, and happily reached the shore, where her friends received her; and her wound being bound up and the flow of blood stopped, she ultimately recovered.

Alligators swim rapidly against the strongest current; and when they reach the shore they dart forward with the quickness of an arrow towards the object at which they aim, when excited either by rage or hunger. Under ordinary circumstances the creature moves with the slowness of a salamander; but it frequently runs,—when it makes a rustling noise, which proceeds from the rubbing of the scales of its skin one against another. In this movement it bends its back and appears higher on its legs than when at rest. Though it generally moves in a straight line, it can change its direction, both in the water and on shore.

“Jumbo, there, hates alligators as much as I do,” continued the doctor. “He was once very nearly caught by one; but he knows the ways of the hateful creatures. I was crossing a river in a canoe, when he unwisely took to the water. I had reached the shore, when I saw a huge alligator swimming towards him. Jumbo saw it too, and made way down the stream, the alligator following and rapidly gaining on him. In an instant I thought my poor dog would be in the creature’s jaws, when Jumbo suddenly turned and made way up the stream. It took the alligator a considerable time to come about, and before it was able to dart forward towards its expected prey Jumbo had safely reached the shore.”

The doctor declared that the female alligator, at the period of hatching her eggs, devours all her young ones which do not run into the river; the immediate use of their legs being the only means of saving their lives.

“I cannot fancy such monsters having any maternal affection,” I exclaimed.

These and similar anecdotes occupied the time we took in crossing the lake. We now entered the last channel, which was to conduct us into the Magdalena. Lofty trees grew on both sides of the channel, among which we saw numerous large green parrots and several kinds of monkeys, the howling species being the most numerous. There were also some large birds which stood looking at us, and which the doctor called “vultures of the lake.” They had long, red, and very strong legs, with their backs and breasts black and grey, and curved spurs, sharp at the point, and about an inch in length, on the first joint of each wing.

As we had seen nothing of our supposed enemies, the Indians, the crew declared that they were too hungry to proceed farther without breakfasting; and a tolerably open space between the trees affording us room to light a fire, we landed, and having cleared the ground, soon had our pots boiling. Our crew put all their food, consisting of rice, plantain, and salt beef, into one large pot, and boiled them together. The mess was then emptied out into wooden basins, from which they fed themselves with their fingers, long cakes of sugar serving as dessert.

By the doctor’s advice, we imitated their example in one respect,—by boiling fowls, ham, vegetables, and flour together, which, when well seasoned, made an excellent dish; only, we made use of spoons and knives and forks to eat it.

After the meal was finished the men lay on the ground to rest, while the doctor produced his huge meerschaum and commenced smoking, surrounding his visage with such dense clouds that not a mosquito ventured to approach him, while my uncle and I had to keep our handkerchiefs moving rapidly to drive off the detestable little insects. We were thus enjoying ourselves, if enjoyment it could be called, when, looking along the channel in the direction we had come, I caught sight of the bow of a canoe just rounding a point.

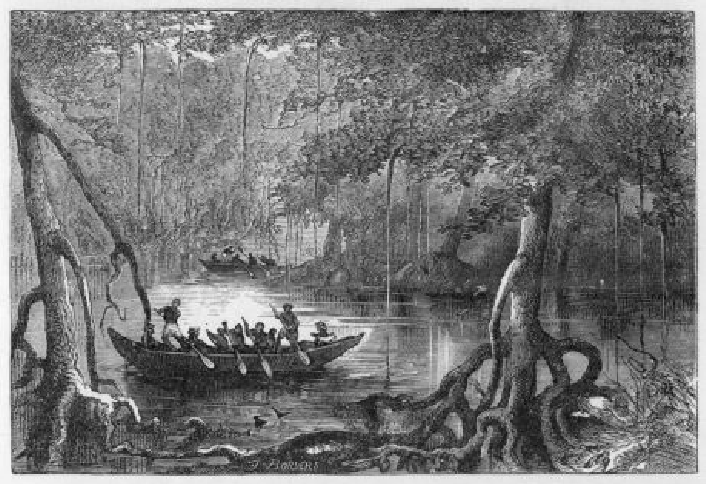
“On board, on board!” shouted the padrone, or captain; and the men, jumping up, tumbled the cooking things, pots and pans, into the boat—Tim following with our breakfast set, which he had just before packed up.

On our taking our seats, the crew shoved off and began to paddle at a rapid rate up the stream. The canoe we had seen had now come full into view, and at first appeared to be gaining on us. This made our padrone excite his men to fresh exertions. Should our pursuer be an enemy, and overtake us, they would as certainly be put to death as we should, supposing that we were unable effectually to defend ourselves. We got our firearms ready, however, having no intention of yielding as long as we were able to resist; and the doctor, having put fresh powder into the pan of his rifle, now knelt down in the stern of the boat, prepared to take good aim should our pursuers exhibit any hostile intentions.

“Why, doctor, I thought you said just now that only fools were eager to fight,” I could not help observing.

“And you are right, young gentleman,” he answered. “I am only preparing to defend myself; and I hope that the people in yonder canoe will have the wisdom not to attack us. Still, in case they should do so, we should lack wisdom if we were not prepared for their reception.”

While the doctor was speaking I was watching the canoe, which was now joined by several others; but for some reason or other the fastest remained for the slower ones, and thus we managed to keep well ahead. The water hissed and bubbled under the bows as our boat clove her way through it. My uncle sat as calm as usual, and had I judged by his countenance I should not have supposed that we were in the slightest danger. The captain and crew, however, showed by their eagerness that they were very unwilling to be overtaken; while the doctor, in spite of his professed pacific feelings, was full of fight, and prepared for the worst. Such good use did the crew make of their paddles, however, that on seeing that we were distancing them our pursuers began to shout and shriek—from disappointment, as we supposed. But their cries only made our men redouble their efforts, and utter every now and then a derisive shout in return. It was echoed by the chattering of the monkeys and the loud squalls of the


PURSUED BY THE INDIANS.

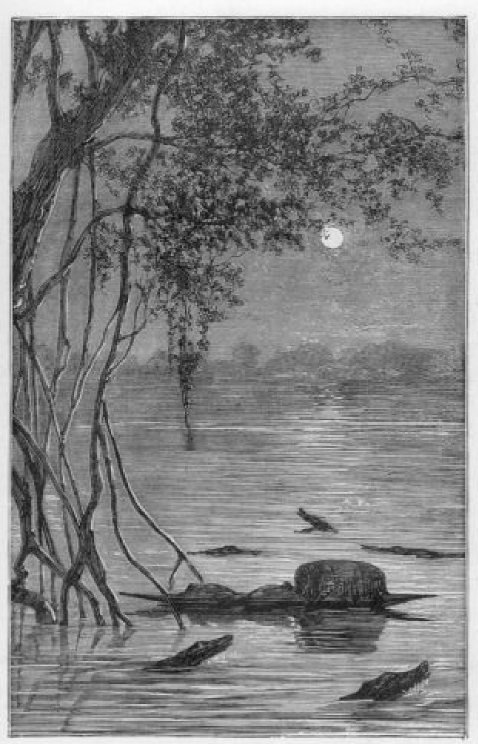
parrots from the neighbouring woods, Jumbo occasionally adding to the chorus by barking furiously.

At length, on rounding a point, we lost sight of the hostile canoes; but our men did not relax their efforts, for we expected them every instant to reappear. I kept watching the point, but no canoe could be discovered coming round it, so I began to hope that the Indians had given up the chase. Our men behaved admirably, and not for a moment did they complain of the severe exertion they were going through. Still, we were too well acquainted with the treacherous character of the Indians not to know that they might very possibly keep out of sight to deceive us, and then come on during the night, in the expectation of finding us encamped on shore, and thus take us by surprise. This neither my uncle nor the doctor had any intention of allowing them to do; and by promising a reward to the crew, my uncle induced them to continue paddling on as fast as at first. They shouted after their fashion when, emerging from the narrow channel, we entered the broad waters of the Magdalena. A breeze was setting up the stream; the mast was now stepped and the sail hoisted, and along we flew at a rapid rate.

We had no longer any fear of being overtaken, though we knew that we had many dangers to encounter on the voyage. The inhabitants of the banks were generally in favour of the Republican cause, but we might possibly, unless we took care, land at a spot occupied by Spanish troops or by Indians fighting for the King of Spain.

I must pass rapidly over our river-voyage, interesting as it was. The banks were, in numerous places, exceedingly beautiful, from the profusion of scarlet and lilac coloured flowers of the convolvulus kind which covered the trees and bushes, some growing on them, others the produce of the numberless creepers which hang to the boughs. In some places we saw the wild cotton-tree hanging over the banks of the river, with pods full of cotton ripe and bursting. Among other creepers was the vanilla, entwining itself round the trees and producing a pleasing effect. The doctor told me that it is used as a spice to flavour chocolate and various dishes.

After sailing on for some days, we came to a part of the river full of islands covered with lofty trees and a variety of shrubs, the mimosa being among the most beautiful. Of the many creepers we observed, one, called the bejuco, is so strong and tough that the natives use it to fasten together the rafters of their houses, and the bamboos forming the covering of the long flat-bottomed boats, called champans, with which they navigate the upper part of the river Magdalena. Birds of all kinds, of the most gorgeous plumage, flitted among the trees or flew over our heads; large scarlet macaws in great numbers, two-and-two, went squalling by, their brilliant


A RIVER-SCENE

plumage shining in the bright sun; large black wild turkeys occupied the lower branches of the trees. We frequently saw the scarlet heads of the macaws peeping out of holes in the trees in which they make their nests; while flights of gaily-coloured parrots and green parrakeets were flying backwards and forwards across the river. Small fish, too, were in such vast shoals in the shallows that the bongo appeared in one place to cut through them. The finny tribe must, however, enjoy a hazardous existence, for close to the spot we counted no less than thirty alligators swimming within a few hundred yards of our boat, their heads generally appearing only above water; and we frequently saw the fish leaping above the surface, evidently endeavouring to escape from their persecutors. On several occasions we saw the monsters' carcasses lying on the banks, probably killed by the jaguars. Some were reduced to perfect skeletons, every particle of flesh having been eaten off by armadilloes or ants.

At one of the villages where we landed, we found a poor mulatto woman in great tribulation; and on our inquiring what was the matter, she told us that her daughter had that morning been seized by an alligator, while in the act of filling her pitcher in the river, and carried away. The rest of the villagers were also in a state of alarm, as they declared that the alligators, when once they have tasted human flesh, become particularly fond of it, and are especially bold and fierce in their attacks on people approaching their haunts.

"I will try what I can do for you," said the doctor. "I have been sent opportunely to your relief. Know me as the renowned slayer of caymans!"

The villagers on this gazed on him with great respect, and eagerly showed him the part of the river frequented by their foe.

Obtaining a bar of iron about a foot and a half in length, the ends sharply pointed, he fixed it in a float, which he surrounded with a large mass of putrid pork. This he fastened to a long rope, the part nearest the bait being of an open texture which the alligator's teeth could not bite through.

The bait was allowed to float off into the river, while the end of the rope was secured to the trunk of a tree. Jumbo was then sent to bark along the bank of the river, in order to attract the monster. Its snout before long appeared above the surface, when Jumbo, aware of the rush it would make, scampered off up the steep bank to a safe distance. The sagacious dog knew well the danger of manoeuvring on ground raised only a little above the level of the water; for the alligator could easily land and make its way over it with great speed. The monster, disappointed in obtaining the delicate morsel Jumbo would have afforded, at last caught sight of the bait; and making a dash at it,

RIVER DANGERS

immediately found its jaws pierced by the iron spike, and began to haul away at the rope with a force which threatened to snap it, if it did not pull down the tree.

The doctor now called the villagers, and ordered them to haul away at the rope. At first they seemed very unwilling to undertake the task; but we setting them the example, they laid hold of it, and casting the end loose from the tree, hauled away lustily. In spite of its struggles, the vast monster was dragged up to the bank; and feeling its feet touch the shore, it made the most terrific efforts to back off. The men hauled away with such good-will, that it was compelled to move along the ground for some distance on its knees. Suddenly getting on its feet, however, it made a desperate rush at its captors. “Pull away! pull away!” shouted the doctor, who was prepared for the emergency; and the villagers pulled with all their might, till two or three tumbling down, the rest scampered off. My uncle, Tim, and I had sprung on one side and got ready our rifles, but before we could fire the monster would have been upon the fallen men, when the doctor, stepping forward, fired his rifle almost down its throat. It instantly stopped, and after another attempt to dash forward fell over on its side.

The villagers on this slackened the rope, when the creature, recovering, made another desperate attempt to reach them. “Pull, ye villains, pull!” shouted Tim; his words being echoed by the doctor, who, in his excitement, as another great naturalist asserts that he himself did, leaped on the alligator’s back, and flourished his rifle, which he had reloaded, above his head; then quickly lowering it, he presented it towards the creature’s ear.

The natives, now emboldened by witnessing his performance, hauled away as he directed them. The wounded alligator was evidently becoming weaker; and the doctor, fearing that it might roll over him, and finding his seat not the most comfortable in the world, leaped off; then running some way ahead, he again fired into the creature’s mouth. The last shot proved an effectual quietus to the saurian, which, after making a few convulsive struggles, rolled over and lay perfectly still.

The natives, on seeing their enemy dead, shouted and danced with delight, and insisted on carrying us all back on their shoulders to the village in triumph. They told us that the monster had already carried off several dogs which had gone down to the water to drink. They urged us to remain, that we might kill a few more alligators; and were much disappointed when we told them that we were compelled to continue our voyage.

As we frequently had to bring up, sometimes before dark, we had opportunities of shooting a variety of birds and animals in the forest. The doctor killed several monkeys, one a large red fellow with a beard as long and rough as that of a capuchin friar, and several others of a smaller species—one called the titti, a pretty little creature with a grey back and chocolate-coloured breast, the face without any hair. I was sorry to see the small creature put to death—it seemed like unnecessary cruelty; but the doctor did not participate in my feelings, and I must confess that the monkey made an excellent fricassee.

We generally spent our nights on the dry sandbanks. At first I was under the unpleasant apprehension that we might be attacked by alligators; but we were assured that they seldom come out of the water at night, and unless very hungry are not likely to carry anybody off. Among other valuable vegetable productions of the country, we saw the guava-tree, from the fruit of which the jelly of that name is made.

At last we arrived at the town of Mompox, which we happily found in the hands of the Republicans. We had here to exchange our bongo for a flat-bottomed boat called a champan, with which alone the upper part of the river can, from its numerous shallows, be navigated. It is exactly the same in shape and construction as the boats made by the Indians before the conquest of the country by the Spaniards. They are of all sizes. A large one costs a considerable sum—as much, we were told, as three thousand dollars. The larger are about sixty feet in length, by seven feet in beam, and the gunwale is two feet from the water’s edge. In the centre is a cabin with a convex roof, between six and seven feet high, made of strong and flexible bamboos covered with palm-leaves, and fastened together with the bejuco, the creeper I have before described. The crew consists of a padrone or captain, a pilot (who steers with a large paddle), and about twenty-two men, who urge the boat on with long poles, some standing in the bow and others on the top of the cabin.

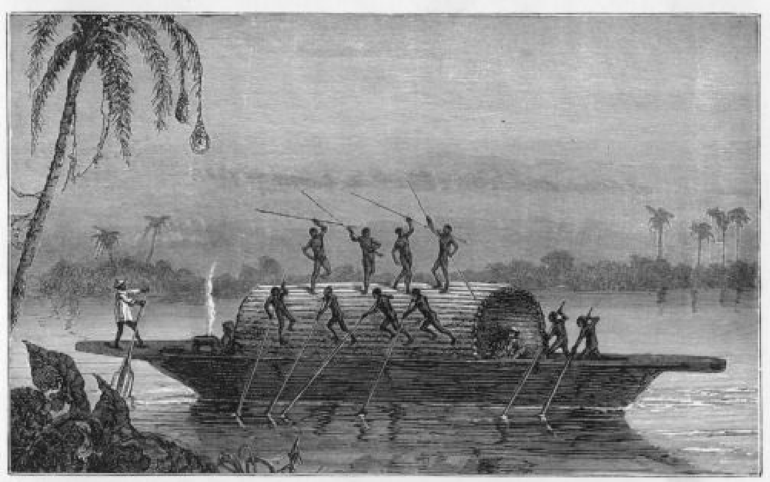
The champan we engaged, however, was of a much smaller size.

The news we received at Mompox, that the Spanish forces were moving out of the fortified towns they had for some time occupied, and were traversing the country, made my uncle anxious to continue our voyage.

We passed several plantations of the cocoa-tree, from the seed of which chocolate is made. The cocoa-pod resembles a small, rough melon, and is of a dark-red colour, full of small beans.

We had now in view in the distance ranges of mountains, which appeared to be of vast height; a sign that we were approaching a region very different from that which we had hitherto traversed.

The second or third night of our voyage in the champan, we brought up alongside a narrow sand-bank backed by lofty trees; and after we had lighted our fire, and just as we were preparing for our evening



OUR VOYAGE IN THE CHAMPAN.

meal, on looking up I saw a number of comical little faces grinning down upon us. As we did not move, their monkey owners became bolder, and advanced towards the ends of the boughs, playing all sorts of gambols,—such as hanging by their tails, and swinging backwards and forwards. Many of them had young ones on their backs, who, in spite of the leaps made by their parents, clung fast, even when they were swinging by their tails with their heads downwards. An old monkey led the way, followed by the others, with flankers and a rear-guard. Sometimes, as a variety, they played a regular game of "follow the leader," and amused us much. They were succeeded by vast flights of parrots and parrakeets, which came to rest in couples on some wild fig-trees which grew near, and indulged in a vociferous concert till the shades of night crept over the river. At times the air was full of them, coming from all directions; but, notwithstanding the din they made, we allowed them to enjoy their repose undisturbed.

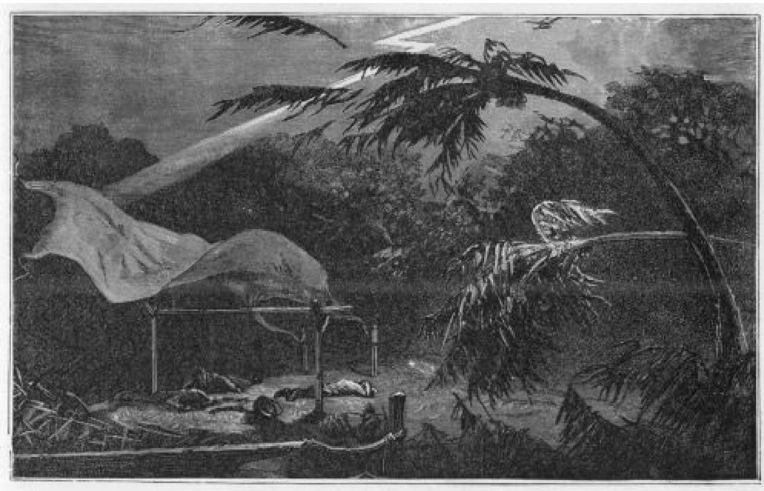
As the interior of the toldo, or cabin, of the champan was excessively close, and infested by mosquitoes, we formed a sort of tent of the boat's sail, which we stretched on four uprights, leaving room below for the air to circulate. Under this covering we spread our bedding, trusting to the Bogos, as the boatmen are called, to keep a proper watch; and still more to the vigilance of the doctor's dog, Jumbo, who always lay at his master's feet. We had been so accustomed to hear of alligators, jaguars, and huge serpents, without having hitherto suffered from them, that all anxiety on the subject had vanished. When we went out shooting in the woods, we of course kept a sharp look-out on either side, and took care where we stepped, that we might not be putting our feet on a venomous serpent, or allow a jaguar to steal towards us unperceived; and as for the alligators, we had arrived at the opinion that they had more to fear from us than we from them.

Thus we were all sleeping tranquilly that night, when, about four or five hours after sunset, I was startled by a bright light which I saw through my closed eyelids, followed almost immediately by a tremendous roar, which seemed to shake the very earth.

"What's the matter?" I shouted out, starting to my feet, scarcely understanding what was about to happen.

"A thunderstorm has broken," answered the doctor; "we shall have the wind down upon us before long, and then we shall see what we shall see."

Scarcely had he spoken when I was thrown flat on my face by a tremendous gust, which in an instant tore away from the posts the sail which formed our tent, and sent it fluttering in the air. The trees bent before the furious blast, while whole branches which were torn off went flying to a distance, and we



DISTURBED BY A STORM.

felt masses of sticks and leaves come rattling down on our heads. For some moments we were in total darkness, then a flash of lightning of extreme vividness burst from the clouds, showing to me the rest of the party lying down as I was, and involuntarily attempting to shield their heads with their hands, while all around the lofty palm-trees were yielding to the gale, which was tearing their feathery heads into fragments. Every instant I expected some of the trees to come down and crush us.

We were utterly helpless, for had we attempted to push off in the champan, we might have been driven against the points of the sunken trees (to the destruction of the boat), or have been stranded on the beach. The champan, it was to be hoped, was securely moored. I shouted to the crew, who had remained on board, but the uproar made by the howling of the wind, and the crashing boughs, and the dashing of the water against the banks, completely drowned my voice. All we could do, therefore, was to remain where we were. A jaguar might have picked us off without difficulty; but I trusted that they were as unable to move as we were, or, what was probable, were terrified by the fierceness of the tempest, which has the effect of overcoming the most savage natures.

I groped about till I got hold of my rifle, which as usual I had placed by my side when I went to sleep. At length there came a lull, when I heard the doctor's voice shouting out, "Barry, my boy, where are you? Mr Concannan—Tim, Tim,—speak, and tell me if you are alive."

"Shure, it's alive I am," answered Tim, "though almost kilt, by a big bough which came down just now on my back."

I saw him, by another flash of lightning which just then darted from the sky, creeping out from beneath a huge branch, which had happily formed an arch over him. I was thankful, too, to hear my uncle's voice.

"Stay where you are, Tim," cried the doctor, "and we'll join you. Providence has formed a hut for us, and into that hut we will creep, as we shall be safer there than elsewhere."

We followed his advice, and were joined by Jumbo, who followed his master under the shelter; and the huge bough effectually guarded us from the numerous other branches which came hurtling through the air.

As we could now hear each other's voices, my uncle expressed his fears about the champan. I told him that I had seen her safe during one of the flashes of lightning, and that I hoped she was still secured to the bank.

Hour after hour, it seemed, went by; the wind howling, the thunder roaring, the lightning flashing through the air, darting amid the trees, and running in fiery lines along the ground with a brightness which so dazzled my eyes, that for the next moment I felt as if struck by blindness, leaving the forest dark as Erebus—though I could still see the trees waving backwards and forwards against the sky.

How thankful I felt when at length the thunder rolled away, the lightning ceased, and the wind almost immediately afterwards fell, till it became perfectly calm. In a short time the fire-flies darted out from their hiding-places, and filled the air with their soft light; but we were not inclined to contemplate their beauty just then, or to attend to anything else except endeavouring to make ourselves tolerably snug for the remainder of the night.

We had escaped a great danger, moreover, of which we at first had not thought. Our fire had gone out before the tempest broke on us, or the flames might have set the grass and dry shrubs around on fire; and though the forest itself was too green to burn, it might have rendered the spot untenable.

Groping about, we found the sail sticking in the bushes; and dragging it over the bough which protected us, we again secured it. In the meantime, Tim had been engaged in relighting the fire, for which the storm had supplied us with an abundance of fuel.

On hailing the champan, we were answered by the padrone; who, to our satisfaction, informed us that she had escaped injury, though some of the crew had received pretty severe blows from falling branches. As we could not trust to the crew, Tim undertook to keep watch while my uncle, the doctor, and I slept. The storm had done us one great service, too,—it had blown away the mosquitoes and other biting insects, besides having materially cooled the air.

The next morning we continued our voyage, the greater portion of which was performed by the men shoving on the champan with their long poles, sometimes among trunks of trees, at others amid rocks; but occasionally they had to go on shore and tow the boat along through the whirlpools and rapids which we met with. The scenery was often very beautiful, consisting of magnificent ranges of mountains, their bases rising abruptly out of the river, covered with umbrageous trees and flowering shrubs of various hues.

At length we reached the neighbourhood of Honda, where our voyage terminated; and from thence we were to travel over the mountains for upwards of two hundred miles. We here parted with our friend the doctor, who was bound for Santa Fé de Bogotà, where, he told us, he hoped to get employment. He wished us good-bye with real heartiness, and I believe was grateful to my uncle for having brought him thus far on his journey. I was much obliged to him for the interesting information he had given me, and I told him that should he ever come our way, I was sure that my father would be happy to see him at our house.

"Perhaps I may come, my young friend," he answered; "it is possible that the inhabitants of Bogotà may not appreciate my talents."

Mounted on a stout mule, and carrying the whole of his property in his saddle-bags, he took his way eastward over the mountains towards the capital of New Granada, while we followed a more southerly course across a wild and mountainous region.

Chapter Three.

Journey over the mountains—Lose our way—We find Padre Pacheco enjoying a bath—Invited to his house—Fresh guests arrive—A Patriot General—A lovely heroine—A supper at the Padre's—I am invited to join the

Patriot cause—Anecdotes of Generals Bolivar and Paez—General Bermudez—The guests depart—Candela comes as our guide—The General's history—Attacked by Indians—We wound and capture their chief—Carry him with us—Our journey continued.

Our journey was performed on mule-back; but I had expected to be provided with a good horse to ride.

"You would soon have wished yourself mounted on your present steady, sure-footed animal," observed my uncle; "the roads we shall have to traverse are such as no horse could pass over in safety with a rider on its back."

I soon found that he was right. The country we travelled over was wild and rugged in the extreme. Dark rocks of varied forms rose in lofty perpendicular walls on one hand, while torrents dashed down the mountain-sides on the other. Frequently we had to ascend by a succession of rough steps cut in the rock, and then to descend by a similar description of path with a precipice on each side of it, down which, had a mule made a false step, its rider would have been thrown many hundred feet into the abyss below.

I soon got accustomed to the sagacious animal I rode; and taking my uncle's advice, I left the bridle loose on its neck, allowing it to pick its own way—which it did in a sensible manner, following most patiently the windings of the paths. Our mules had been well-trained to ascend and descend these precipitous mountains, and as they proceeded they fixed their small feet with caution and firmness in the holes made in the ground by the constant passing and repassing of other travellers.

For some distance we proceeded almost parallel with the river Magdalena, of which, through openings in the rocks, we got fine views as it rushed onwards, foaming and eddying amid the huge boulders in its course. Then, leaving it on the right, we continued along the bed of a small stream for a league or so, till we reached a shallow lake which runs in and out amid the precipitous cliffs rising to an immense height above it; while over its whole extent were scattered huge masses of rock, which had been hurled down by the convulsions of Nature from the summit of the mountains. Not a canoe floated on its bosom; no human being, bird, or animal was visible. It was one of the wildest and most desolate scenes I had ever beheld, and contrasted strongly with the fertile region through which we had passed, teeming with human and animal life. I was very glad, then, when, crossing another rugged height, we reached a small valley.

But I must not stop to describe the various incidents of our journey, or attempt to portray the scenery of the country we traversed. It varied greatly; sometimes being grand and beautiful, at others monotonous. Sometimes we slept at the cottages of the natives, at others we bivouacked in the woods, or under the shelter of lofty rocks. We each carried a net-hammock at the cruppers of our mules, so that we had it ready to hang up between a couple of trees, or in a hut, whenever we stopped, either for our noonday rest or at night. On crossing a wide elevated plain, we passed through several forests of date-trees; and had a few Arabs with their camels been moving about among them, the whole scene would have borne a truly African appearance.

The journey appeared a very long one, though we pushed on each day as fast as our mules could travel; but we had to make frequent détours to avoid places held by the Spaniards, who, though often defeated, still had considerable forces in the field. My uncle and I, having been born in the country, would have been looked upon as Spanish subjects; and as all the members of our family were known to hold Liberal opinions, we might be detained and compelled to serve in the Spanish ranks. At all events, my uncle thought it prudent to keep out of the way of the Royalists, as well as of those Indians who were known to side with them.

A MOUNTAIN-LAKE

Whenever we passed through a village or came to a halt for the night, we endeavoured to gain information of the movements of the troops; and in the course of three days we came in sight of as many spots where villages had once stood, which now only presented blackened walls and devastated fields—the sad result of civil war. When able, we obtained a guide to conduct us over the mountain-paths; but we were not always successful, and sometimes had to make our way alone.

We were now approaching our home; but my uncle had been so long absent from the country that he was unacquainted with the road, and even Tim had to confess that he did not sufficiently recollect the appearance of the scenery to guide us.

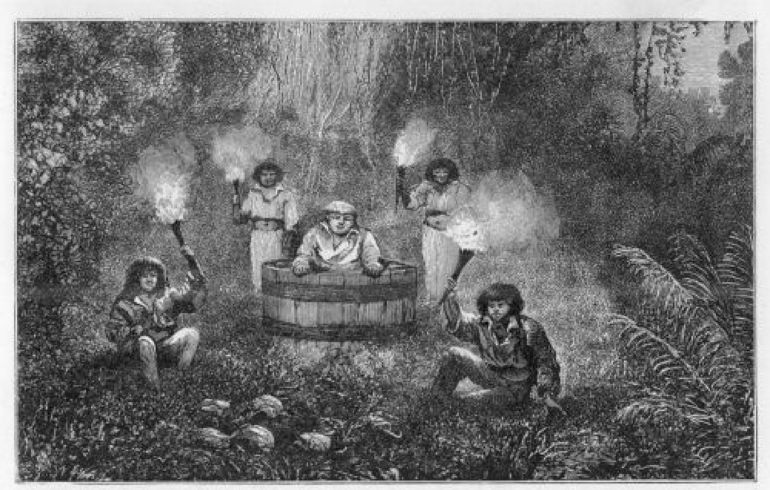
We had descended to a lower level, and after passing through a thick tropical forest, were proceeding along the margin of a river, looking for an open spot to encamp, when the sun disappeared behind the mountains on our right. There is little or no twilight, it will be remembered, in that latitude, and before we were aware of it darkness came down upon us.

"Shure, we can camp aisy enough," observed Tim; "but about the provender—I'm afraid our canteen is well-nigh empty."

Such proved to be the case, and we had every prospect of going without our supper. We had two mulatto boys to look after our mules, but they were of little use for any other purpose; and though we heard some parrots and other birds uttering various notes in the trees, it was too dark to see them. Still, as it could not be helped, we were about to make our usual preparations for spending the night, when Tim exclaimed that he saw a light some distance ahead; and as it probably proceeded from a hut, or perhaps from a habitation of more importance, he proposed that we should ride forward towards it. My uncle, with his usual wariness, was unwilling to allow this, fearing that it might proceed from the camp of a party of Spaniards or Indians. I offered, therefore, to make my way to it, and ascertain whether we were likely to meet with a friendly reception. To this he consented, provided I took care not to be discovered.

Carrying my rifle in one hand, and a stick, with which to feel my way, in the other, I directed my steps towards the light. As I approached it, I crept forward slowly, concealing myself behind the shrubs which grew thickly around. As I advanced I saw that there were several lights, and I heard voices, with now and then the sound of laughter. "If they are enemies, they are jolly ones," I said to myself; "there is nothing very dreadful here, I suspect."

Creeping on a few paces and looking over the bushes, I saw, in an open spot surrounded by trees, at a



THE PADRE ENJOYING AN EVENING BATH

short distance from the river's brink, four Indians clothed in jackets and trousers, each holding a torch in his hand, and in their centre the head and shoulders of a jovial friar (for that he was a friar I knew by his shorn crown) just rising above a huge cask sunk in the ground. The friar was evidently enjoying a bath, though he was taking it in a somewhat curious fashion—as I at once guessed, to avoid any risk of being carried off by an alligator. Now he sank himself up to his chin in the refreshing fluid, now up he popped again like a Jack-in-the-box; now down he went, and then up he came again, holding on by the edge of the cask,—his Indian attendants meanwhile watching him, as grave as judges.

At first I doubted whether I ought to intrude on the bather; but as he showed no inclination to get out, I thought that I might venture to pay my respects to him, and at the same time ask him to afford us shelter in his house, which I knew could not be far off! I accordingly advanced, and taking off my hat, saluted him with a polite bow. The Indians, who were crouching down in front of him, looking out towards the river, apparently to watch that no hungry alligator or jaguar should pounce out upon their master, upon this sprang to their feet, and looked very much inclined to run away.

"Who are you; and whence do you come?" inquired the padre.

"I am travelling with my uncle, Señor Denis Concannan, and a servant, towards our home, not far from hence, and having no guide we have lost our way," I replied. "My father is Señor Barry Desmond—perhaps he is known to your reverence?"

"Of course he is; and a dear friend," answered the padre. "And you are his son! If I were not dripping wet, I would give you an embrace: receive it in imagination. You, and your uncle, and attendants, if there were fifty of them, are welcome to my abode. Go and bring them hither; and as soon as my servant comes down with my dry clothes, I will accompany you."

I must own, by-the-by, that I felt well pleased to accept the padre's embrace in imagination rather than in reality; and heartily thanking him for his kind reception, I begged to know his name, that I might tell my uncle.

“The Padre Pedro Pacheco,” he replied; “he will remember me, though he has been absent so many years, and will require no further assurance that he will meet with all the hospitality that I can afford him. Now go, young caballero, and bring him here; and by the time he arrives I shall be in a fit condition to set out.”

On this, making another bow, I set off to return by the way I had come.

I had not gone far when I met Tim, who, ever careful about my safety, had followed me.

“Hurrah! shure, it’s all right if it’s the Padre Pacheco,” he exclaimed. “I know his riverence well, and there isn’t a praste like him in all the country round; though, to tell you the truth, Misther Barry, he isn’t much in favour with the Spaniards or monks up in the towns, for he’s a mighty great Liberal, and is as ready to fight as to pray for the cause of the Republicans.”

Tim gave me this information as we were making our way back to where we had left my uncle and the mules. We were not long in saddling the animals and replacing their packs; and by the time we got back to the padre’s bathing-place we found him standing ready to receive us, clothed in dry garments. He greeted my uncle as cordially as he had done me; and taking our arms,—two of the Indians with torches leading the way,—we proceeded by a path through the forest to his house, which stood on a slight elevation above the river. It was a thatched one-storied building, with a walled-in courtyard on one side, and surrounded by a garden of considerable extent, as far as I could judge by the torchlight.

He at once ushered us into a good-sized room, furnished with a large table and benches, and a ponderous arm-chair at one end. The table was covered with various substantial viands, as well as delicacies and fruits of all sorts, showing that the padre was given to hospitality, and that he was at all times prepared for the unexpected arrival of guests.

“I sent up to order supper to be got ready for you, and I see that my people have not been dilatory,” he observed as we entered the room. “Perhaps we shall have other guests, and I only hope they may be such as we desire to see. Sometimes the Spaniards come this way, and I am compelled, though much against the grain, to be civil to them. However, before you sit down, you may desire to wash the dust off your hands and faces; and if you will accompany me, I will show you where you can do so.—Here, Candela, bring a torch, and towels for the caballeros.”

As he spoke, an intelligent-looking black servant led the way into the courtyard, where we saw a fountain falling into a stone basin, the water afterwards serving to irrigate the garden. We quickly performed our ablutions, especially refreshing after the heat of the day, and then returned with the padre into the supper-room. We were on the point of sitting down, when the sound of horses’ hoofs coming along the path from the southward reached our ears.

“Grant Heaven that they are friends!” said the padre, looking grave. “Should they be Royalists, you will guide your conversation accordingly, Señor Concannan,” he observed.—“Here, Candela, go out and welcome the cavaliers, whoever they may be.”

The black, relighting his torch, hurried out; and soon we heard his voice calling to the other servants to hold the cavaliers’ horses, and in a loud voice welcoming the travellers. One of them spoke a few words in return, whereupon the padre started up and rushed out to the front of the house. I followed him, and saw him clasping the hand of a tall cavalier, who had just dismounted from a powerful horse, which one of the servants was holding. On another steed of more delicate proportions sat a lady, who, as the light of the torch fell on her countenance, appeared to be young and unusually beautiful. At the same moment several other persons came up; and the tall cavalier having now assisted the lady to dismount, advanced towards the house—the rest of the party, throwing themselves from their horses, following.

On entering, the cavalier cast a suspicious glance at my uncle and me.

“Who are these?” he asked of Padre Pacheco in a low voice.

“They are English—friends to the cause; you can trust them,” answered the padre; and he mentioned our names. On this the new-comer advanced towards my uncle, and taking his hand, shook it warmly; afterwards doing me the same favour.

“The English are always my friends,” he said,—“a noble nation, who love liberty; and especially are you so, gentlemen, who belong to such an esteemed family. Would that we had many more like them. But our cause will triumph; everywhere the tyrant Gothos are yielding to our arms whenever we can catch them in the open country; and as hornets are burned out of their nests, we must expel them from the cities in which they have taken refuge, and then not sheathe the sword till we have cut them to pieces or driven them before us into the ocean.—Say I not well, Donna Paola?” he added, turning to the young lady.

A rich colour mounted to her brow, as with kindling eye she replied,—“Heaven will favour the righteous cause, and aid you, General Bermudez, and your brave followers, in the glorious undertaking.”

She spoke in a firm yet sweet and melodious voice, and I at once saw that she was an enthusiast in the cause. My uncle regarded her with a look of surprise and admiration, and bowing, said,—“I have often heard of you, Donna Paola Salabriata, and rejoice to have the opportunity of meeting you.”

Donna Paola smiled and bowed gracefully; and the padre, who had been giving directions to his servants, then appearing, requested her to take possession of the only private room in his house which he could offer; “Though,” he added, “it is unworthy of one to whom is due all the honour we can pay.”

The young lady smiled. “I am accustomed to rough lodging,” she answered, “and will gratefully accept your kindness, Señor Padre.”

I judged from the appearance and manners of the other persons who entered that they were officers on the staff of General Bermudez. Two, however, appeared to be of rank; and one I soon discovered to be an Irishman, from the rich brogue in which he addressed me on hearing my name. He had been long in the service, but had not forgotten his native tongue, he assured me—an assertion not in the slightest degree necessary. He at once launched forth in praise of General Bermudez, whom he asserted to be, next to Bolivar, the best and bravest man and truest patriot in the country; and from what I afterwards heard of the general, I am convinced that he was right.

After a short time the whole party collected in the supper-room, but did not take the seats which the padre requested them to occupy. Their eyes, I saw, were frequently turned towards the door. At length it opened, and Donna Paola entered the room with that grace which Spanish women so generally possess. She looked even more beautiful than at first; her raven hair, secured by a circlet of gold, contrasting with the delicate colour of her complexion, which was fairer than that of Spanish women generally. Her figure was slight, and she appeared scarcely so tall as I had supposed when I had first seen her in her riding habit. She was followed by a black damsel,—her constant attendant, I found,—who stood behind the chair she occupied on the right of the general. He desired my uncle and me to take the seats on the other side.

I confess that, interested though I had been, I had become very hungry, and was glad to fall to on the viands which the good padre had provided. There were a variety of dishes: fish and fowl predominating, an olla-podrida, omelets, and puddings. There was flesh too,—some small animals, which I strongly suspected were monkeys.

The party were evidently too much interested in talking of affairs of importance to pay much attention to the nature of the provisions set before them. The young and handsome officer—a colonel, I judged, by his uniform—sat next to Donna Paola; and from the tender way in which he addressed her, and the looks she gave him in return, I suspected that her patriotic enthusiasm had not steeled her heart against all softer influences. Such I afterwards found to be the case. She had promised to marry the colonel as soon as the patriots had triumphed, and the liberties they had been struggling for had been established.

It was important to gain exact information as to the intended movements of the Royalists; and Donna Paola, I found, had undertaken the hazardous duty of visiting Bogotà and other cities, and from thence transmitting intelligence to the patriot leaders. The young colonel looked grave when the subject was mentioned, and, from what he said, would willingly have dissuaded her from the attempt.

“If we fear to run a risk for the purpose of obtaining an important end, that end may never be gained,” she answered; “and the time you look for, Enrico, must be postponed,” she added, playfully tapping him with her fan on the arm; for, heroine as she was, she carried one. What woman, indeed, with Spanish blood in her veins, would be without so useful an implement?

The party were to continue for some days together, and then to separate in various directions,—General Bermudez to return to the plains and take command of his guerilla forces, which had already proved so terrible a scourge to the Spaniards. Had they known how close he was to them, with only a small band of followers, they would eagerly have despatched a force to effect his capture.

The conversation at the supper-table was animated in the extreme, Padre Pacheco taking an active part in it. After some time the general turned to me. “You have heard, young gentleman, of the glorious cause in which we are engaged,” he said. “Many of the patriot leaders drew their swords when younger than you are. We want every one with honesty and courage to join us, and we claim you as a compatriot. Judging by your looks, you will soon become expert in all the exercises required for a leader; and I shall be glad to offer you a command in one of the brave bands serving under me when you have gained sufficient experience.”

I felt highly flattered at this address, though I scarcely knew what to answer.

“I shall be ready, whenever called upon, to do my duty towards the country of my birth,” I answered at length; “but I am under my father’s orders, to whom my first duty is due, and I dare not pledge myself till I have consulted him.”

“Well spoken, young señor,” remarked the general. “Knowing his sentiments, I feel assured that he will not deny your request, and that I may count upon you ere long as a follower.”

“Surely the young Englishman will feel it the highest privilege he can possess to fight in so glorious a cause,” observed Donna Paola, looking across the table at me with her beautiful eyes. “Say at once, my dear young friend, that, with your father’s permission, you will devote yourself to the liberation of your native land. For what nobler task can a human being live—or die, if needs be? For my part, I am ready to sacrifice all I hold dear in life, and life itself, so that I may but afford the feeble aid a woman can give in forwarding the great object.”

I had found some difficulty in answering the general; I found it still more trying to reply to the beautiful Donna Paola. I remembered too well the advice given me by my sensible schoolmaster; yet, as I listened to the enthusiastic conversation of those into whose company I was so unexpectedly thrown, and heard of the atrocities of the Spaniards and the gallant exploits of the patriot leaders, I was naturally carried away, and soon forgot all my prudent resolutions, in spite of the remarks made by my uncle to prevent me from committing myself.

“Whenever summoned, you will find me ready, general,” I exclaimed; “and I call my friends here to witness my promise.”

“Well spoken, my young patriot,” cried the general, stretching across the table to take my hand; while Donna Paola smiled her approval.

“Remember, Barry, that your promise is but conditional,” whispered my uncle; “your father may have other work for you.”

During the time we sat at table, I heard anecdotes of most of the chief leaders of the patriot as also of the Royalist forces. Of the former the two principal men were,—Don Simon Bolivar, a man of good birth and education; and José Paez, who, belonging to the humblest rank of life, had been brought up among the hardy llañeros of the Apure. Bolivar was born in the city of Caraccas, in the neighbourhood of which his father, Don Juan Vicente Bolivar, had large possessions, and was of noble rank. At an early age he was sent to Madrid for his education, on completing which he made the tour of Europe, visiting England among other countries. When only nineteen he married a beautiful girl, the daughter of a nobleman, and for a short time lived in the enjoyment of domestic life, until he was deprived of his wife by death. To alleviate his grief, he again visited Europe and the United States, where he imbibed, those Liberal principles which induced him to take a prominent part in fighting for the freedom of his native country. In 1811, when General Miranda, the commander of the patriot army, cut down and destroyed the Spanish standard, and hoisted the tricolour in its stead, Simon Bolivar joined him, and was immediately appointed to a command in the independent army. After a long and desperate struggle, Venezuela again fell into the hands of the Royalists, who retaliated on those who had opposed them, and the whole country was reduced to a frightful state of misery. The Spanish troops treated the people with the most revolting ferocity, plundering and murdering in all directions, on the most trifling pretexts. Old men, women, and children even, were arrested, and often cruelly maimed and massacred as rebels. These barbarous proceedings aroused the indignation of Bolivar, who had escaped from the country; and uniting with a relative, Ribas, he proceeded from the island of Curacoa to Venezuela, where he speedily raised a small force. Attacking the Spanish garrison of the town of Teneriffe on the river Magdalena, he drove them out, proceeding southward to Bogotà, then in the hands of the patriots. The Spanish generals at this time were Boves, Rosette, and Morales. They were joined by Morillo, who was sent in 1815 with a powerful army from Spain. Bolivar had again to fly; but once more returning in 1817, he defeated Morillo in several battles; and in 1819 he had become President of the Venezuelan Republic, the Congress of which had been installed at Angostura on the Orinoco. From his finished education, his knowledge of the world, and his military talents, he was well fitted, as he showed, for the important position he held.

Very different was the career of General Paez, who was born at Araure. When but seventeen years old, the priest of that place—who was his uncle—sent him with a considerable sum of money, to be delivered to another padre residing at a distance. That he might perform the journey in safety, he was provided with a mule, an old pistol, and a rusty sword. It was fortunate that he was thus armed, for on the road he was attacked by three men, who demanded his treasure. Young Paez, instead of giving it up, threw himself from his mule with his pistol cocked; and his weapon for a wonder going off, killed one of his opponents, and at the same time bursting, struck another in the face; then drawing his sword, which providentially also came out of its sheath, the youthful hero charged the third robber, who, with his wounded companion, then took to flight.

Not knowing what might be the consequence of having killed a man, young José,—after delivering the money to the padre,—afraid of returning home, fled to the province of Barenas, where he obtained employment on a large cattle-farm. The overseer was a black man, who, conceiving a dislike for the youth, compelled him to perform all sorts of laborious duties, and among others to break in the most vicious horses. He thus became a first-rate horseman, and learned also the use of the lance, the weapon of the llañeros. The brutal black, in order to exhibit his dislike to young Paez, compelled him more than once, on returning home after a hard day’s labour, to bring a pail of water and wash his muddy feet—an act which Paez did not forget.

On the breaking out of the revolutionary war, he enlisted as a common soldier in the militia of Barenas; but soon proving his superiority over his companions, he was able to raise and organise an independent body of cavalry, with which ere long he rendered important service to the cause. His troops ever had the utmost confidence in him; when charging, he was sure to be the first among the ranks of the enemy, his lance making terrible havoc. Ever hating the Spaniards with a deadly hatred on account of their cruelties, he never spared them. Unfortunately, he was at length taken prisoner, and an order was issued by the Spanish general for his execution. It was the custom of the Spaniards to lead their prisoners out at night to some lonely spot, where they were quietly despatched with a lance or sword. Paez and some of his fellow-prisoners were being led out for this purpose, when, believing that he was merely to be taken before the general, he borrowed a hat of one of his companions. The officer in charge of the party, not recognising him, ordered him back to be exchanged for the unfortunate owner, who was supposed to be the notorious rebel captain. He thus unexpectedly obtained a respite of a day. The next night he was aroused by a loud noise in the streets, and fully expected that he was about to be led out to execution; instead of which, it proved that the Spaniards had been alarmed by the report that a large body of patriots were about to attack the town, and were hurriedly preparing to evacuate it. Paez took the opportunity of freeing himself from his fetters; and having helped to release some of his fellow-prisoners, they overpowered the sentinels, and made their escape.

He was quickly at the head of a fresh body of insurgents; and after going through numerous adventures, he found himself holding the independent command of a large body of llañeros. On frequent occasions, though with inferior numbers, he attacked and defeated the Royalists. The Spaniards, having regained their power in other parts of the country, compelled, by the fearful cruelties they practised, vast numbers of men, women, and children to fly into the wilderness and take refuge in the camp of Paez. Among them were many persons of distinction; and a regular system of government being established, Paez was chosen supreme chief with the rank of general of brigade. To supply his starving followers, he, at the head of his troops, during the rainy season made a long march across the flooded savannahs to attack the city of Barenas, which abounded with all the commodities of which he stood most in need. When approaching Barenas, he sent a detachment to attack the small town of Pedroza, for the purpose of drawing the Spanish forces away from the city to its relief. His ruse was successful; and galloping forward, he and his ragged followers were quickly in possession of the city. Each man loading himself with as large an amount of provisions and stores as he could carry, the troops quickly again retreated, and succeeded in conveying their booty to their starving friends.

On the arrival in the country of a large army under General Morillo, Paez gave him battle on the plains of Apure, and by a stratagem—pretending to fly—induced the Spanish cavalry to follow. His active horsemen then wheeling round, attacked them so furiously with their lances that nearly the whole were destroyed.

I heard many anecdotes related of him. On one occasion he overtook in a skirmish a Spanish major of cavalry, who defended himself bravely; but when Paez was in the act of running his lance through him, he exclaimed, “O general! had you not been better mounted than I am, I should have overmatched you.”

“If you think so,” exclaimed the gallant Paez, “we will exchange horses, and renew the fight.”

To this the major agreed; but no sooner did he find himself on the back of the general’s horse than he galloped off at full speed, followed by Paez, who, finding that he was losing ground, threw his lasso over the major’s neck and brought him to the ground. As the major, however, had defended himself bravely, Paez gave him quarter, a favour neither he nor his llañeros were in the habit of granting to their foes.

On another occasion, one of his men brought in as prisoner a Spanish hussar of the regiment of Fernando the Seventh,—who, in order to appear more terrific, wore long beards.

“Why did you grant him quarter?” inquired Paez.

“Because,” answered the llañero, “my conscience forbade me to despatch a Capuchin friar.”

“He is no friar, but a regular soldier. Bring me no more Capuchin friars,” said the general.

On this occasion, too, he spared the prisoner’s life, and the man entering his service, became much attached to him.

Paez ever proved himself a most indefatigable enemy to the Spaniards. For weeks and months he followed the steps of Morillo, unceasingly clinging to him, and on every opportunity dashing into his camp at night, frequently with not more than a hundred and fifty or two hundred men, slaughtering all he encountered, and never failing to cut his way back with trifling loss. He would also, when the Royalists were fatigued by a harassing day’s march, drive off all their cattle and baggage-mules, leaving them frequently without provisions.

The most renowned of his exploits occurred when he had formed a junction with Bolivar on the plains of Apure. Their troops were in an almost starving condition, and unless they could cross the river they would have to make a circuitous march of many leagues to obtain provisions; while on the opposite bank were seen vast numbers of cattle, which could not be reached for want of boats. About midway across the stream there was also a fleet of sixty flecheras, or gun-boats, well-armed and manned, belonging to the enemy. Bolivar stood on the shore gazing disconsolately at the enemy’s fleet, when Paez rode up to him and inquired the cause of his disquietude.

“I would give the world to have possession of the Spanish flotilla, for without it I can never cross the river,” answered Bolivar.

“It shall be yours in an hour,” replied Paez.

“It is impossible,” said Bolivar.

“Leave that to me,” rejoined Paez, and galloped off.

In a few minutes he returned at the head of a body of three hundred lancers, selected for their proved bravery and strength from his llañeros, and leading them to the bank, he thus addressed them,—“We must have those flecheras or die. Let those who please follow Tio,” (or uncle, for so his favourite troopers were accustomed to call him). Saying this, he dashed into the river and swam towards the flotilla.

His guard followed him with their lances in their mouths, now encouraging their horses to bear up against the current, now swimming by their sides and patting their necks, and shouting to scare away the alligators, of which there were hundreds in the river. Thus they proceeded till they reached the flotilla; then mounting their horses, headed by their leader, they sprang from their backs on board the boats. A desperate struggle ensued; but the llañeros were victorious, and driving the unfortunate crews overboard, they carried the flecheras to the bank of the river, where the patriot forces were drawn up.

Equal to him in most respects, and superior in some, was the noble-looking cavalier, General Bermudez, in whose company I now so unexpectedly found myself. I could learn less about him at the time, but I afterwards heard much of his interesting history.

Notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers with which they were surrounded, the whole party seemed in high spirits, and did not separate till a late hour. Donna Paola was the first to rise, and bowing gracefully to the military officers and wishing them good-night, she left the room, accompanied by her sable attendant. The table being then cleared, our supper-room was turned into a dormitory—every corner of the house being likewise occupied. The padre requested my uncle and me to take possession of a small chamber near his own cell, which afforded just space enough for us to stretch our legs. Here, with our saddles for pillows, and horse-cloths and cloaks for bedding, we were quickly asleep.

At an early hour the next morning we were astir, and found an ample breakfast spread. General Bermudez hurried over the meal, and left the table; and on going out to the front of the house soon afterwards, I found him standing by his horse’s head, ready to mount. He presented a perfect picture of a commander of irregular troops. He was remarkably tall,—being considerably above six feet in height,—his figure well proportioned, and evidently possessing great muscular power; his handsome countenance showed intelligence, and beamed with good-nature and sincerity; while the evening before I had been struck by his frank and genial manners, so unlike those of the ordinary run of Spaniards,—though he was, as might be expected, wanting in that polish which a constant intercourse with refined society seldom fails to give. Though dexterous in the use of the lance, as are all the warriors of the plain, he was armed with a


THE GUERILLA CHIEF.

remarkably long gun, which only a man of great strength could have used with any effect. A powder-horn hung over his shoulders, and a long dagger was secured by the folds of the ample scarf he wore round his waist.

At a short distance off were the troopers who had formed his escort, standing by their horses, ready for the signal to mount. They were picked men, mostly tall and stalwart, and armed with lances and carbines; evidently from their costume irregular cavalry, and looking as if they could render as efficient service in that climate and region as any body of troops, albeit clothed in more uniform fashion.

“Ah, my young friend, I am glad to have the opportunity of saying farewell,” he exclaimed, putting out his hand; “you will not forget your promise of last night. And let me advise you to prepare yourself for the service you may render our beloved country. Take every opportunity of perfecting yourself in horsemanship, and practise the use of the lance and carbine I hope ere long to return this way, and to enrol you among my troops, when you will, I doubt not, with the practice we will be able to give you, become thoroughly expert in the use of your weapons. Should Heaven preserve your life, you must look forward to becoming a leader; and consider well how you will have to act in all the circumstances in which you may be placed,—whether meeting the foes of our country on the plains or amid the mountains; either pursuing, or retreating before superior numbers; endeavouring to effect a surprise, or guarding against one. He proves the most successful leader who has reflected well—during the quiet hours of the bivouac under the starry vault of heaven, or in his silent chamber—how he will conduct himself in the varied chances of warfare. Brute courage is useful in the heady fight, but the possessor of that only can never be a fitting leader.”

I was thanking the general for his advice, when Donna Paola appeared, led forth by Colonel Acosta, the young officer I have before mentioned, who had been seated next to her at supper. He pressed her hand as he assisted her to mount, and by the look she gave him I saw that their affection was mutual. I trusted, for both their sakes, that she would be protected in the dangerous undertaking in which she was engaged. The general springing into his saddle, the rest of the party followed his example. Waving his adieux, he led the way along the side of the mountain; while Padre Pacheco, stretching out his hands, blessed him and his followers, and commended them to the care of Heaven.

My uncle and Tim had also come out prepared for a start. The hospitable padre urged us to remain longer, but we were naturally anxious to reach home. On my uncle making inquiries as to the best road to take, “I will send Candela with you,” said the padre; “he knows it well, and may be of use to you should any roving bands of Indians (and I have noticed that there are several out), seeing a small party, attack you. They mostly know and respect me—for though they are but poor Christians, they look upon me as possessing supernatural powers; and when Candela explains that you are friends of mine, they will allow you to pass without molestation.”

Without hesitation my uncle gladly accepted the kind padre’s offer, and Candela was forthwith ordered to get ready. He did not require many minutes, his preparations consisting in bolting a mess of porridge, to enable him the better to undergo the fatigue of the journey. He was to proceed on foot with the natives who conducted our baggage-mules.

“You must come soon and see me again,” said the padre, as he wished me good-bye. “You are sure to find me, for I never move far from home, seeing I have my little flock to look after, and matters of importance to attend to. But before you go, let me caution you, Señor Denis, not to speak to any one about those persons you saw here. It might lead to unpleasant consequences should the tyrannical Spaniards hear that my quiet abode is frequented by patriots; and we never know what evil birds may carry information.”

“You may trust Barry and me, and my brother’s servant; though we are not likely to meet any but friends to the cause where we are going,” replied my uncle.

The padre looked satisfied; and again wishing him good-bye, we mounted and rode forward, led by Candela, who, with a long stick in his hand, kept well ahead of us.

We soon lost sight of the padre's abode. The road we took was wild and rugged, across the spurs of the mountains; sometimes we had to cross rocky heights, again to descend into narrow valleys, with streams—through which we waded not without difficulty—running down them. Occasionally we had to pass amid thickly-growing trees, which concealed from view the mountain-tops, which might otherwise have assisted to guide us; and we agreed that it was fortunate Candela had come with us to show us the way.

We had to encamp another night in the forest, as it would have been dangerous to proceed over that kind of country in the dark; but Candela assured us that we might reach my father's house early the following day. We pushed forward till the gloom of evening came on, when we looked about for a convenient spot for encamping. We selected one on some rocky ground just outside a wood, with a deep ravine in front of us; while on our left was a precipice of a hundred feet or so in height, at the bottom of which flowed a rapid stream.

Securing the legs of our mules with their halters in the usual fashion, so that they could not stray, we turned them loose, while we lighted our fire, and placed our saddles and horse-cloths ready for sleeping. A basket of provisions, which the padre had secured to one of the baggage-mules, afforded us an ample supper; so that we had only to boil our chocolate, and to heat some water with which to mix the aguadiente the padre had sent, prescribing a cupful as a preventive against the ill effects of the damp night air or any noxious exhalations rising from the valleys—though there was not much chance of our suffering from these in the lofty position we occupied.

While we were seated at supper, I asked my uncle what he knew of the guerilla chief whose acquaintance we had just made.

"I learned something of his history from Padre Pacheco this morning," he answered; "and his career has been very similar to that of General Paez. He is the son of humble parents, who resided near Caraccas, their occupation being to convey provisions to the garrison and inhabitants, in which work he assisted them. Illiterate as was the old Bermudez, he was a devoted patriot, and, notwithstanding the danger he ran in doing so, endeavoured to induce all the young men of his acquaintance to join the troops then being secretly levied for the independent cause by General Miranda. Having incautiously uttered some Liberal expressions, he was seized by the governor of the city, Monteverde. In vain young Bermudez pleaded that mercy might be shown his aged parent; notwithstanding his advanced age, he was cruelly gibbeted, his son being barbarously compelled to witness his execution. This was the fate of many others who dared to utter a word against Spanish tyranny.

"Young Bermudez managed to effect his escape; and carrying with him his unhappy mother, he set off over the plains of Maturin, where he intended to provide a shelter for her few remaining years while he entered the service of his country to revenge the murder of his father. Her death from grief on the way set him free, and he immediately joined as a private a body of the irregular cavalry of the plains, commanded by the brave Hirogas. The band, from its inferiority of numbers, seldom came to an open engagement, but harassed the foraging-parties of the Spaniards, never failing to come off victorious. Bermudez, by his determined bravery and great personal prowess in these skirmishes, gained the admiration of his comrades, and was speedily raised to the rank of lieutenant of a small troop, at whose head he performed numberless acts of valour. From his great strength and skill in all the games in which the horsemen of the plains take delight, he still further rose in the estimation of his companions; while, from his unassuming manners and excellent conduct, he was beloved by all who served with him.

"The band to which Bermudez belonged in a short time amounted to four hundred men; and so much injury did they inflict on the Spaniards, that Monteverde resolved, if possible, to crush them. He accordingly sent out a strong detachment—six hundred cavalry, and an equal number of infantry—in pursuit of Hirogas. The forces of the guerilla chief were strongly posted on the top of a hill, about fifteen leagues from the Spanish headquarters. They were not men to be taken by surprise, and as they saw the Spaniards advancing they charged furiously down upon them. The odds were fearfully against the patriots; and the brave Hirogas, carried by his impetuosity too far in advance, fell into the hands of the enemy, desperately wounded. Bermudez, on seeing this, charged with his troop upon the Spanish infantry, and not only succeeded in rescuing his chief, but put the enemy to flight. The Spaniards left about one-third of their number dead on the field, and many of their horses and arms in the hands of the victorious guerillas.

"Hirogas dying of his wounds, Bermudez was unanimously chosen chief of the band; and his fame spreading, volunteers flocked to his standard. He had no difficulty in mounting them, from the many herds of horses which roamed at large on the mountains and plains of Venezuela, which were easily caught with the lasso, and quickly broken-in at the experienced hands of his followers.

"Having organised his band, he attacked the Spanish forces; laying siege to the town of Maturin, and in three successive encounters supplying himself with arms, ammunition, and every military essential. His force was then regularly enrolled by the Congress as a portion of its troops, and in appearance and discipline became far superior to the generality of the guerillas.

"Being now recognised as one of the leading patriot chiefs, he united himself to General Roxas; and in conjunction they attacked the army under the Spanish General Boves. In this action Roxas slew Boves and nine others with his own hand; and Bermudez was said to have killed thirty men in the action, during which he broke three lances. The patriot government, in recognition of his services, now created him a general of division, and offered him pay; but he nobly declined any remuneration, observing that his object was to fight for his country's liberty without the intention of receiving reward. By his frequent forays into the plains, where he collected large herds of cattle, he contributed greatly to the support of the patriot army."

Such was the man under whom, should my father give me permission, I had undertaken to serve. I felt flattered that he should have thought me capable of being of any use among his hardy and experienced horsemen, and I could scarcely account for the reason of his so distinguishing me. I asked my uncle what he thought about the matter.

“He saw that you were a likely lad, and took it for granted that your father’s son was brave and intelligent. He admires the English, and wishes to have a few with him to assist in civilising and disciplining his followers,” he answered.

We talked on for some time, till my uncle proposed that we should lie down and go to sleep, leaving Tim and Candela to keep watch alternately and maintain the fire, as even at that elevation we were liable to be attacked by a prowling jaguar or puma.

I never slept more soundly in my life; and when I was awakened by Tim pulling at my arm, I found that the day had already broke.

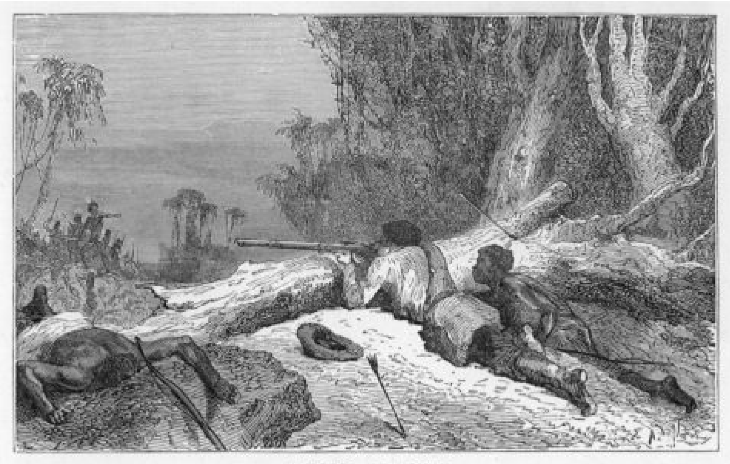
“Hist, Masther Barry,” he whispered. “The praste’s black fellow Candela, says there are Injyuns lurking about, who maybe want to steal our mules, or cut our throats if they have the chance; and we’ve sent the boys to bring in the animals; and Misther Denis and Candela have gone forward to get a look down the gorge, where we think they have hidden, intending to take us by surprise.”

I should have said that on the other side of the gorge was a ridge, beyond which the ground again sloped, thus enabling a party to approach within gun-shot of where we were encamped.

On jumping to my feet I saw my uncle and Candela creeping along towards a fallen trunk, which lay close above the brink of a precipice. At that instant an Indian sprang up, bow in hand, from the other side of the trunk, and shot an arrow, which quivered in the ground close by my uncle’s side. He rushed forward, on seeing this, and before the Indian could fix another arrow had felled him to the earth with his sword. The next moment a large party of Indians appeared on the top of the ridge, and a shower of arrows fell close to us: happily, none took effect, and I saw my uncle drop so as to conceal himself behind a log, while he levelled his rifle over it at the Indians. As he saw the Indians about to shoot, Tim pulled me behind the nearest tree, and probably saved me and himself from being wounded by the arrows,—which, as it was, whistled close to our ears. Before the Indians could move forward, my uncle fired, and a tall warrior, who seemed to be their chief, fell wounded to the ground. This evidently disconcerted them.

“Now is our time,” cried my uncle. “Barry—Tim—call the mule-boys and follow me;” and leaping over the log, he dashed down the ravine, sword in hand, and rapidly climbed the opposite side.

We obeyed his orders, and the Indians, seized with a sudden panic on seeing us coming, and probably believing others were to follow, took to their heels, leaving their chief bleeding on the ground. We fired,—as did my uncle, who had reloaded his gun,—to expedite their movements, and two more fell dead, the rest continuing their flight.



ATTACKED BY INDIANS

“Though he is an enemy, we must not let this fellow bleed to death,” said my uncle, stooping down. “Come, Barry, we’ll bind up his wound and carry him along with us; perhaps he may be able to give us some important information, and at all events we shall learn why he attacked us.”

My uncle soon stopped the flow of blood from the Indian’s side; and the muleteers having brought the animals round by crossing the valley a little way above where we stood, we placed our captive on one of them. We then, guided by Candela, hurried forward on our journey, keeping a sharp look-out lest the fugitive Indians should return.

Chapter Four.

Approach my home—A welcome—My sister Norah—The Indian’s wound dressed—He takes his medicine from Norah—His gratitude—My family—A happy evening—Candela leaves us—Our relative, Don Fernando Serrano—Gerald and I pay him a visit—The Barawa Indians—Our cousins—Donna Isabella Monterola—I practise with the lance—Win Donna Isabella’s approval—We take our departure—Swim across a river—Put to flight by a boa-constrictor—Travel along the borders of a lake—See Dr Stutterheim—He accompanies us home—Takes Kanimapo in hand—The fate of Donna Paola Salabriata—Start on a shooting expedition with the doctor—Encounter a huge anaconda—I shoot it, and save the doctor—Carry off the skin in triumph.

We were now approaching my father’s house, and I recognised several points in the surrounding scenery. The northern end of the lake came into view, bordered by lofty palms and other graceful trees, and I remembered well the shape of the mountains which rose above it.

Tim kept a watchful eye on our prisoner, who, though badly wounded, might still, he thought it probable, attempt to make his escape. He had not spoken as yet, but I observed his dark eye wandering on every side, either in the hope of rescue, or as if considering in what direction he should fly, should he be able to free himself from the thongs by which he was secured to the mule. I was surprised that his followers should have deserted him in the cowardly way they had done. He was a fine-looking savage, with features more refined and regular than those of the Indians I had hitherto seen. But his countenance was sullen; and, from his resolute aspect, he probably expected that he would meet with the fate the Spaniards invariably inflicted on their captives, and be immediately put to death on our arrival at our destination. I suspect that he was in ignorance as to who we were, and supposed that we belonged to a party of patriots; and if so, he must have been surprised on discovering the smallness of our numbers.

Tim led his mule, constantly looking back to assure himself that he had not succeeded in loosening the thongs which secured his arms and legs. At the same time Tim continued talking to me, and pointing out various objects which I thought I remembered.

At length he exclaimed,—“Sure, Masther Barry, there’s the masther’s house; and mighty glad they’ll all be to see you safe;” and he pointed to a good-sized house with a broad verandah in front, shaded by trees, and standing in the midst of a large, well-irrigated garden. Though smaller than I had supposed, I at once knew the house to be that in which I was born. “And beyond it there, higher up the hill, you see Mr Concannan’s mansion—Castle Concannan, we call it, you’ll remember—and a pretty dacent castle it is, with its high, thick walls and courtyard; it would take a pretty strong earthquake to shake it down. He has made it stronger still, by blocking up some of the lower windows.”

In our eagerness to reach home, we pushed on as rapidly as our mules could move. We were yet at a little distance, when, riding on ahead, I caught sight of the figure of a black woman holding up a chubby little boy in her arms. I felt sure that he must be my youngest brother,—the baby, as he was called,—whom I had never seen, and that the woman must be our nurse, Josefa. She gazed at me, doubting whether the tall young man she saw approaching could be the little boy who had gone away but a few years before. The baby, who was a good bouncing one, shook his rattle, and seemed satisfied that I was some one he ought to expect.

Josefa knew me the moment I uttered her name; and as I sprang from my mule, she and little Denis, who was named after our uncle, threw their arms round my neck. We then hastened on towards the front gate, Josefa shrieking out in her delight,—“They are come! they are come! It is Señor Barry!” Her voice was heard at the house; and my father and mother, with my sister Norah and the rest of the family, guessing who we were, hurried out to welcome us.

WELCOMED HOME

Our first greetings over, my father expressed his satisfaction at my appearance.

“You have benefited greatly by your stay in the old country, Barry,” he said; “and your journey here seems to have done you no harm.”

My mother pressed me to her heart; and my sweet sister Norah kissed my cheek again and again, gazing at me as sisters are apt to do at a brother of whom they are proud. I am sure I felt proud of her, and wondered that all the young men in the neighbourhood were not dying with love for her; but perhaps they had too much to do in fighting for the liberty of their country.

As may be supposed, my father soon made inquiries about our captive. Uncle Denis explained how we had caught him, and suggested that he should be placed in a strong room, under a proper guard, where his wound could be tended without the risk of his making his escape. My father observed that he had a small unoccupied room at the back of the house, which would serve as a prison; and to this our captive was at once conducted.

As there was no surgeon, either English or Spanish, living within many miles, my uncle undertook to dress the Indian's wound, and to do his best to cure him.

A bed was brought into the room, on which he was placed. Uncle Denis then commenced his operations.

After gently washing the wound, he discovered to his satisfaction that the ball had passed through the Indian's body, and that he should therefore not have to attempt its extraction. This greatly facilitated his task. My mother having brought some linen bandages and a healing salve, the wound was carefully bound up. The Indian, who did not once wince, though he must have been suffering great pain, gazed with a look of surprise at my uncle and the other bystanders, and was evidently wondering why so much care was taken of him. My sister Norah then brought in a cooling draught, which she offered to him; and speaking first in Spanish, and then in the language generally used by the Indians in the neighbourhood, advised him to take it, assuring him that it would be beneficial. He, without hesitation, swallowed the draught; and now speaking for the first time, expressed his gratitude for the attention bestowed on him.

"We are sorry that you were wounded, and our wish is that you may recover," said Norah, in a pitying tone. "You must rest now; and if you will give your word that you will not attempt to escape, or to injure those who are guarding you, your arms will be left at liberty."

The Indian hesitated, and was apparently considering the consequences which might ensue should he give the promise required.

"Tell him that we intend to keep him a prisoner only till his wound is healed, and that we will not now trouble him with questions; but we shall by-and-by wish to learn who he is, and why he attacked your uncle and Barry," said my father.

Norah repeated this, for having learned the Indian tongue from her nurse, she spoke it better than any one else in the house; no one, indeed, would have been so likely to calm the suspicions of our captive, and to gain his confidence, as she was. "We do not wish you to speak now," she added; "but to-morrow or next day, when you are stronger, you will tell us what we seek to know. And now, will you give me the promise we ask? It will be for your benefit; and you know how you would have been treated had you fallen into the hands of the Spaniards."

"I promise to remain quiet as a child on its mother's breast," answered the Indian. "Kanimapo never breaks his word; and to you, who have treated him so mercifully, he will be faithful."

On this assurance, in which my father and uncle believed that they could trust, the Indian's limbs were left unfettered; but, at the same time, they thought it prudent to place a man well-armed with pistols and a dagger at the door, and carefully to bar the window on the outside, so that the captive, even in possession of his full strength, would have been unable to make his escape.

My father, with Norah, always accompanied by another person, visited him several times during the evening. Notwithstanding all the care bestowed on him, he appeared to be suffering much, though, Indianlike, he endeavoured not to exhibit his feelings; but his eye brightened whenever it fell on Norah, and he seemed to look upon her as his good genius. Each time he showed his gratitude by a few words, or by the expression of his countenance when unable to speak from pain.

We had a very happy evening. My parents were glad to have me back safe, and, as may be supposed, we had a great deal to talk about.

My young brother, Gerald, was fully as fine a little fellow as Tim had described him. He constantly came up to my side, and brought various articles to show me—stuffed birds, and the skins of animals he had shot—and as soon as he could he dragged me away to exhibit his gun, and his canoe, and several animals he had tamed. Kathleen, my second sister, was like Norah, but on a smaller scale; and Mary, the third, was a jolly little girl, fat and chubby as a rosy apple, in spite of the climate in which she was born; while the baby, Denis, was a merry chap, who took to me at once, though he might not exactly have comprehended our relationship.

Our uncle remained with us during the night, that he might attend to our wounded prisoner, though anxious to proceed to his brother's house. He was also unwilling to let Candela go back alone, lest the Indians who attacked us might be still prowling about, and should murder him.

"I have no fear on that score, señor," he answered; "I know the country better than they do, and can easily make my way without being discovered. They would not, either, willingly attack the señor padre's servant; and so by daybreak to-morrow I will depart, as my master will be anxious to hear of your arrival."

We sent many messages to the kind padre; and my father especially invited him to come to our house, should he at any time find himself threatened by the Spaniards on account of his Liberal principles. His cloth certainly would not save him, as they had already shot several padres who had sided with the patriots; the greater number of the priests, however, professed to be loyal subjects of the King of Spain, and supported his cause. One might have supposed that the Spaniards, after all they had suffered at the hands of Napoleon's generals, would have been inclined to treat their fellow-countrymen in their colonies with leniency; but, on the contrary, the only lesson they appeared to have learned had taught them to be more cruel and tyrannical than their conquerors.

Among the various friends about whom my uncle made inquiries was our relative, Don Fernando Serrano, whose estate was a few leagues off, though it abutted upon that of Mr Concannan, which extended a considerable distance to the southward. Properties in that country are of great extent, and a visitor to Don Serrano's house had to travel a dozen leagues through his estate before reaching it. He was not only a wealthy man, but greatly esteemed by all who knew him. He was supposed to entertain strong Liberal principles, but, on account of his age and health, had taken no part in the struggle going forward. My mother's and Uncle Denis's father, I may remark, had married his sister; he was therefore my great-uncle, and his children were my cousins. Our families, too, had always been on the most friendly terms, and my father and mother had paid frequent visits at his house. His eldest son, Don Carlos, who was married and had a large family, lived with him. Two of Don Carlos' sons and one of his brothers had joined the insurgents, but, not to commit Don Fernando, had assumed different names; though we knew that both Don Fernando and Don Carlos afforded much pecuniary assistance to the Liberals. From the precautions they had taken, they believed that they were not suspected by the Royalists, and at all events they had escaped being molested.

Their chief cause of anxiety arose, however, from the hostile behaviour of a tribe of Indians, the Barawas, who inhabited the shores of the river Guaviare, falling into the Orinoco. They belonged to the great Carib family, and had many years before been driven by their white invaders from their native territory on the coast to the eastward, and had here settled themselves; retaining, however, their warlike disposition and many of their ancient manners and customs. Barawa is a Carib name for the sea; and they consequently took it, as was supposed, from their ancestors having lived on the borders of the ocean, or having crossed it from the lands they once inhabited. We had little doubt that our prisoner belonged to that tribe, and was probably a chief among them.

My father told us of a report he had heard, of Spanish emissaries having visited them for the purpose of inducing them to take up arms against the Republicans; and should such be the case, the capture of our prisoner, Kanimapo, might prove a fortunate circumstance, as we should hold him as a hostage for their good behaviour. The next morning, however, there appeared great probability that our hopes would be disappointed; for on my uncle's visiting him he found him much worse. As the day advanced, Uncle Denis expressed his fears that the Indian would die, notwithstanding all the care bestowed on him.

Day after day, however, the wounded man lingered on. My father and Norah were assiduous in their attentions to him; and he refused to take such medicines as we possessed from any other hands but my sister's. There was now no chance of his escaping, for he was too weak to walk; indeed, he could scarcely sit up in his bed. Still, the Indians possess wonderful vitality and endurance, which enable them to recover from wounds of the body; but they succumb very quickly to European diseases. Though apparently growing weaker, Kanimapo still clung to existence. He seemed grateful, too, for the attentions shown him; but except having mentioned his name, he had not told us who he was, nor had he given any reason for attacking our party.

Uncle Denis had gone home; and soon after Gerald and I paid a visit at his house. We then went on to that of our relation, Don Fernando Serrano, where we were received by him and my cousins with the greatest kindness. They were interested in hearing of all my adventures, and especially in the accounts I gave them of our capturing the Indian; but they were unable to conjecture who he was. I was delighted with all the family, they were so gentle and loving to each other, and so kind to me. What also surprised me much, was to find that Don Serrano regularly read the Bible and had prayers with his family. Such a thing was at that time probably unheard-of in South America. They did not speak unkindly of the nearest padre, who occasionally visited them, but they evidently held him in no respect.

"He is a poor ignorant man," observed Don Carlos, "a blind leader of the blind; he expressed his horror at finding we read the Bible, and urged us to give up the practice, as one most dangerous to our souls. Now, it is very evident to me that from the Bible alone do we know anything about God, or how He desires men to live; and therefore, unless we read the Bible, we must remain ignorant of Him and His will, or obtain the knowledge second-hand from one who might make grievous mistakes in interpreting it,—as Padre Bobo would most certainly do."

I suspected from this (what I afterwards found to be the case) that my relatives were really Protestants, though they did not openly declare themselves to be so; that their family had held these opinions from the time when many of the noblest in Spain had espoused them. Their ancestor had providentially escaped the doom which the horrible Inquisition had inflicted on the greater number of those who had become Protestants: having made his way to America with his wife, he had settled in this then remote region; but dreading persecution, he had not attempted to promulgate his opinions beyond his own family. My maternal grandfather, when he married Donna Teresina Serrano, had, through her instruction, become a Protestant. Thus, in the heart of South America, those principles were cherished which, as was fondly hoped, would spread around them when liberty should be established among the population.

I suspect it was owing to the machinations of the priests that the Barawa Indians had proved so hostile to one whose wish and aim was always to benefit them. That such was the case, Don Fernando could not clearly ascertain; but it was known that Padre Bobo had made several visits to the Indians, for the purpose, as he professed, of converting them to Christianity. He had managed, indeed, to induce some of them to allow him to baptise their children, but they remained as utterly ignorant of the Truth as before. (What I have here mentioned, I heard from my own family before Gerald and I set off to visit our friends.) As is often the case in Spanish families of wealth, there were three generations living in harmony together, and I was somewhat puzzled at first to distinguish between my numerous relatives. Gerald, who knew them all, helped me, but still I was frequently making mistakes. Among them was a very beautiful girl, whom I at first took to be one of my cousins, and whom I addressed accordingly; but after I had been there a couple of days, she laughingly told me that, though she should be very happy to be a relative, she was not so in reality: that her name was Isabella Monterola, and that she was a ward of Don Fernando. Then suddenly changing her tone from gay to grave, she said,—"I am happy here, and they are all very kind; but I cannot forget my poor father, who was murdered by the cruel Spaniards because he loved liberty and hated tyranny; and, alas! my mother, who was compelled to witness his execution, died of grief. They would have shot her too, had she lived, as they did other women, without remorse; and me, perhaps, because I was their child, had I not been so young but I was rescued from prison by Juan Serrano, and brought here secretly. The Spaniards did not know who carried me off, and therefore could not send to bring me back, or they would have done so. You have not been long enough in the country to have heard one-tenth part of the horrible cruelties those Gothos have inflicted on our people."

"But you, Donna Isabella, are Spanish, and so are all our friends here," I said, after having expressed my horror of the atrocities which had been committed in the country.

“I am a child of Venezuela,” she answered proudly. “I disown the name of Spaniard; do not, Señor Barry, ever call me one again. We speak the language of Spain, it is true, and boast our descent from noble ancestors who conquered the country in which we live; but we have for ever severed our connection with the land from which we came, because Spaniards desire to enslave us.”

I had considered Donna Paola a heroine, but as I listened to Donna Isabella I thought her a still more interesting one; and she was equally anxious to enlist recruits in the cause of liberty.

I had not forgotten the advice General Bermudez had given me; and I found my young cousins were in the habit of exercising themselves daily in the use of the lance, as well as with firearms and swords. Every morning they went out for some hours on horseback, and practised on a level meadow at some little distance from the house; and I soon became as expert as any of them. The ends of our lances were not only headless, but covered with a soft pad, so that we could charge at each other without much risk of serious injury; and one day, in a sham fight, I unhorsed all my opponents in succession. As I rode up to where the ladies—who had come out to witness our sports—were standing, they greeted me with loud applause, and Donna Isabella especially showed her satisfaction by the bright smile she gave me and the eagerness with which she waved her scarf.

We had occasionally, also, real sport in hunting wild boars in the part of the forest frequented by those animals. The first day I went out I killed a boar, after narrowly escaping, by a dexterous turn of my horse, being killed myself. We killed a bear, too, and a puma, or South American lion—which, next to the jaguar, is the most savage animal in that continent; and I had the satisfaction of presenting the skin to Donna Isabella.

But our visit was at last to come to an end. Very unwillingly, so far as I was concerned, did we bid our friends good-bye, and mount our horses to commence our journey.

“I shall expect to hear great things of you, Señor Barry,” said Donna Isabella, as I bade her farewell. “The next campaign undertaken by Bolivar will, it is hoped, complete the overthrow of the Spaniards, I am told.”

“The noble sentiments you hold will inspire me, Donna Isabella,” I answered; “and if you will give me that feather from your hat, I will ever wear it in battle, and promise that it shall never be seen in flight.”

She, smiling, instantly gave it me, and I fixed it securely in my hat. We were very young, and I had of late become more romantic than I had ever before been.

At last we had to ride forward, two of our cousins accompanying us to the borders of the estate. As we were well-mounted, instead of taking the rougher but shorter road across the spurs of the mountains, we had settled to strike down into the plain, where we could gallop for a considerable distance, and then, keeping by the borders of a long lake, return towards our own home. Gerald, who knew the way well, said there were no insuperable difficulties to overcome, though we might have to swim a stream or two. “But that,” as he observed, “is nothing when one is accustomed to it; and you, Barry, will have many a river to cross and many a marsh to wade through, as well as mountains to climb, and hundreds of miles to gallop over the prairie, when you take service with General Bermudez.”

He was right; and I was glad to gain some experience as to the varieties of country I might have ere long to traverse.

We were armed with pistols, carbines, and lances, though Gerald’s arm was not strong enough to wield the latter with much effect; but he could skilfully use his carbine when going at full gallop. We trusted, however, to the speed of our horses, should we come in sight of any marauding party of the enemy; and Gerald declared that three, or even four or five, horsemen would not dare to attack us. He was indeed the most spirited little fellow I ever met, and utterly fearless.

As we galloped along we kept a look-out over the plain for any horsemen who might appear.

“I only wish two or three would come!” cried Gerald. “We would soon make the survivors turn to the right-about; for I am pretty sure we should kill a couple at least.”

“I hope that we shall not have anything of the sort to do,” I answered. “I am perfectly ready to fight, when necessary, in a right cause, such as I believe that to be in which our friends are engaged; but it is dreadful to contemplate killing people unless stern necessity compels us. Warfare is terrible work at the best, and the butcheries of which I have heard in this country show too well what men are capable of when their passions are excited. For my part, though I have seen but little of fighting as yet, I wish that peace were established.”

“Oh, you wouldn’t do for a guerilla!” exclaimed Gerald, in a somewhat contemptuous tone.

“I shall not fight with less determination because I wish for peace,” I continued, not minding him. “The only way to secure it is to beat our enemies; and that I will do my best to accomplish, when I have the opportunity.”

“That I am sure you will!” exclaimed Gerald, sorry for his remark; for though impulsive, and in the habit of blurting out anything that came uppermost, he was ever ready to acknowledge himself in the wrong.

We galloped on for some leagues, stopping occasionally to give our horses breath, and then reached the borders of the lake I spoke of—which extended for some distance parallel with the foot of the mountains, and was fed by several streams which flowed from them. It was also connected, by another stream, with the smaller lake below our father’s house. Out of it likewise flowed a river of some size towards the east.

We had forded two of these smaller streams without difficulty, when we came to a wider and deeper one.

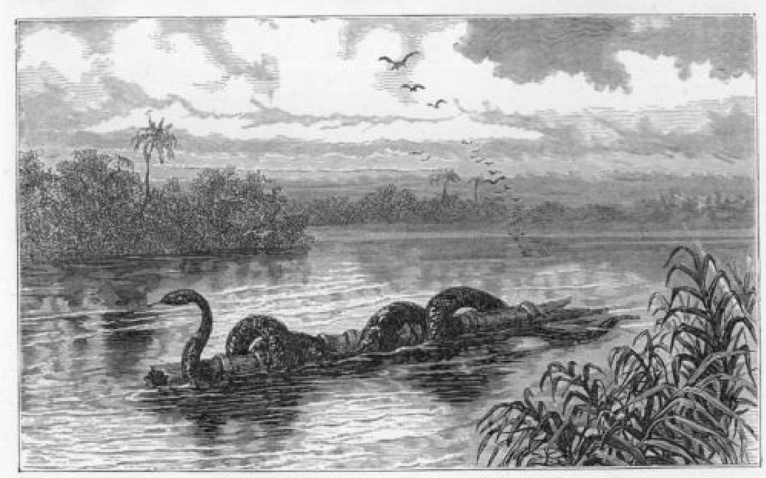
“We shall have to swim for a little distance,” said Gerald; “but our horses will perhaps carry us over on their backs. However, if we find that our weight is too much for them, we must slip off; only we must remember to hold on tight by their manes, and keep at their shoulders, to avoid the unpleasant pats they might otherwise give us with their fore hoofs. And, by-the-by, it will be as well, while we are on their backs, to keep our feet as high up as we can, lest an alligator should take a fancy to our toes; though, as the brutes are of no great size, we haven't much to fear from them."

I thought Gerald was joking; but he was perfectly in earnest, though the danger we were to run did not in the slightest degree trouble him.

I followed his advice when, after wading a short distance, my horse began to swim. Shortly afterwards, as its body was completely immersed, I slipped off its back, taking care to hold on to its mane, near the crupper, with one hand, while I struck out with the other. Gerald himself, being so much lighter, stuck on, and guiding his horse to a shelving part of the bank, regained the firm ground.

I was still in the water, when, looking up the stream, he shouted out to me,—"Make haste, make haste, Barry! for here comes an ugly-looking customer it would be as well not to encounter in the water."

As may be supposed, I was making all the haste I could; for I had no fancy to remain in the river longer than necessary, with the possibility of being seized by an alligator, even though it might be one not large enough to swallow me at a gulp. I saw that Gerald was more excited than usual: as he held his horse's



A BOA-CONSTRICTOR ON A VOYAGE

bridle, he kept stamping and moving about in his eagerness. I exerted myself to the utmost, and at length had the satisfaction of finding my horse's feet touch the shore; when I immediately scrambled on its back and rode up the bank.

"Look there!" cried Gerald; "that brute would be a more unpleasant opponent than even a big alligator."

He pointed, as he spoke, to a huge serpent—which, I concluded, was a boa-constrictor—coiled round the broken stem of a palm-tree, and, with head erect, floating leisurely down the river.

"I only wish it would come nearer!" exclaimed Gerald. "I think I could manage to hit it and blow its head off."

He fired as he spoke, but missed; and the serpent, turning its head, gave a hiss at us, though it did not attempt to quit its raft. From the way it moved its tail, which served as a rudder, I believe that it could easily have guided itself to the shore; and as it was big enough to have crushed not only one of us, but either of our horses, in its powerful folds, I felt especially anxious to avoid it.

Gerald quickly reloaded his weapon. "Fire, Barry—fire!" he cried out; "and if you miss, I'll have another shot."

As the snake, though it was not likely to attack us, might injure other people or destroy some cattle, I took aim and fired; but I merely grazed its head, for it was a small mark to hit with a carbine. The creature then gave a hiss, as if it did not like such treatment, and whisking its tail urged its float towards the bank.

"I say, Barry, the brute's coming towards us," cried Gerald. "I'll have one more shot; and if I miss we'd better gallop off, for these snakes move with fearful rapidity through the grass, and this one might catch hold of us in a way we shouldn't like."

I was glad to find that Gerald was as cautious as he was brave; and considering his advice good, I agreed to take to flight rather than risk an encounter with the serpent on dry land. I might transfix it with my lance, as Saint George did the dragon, but I had no wish to engage in combat with the terrible beast.

While I was reloading my carbine Gerald fired. "Missed again!" he shouted; "now let's gallop for it,—the brute's in earnest, and will have us if he can!"

We turned our horses' heads, and digging our spurs into their flanks, left the serpent, should it land, to search for us in vain.

After going some distance we pulled rein and looked back, but as we could nowhere see it, we concluded that, not discovering us on the shore, it had continued its voyage to wherever it was bound.

"I don't care for human foes, or for any wild animals, but these snakes are my detestation," said Gerald. "The boa and anaconda, and the big tree-snake, are bad enough; but there are others which, on account of their bite, are still worse. There is one called the aques, seldom more than eight or ten feet long, which is the most savage creature imaginable; and its fangs are so deadly that a person seldom lives more than a few hours after being bitten. Not only will the creature spring out upon a passer-by, but it will follow him to a considerable distance, and then fly at his throat and kill him,—unless he has a long stick to defend himself. The Indians and blacks are, with good reason, mortally afraid of the aques. I have often seen them, but never had a fight with one; though I shouldn't care about it, provided I was armed with a long, tough stick."

I confessed that I should not wish to make the near acquaintance of so terrible a reptile; but, young as he was, Gerald had shot a jaguar and a puma (on each occasion while quite alone), and several smaller wild animals—such as black bears, boars, peccaries, and tiger-cats. He had numerous trophies of his skill to exhibit. No wonder that Tim was proud of him. He had greatly the advantage of me as a sportsman; but, though our father and mother had done their best to instruct him, he was sadly behind-hand in general knowledge and book-learning, such as I had had the opportunity of gaining at school. Notwithstanding this, we got on very well together; and there was no fear, I hoped, of our ever falling out. He looked up to me as superior to him in many points, and I regarded him with admiration for his courage and hardihood and excellent temper.

We had proceeded for some way along the banks of the lake, when we caught sight of a boat in the distance, apparently crossing to reach a point ahead of us. We could distinguish four people in the boat, which came on rather slowly. This was accounted for when we made out several horses swimming in the water astern. The lake was bordered by a fringe of reeds, which in some places grew some distance into the water, over which water-fowl of various species winged their flight,—while we observed several pink-tinted flamingoes stalking with long legs in the shallows: and as we were watching the boat, a large flight of these beautiful birds came swooping along through the air.

Being curious to know who was in the boat, we rode slowly on towards the landing-place, from whence, Gerald told me, the road led past the end of the lake to our house. As we reached the spot the boat approached; and looking at the only passenger it contained, I at once recognised the countenance of Dr Stutterheim, while his canine friend Jumbo was standing in the bow of the boat. "What, doctor! is that you?" I shouted out.

"Ah, my young friend, I am very glad to see you," he exclaimed, standing up and waving his hand. "I am coming to take advantage of your invitation. But I will tell you all about it when I get on shore."

THE DOCTOR'S ARRIVAL.

In another minute the boat touched the bank; when the doctor, leaping on dry ground, dragged two of his horses out of the water by the long reins which secured them—a black man, whom I found to be his attendant, leading the third. Shaking hands warmly with the doctor, I introduced Gerald, while Jumbo acknowledged me as an acquaintance by leaping up and energetically whisking his tail. The boatmen then assisted in loading the baggage-animals with several chests the doctor had brought; and having paid the men, he dismissed them, and mounted his horse.

"Now, Heliogabalus, follow me; and see that none of the baggage falls off, you black villain," said the doctor.

The black, having examined the thongs which secured the baggage, climbed up on the back of one of the animals, and followed us as we rode on.

"I sometimes call him Heliogabalus," said the doctor; "but he is generally known by the name of Gab, which is a more convenient appellation for ordinary use. I picked him up on the road to Santa Fé. I have no great faith in his honesty; but as I wanted an attendant, I engaged him—though I strongly suspect he is a runaway, and very likely may be reclaimed by his owner."

"I don't admire him for his beauty," I answered. "Now tell me, doctor, to what happy circumstance are we indebted for the pleasure of seeing you so soon?"

"Simply because I found it dangerous to remain longer in Santa Fé," he answered. "I got no practice,—or rather no payment from my patients; and I thought it very probable that I should be led out and shot by the Spaniards on suspicion of being a Liberal, as was the case with many unfortunate people while I was there. I determined, therefore, to continue my journey through the country, and gain a further knowledge of its natural history and productions,—keeping, if possible, out of the way of the combatants. I should have preferred travelling in more peaceable times; but, as life is short, I might not have an opportunity were I to defer my travels till the Spaniards are driven out of the country and peace is restored."

Of course I told him that, under any circumstances, we were very glad to see him; and it at once occurred to me, that should our captive Indian be still alive, the doctor might by his superior skill assist to cure him.

"I have a grand remedy, which, if he has still some breath in his body, is almost sure to succeed," he answered.

"What is it?" I asked.

"To let nature take its course," he replied. "Perhaps your friends have been doctoring him overmuch; but I shall judge when I see him."

It was late when we reached our house, and my father, to whom I had before described the doctor, gave him a hearty welcome.

I was thankful to hear that the Indian was still alive, though in a very weak state; so the doctor was at once taken in to see him. Having examined his wound and felt his pulse, he observed,—"I see all about it. We will give him stimulants, which will set the machine agoing. You have been afraid of fever, and have kept him too low. I will answer for it that in a few days he will be ready to perform his war-dance and flourish his scalping-knife with as much energy as ever."

Norah, who heard this remark, assured the doctor that she believed his patient had become perfectly civilised, mild, and gentle.

"Oh yes, while he is in this house and in your presence, young lady; but let him get back to his old haunts among his savage companions, and he will cut throats with as much zest as ever," replied the doctor.

At the supper-table my father inquired what news the doctor brought from Bogotà.

"Judging from the cruelties inflicted on their prisoners, the Spaniards know that they are losing ground," he answered. "It is bad enough when they shoot men taken in arms; but the day before I left I witnessed a sight which made my blood boil with indignation—and I am not apt to feel such sensations, I assure you. A young lady, it appears, residing in the city, was accused of favouring the patriot cause, and of giving information to its leaders—of being a spy, in fact. A letter she had written to Bolivar was stopped, and the bearer confessed that it had been intrusted to him to deliver, by her. She was immediately arrested and brought before the judge. She was young and beautiful—very beautiful indeed, I assure you—and I should have thought that her appearance alone would have softened the heart of the greatest tyrant. I expected to hear her plead her innocence with tears in her eyes, imploring for mercy; but instead, she stood calm and unmoved, and boldly acknowledged herself a patriot, and ready to die, if required, so that she might know her beloved country would gain its freedom. Not one among those collected at the trial dared to utter a word in her favour: she was condemned to die, and was forthwith led out to undergo the sentence just pronounced. She bowed her head proudly, not a limb trembling, not a tear dropping from her eye. It was granted her, as a favour, that she should be shot, on account of her rank and the high estimation in which she was held. A priest was sent for; but she refused his services, observing that she had counted the cost, and had made full preparation for the fate which awaited her should she be discovered—her only regret being that she could no longer serve the cause in which she gloried. 'Do you leave no one behind you who will mourn your loss?' asked her military judge, with cruel irony in his tone; for it was known that she was engaged to marry a young and handsome colonel of the Republican army."

"Who was she?" I exclaimed eagerly, my heart sinking as I heard the doctor say this; "what was her name?"

"Donna Paola Salabriata," he answered. "Without being allowed to take a last farewell of her friends, or to communicate with any one, she was led out into the great square, followed by a party of soldiers," continued the doctor, not observing my agitation. "She entreated as a favour that her eyes might not be bound; and facing her executioners, she stood with her arms crossed on her fair bosom, without for a moment exhibiting the slightest fear. I could not have believed that any woman would have shown courage so undaunted, and yet be so gentle and modest in all her actions. Stoical and indifferent as I am, I could scarcely refrain from shouting 'To the rescue!' and rushing forward to preserve her; but I remembered in time that I should certainly be shot did I make the attempt. And so, rooted to the spot, and feeling as if I were turning into stone, I waited till the fatal word should be given. Could any being in the form of man, as he beheld that young creature in all her maiden beauty, utter that word? Could those swarthy soldiers, savage as they looked, pull a trigger to deprive her of life? Yes! and the officer—who perhaps was a husband, perhaps a father—in a loud voice, which sounded to me like the shriek of a demon, gave the order to fire. Then came the rattle of musketry and a cloud of smoke; and the fair young girl, pierced by a dozen wounds, sank lifeless on the ground. The officer advanced to ascertain that she was dead, followed by the soldiers, to plunge their bayonets into her had she shown any signs of life. But death had been merciful; and the still lovely corpse—for not a shot had struck her countenance—was placed on a bier, and carried away for interment."

As the doctor finished his thrilling narrative, unable longer to restrain myself, I burst into tears, at the thought of one so young, so lovely, and so devoted to a noble cause, having been thus cruelly put to death. My heart bled, too, for young Colonel Acosta. I reflected on the agony he must endure, the bitter desire for vengeance which must animate his bosom. I little fancied at the time that he was my cousin, and that I should be by his side on the field of battle when, in the hour of victory, he cast his last fond look at the miniature of the lovely girl whom he had hoped one day to make his bride, ere she was foully murdered by those who were now about to be driven for ever from the land. But I anticipate events.

The account we had heard excited feelings of grief and indignation in all our family. Norah was weeping bitterly; she had known Donna Paola. Even had she not known her, she would have wept at the tale, and wished, as I did, to aid in driving our tyrants from the land. I suspect that had my worthy schoolmaster been present, his sympathies would have been with us, and he would not have advised me to remain neutral in the struggle. But I must quit the subject; I cannot, even at the present day, speak of it without a choking sensation rising in my bosom.

The doctor looked surprised at the effect his narrative had produced; and he expressed his regret that he should have spoken of her, when I told him that I had but lately met Donna Paola.

"Now we will talk of something else," he said. "Your brother seems to be a great sportsman for one so young, Mr Barry. I hope that he will assist me in obtaining specimens of natural history, and enable me to gain a further knowledge of the habits of the quadrupeds and quadrumana, and of the feathered tribes, of this region."

"I shall be very happy to accompany you, doctor,—either into the forests, or over the plains, or up the mountains, or on the shores of the lakes,—whenever you wish to go," said Gerald.

"I should be ready to go to-morrow; but I must not neglect my patient," answered the doctor. "And he will require my care for a few days; and trust me, I will do my best to cure him."

The rest of the evening was spent in talking of our proposed shooting-excursion.

Some days elapsed, however, before we could set out. The doctor was most attentive to the wounded Indian, who was now evidently recovering under his superintendence. Still, he seemed to regard Norah as his chief nurse; and though he hesitated to take what the doctor prescribed for him from any one else, he received it willingly from her hands.

At last the doctor pronounced him convalescent, and declared that he no longer needed his care. "And so, my young friends," he said, turning to us, one evening while we sat at supper, "we will lose no more time, out set off immediately. Life is short, remember. '*Carpe diem*' should be the motto of all who desire to gain information."

I agreed to accompany the doctor and Gerald; and before retiring to rest that night we made arrangements. Tim, also, on hearing of our plan, begged to go—being afraid that Gerald would get into some scrape.

The doctor of course intended to take Jumbo. I asked him if Gab was to go also.

"I have not tried him yet, and I think it is possible, if I put a gun into his hands, that he might shoot me instead of a jaguar, should one appear before us," he replied.

I confess I thought that possible, for I did not particularly like the appearance of Mr Heliogabalus.

My father employed a number of blacks on his estate, as did my uncle; for they found them far more trustworthy and industrious than the so-called Christianised natives. Gab soon made himself at home among his fellow-blacks, but they from the first looked upon him with some degree of suspicion, for which I could not account; they very probably had more insight into his character than either his master or I had.

We started early the next morning, with a small quantity of provisions,—consisting chiefly of flour and biscuits,—a pot in which to boil our cocoa, and some cups to drink it out of; some condiments, such as pepper and salt; and plenty of powder and shot. We expected to kill sufficient game to supply ourselves with substantial food. We were all mounted, as we could leg-strap our horses while we shot, or leave them under charge of a black servant, who accompanied us with a sumpter-horse to carry our larger game, as also the skins of any animals the doctor might wish to preserve. We agreed to camp out for a couple of nights, and then return home.

I must not stop to describe the numerous birds we saw on the lake along the shores of which we took our way—the flamingoes, spoonbills, herons, and several varieties of water-fowl. Among others, we saw some little herons as white as snow, which the doctor assured me were great friends of the alligators. Before long we caught sight of a number of these saurians lying on a bank in the sun; and while we were watching them, several of the beautiful birds perched on their backs, and went walking composedly along, as if they mistook them for trunks of trees. The alligators were much smaller than those I had seen in the Magdalena, and both Gerald and Tim assured us that they never attacked human beings.

Having left our horses in charge of our black servant, Chumbo, we set off to get a shot at the wild-fowl, some of which the doctor wanted to stuff, while we agreed they would also serve us for dinner. The reeds being very high, we soon lost sight of each other. I had gone some way, supposing that I was at a distance from my companions, and was on the point of firing at some wild-fowl which rose in the air, when, just close to the water, I heard the doctor shout out in a voice of terror, which I was sure he would not have done without good cause. I rushed forward as fast as I could through the reeds, when what was my horror to see an enormous anaconda, capable of swallowing a foal or a young calf at a gulp, with its head raised within a few feet of his shoulders, and apparently about to seize him in its deadly embrace. Either his gun was unloaded, or terror prevented him from using it.

Hastily ramming a bullet down my fowling-piece, I raised it to fire, hoping earnestly that I might take good aim. My worthy friend's life depended on my doing: so, for in another instant the monster might envelop him in its huge folds. I shall not forget in a hurry the look of horror depicted in the worthy doctor's countenance. Taking steady aim, I fired, and the bullet happily went crashing through the anaconda's head. Though the creature was not killed, its head dropped, and the doctor had time to spring forward and escape its fangs, which almost grazed his arm. I shouted to him while I was reloading my gun. In a moment he was himself again, and imitating my example, got his weapon ready to fire down the serpent's throat should it again lift its head. It quickly gave him an opportunity; and the second shot had the effect of making it roll over and over in a most extraordinary fashion.


THE DOCTOR AND THE ANACONDA

I was glad to keep out of its way, and so was the doctor, whom, by making a circuit, I rejoined.

"I hope this marsh is not frequented by other snakes of the same species," he observed. "If it is, I propose that we beat a retreat while we can do so with whole bones. But I should like to have that fellow's skin; it would be a prize worth possessing. However, I don't feel inclined to approach it nearer."

"Nor do I; but probably in a few minutes it will be dead," I said.

"Not quite sure of that," replied the doctor; "serpents have wonderful vitality. But if we could get near enough to cut off its tail, we should soon kill it."

I undertook to make the attempt. Having a sharp axe in my belt, while the doctor stood ready to fire should it raise its head, I rushed forward and severed the tail about six feet from the end. In an instant its movements ceased, and its coils gradually relaxed.

"Bravo, Barry! The piece you've cut off would make a good-sized serpent of itself," shouted the doctor, holding it up. "If we could skin it, we might carry it home."

While we were speaking, Jumbo, who had been at a distance, came jumping up, and barked furiously at the dead serpent. I rather suspect that, having seen the creature, he had bolted—not unwisely, for it would have swallowed him at a gulp. I hinted this to the doctor, who at first repudiated the idea, but acknowledged that Jumbo was more experienced with regard to alligators than anacondas.

Our shots, and shouts had been heard by Gerald and Tim, who now appeared, and congratulated the doctor on his escape.

"I owe it to my friend Barry's coolness and courage," he answered. "I shall ever be grateful to him;" and he described how I had shot the anaconda.

The doctor seemed so anxious to have the skin that we all set to work and cut it off, together with the head. To me it was a disagreeable operation, as I was unaccustomed to it; but the rest of the party took it as a matter of course. Having scraped it as clean as we could, we bore it in triumph to where we had left the horses. They snorted as they saw it, and the animal on whose back we fastened it did not seem much to like its burden. Our negro servant gazed on it with horror and astonishment, declaring that he had never seen so large a serpent.

We agreed that, as there might be others in the neighbourhood, it would be wise not to remain among the reeds, especially as Gerald and Tim had shot as many wild-fowl as we required for supper. We accordingly proceeded on towards a forest which bordered the bank of a stream running into the lake; and here we intended to encamp for the night.

Chapter Five.

Camp at night—Shoot two tapirs—The doctor's lecture—Visit Padre Pacheco's house—He has disappeared—A night at a hunter's hut—Return home—Gab accused of treachery—Humming-birds—Kanimapo appears—Warns me of an intended attack on our house—We collect men, and go to Castle Concannan—Prepare for its defence—We see our house burning—Aqualonga and his banditti appear—Commence the attack—We drive them back with one of our guns—They assault the back of the house—Gab escapes—A battering-ram brought into play—Out-buildings on fire—Several of our men killed and wounded—Our ammunition runs short—A fresh assault—Enemy retreat—We follow—Regain the house—Enemy return—Driven back and disappear—The dead buried.

We were well satisfied with the success we had enjoyed during the day, having shot as many birds as we required for the pot, and several others of various species. We had half-a-dozen different sorts of animals which the doctor wished to examine or to add to his museum. There were among them three monkeys, a titi, a minas leonidas (a miniature lion—a curious little creature), a spider-monkey with white whiskers; besides a paca (a small rodent which burrows in the ground), and an opossum with a prehensile tail, which we saw with half-a-dozen little ones on its back. The doctor observed that, having no pouch, it thus carries its young, and is from this circumstance called Dorsigereas, or "back-bearing." The young ones were clinging on to her with their hand-like feet, while their tails were turned round hers; and thus she was making her way along the branch of a tree when the doctor's cruel rifle cut short her career. I confess that I could not have had the heart to kill the creature, nor did I much like shooting the playful little monkeys; but the doctor observed that such sentiments must yield to the necessities of Science, and that they might consider it a great honour to have their skins exhibited in the Museum of Berlin.

Having kindled a fire, we were busily employed till a late hour, by its light, in skinning the doctor's prizes. The paca, by-the-by, was roasted, and preferred to the ducks.

With our ponchos and horse-rugs we formed luxurious couches, though the mosquitoes were somewhat troublesome. The doctor was entering into a learned disquisition as to their species.

"Faith, your honour," cried Tim, "they all seem mighty much alike, for they bite terribly!"

I may remark that the poncho is the usual cloak worn by all ranks, from the hidalgo to the poorest civilised Indian, differing only in material and texture. It consists of a square piece of cloth with a small round hole cut through the centre, and a slit a little way in front, which enables it to be slipped over the head. It is secured round the neck by a clasp or a button, and is well adapted for a climate where rain and wind have to be guarded against rather than cold.

We agreed that one of the party should keep watch at a time, as it would not have been wise to trust even to Jumbo's vigilance, notwithstanding all the doctor had to say in his favour. At all events, he could not put the sticks on the fire; and a stealthy jaguar might, carry him off, should he close his eyes for a moment.

We secured our camp by dragging some logs of wood round it, and sticking some thick boughs into the ground, so as to break the rush of a jaguar or puma should one take it into its head to make a dash at us, tempted by the savoury smell of the roasted paca and ducks.

I need not again mention the monkeys which came round to look at us, the parrots and other birds which perched in the neighbouring trees, or the brilliant fire-flies which flitted about our heads as soon as darkness set in. I may add the mosquitoes, but they are pests to which no human being can get accustomed. Even the natives look upon them as persecutors; and the whites who live near the banks of the rivers, when asked how long they have resided there, often reply, "I have been food for mosquitoes for so many years." We had bound thick handkerchiefs round our heads, that the ends, by covering our faces, might assist to guard them.

Covering myself up with my poncho, I had managed to go to sleep, in spite of the stings of the mosquitoes, when I was awakened by hearing some one moving near me; and looking up, I saw the doctor take his gun and steal away out of the camp. I followed him, to render him assistance if necessary, though I could not guess his object.

"Hist!" he whispered; "I saw some creatures coming down to the water to drink. They are tapirs; and if we are cautious we may shoot them."

We crept along, keeping under cover of a bank, at one end of which we had formed our camp. Presently I saw two large animals, with long snouts somewhat resembling the trunks of elephants, but considerably shorter. They came on slowly, cropping the grass or leaves in their course. The doctor whispered to me to aim at the one on the left, while he took that on the right. Waiting till they came quite close to us,—for their skin is so tough that it can turn a bullet at a distance,—we fired almost together. The animals turned round, and I thought that we had missed and that they were about to escape; but no sooner had they got round than they began to stagger, and presently both came to the ground.

The doctor, uttering a shout of triumph, rushed forward with his hunting-knife and quickly despatched them. The shots and our voices aroused our companions, who leaped up and came rushing towards us. Together we dragged the two carcasses close to the camp, thinking that the doctor would wait till the morning to cut them up; but, in his eagerness, he insisted on commencing operations at once.

"I want their skins," he said; "and if we don't secure them, the armadilloes, the ants, and the vultures will have made a feast off them before we awake, if a jaguar has not torn them to pieces."

Grasping his knife, he commenced his labours, in which we were fain to assist him; and as he cut away, he lectured on the creature.

"You see," he observed, "this is one of the Pachydermata, or thick-skinned animals. It is a link which connects the elephant and rhinoceros to the swine; indeed, their habits are somewhat similar. It measures about four feet in height and six in length, and is thus the largest animal of this part of the continent. Observe its flexible proboscis—how much it resembles the rudiment of the elephant's trunk; and it serves for the same purpose—that of twisting round the branches of trees, and tearing off the leaves, on which it partly feeds. In form it is like the hog; while its skin resembles that of the rhinoceros: and like that animal it delights in water, and is a good swimmer and diver; while, as does the hog, it enjoys wallowing in the mud. During the day it remains concealed in the deep recesses of the forest,

and, 
NIGHT SPORT

as we have had an instance, issues out at night to seek its food. Here, look at its front feet: there are four toes (while on the hinder there are only three), their tips, as you observe, cased in small hoofs. See! the eyes are small and lateral, and the ears long and pointed. Observe the teeth, which are strong and powerful, to enable it to crush its food, or defend itself against its enemies. The hair, as you observe, is of a deep brown, nearly black, short, scanty, and closely depressed on the surface; while it has little or no tail. The animal is of enormous strength, and its tough hide enables it to force its way through the dense underwood, where no other creature can penetrate. It generally moves forward at a trot; but when pursued it breaks into a gallop, carrying its head downwards very much as does a hog. It holds its own against all the other animals of the forest, and, being of a peaceful disposition, never willingly attacks either man or beast; but the savage jaguar tries occasionally to make a feast off its carcass by leaping on its back. When the tapir feels its enemy, it rushes through the forest, attempting to dislodge it by passing under the low boughs of the trees; or, should water be near, by plunging in and diving down,—when it quickly escapes, as the jaguar must either let go its hold or be drowned. Its teeth being strong and sharp, it can inflict severe wounds when hunted and brought to bay, though it prefers seeking safety by flight."

"Faith, doctor, you were fortunate in killing these fellows before they scented you, or they might have given you some ugly bites," observed Tim, holding open one of the heads.

Having performed our unpleasant operation, we went down to the river to wash our hands, while Tim and the black beat the surface to scare away any alligators which might be prowling about. On our return to the camp we once more lay down, one of the party as before keeping watch; which was more than ever necessary, as the dead tapirs were very likely to attract either jaguars or pumas. We were unmolested, however.

In the morning, mounting our horses, we rode some distance before we breakfasted. Then we shot all day with a result highly satisfactory to the doctor, though we met with no adventures worth noting.

In the evening I found that we were not far from Padre Pacheco's abode; and recollecting my promise to visit him, I proposed that we should go round that way. To this the doctor and Gerald agreed; and, accordingly, the next morning, after we had had a few hours' shooting, we turned our horses' heads in that direction.

On reaching the padre's house we saw no one about. Fearing that he was ill, I went to the door and knocked, but nobody came. I tried to open the door; it was bolted. At last, seeing a cottage at some little distance, I rode towards it, and shouted out,—"Friends, can you tell me what has become of the padre?"

The door opened, and a native woman rushed out with a child at her back, exclaiming,—"Has he come back?—has he come back? O señor, we have lost him!"

"Lost him! How, and when?" I asked.

"Two days ago, when one of our people went to his house it was closed, and no one was within. Neither the señor padre nor Candela were to be found. It is said," (and here she dropped her voice to a whisper) "the Gothos carried them off. They were here, that is certain; and we fear they have murdered him, as they have done so many other unfortunates."

In vain I tried to draw more information from the poor woman, who showed, by her sorrow, the affection she felt for the worthy padre. We also made inquiries at other cottages in the neighbourhood, but received only the same answer.

"Has no one been into the house?" I asked at length. "Perhaps they are there. They may, alas! have been murdered."

We rode back, and after searching round I found a window open. Gerald and Tim scrambled in, and I waited, expecting to have my worst anticipations confirmed. I was indeed relieved when they came back saying that they could find no one. There was still some hope that the padre might be alive; though had he been carried off by the Spaniards, his fate might be that of many others.

As we could not longer delay, we set off, in order to reach the house of a native acquaintance of Gerald's before dark. He was a great sportsman, Gerald told us; and having had several encounters with jaguars and pumas, he would be delighted to recount his adventures.

The house was situated some way up the mountains on the right. To reach it we had frequently to get off our horses and lead them along the rugged path. Our friend's abode was not a grand one; it consisted but of one room, which was ornamented with his trophies of the chase. He maintained himself chiefly by keeping a large flock of goats, which lived secure from jaguars and pumas among the rugged rocks. The savage animals sometimes came, however, to try and catch them, but generally paid the penalty of their audacity with their lives. He gave us a kid for supper, and told us some wonderful stories. Even lately, a jaguar, which was crouching behind a rock, suddenly sprang out on him, and seized him by the arm. With his knife he attempted to strike the brute, when they both rolled over the precipice, and he lost all consciousness. On recovering, the jaguar was gone; but there were marks of blood, which showed that it must have been severely wounded.

I did not fail to mention Padre Pacheco's absence, and asked if he could divine what had become of him.

"I do not think the Gothos have got him," he answered; "for, to say the truth, I gave him information that they were coming, and, as the padre is a wise man, he would not have waited for their visit. Where he has gone I cannot tell."

I was somewhat relieved by this information, though I pictured to myself the jovial padre wandering about the wilds without food or shelter.

The next day, by starting at dawn, we reached home at an early hour. The doctor's first inquiry was for his patient; when, to our astonishment, we heard that he had rapidly gained strength, and on the previous night had made his escape. In consequence of his evident weakness, he had been left unguarded, and no one supposed that he had even any wish to quit the house where he had been so kindly treated. Only the day before, he had, with evident sincerity, expressed his gratitude to Norah, and taking her hand had pressed it to his lips, vowing that he would be ready to die to do her any service.

"And so I am sure he would," exclaimed Norah, when our father told us this. "Could he write, he would have left a message explaining why he has left us; and we shall hear some day that he had good reason for doing so. Still, I was as much surprised as any one else when I found this morning that he had actually fled. Probably he was afraid that he might be stopped should he express his wish to go, and therefore thought it wiser to steal off secretly. We shall hear from him before long, depend on it. I cannot believe that he is ungrateful, or had any bad motive for running away."

I fully agreed with Norah. Still, the act was so like the ordinary conduct of Indians, that it was not surprising the rest of the party should believe him to be ungrateful.

"We must wait patiently, at all events, till the mystery is elucidated," observed my father; "and now, as you hunters are hungry, we will go to dinner."

We had just finished our meal when Tim hurried in with the announcement that a number of our black labourers were collecting outside in a state of great commotion, three or four of them having brought in the doctor's servant, Gab, as a prisoner. Tim informed us that, having suspicions as to his conduct, they had followed him for several miles into the mountains, when they found that he had gone to meet some Spaniards.

On hearing this the doctor seized a thick stick, and was on the point of rushing out, to break it, as he said, on Gab's head,—or rather on his shins, for his head was not likely to be much the worse for it.

"Sit down, my good friend," said my father. "I don't manage my blacks in that way. Let me go and speak to him, and I may perchance elicit the truth. If he has been holding any traitorous communication with the enemy, he probably knows something of their movements; he may afford us valuable information."

My father accordingly went out. I stayed a short time to try and calm the doctor, who was excessively enraged at the conduct of his servant. "Light your meerschaum, doctor," I said, "while I go and see how matters are proceeding."

On reaching the verandah in front of the house, I found Norah and old Josefa standing there, the latter apparently as much excited as the rest of her sable brethren and sisters, who in considerable numbers were collected round the accused negro, vociferating loudly, while Jumbo, who had never taken to him, was joining in the chorus with repeated barks. My father advanced, and having requested the rest to be silent, addressed him earnestly, and urged him at once to confess what he had been about. Gab, lifting up his hands, declared that he had had no evil intentions, as he respected his master, and was grateful to us his entertainers; and that the other blacks, through jealousy, had brought a false accusation against him. On hearing this they all shouted out as before, denouncing Señor Gab as a traitor, a spy, a barefaced hypocrite, and bestowing a good many other unsavoury epithets upon him.

"Silence, my friends," again said my father; "I must sift this matter to the bottom. You have behaved faithfully in bringing him back, and I am thankful to you. And now, Gab, tell me at once, who are the people you went to meet, and what did you say to them? You will understand that if you faithfully speak the truth, you will be rewarded; but if you endeavour in any way to deceive us, you will be punished severely."

Gab hung down his head.

"Speak at once," said my father. "I cannot allow you time to concoct a story. Who are the people you went to meet?"

"I learned nothing from them, Señor Desmond," at length replied Gab. "They were friends of the Spaniards, I confess; and they wanted to know how many people were assembled in this house, and in Señor Concannan's; also if there were many fighting men in the village, and whether you expected a party of the insurgent troops to come here."

"And did you give them the information they required?" asked my father.

"O señor, believe me, I did not," exclaimed Gab. "I told them as many lies as I could think of, and tried my best to deceive them."

"You audacious villain! Then how are we to believe you?" exclaimed the doctor, who now appeared on the scene, and heard his servant's last words. "What made you go out to meet those people?

UNDER SUSPICION.

Answer that. I care not what you tell us that you said to them, or they said to you."

Gab was dumb.

"The fellow has probably been all along in communication with your enemies, Señor Desmond; and his object is to gain a reward for conducting them to this place," exclaimed the doctor. "Take my advice, and hang him forthwith. As I brought him here, I feel answerable for his behaviour; and it would be a bad return for your kindness should the villain betray you."

I am very sure the doctor said this to frighten Gab, for he was not at all of a sanguinary disposition, and even the beasts of the forest he only slew in the cause of Science. But Gab, believing him to be in earnest, trembled all over, and pleaded for mercy, promising to be faithful to his master in future, and to endeavour to mislead the enemy should they come into the neighbourhood. Our own blacks, on hearing this, shouted out,—"Don't trust him; he has got two faces—one for the enemy, and one for you!"

"I don't intend to do so," answered my father. "We will shut him up for the present, till we have settled what punishment to inflict."

With this the rest of the blacks were far from satisfied; and I believe that, had he been handed over to them, they would very quickly have disposed of him.

He was forthwith conveyed to the room in which the Indian had been confined—a plank being nailed over the window to prevent him from communicating with any one outside, and the bedding taken away, so that he had but the bare ground to sleep on, and the naked walls to look at. He was not likely to make his escape, as our former captive had done.

Two or three days passed. The doctor was mostly out in the woods shooting birds and collecting animals and insects. Among the first were some beautiful humming-birds, which in great numbers frequented the neighbourhood, one species scarcely larger than a humble-bee. The doctor came home delighted with his spoils. He observed that he found different species of humming-birds in different localities. One species, which he called a "thorn-bill," does not, as do most of its race, mount to the tops of the trees, but seeks its food among the low flowering shrubs. He exhibited the little creature, which was not so large as many moths. It was of a golden green colour on the upper parts, with a dull brown below; and it had a curious tuft hanging from its chin, of a light green at the base, and purple-red towards the points. The wings and tail were of a purple-brown hue, while the under part of the tail was of brown-yellow.

High up on the hills he found another beautiful little bird which he called the "white-booted racket-tail." It possessed muffs round the legs, and the feathers of its tail were shaped like two racket sticks. When flying these are in constant motion, waving in the air, opening and closing in the most beautiful manner, while it darts forward with the rapidity of an arrow. The colours are chiefly of a bronze-green, with wings of a purple-brown; while the feet, just appearing below its milk-white ruffs, are yellow.

However, I have not time to describe one-half of the humming-birds or others of the feathered tribe which the doctor exhibited. I had often seen them flying about, but had never taken the pains to examine the peculiarities of each. The doctor remarked that many of them were found at an elevation of ten thousand feet above the sea, and others still higher; often on the sides of Chimborazo and Pichincha.

I after this took more particular notice of the peculiarities of the humming-birds in different districts, and thus discovered how greatly they vary according to their localities. It seems a wonder how such defenceless little creatures can exist, surrounded as they must be by numerous foes. They escape in the daytime by the rapidity of their flight; and at night from their small size, and the care they take to guard their nests (many of which are built hanging to the ends of boughs, down which even the active monkeys cannot climb). Others, again, live high up the mountains, in spots to which neither monkeys nor insects find their way.

About a week had passed from the discovery of Gab's supposed treachery, during which time we had felt some anxiety lest an enemy should really intend to pay us a visit; but at last, as no further information reached us, our fears began to subside. I followed the advice I had received from General Bermudez, and endeavoured, as far as I was able, to improve myself in horsemanship, and in the use of the lance and carbine, by firing at a mark as I rode at full speed. As I improved, the desire of practically employing my accomplishments against the enemies of my country increased, and I looked forward eagerly to a summons from the general. I had been one day thus engaged, at some distance from the house, when I caught sight of a mounted Indian galloping towards me. He also carried a lance, and a long bow at his back. As I saw him, the thought that he was an enemy flashed across my mind. The time had come for me to try my prowess and to fight for my life. I reloaded my carbine, which I had just fired, and, placing it across my saddle ready to raise to my shoulder, I grasped my lance, meanwhile watching the movements of the Indian. He had not unslung his bow, while his lance still rested in an upright position; and as he came on he lifted up his hand, as a sign that his intentions were peaceable. In a few seconds I had recognised our late prisoner Kanimapo. His steed was panting and covered with foam. He had evidently ridden at a rapid rate for a long distance.

"I am thankful to meet with you here, Señor Barry," he said, "for my horse is well-nigh exhausted, and there is no time to be lost. But a few hours back I gained the information that a large body of men, under the Royalist leader Aqualonga, is about to make a foray in your district, and to carry off or slaughter all suspected persons,—which means every one whom they encounter. You have heard of the man, and the fierce banditti he commands. He has had notice that a traveller with a vast amount of wealth is residing in your house, and his chief object is to get possession of it, as well as of those whom he calls traitors. Hasten back and make all the preparations in your power for defence, for I cannot tell how soon he may attack you. You may collect a sufficient body of men from the neighbouring village to assist in defending you, and I will endeavour to bring up some of my people to your aid. Again I say you have not a moment to lose. Ride on as fast as your horse can carry you. Farewell. Trust to my desire to assist you."

I thanked Kanimapo, assuring him that I would follow his advice. In the hurry of the moment, I forgot even to ask him why he had quitted our house without wishing us good-bye; and as, immediately he had done speaking, he turned his horse's head, I put spurs into the flanks of mine and galloped homewards.

As I approached I listened anxiously, almost expecting to hear the sound of shots; but none reached my ears. Then I began to fear that the sanguinary banditti had surprised the house, and perhaps put all those I loved to death, as I well knew they were capable of doing. I kept my carbine and spear ready for instant use should I catch sight of the enemy, resolved to sell my life dearly, and to avenge the murder of my family; but no sounds came from the house. My heart sank within me. Great was my relief when, as I got nearer, I saw my father and the doctor seated under a wide-spreading tree, a short distance in front of the house,—the latter puffing away at his meerschaum, and evidently engaged in some learned disquisition or other.

I threw myself from my horse as I got up to them, but so deeply absorbed was the doctor in his subject that he kept puffing and puffing away, encircling his head with a cloud of smoke, and scarcely observing me.

"I beg your pardon, doctor," I said, "for interrupting you; but I have matter of importance, which brooks of no delay." I then gave the information I had received from Kanimapo.

My father looked grave, as well he might.

"Can the Indian be deceiving us?" suggested the doctor.

"I feel very sure that he is not," said my father.

He and the doctor then rose, and we hastened to the house. As we went along, my father continued,—"Before we act, let us consider what is to be done. Even were we to make no resistance, those ruffians would murder us; so that, however inferior in numbers we may be, we must fight. Barry, do you and Tim go into the village and beat up for recruits. Gerald must ride off to Castle Concannan and give your uncles notice,—Aqualonga will certainly try to surprise them. The doctor and I will remain, and, with the aid of our blacks, make all the preparations we can for defence. You will stay by us, doctor; but you may prefer seeking safety in flight, as the quarrel is not yours?"

"No, no, my good friend; I will stay and fight, and attend to those who may be wounded," answered the doctor, still sucking at his beloved meerschaum. "Indeed, it is my belief, from what Barry says, that I am the chief cause of the attack. The savages have heard of my chests of specimens, and naturally suppose that they contain treasure; so that I should be an ungrateful wretch, as well as a big coward, were I to run away. We Germans are not in the habit of doing that. But, from the appearance of your house, I very much doubt whether you can hold it against a determined attack. Would it not be wiser for you to unite with your brothers-in-law, and assist in defending their house, which you may do successfully? It is far more capable of resisting an enemy; and, pardon me, I think it will be madness to attempt to hold out here, when you have their house in which you can take refuge."

"Doctor, you are right," exclaimed my father. "They can but burn this down; and they will not have time to destroy the plantations. I am grateful to you for your counsel. We will carry it out."

Entering the house, my father communicated to my mother and Norah the intelligence I had brought, and desired them to prepare with the children for instant flight, while he went out to call in the blacks whom he could trust.

I meantime, having found Tim, hastened off to the village, where there were nearly a score of men who would be ready, Tim assured me, to fight in our cause. The news we brought spread consternation among the people: some immediately began to pack up their property, with the intention of flying into the woods to conceal themselves; while the braver portion—many of them young men who had already served with the insurgent forces—hurried to get their arms and ammunition, and to follow us. The village was so open that it could not be effectually protected, unless with a far larger force than the inhabitants could muster; and they knew, therefore, that they must abandon their own houses to pillage if they would preserve their lives. It was a hard fate, but it had been the lot of so many others of late years that they did not repine.

I was thankful to find, in the course of a few minutes, twenty stout, hardy-looking fellows, chiefly Creoles and mulattoes, pretty well-armed either with guns, blunderbusses, pistols, swords, or spears. All had one or two weapons, which they knew how to use; and were thoroughly imbued with a true hatred of the Gothos, as they called the Spaniards, and all those who sided with them. The bandit Aqualonga they especially detested, from the numberless atrocities he had committed, and for which he had been rewarded by the King of Spain with a colonel's commission, a handsome uniform, and occasional pay. These signal marks of favour had encouraged him to continue his career. Bermudez and other patriot chiefs had hitherto in vain attempted to hunt him down. He was active and intelligent; and, supported by his band of cut-throats,—Spaniards, mulattoes, Indians, and blacks,—had long evaded pursuit, and had appeared now in one part of the country, now in the other, where he had committed fresh outrages on the unfortunate inhabitants.

I feared that, as he had now come into our neighbourhood,—if Kanimapo was rightly informed,—he would attack Don Fernando's house, from which he would obtain a richer booty than from ours or Castle Concannan. I mentioned my fears to Tim.

"It may be, Masther Barry; but if he pays Castle Concannan a visit first, it's my belief that we'll be after giving him such a drubbing that he'll have no stomach for attacking any other place. We've a good store of ammunition at our house, and your uncles have a still larger; and with forty or well-nigh fifty true men inside the four walls, we shall be able to keep the enemy employed as long as they venture to stay within gun-shot."

On reaching the house, we found my mother and Norah mounted. Each of them held one of the children; while the rest of the horses were laden with the ammunition, and some of the more valuable property. I could nowhere find the doctor, and asked what had become of him. Presently I saw him returning with four blacks.

"I went away for an especial object," he said: "to hide my chests of natural history. The rogues would have broken them open, expecting to find them full of treasure; or should they burn the house, their contents would have been destroyed: so I thought the best way would be to conceal them in the woods, as I could not ask your father to convey them."

I congratulated him on his forethought, and it then occurred to me to ask what had become of Gab.

"Oh, the villain! I forgot all about him!" exclaimed the doctor. "He still remains shut up. Should the banditti destroy the house, he will be burned alive."

"Common humanity forbids that we should allow him to be thus put to death. We must take him with us," observed my father.

"He would only meet with his deserts," remarked the doctor. "However, as it won't do to let him be at liberty, I will bring him out."

The doctor hurried into the house, and quickly returned driving Gab before him with a rope fastened round his wrists, so that, though he could use his feet, he could not run away.

The order was now given to advance,—my mother and sister, with the children, being placed in the centre, while our own servants and the villagers marched on either side; for though we hoped to reach Castle Concannan in safety, we could not tell at what moment Aqualonga and his band might arrive.

My father cast a regretful look at his house, which he was thus leaving to destruction. Tim, who observed it, cried out,—"Faith, masther dear, better to let the house burn than to lose all our lives, which would have happened, maybe, into the bargain; so we'll just hope to live and fight another day, and go back and build it up again before long."

My father, giving Tim a friendly nod, turned away his head and pushed forward to the front, while the doctor and I brought up the rear. He was too good a soldier to omit sending out scouts to bring us timely notice of the approach of an enemy; but we pushed on as fast as we could move, with our firelocks ready for instant use, hoping that, even if attacked, we might fight our way to Castle Concannan, the distance not being great.

Our anxiety was soon relieved by our arrival at our destination. My eldest uncle came out to receive us. Gerald had faithfully delivered our father's message, and they had immediately set to work to put the place in a state of defence. All the timber that could be collected had been brought in to barricade the windows and doors; and they had already begun to remove part of the roof which was thatched, and which, as it could easily be set on fire by arrows with burning tips, was likely to prove dangerous. The considerable force we brought enabled these operations to be rapidly carried on. The thatch was conveyed to a distance from the house, that it might not be employed for smoking us out, while all the men able to use saws and hammers set to work to fit and nail up the timbers. Every door and window was so strongly barricaded, that a cannon-shot only could have knocked them in.

My uncle had, fortunately, two small field-pieces. To enable these to be used with effect, ports were cut in the lower part of the doors on either side, with traps or portcullises to mask them till it was necessary to run them out and fire. All the windows were loopholed; and a number of large stones and bricks, taken from the walls of the outhouses, were carried up to the roof, to be hurled down on the heads of our assailants, should they attempt to escalade the walls.

Our men were then divided into four parties, that, should the house be attacked on every side at once, it might be effectually defended. Uncle Denis had charge of one of the guns; and as I had learned to load and fire one on board ship, I had command of the other, with Gerald and Tim under me.

The preparations occupied us the greater part of the night, and not till towards morning did we consider that the house was placed in a proper state of defence.

My mother and sisters, as well as my aunts and cousins, had rendered all the assistance in their power, and they now begged that they might be stationed in the upper part of the house, so as to throw stones on the heads of the enemy should they approach the walls. To this, however, my father and uncles would not consent, as they would thus be exposed to the shot of our assailants.

“Your proper duty, ladies, will be to help me, should any of our garrison be wounded,” observed the doctor. “The fittest place will be the centre of the house, where you yourselves will run the least risk of being hurt. We cannot allow you to be exposed to danger, if it can be avoided.”

To this they somewhat unwillingly agreed; and our minds were greatly relieved by believing that, as long as we could hold out, they would be safe.

The command of the fortress was entrusted by my uncles to my father, who, having seen so much fighting in his younger days, was considered the best soldier of the party; while Uncle Denis and I acted as his lieutenants.

The order was now given to those of the men who wished to do so to lie down and rest, while we kept a look-out from the battlements,—for so I may call the upper part of the house,—that the enemy might not take us by surprise. It was, as I have said, a square, strongly-built stone house, with a courtyard on one side, beyond which were several out-buildings. Had we possessed a stronger force, these would have been fortified and occupied; but, as it was, we had only men sufficient to garrison the house, and we were compelled to leave these to their fate. Our horses were brought inside, as were several mules; but the rest of the live stock—the oxen, pigs, sheep, and goats—had to be deserted. The house stood on slightly elevated ground, sloping away gradually on three sides, the fourth being that on which the courtyard was situated.

The night was drawing on, but as yet we had seen no signs of an enemy. It was possible that, after all, Aqualonga and his band might not come; they might have encountered some of the patriot troops and been driven back. We hoped that such might be the case.

I was looking out on the side turned towards our house, when Gerald joined me. “I can’t sleep for thinking of the work we are to be engaged in,” he said. “After all the trouble we have taken, it will be quite a pity if the banditti disappoint us.”

“I cannot quite agree with you,” I answered. “Remember that they are not likely to come here till they have paid our house a visit; and if they go there, they are sure to burn it, in revenge at finding us gone, and nothing within which they greatly value.”

As I was speaking, I observed a bright light in the direction of our house, and pointed it out to Gerald. “What do you think that means?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” he said. “Perhaps some native with a torch going through the woods.”

“I fear very much that it will increase,” I answered. “See! it is already doing so! Gerald, I am afraid Aqualonga and his party have really come, and finding that we have escaped, have in revenge set fire to our house. I trust that they will not treat the whole village in the same way. It is bad enough for those who have friends to go to, but it will be sad indeed for the poor people to be burned out of their homes.”

“You take things very coolly, Barry,” exclaimed Gerald. “The villains! Can they have dared to burn our house? I hope that they will come here; and we’ll give them a tremendous thrashing!”

“Depend on it, they’ll not disappoint us,” I observed. “See! see how the flames are ascending! I have no longer any doubt of what has happened.”

As we were speaking we were joined by my father and Uncle Denis, whose opinion confirmed our worst fears. The burning of our house was the signal for us to prepare for an immediate attack, as the enemy would not take long in traversing the distance between the two places; and unless they should take it into their heads to destroy the village, they would very soon appear before Castle Concannan. Those of the garrison who had lain down to sleep were aroused, and all the men were ordered to their posts. I hurried to mine; while my father remained on the roof to give us notice of the approach of the enemy. I opened the port through which my gun was to be fired, and looked out. The shades of night were fast floating away, and I could see down the slope to a thick wood which covered the opposite side of the valley. My gun was loaded with langrage, which was likely to prove far more effective than a single shot; for, though that could reach to a distance, it would not, like the pieces of iron, scatter death and destruction around. With a slow match in my hand, I stood ready for action. A few men only were stationed near me, all of whom seemed resolute and determined to fight to the last.

I felt very impatient, waiting to hear the expected word of command from my father, to fire. Several times I peeped through the port. At length I saw a body of men emerge from the wood. They halted for a minute or more,—being apparently the advanced guard,—till they were joined by others. My father must have seen them, but he did not give the order to fire. At length I saw the whole mass advancing, and at the same moment my father's voice sounded loud and clear through the building,—"Be prepared, my men! The enemy are coming; but reserve your fire till you receive my orders, and then take good aim, and don't throw a shot away."

My uncle now came over to where I was posted. "The enemy appear to intend attacking us only on this side," he observed; "I hope they may, for we shall then be able to sweep them down as they ascend the open slope. They have no scaling-ladders with them, I am thankful to see, or our task would be more difficult. I will lend you a hand, Barry, in fighting your gun, till I am called back to my own. We must take care that while we are reloading none of them succeed in creeping through the port; they are daring fellows, and may make the attempt."

We had kept the port closed, a man being stationed to lift up the trap the moment the order to fire should be given. For a minute or more perfect silence reigned through the house; every one stood eagerly waiting for my father's orders. At length his voice was heard. "Fire!" he shouted; and at the same moment, as if his command had been addressed to the enemy, they began blazing away, the shot rattling like hail against the walls.

Our port being unmasked, we ran out the gun, depressing it so as to sweep the hill-side, and fired. Loud shrieks and cries arose as the iron shower went crashing among them; but as we immediately closed the port, we could not see how many fell. Still they advanced; and as they did so our garrison kept firing away, with right good will, from every loophole in the house. We meantime reloaded our gun and again ran it out; but the enemy scarcely waited for its discharge. Its effects were even more deadly than at first, for their front ranks were almost up to the walls. Before the smoke had cleared away some of them dashed forward towards the port, by command of their leader, for we heard his voice giving the order; but we had our pikes raised to receive them, and two, if not more, were killed as they attempted to force their way in. The others for a moment holding back, enabled us to close the port, at the same time that some of the men on the roof hurled down on their heads a shower of stones, which must have killed or disabled many more.

Aqualonga—for he himself was at the head of the party—now found that he had made a mistake in attacking the house on the north side, and dashing forward, he and his followers took shelter among the out-buildings which surrounded the courtyard. He here rallied his men, and for a short time the firing ceased; for though the out-buildings afforded our assailants protection, they were unable to fire at us from them.

But the fighting was soon renewed. Some brands thrown from the top of the walls on to the roof of the out-buildings set them on fire, and quickly drove out the banditti, who now rushed into the courtyard and attempted to burst open the back doors of the house,—not being aware how strongly they were barricaded. We had on this side also kept a port ready for firing through; and my gun being hauled round, we sent another dose of langrage among them. Numbers fell, as did many more from the shot fired at them from the loopholes and the stones hurled down on their heads. Still, with desperate bravery, Aqualonga persevered, and the bullets came rattling against the walls, several making their way through the loopholes, and some penetrating the shutters, which were of less thickness than those below.

At length the enemy brought up a huge log of timber supported on ropes, and while the rest of the band fired rapidly at us, they attempted to break open one of the lower doors. Should this plan succeed, they might, in spite of all the resistance we could offer, force their way in.

"They are not aware, possibly, that we have another gun in reserve," observed Uncle Denis. "We'll bring it round; and if they do force the door, they'll meet with a reception they little expect."

Had there been any projections to the house, from which we could have opened a flank fire on our assailants, we should have had a great advantage; but, as it was, we could only fire directly upon them.

The battle now raged with greater fury than before: the banditti seemed determined to get in, while we fought for our existence, for we knew well that every one of us would be put to death should they succeed. Again and again they attacked the port—or, more properly speaking, the embrasure—which opened on the courtyard; and at last, finding that they could not force their way in, a number of them brought some heavy masses of timber, with which they completely blocked it up, so that the gun could not be fired through it.

As it was necessary to have a strong party to protect the lower part of the house, now attacked, several of the garrison were summoned from the upper story; when I learned from them that two or three had been killed, and five or six wounded,—who, poor fellows, were affording ample occupation to Doctor Stutterheim. Should the attack be continued with the same fury as at first, the banditti might succeed, in spite of the determined resistance we were making. That they still hoped to do so, was shown by the way they were attacking the door; but as we had two guns ready to receive them, besides a number of men with muskets and pikes, we did not despair of driving them back, even should they break down the barricade.

While we were standing ready, my uncle recollected that the port on the south side was left unguarded, and Gerald and Tim were sent round to watch it. Directly afterwards Gerald came running back, saying that just before they reached it they saw a couple of black legs going through, and on looking out they discovered Gab scampering down the hill. They both fired, but missed him, as he at that instant, either intentionally or by chance, fell flat on the ground. He quickly picked himself up, however, and before they could reload he had got under shelter. They had little doubt that his intention was to join Aqualonga, and lead some of the people through the unguarded port; so Gerald begged that two or more men might be sent to assist in its defence. This was of course done, though they could ill be spared.

All this time the battering-ram was crashing against the door, notwithstanding that several of those working it were one by one picked off by our marksmen in the upper story. In so doing they were exposed to the fire of our assailants at the further end of the courtyard, who kept peppering away at us without cessation.

"I fear, Desmond, that we shall before long exhaust our powder," I heard my eldest uncle observe to my father; "it is already fearfully diminished."

"We shall drive the enemy back before then, I hope," was the answer; "it will never do, by slackening our fire, to let them suppose that we are likely to run short of it. Even should it be exhausted, we may still hold out; and, from the rate at which they are firing, they are quite as likely to use up all they possess."

We were at this time standing ready to discharge our two guns, should the door give way—and there seemed little hope that it could resist the tremendous battering it was receiving. As soon as one of the men working the battering-ram was killed or wounded, another took his place. Presently there came a loud crash, and the shattered door flew in splinters about our ears, while through the aperture we saw hundreds of savage countenances, with the points of pikes and swords and the muzzles of pistols directed at us. It was but for an instant, for directly we could run out our guns we fired them point-blank into the living mass. As soon as the smoke cleared away the ground was seen strewed with dead and wounded men; while the greater number, panic-stricken by the unexpected reception we had given them, instead of dashing forward to make their way through the opening, were rapidly retreating, in spite of the efforts of their leader and his officers to stop them.

"Now, my lads!" cried my father, "let's take advantage of their fright, and put them to the rout." Saying this he dashed through the doorway, while I followed with about fifteen more. We drove the enemy before us across the courtyard, and should have followed them farther, had we not heard my uncle's voice shouting to us to return, in tones which showed that he considered we were in the greatest danger. Happily, we effected our purpose before Aqualonga perceived what we were about; and as my father and I—being the last to re-enter the house—sprang through the doorway, we saw the enemy again advancing.

My uncles had, during our sortie, brought fresh beams, with which, as soon as we were inside, they again barricaded the door. It was not a moment too soon, for another band of Aqualonga's followers had been perceived approaching the house on the southern side. Disappointed in not immediately effecting his object, Aqualonga now called off his men; it was, however, to reform them, and make preparations for a fresh attack.

Matters with us were now growing more serious: we had only powder to hold out an hour or two longer at the rate at which we had hitherto been using it; while the enemy, from behind every spot where they could find shelter, continued firing at the loopholes. A party of them, having gone to a short distance, now returned with a quantity of firewood, which they threw into all the out-buildings nearest the house; and setting light to them, they were soon blazing furiously.

The enemy took care not to give us a moment's respite. Although nearly a hundred of them had been killed or badly wounded, they still outnumbered us as ten to one. Already eight of our men were *hors de combat*,—a heavy loss among so small a number,—yet no one quailed, or talked of surrendering.

While the flames were raging round us, the banditti once more came on to the assault on three sides of the house. We flew to our posts—my uncle dragging one of the guns to the south side, and I taking mine to the north. The enemy shouted loudly as they advanced. My father and uncles encouraged the men to remain firm, and I did my best. "Hurrah! sure they'll run soon!" shouted Tim, imitating our example.

The guns were prepared; and waiting till our assailants were close to the walls, we discharged them as before. We now saw that they had got fresh battering-rams; my gun having swept away most of the men carrying that on the north side, while the musketry from the loopholes in the upper story played havoc among their ranks.

Aqualonga appeared everywhere—now on one side, now on the other; in vain we endeavoured to pick him off—he seemed to bear a charmed life. We knew him by his Spanish uniform; but in his appearance there was nothing to show him to be a chief, for he was short and broad-shouldered, with remarkably ugly features. Yet the man, though serving in a bad cause, had the spirit of a hero; and his courage animated his followers, or they would not have persevered so long.

In this attack they kept up as hot a fire as at first—when suddenly it ceased. On looking out we saw them retiring rapidly down the hill on both sides, and forming out of gun-shot on the west. Our hopes rose, but it would not do to be too sanguine: they might be preparing for a third and more desperate attack. Could we resist that attack? We had not more than three or four rounds of ammunition for each musket; and not so much, should we again have to load the guns. My father, animated by the spirit of his youth, proposed to charge down the hill and put the enemy to flight; he had called some of the men together for that purpose, and many were ready to follow him. Tim and I, of course, were eager to do so; but my eldest uncle interfered, and urged us not to make the attempt: perhaps the enemy had retired with the object in view of drawing us out from our fortifications, and then turning round and attacking us with overwhelming numbers.

"I believe you are right, Terence," answered my father; "though I should have liked much to give them a parting salute."

The design was accordingly abandoned. Our first care was to strengthen the door the enemy had battered in; for should they return, we must depend rather on our fortifications than on our power of annoying them. To make some amends for our want of ammunition, a party of men were told off to carry up a supply of stones and brickbats to the roof, to hurl down on our assailants. By using these, we might at all events destroy a good many, and annoy them while attempting to effect an entrance at any particular part. Should they succeed in again breaking open a door, we agreed to fight desperately at the breach till not a man of us remained alive.

As may be supposed, the enemy were anxiously watched from the battlements. To our infinite satisfaction, in a few minutes they continued their march; and in a short time not a man of them was to be seen. Their wounded they carried off, but the dead were left where they fell. It was a dreadful sight. Upwards of eighty lay stretched on the ground, in various attitudes, round the house; the greater number on the west side, in the courtyard. Some of these had fallen into the burning buildings, and were hideously charred. If left where they were, besides the annoyance which the fearful spectacle caused, they would render the house uninhabitable. My uncle therefore ordered down ten of the men—promising them a reward—to bury the bodies; and a huge grave being dug in the valley, they were dragged down and thrown in. This task occupied nearly the remainder of the day.

I had been so much engaged, that I had been unable to go up and see my mother and sisters. I now found Norah and my mother assisting the doctor in attending to his patients; while the rest were in the kitchen superintending the cooking of various viands. I had tasted nothing since the morning, and the odour made me excessively hungry. I was thankful, therefore, when the meal was ready; and we all sat down to it with right good appetites. Had it not been for our poor fellows killed and wounded, we should have been a very merry party. It was my first battle, and I could not get over the sight of the unhappy wretches whose bodies I had seen strewing the ground. We were all, I trust, thankful for our preservation.

We did not allow our scarcity of ammunition to be generally known; but so small was our supply, that unless we had been able to keep out the enemy with our swords and spears, we might otherwise by this time have been numbered with the dead.

Note. A house attacked by Aqualonga was defended by a party of the patriots much in the way described in the text.

Chapter Six.

The night after the battle—On the watch—Kanimapo appears—Warns us that Aqualonga is about to return—We resolve to retreat—Kanimapo offers to guide us to a place of safety—The doctor accompanies the wounded—Our journey—Adventures—My mother unable to proceed—Encamp—Find Candela fishing—Visit the padre in his nest—He comes with me to our camp—He agrees to accompany us up the mountains—Again proceed—Encounter the doctor—He joins us—Kill two pumas and obtain some venison.

Notwithstanding our success, we were perfectly sensible that danger was not over, as the enemy might return, and, in the hope of taking us by surprise, renew the attack. Of course, trustworthy men were placed on the battlements to keep a look-out.

We were all naturally somewhat tired, and were very glad to lie down on mats in the corners of the room. My father and uncles were, however, too anxious to go to sleep; and I desired to be aroused in three hours, that I might take my share of watching.

When Tim called me, I got up, feeling quite refreshed, and at once went to the top of the house to have a look-out. The buildings which the enemy had set on fire were still smouldering, but I was able to look beyond them into the darkness, and to distinguish objects at a considerable distance. The fire which we supposed to be our own house had now gone out, showing that it must long since have been burned to the ground. We hoped, however, that the village had escaped.

A passage ran completely round the roof, and by its means I could watch each side in succession. I was looking towards the south-west, where the ground was mostly open, when I observed a single figure advancing at a quick pace across it. The person stopped for a few seconds, and then came on directly towards the house. Whoever he was, I could not suppose that he was an enemy. As he got near enough to hear me, I hailed, and inquired what he wanted.

“I come with important information,” he answered; “allow me to enter, that I may deliver it without delay.”

From the tone of his voice, and the way he pronounced his words, I knew that he must be an Indian; but feeling assured that he was a friend, I told him on which side he would find the only door by which he could be admitted; then calling to one of the men to take my place, I hastened down to the ground-floor. I there summoned four trustworthy men to guard the door; but on opening it, the light from the lantern held by one of the men fell on the stranger’s countenance, and I recognised Kanimapo.

“I come,” he said, “to urge you to be on your guard; for Aqualonga has been joined by fresh forces, and he has sworn that he will capture the house, or perish in the attempt. He fully expects to succeed, for a black, who states that he made his escape from the house, has informed him that many of your people have been killed and wounded, and that your ammunition is almost expended. On hearing this, Aqualonga expressed both rage and regret at not having continued the attack; and he fully intends to resume it to-morrow night, when he hopes to find you off your guard. As I am supposed to be a foe to the patriots, I was able to mix among his officers without being suspected; and having gained all the necessary information, I escaped from the camp, and came at once to put you on your guard. I desire, also, to render you any further assistance in my power.”

I of course merely give the substance of what Kanimapo said.

Knowing that his information was too important to be neglected for one moment, I at once went in search of Uncle Denis, who was on guard. He called up my father, Uncle Terence, and Doctor Stutterheim; and Kanimapo being summoned, a council of war was held. No one having any doubt of the correctness of his information, it was quickly decided that, in consequence of our want of ammunition, it would be hopeless to attempt the defence of the house, and that the best prospect we had of saving our lives was to beat a speedy retreat. My uncles proposed proceeding to Don Fernando's; and my father would have gone there also, had not Kanimapo undertaken to guide him and his family to a place of safety, if they would trust to him.

"I would invite you all to come, but I fear that so large a number would be more likely to be discovered by the Spaniards," he said.

My father expressed his perfect confidence in the Indian, but said that he must first consult my mother. He therefore went to call her, and she and Norah quickly appeared. The Indian did not conceal his satisfaction when they both declared that they should be ready to trust to his guidance.

"Kanimapo's life will answer for your preservation," he replied. "Had he a hundred lives, he would willingly give them up for your sakes."

It was therefore decided that my uncle and his family, with a party of twenty men, should immediately start for Don Fernando's, and that we should accompany Kanimapo. Our chief anxiety was for the poor wounded men. To leave them in the house, would be to doom them to certain destruction. It was accordingly arranged that they should be carried to a place of concealment in the neighbourhood of the village, where their friends could take care of them.

"I will attend them," said Dr Stutterheim; "although I should have preferred accompanying you, my friends, into your mountain-retreat. But I look upon these poor fellows as my patients, and I never desert my patients until they are cured."

Having once decided to abandon the house, the necessary arrangements were rapidly made. Litters were formed for carrying the wounded men; two horses and a mule were appropriated for the use of my mother and Norah, and for the conveyance of the younger children. The remainder of the animals were then taken by my uncles, as it was important that they should push on rapidly, to avoid the danger of being cut off by any of Aqualonga's people. My father advised that a party should remain within to barricade the door by which we had made our exit, and that they should then descend from the battlements by means of a rope, so that it might cost the enemy considerable time and trouble to force their way in.

A brief time only was given to parting adieus, and then our different parties set out. We had still three hours of darkness before there was any risk of being discovered, and after that, it will be remembered, according to what the Indian had heard, a whole day would elapse before Aqualonga would make his proposed attack.

I remained behind a moment, to bid farewell to the doctor.

"I will not, if I can help it, quit the neighbourhood till we meet again," he said as he wrung my hand.

"The banditti will probably not remain here long. When they have retired, you may descend from your mountain stronghold; and your father will, I hope, lose no time in rebuilding his house."

On consulting with Kanimapo as to the best route to take, we found that he intended to proceed for some distance along the level ground, through the forests, and by the shores of the lake; then, having made a circuit, to strike up to the left among the mountains. We should thus avoid the risk of falling into the hands of any scouts sent out by Aqualonga; and though the route was longer, we might easily reach the region to which he wished to conduct us. Game, he said, was abundant; and there was a cavern of considerable dimensions, which would afford us ample accommodation, surrounded by inaccessible rocks, the only pathway amid which was little known and might be easily guarded.

It may seem strange that my father and Tim, who had resided so long in the country, should not be well acquainted with every part far and wide around; but the difficulties and dangers of traversing these mountain districts are so great, that few white men are tempted to go out of the beaten track, and they are consequently known only to more daring hunters and a few of the Indian natives.

Before we started, we sent off the villagers with the wounded men and all our own blacks, with the exception of one—a faithful fellow named Chumbo, who had been chiefly instrumental in the capture of the traitor Gab, and had frequently exhibited great affection for us. We did not even let him know the route we had determined to take, and the rest of the party believed that we should at once strike up into the mountains. Indeed, we proceeded a short distance in that direction, and then halted till the rest were out of hearing.

My father, Gerald, Tim, and I carried firearms; but our scanty supply of powder would prevent us using them except in cases of emergency. Chumbo had a long pike and the usual knife of the country; while Kanimapo was armed with his bow and spear. We could thus defend ourselves against any wild animals, though we might offer but a slight resistance to a body of human foes.

Silently we moved on through the darkness, Kanimapo and Gerald leading the way, and I bringing up the rear, while my father and our two attendants walked by the side of our mother and Norah, with Josefa and the children.

Morning dawned as we were travelling along the side of the lake, between which was some forest which would conceal us from the view of any persons on the higher ground. It is often the case that more important events fade from recollection, while trifling incidents are remembered; so, even at the present day, the scene on which my eye rested as the sun rose above the horizon is impressed on my memory. We were

A LAKE-SCENE.

passing by a small arm or inlet of the lake, surrounded thickly by reeds, and in parts overhung by the branches of trees, amid which birds of gorgeous hue were fluttering; while near at hand one of the gaily-decked patos reales, or royal ducks, with its young brood, floated on the calmer water; and farther off a long-legged water-fowl, of the crane or bittern species, stood gazing at us with a watchful eye as we approached its domain. Had we possessed a larger supply of ammunition, I might have shot the duck for breakfast; but I was unwilling to expend a charge of powder—and besides, I was not sorry to allow the beautiful creature to enjoy its existence.

Kanimapo came up to us. “We will quickly have some of these birds,” he observed. “Wait a few minutes, and you shall see how I will catch them.”

Saying this, he retired out of sight of the birds, and speedily constructed a sort of basket from the reeds which grew on the bank, of sufficient size to cover his head and shoulders. As soon as he had manufactured it, he cautiously approached the bank and shoved it off. Impelled by a light breeze which blew from the shore, it floated away towards where the ducks were swimming about. They swam up to it, and, after sufficient examination, perceiving that it could do them no harm, took no further notice of it. The Indian, in the meantime, had formed another basket of the same description, which he secured over his shoulders, leaving a space sufficient to enable him to look through it. He now slipped into the water, and, keeping his feet and arms low down, slowly swam towards the ducks. They, already accustomed to the appearance of the basket, seemed in no way alarmed; and thus he was able to get close up to them, when one after the other disappeared beneath the surface. Thus he secured half-a-dozen fine ducks, with which he returned to the shore, when he fastened them together with a string and suspended them at his back.

We proceeded on some distance farther, till we reached a sheltered spot in the woods, where we could encamp and cook the provisions we had brought for our morning meal. Kanimapo assured us that we need not be afraid of starving, as the region to which he proposed to conduct us abounded with game; and that should we run short of ammunition, his unerring bow would always supply us with an ample amount.

As we rested on the ground near the fire, the smoke from which assisted to keep away the mosquitoes, we talked of the events of the last few days, and discussed our prospects for the future. My father was more out of spirits than I had ever seen him; the loss of his house and so much of his property was naturally very trying, and he had begun to despair of the success of the patriot cause.

“Shure, your honour, the more harm the Spaniards do to people, the more enemies they’ll make; and for every man they kill, a dozen will rise up to revenge his death,” observed Tim. “We don’t like them the better for burning our house; and, if I have the chance, I’ll show them that, some day or other.”

I felt, I must own, very much as Tim did. I had before been rather cold in the cause, though I intended to join General Bermudez as soon as summoned; but after the accounts I had heard of the atrocities committed by the Spaniards, and the evidences I had witnessed of what they were capable of doing, I felt eager to assist the patriots by every means in my power, and regretted the delay which our flight into the mountains must cause. I could not, of course, quit my mother and brothers and sisters until I had seen them all placed in safety.

We feared much that my mother would be unable to stand the rough life we were about to endure. She was, indeed, already fatigued with her morning ride; and when Kanimapo proposed that we should proceed, my father begged that she might be allowed a longer time to rest. The Indian consenting to this, he and Gerald and I made a short excursion in search of more game.

We had not gone far when we reached a stream which ran through the forest, thickly bordered by magnificent trees. Here animal life abounded; parrots flew amid the branches; and just above the water a number of small rodents were busily employed in searching for food; while a curious boat-bill heron, which had just scrambled up out of the river, was hunting the numerous insects flying about.

Concealed by the trees, we were watching the bird, when I saw an opossum rapidly descending the boughs; then, after hanging for a moment suspended by its prehensile tail, it let itself drop directly down upon one of the small rodents, which it seized in its claws, and was bearing off in triumph, when Kanimapo shot an arrow, and the opossum and its victim fell down a few yards before us. Though a carnivorous animal, the Indian assured us that its flesh was very good eating.

On showing the opossum to Gerald, he said it was called the “crab-eater.” When living near water, it exists on crabs and other Crustacea; but it also feeds on small rodents, birds, and other creatures. Its body was scarcely a foot in length; but its tail, which was prehensile, was fifteen inches long. Its fur was darkish; and it had a somewhat pointed nose; as also a pouch in which to carry its young. I had observed this little creature moving with the activity of a monkey. Indeed, it was evidently formed for living among trees, its powerful tail enabling it to get rapidly and securely from one branch to another. Gerald told me that there are various species of opossums, one of which lives in the water and has webbed feet, but they are mostly found on trees.

A FOREST-SCENE

We carried the opossum back to the camp, with three or four parrots which Kanimapo had shot. By this time my mother was sufficiently rested to enable us to continue our journey. We pushed forward, keeping as much as possible under shelter of the trees, not only for the sake of the shade, but in order to keep concealed from any parties of the enemy who might be passing in the neighbourhood. We greatly felt the want of people to send out as scouts, who might give us due notice should danger be near; but we could ill spare any one from our small party. Tim and Chumbo were required to lead the mules which carried the nurses and the children: Josefa sat on one with the baby in her arms; and Kathleen rode in a huge pannier, balancing the younger ones, who were placed in another. My father and I guarded them, one walking on either side. Gerald brought up the rear; and Kanimapo went ahead to lead the way.

At any moment a jaguar might spring out on us, so it was necessary to be ever on the watch. We had also to keep a look-out for the aques, the most savage and deadly snake of that region, which without any provocation springs out from its ambush on passers-by; and will even follow them, and, giving a tremendous leap, fix its fangs in a person’s body. The rattlesnake is not nearly so dangerous, as its rattle always gives notice of its approach; while the boa and anaconda can, from their size, generally be seen moving through the grass, and avoided. There are, of course, many other venomous serpents in the country. They seldom attack people, however, unless trodden on; but numerous as are the serpents of South America, they generally keep away from the haunts of men.

We had proceeded, as far as I could judge, about half-way between Padre Pacheco’s house and our own, when Kanimapo, pointing to a range of mountains in the west, told us that we must now turn in that direction. We accordingly followed him, hoping to get some way up the mountains before nightfall.

We had gone some distance farther, when my father observed my mother looking very ill; and she confessed that she was suffering greatly from the heat, and feared that she should not be able much longer to sit her horse. On this he called a halt, and we looked about for some place where we might bivouac. We fixed on a small open space entirely surrounded by shrubs thickly entwined with creepers, which would afford us shelter and concealment. On one side ran a stream bordered by reeds, and apparently not very deep.

We at once set to work to cut down boughs to form a hut for my mother and sister. We bound the tops of the branches together with sepos, and then thatched it with large palm-leaves, which would effectually keep out the rain should any fall. Working with a will, the operation did not take us as long as might be supposed; and a very complete hut was constructed, with walls which no jaguar or puma could break through, or any ordinary-sized snake or other animal penetrate. The only creatures it could not keep out were the mosquitoes; but as my mother had thoughtfully brought some mosquito-curtains, we were able to set those tormenting creatures at defiance.

The hut was finished, and Chumbo was at a little distance cutting firewood when we heard him shriek out, “A snake! a snake! I am bitten!”

Kanimapo instantly ran towards him. “Let me see the wound,” he said. Chumbo showed where the snake had bitten his leg; when Kanimapo produced a small bottle from his waist-belt, and poured a few drops from it into the wound. He then desired Chumbo to swallow a little of the decoction which he gave him. “You will suffer no harm from the bite,” he added; “and if you see another snake, cut off its head and bring it to me.” Chumbo, on hearing this, soon recovered his calmness, and in a short time returned to the camp with a large bundle of wood.

Not having much confidence in the antidote, we expected to hear him soon begin to complain of the sensations which generally result from a snake-bite. I asked Kanimapo what he had given Chumbo. He said it was the juice of a red berry boiled into a syrup; and it was considered so efficacious that all Indians carried a bottle of it about with them. He told me that it had been discovered by an Indian, who was one day in the forest and saw a desperate combat take place between a small bird called the snake-hawk and a snake. During the conflict the snake frequently bit the bird, which on each occasion flew off to a tree called the guacco, and devoured some of its red berries; then, after a short interval, it renewed the fight with its enemy,—and in the end succeeded in killing the snake, which it ate. Thinking the matter over, the Indian arrived at the belief that these berries would cure any human being bitten by the snake. He accordingly made a decoction, and not long after had an opportunity of trying it upon himself. It proved effectual; so instead of keeping it secret, as some people might have done, he generously made it known to all his acquaintance,—and thus the use of this berry became universal.

In the case of Chumbo, however, I was not satisfied that the antidote had been really required, for he confessed to me that he believed he had been bitten by a coral snake—which he declared was most venomous, whereas I have since learned that it is perfectly harmless. But I believe that no specific has yet been discovered to prevent the fatal effects of bites by the more venomous snakes.

The occurrence made us feel a little uncomfortable when we lay down at night, for we could not help fancying that snakes might crawl into our camp and attack us while sleeping.

At Kanimapo's suggestion, he and Gerald and I set off to explore the country over which we should have to pass the next day, that we might ascertain whether there were any foes lurking in the neighbourhood; though, as no high-road—if I may so call the tracks which led from one place to another—passed within some leagues of it, we were not likely to meet with any Spaniards. Gerald and I took our guns; while, our Indian friend carried his bow and arrows, that he might shoot any game he came across.

I kept along the bank of the river, while my companions took a course more to the left. Soon I had lost sight of Gerald and the Indian, and was attempting to go on farther than I had intended, when the sun disappeared behind the mountains, and suddenly left me in darkness. I turned to retrace my steps with somewhat uncomfortable feelings, lest a jaguar or puma might be following me. I do not mind mentioning these creatures so often, for I defy any one to wander alone through the South American forests without thinking of their possible vicinity, and the numberless stories he may have heard from the natives of the way in which people have been destroyed by these savage beasts. The puma, it is true, is not so fierce as the jaguar; but, at the same time, it is very dangerous, as it will, cat-like, follow a person, and spring upon him if it can catch him unawares. It will not, in most instances, attack him if he faces it boldly, but will then slink off; whereas the jaguar will attack a man unless he has the nerve to fix his eye on the brute, when it generally hesitates to spring forward; but it will do so the instant he turns,—and should he attempt to fly, will bound after him and bring him to the ground.

I had not gone many paces—intending to keep along the bank of the stream, that I might the more easily find my way—when the moon rose round and full, shedding her silvery light over the scene,—on the quivering leaves, and the waters of the stream, rippled by a gentle breeze. I kept my eyes round me on every side, with my lingers on the trigger of my gun, occasionally giving a glance over my shoulder to ascertain whether any animal was following me, when I caught sight of a dark figure kneeling close to the edge of the water with a long rod in his hand. I saw that he was fishing, though it did seem an odd time for a person to be so employed. For a moment I thought it must be Chumbo; but then I recollected the distance I was from the camp, and that my father would not have allowed him to quit it for such a purpose, as we had as much food as we required. I had no cause to be afraid of the man, whoever he might be; but I advanced cautiously, so as not to alarm him. As I got nearer the light of the moon fell on his face, and I discovered to my great satisfaction that he was no other than Padre Pacheco's black servant, Candela; so I immediately surmised that his master could not be far off.

BY THE STREAM.

"Candela, my friend, what has brought you here?" I cried out, as I advanced from amid the shrubs which concealed me.

"O Señor Barry, is that you? Praise Heaven!" he exclaimed, pulling out a fish—which, with his rod, he threw on the bank, and then rushed forward to greet me. His delight was very great on being assured that he was not mistaken; and he at once told me that his master was hiding in the neighbourhood, being afraid as yet to return to his home.

“We first took to the mountains,” he said; “but the padre found scrambling among the rocky heights did not suit him. Besides which, we had no firearms to shoot game, and I am no great hand with the bow and arrow, so that we were almost starving. It was very tantalising to see plenty of deer and pacas and birds, and not be able to get them; and at last the padre resolved to risk coming down here, where I knew that I could support him and myself by fishing, having fortunately some fish-hooks in my pocket when we took to flight. Poor man! you wouldn’t know him, he has grown so thin,—though he has retained his health.”

“If you will lead me to him, I will try to persuade him to accompany us,” I said. “My father will, I am sure, be glad of his society;” and I then gave Candela a brief account of what had happened, and where we proposed going.

Candela hesitated a moment. “The Señor Padre told me on no account to let his retreat be discovered,” he said; “but he has confidence in you, and you may follow me. Stop when I tell you, and I will go forward and ask his leave to bring you to him.”

Candela then secured his fish, and, hiding his rod in the bushes, led the way into the thick forest, crawling on his hands and knees under the mass of creepers and branches—while I did the same.

At length he stopped at a spot under some lofty trees, through which the beams of the moon could scarcely penetrate.

“Stay here, Señor Barry,” he whispered, “and I will go forward and prepare the Señor Padre for your coming.”

In less than a minute I heard the padre’s voice exclaiming,—“Yes, yes; I will see him gladly. I long to give him an abrazo!”

Though thus sure of a welcome, I did not attempt to advance, as I literally could not see in what direction to move without the risk of running against the trunk of a tree, or stumbling over the roots. Presently I heard Candela speaking close beside me. “Take my hand, Señor Barry,” he said, “and we will soon reach our abode. Stoop down again, and creep after me till I tell you to stand up.”

In a little he spoke again. “Take hold of this ladder. My master and I have imitated the birds, and formed a nest for ourselves up in a tree; no jaguars, snakes, or peccaries can reach us there, and the Gothos are not likely to search in such a spot.”

As he spoke, I put my foot on the first round of a ladder, and commenced the ascent; and soon I saw a light streaming through a sort of trap, down which the padre’s smiling countenance was beaming on me. A few rounds more carried me into the interior of a small hut, built among the branches on a substantial platform.

The padre gave me the promised embrace, and then bade me sit down on the floor, as he had no other seat to offer. Candela immediately joined us, and, drawing up the ladder (which was formed of the strong creeper I have already described), closed the trap.

“You see, Señor Barry, thanks to the skill of my faithful attendant, I am as snug here as I can desire, and may set my enemies at defiance,” remarked the padre; “for even were they to come to the very foot of the tree, they would scarcely discover my abode,—as you will be able to judge when you see it by daylight,—for we have taken good care to conceal the lower part of the platform with boughs, while the surrounding foliage completely hides the nest itself.”

Of course the padre wished to know how it was I had found Candela; so I gave him a full account of all that had happened.

“Could you not remain with me?” he asked. “We might construct two or three nests like this, in which you could all stow away; and we might shout to each other from our respective abodes, like the howling monkeys,” and the padre chuckled at his joke.

I told him that I doubted whether my father would agree to his proposal, for several reasons. The forest region was not considered healthy, though he had not suffered from living in it; and we had horses and mules, which, as we could not haul them, up into the branches, would probably betray us. I added, that as I was sure my father would be glad of his society, I hoped that he would rather accompany us up the mountains; and as we were promised an abundance of game by our Indian guide, he would thus no longer suffer from hunger as before,—while the region was much more healthy, and nearly as inaccessible as his present residence.

“I agree with you in regard to your first reasons, Señor Barry,” he answered; “but I very much doubt whether, unless I were betrayed, my enemies can possibly find me where I am.”

He acknowledged that the want of food was the greatest drawback to his life in the forest, as he had only fish to depend on, and even to obtain that Candela had to run the risk of discovery. He took the precaution, however, when he went out, to wear scarcely any clothing, so that, should he be seen, he might not be known as the padre’s servant.

“I am glad to see you, as I shall be to see your good father,” continued the padre. “I confess, though, that I am somewhat surprised to find that you are still with him. It is, however, very right and proper that you should be so. I had expected that you would by this time have joined the band of General Bermudez, who must, I should fancy, have commenced operations against the foe; but you are undoubtedly where you should be—with your father.”

I replied that I had been waiting for a summons from the general, and should have been prepared to join his standard had he sent for me.

Though I should have been glad to have remained with the padre, I told him that I was afraid my father would become anxious did I not appear at the camp with my brother and the Indian, and that I must now hasten back by myself, unless he would accompany me. I thought he could do so without danger, and my father and mother would be delighted to see him.

He thought a moment. “I will go with you,” he said. “Candela, we will visit the Señor Desmond, and you will easily find the way back; though, by my faith, it is more, I suspect, than I could do myself.”

Candela had no objection to offer. Indeed, there was no danger of the padre being discovered, as our enemies were not likely to be wandering in that part of the forest at night; and even if they were, unless they found out our camp, we might easily conceal ourselves from them. This being arranged, Candela, after listening at the trap to make sure that no one by any chance was near, led the way down the ladder. I followed as soon as he was at the bottom; and the padre came last, Candela and I holding the lower end of the ladder to steady it. The padre, however, exhibited far more activity than I had expected, and came down as fast as I had done. He had laid aside, I should have said, his usual clerical attire, and was habited in a half-military dress, with a broad-brimmed straw hat on his head; and having allowed his beard and moustache to grow, I should not, with his hat on, have recognised him. He carried a long, stout stick, which, dexterously wielded, was calculated to prove a formidable weapon.

“I should not venture to leave the ladder hanging down in the daytime,—though there is little chance even then of any one reaching the spot,” he observed.

Candela now led the way, crying out to us when to stoop down and when to crawl, as we passed through the narrow passages by which he had before conducted me. The padre followed, and I kept close after him. Thus we progressed, till we reached the more open part of the forest, near the edge of the river. Candela now pushed on at a rapid rate, till we saw the light of our camp-fire a short distance off. I then proposed going ahead to announce the padre’s coming.

I found my father watching at the entrance of the opening; Gerald and the Indian had arrived, and he was beginning to get anxious at my non-appearance. He was very glad to hear that Padre Pacheco was alive and well, and was coming to the camp; so I hastened back to meet him and Candela.

While we were greeting the padre, his servant received an equally warm welcome from Tim and Chumbo.

My father endeavoured to persuade the padre to accompany us up the mountains.

“I would rather advise you to remain here,” answered the padre. “You would run no risk of being discovered while living, as I do, at the top of a tree; and you may kill as much game as you require.”

“We should kill no game while living at the top of a tree, that is very certain,” answered my father; “and the report of our guns, when shooting in the forest, would be more than likely to reach the ears of our enemies.”

At last the padre, with a sigh, agreed that my father’s plan was the best. “As for accompanying you,” he said, “I cannot make up my mind. If I could discover where the brave Bermudez, or Paez, or Bolivar himself, are, I would join their forces; and I might do good service by preaching to the men, and encouraging them to perform their duty.”

“You are more likely to hear of them by accompanying us to the mountains, than by remaining where you are,” said my father. “Our Indian guide will be able to gain information; and should any of the patriot bands come into the neighbourhood, you will have the opportunity of joining them. I will introduce our friend Kanimapo to you, and you can consult him.”

The Indian, who was seated at a little distance, near another fire, with Tim, Chumbo, and Candela, was accordingly summoned.

The padre examined his countenance attentively. “We have met before, my friend,” he said.

“I do not know you,” answered the Indian; “you must be mistaken.”

“Mistaken I am not,” said the padre; “but you probably do not recognise me in my present dress. Once you came to the house of Padre Pacheco, and wished to be instructed in the Christian religion. You remember that?”

“I do,” said the Indian. “And I went away as wise as I came; or rather, from what you told me I was convinced that it was a religion that would not suit me.”

The padre sighed. “I am afraid that I gave you a wrong notion of it,” he answered, “and that it was my fault that you did not accept it. But I have since read the Book God has given to man to make known His will, and I should tell you very differently now.”

“I shall be very glad to hear you,” said the Indian, “for I much wish to understand the white man’s religion. I cannot believe that more than one God exists; and He must be powerful and good, or He could not have made this world as it appears to us, or given abundance of food to man as He has done. How to ask Him for what we want, and how to merit His favour, is what I desire to know.”

“I cannot tell you all that now,” said the padre; “but I will, as far as I know it, by-and-by. In the meantime, Señor Desmond wishes to consult you on a matter of importance.”

My father then asked Kanimapo if he would assist the padre, should he determine to join any of the patriot bands.

The Indian asked time to consider the subject; and while we talked on among ourselves, he retired to a short distance. He soon returned, and expressed his readiness to act as the padre might wish. The arrangement was finally concluded, and our friend promised to join us in the morning. At all events, in his present costume there was little danger of his being recognised, and he would run no more risk than would any of us. He preferred returning to his nest for the night, especially as he had left a book and a few other articles there. That book, he told us, was the Bible, which had of late become his constant study.

The evening's rest had greatly restored my mother, and we hoped to be able to start early the next morning. A watch was set, as usual; and two large fires were kept up, which would scare any wild beasts, though they might not prove any impediment to the approach of snakes. Still, the flames would enable the person on guard to see them; and we had three or four long sticks cut, ready to attack them, should any be discovered.

The night passed away quietly; and the moment day broke, all hands were called up, and we breakfasted on the remains of the wild ducks and opossum. As soon as breakfast was over the fires were extinguished, and the embers scattered, so that no one coming that way might ascertain how lately we had left the spot. My mother and sister having mounted their horses, and the nurses and children being placed on their mules, we moved forward, looking out as we went along for the padre and his servant. We had not gone far when a voice hailed us from behind some thick shrubs; and presently our friend appeared—so completely disguised, that had I not examined his features I should not have recognised him. His hat was stuck jauntily on one side, sufficiently low down to conceal his shorn crown; and a gaily-coloured handkerchief, which a West Indian negro would have envied, was tied in a bow round his throat. His coat was braided and slashed; his breeches were ornamented with tags and laces, and open at the knees, showing his stout calves encased in leathern leggings; while in a sash round his waist was stuck a long dagger and a brace of pistols. Candela followed, carrying a biggish bundle hung to the end of a pole (which he balanced on his shoulder), with a long stick in his hand, and a machete secured in his waist-belt.

After greeting us, the padre whispered to me,—"I am not so warlike as I look, for my pistols are unloaded,—since I have neither powder nor shot,—and one of them is destitute of a lock. My dagger, however, is sharp; and I can use my stick to some purpose."

I told him that we could supply him with a rifle, and spare him some ammunition for his serviceable pistol, should there be any probability of our being compelled to fight.

"Depend on me; I will not hang back if we have to defend ourselves," he answered. "I have no love for lighting; but in this case it is lawful and right—of that I am assured."

The padre walked along far more actively than I had expected; and we were glad to have our party strengthened by such sturdy allies as he and his man Candela.

The forest through which we were proceeding extended some way up the side of the mountains, with only two or three paths running across it at right angles to our course. As these were in some sense highways, and people might be traversing them—perhaps enemies—we passed by them as rapidly as possible, so that we might avoid the risk of encountering any one. As Kanimapo knew when we were approaching one of these paths, he went some way ahead and looked up and down, to ascertain whether any one was travelling along it.

We had halted for this purpose, when he came back and said that he had seen a person on a mule coming from the south, and urging his beast on at a rapid rate. He advised us to remain concealed till the traveller had passed; not that, being alone, he could do us any harm, but he might betray us to our enemies.

Being near the path, I was tempted to creep forward to see who the stranger was. I had moved a few paces, when I heard a bark; and presently a dog came rushing towards me, barking furiously, and apparently with the intention of flying at my throat. I might easily have shot the animal; and I was lifting my weapon, in case it should be necessary to fire, when I recognised my old acquaintance Jumbo.

"Jumbo! Jumbo!" I shouted out; "don't you remember your friends?"

Jumbo knew my voice instantly: he ceased barking, and came fawning up to me. I was sure that his master could not be far off; and hurrying out from my concealment, I saw before me Dr Stutterheim,—who, supposing that his dog had discovered a jaguar, had unslung his gun, ready to do battle with the wild beast.

Great was the pleasure he exhibited at seeing me.

"Why, Barry! my dear Barry!" he exclaimed, "what wonderful chance has enabled us thus to meet? I thought that you were long ago safe among the mountains; and despairing of finding you, I was on my way down to any port I could reach on the coast, from whence I could escape from this unhappy country, regretting that I should probably see you no more; and almost as much grieved—I must confess the fact—to leave all my treasures behind me, to rot, or be eaten by the ants, as I had no means of transporting them."

"I thought, doctor, that you were determined to remain with your patients till they recovered," I remarked.

"Alack, alack! my friend, they have gone where they require no surgeon's aid," replied the doctor. "Those bloodthirsty Spaniards last night burst into the village, and murdered every wounded man; together with several other people—men, women, and children—whom they caught. I myself narrowly escaped with my life by remaining concealed in the garden of the house, under a bed of pumpkins, where it did not occur to them to look for me. Finding that they had beaten a retreat (being alarmed by a report that a large body of patriots was near at hand), I crept out of my place of concealment, and fortunately stumbled upon this mule, saddled and bridled, on which I rode away as fast as I could make the brute move over the rough paths."

The Indian, who had witnessed my meeting with the doctor, and saw that he was a friend, had gone off to report the same to my father; who now appeared, with the rest of our party.

“The cruel monsters!” exclaimed the padre, when he heard the account given by the doctor; “surely such barbarities must call down the vengeance of Heaven on the heads of those bloodthirsty tyrants and their supporters. Even had I not ample reason for siding with the patriots, the account you have given us would make me desirous of exerting all my energies to promote the overthrow of those monsters. They must be driven from the land before we can hope for peace and prosperity; and I, for one, will not don cassock again till I have aided in accomplishing the work.”

“Bravo, Señor Padre!—for padre I suppose you are,” said the doctor. “I highly approve of your patriotic principles and resolutions; and should a sacrilegious bullet enter your body, I promise you that I will do my best to extract it and set you on your legs again, should I happily be near you.”

The padre thanked the doctor, but quickly changed the subject; his feelings had run away with him, and perhaps he did not quite like to contemplate the contingency to which the doctor alluded.

The doctor did not require much persuasion to be induced to accompany us. He might render us some service, he observed, and might find ample objects of interest in the alpine region into which we were proceeding. He had fortunately brought a rifle and a good supply of ammunition, which was especially welcome.

As soon as the doctor had resolved to join us, we lost no time in moving forward, lest some other traveller might come that way and discover us. After a time we found that we were gradually ascending, though we had mounted to a considerable distance before we perceived any change in the size of the trees or alteration in their character; for palms and other tropical plants still flourished, and the heat was as great as in the plains below. At length, however, we reached the bare side of the mountain; the vast precipitous rocks towering up above us, while the vegetation was that of more temperate climes.

Looking back at the forest from which we had emerged, I was struck by its magnificent appearance, illumined as it was by the almost perpendicular rays of the sun, which caused the broad leaves of the trees to shine with dazzling brilliancy. We could hear, when we stopped, the roaring of the cascade, though concealed by rocks, and groves of the Indian fig-tree.

Up and up we went, sometimes along narrow paths on the summit of precipices, with barely sufficient room for a single animal to advance without risk of slipping over. The mules were so sure-footed, that we had but little anxiety about them; but the danger my mother and sister ran on horseback was very great. No one could render them any help, and they had to depend upon their nerve and the steadiness of their horses. Frequently, I held my breath as I saw the places they had to pass.

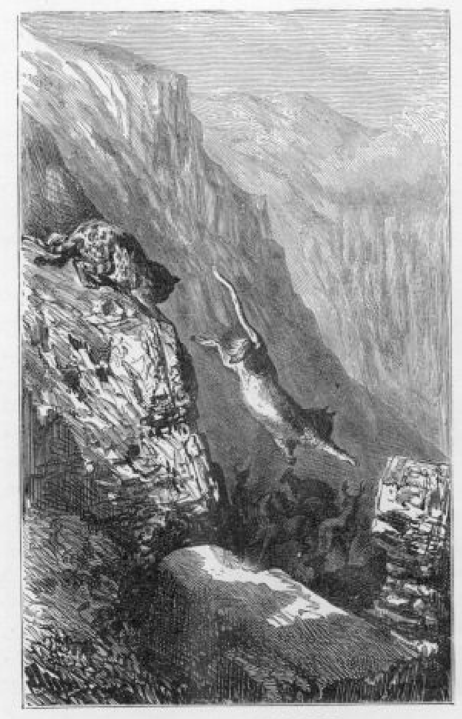
At length, from the height over which we were crossing, we looked down upon a broad valley.

“I told you that I would bring you to a region where there is an abundance of game,” observed Kanimapo; and he pointed to a herd of deer directly below us, grazing quietly, unconscious of our vicinity.

“But see! there are already hunters before us,” I remarked, as at that instant I observed two large pumas stealing along the top of an overhanging rock. So eager were they in pursuit of their object, they did not discover us. Scarcely had I spoken when the first threw itself off, and pounced directly down on the back of an unsuspecting deer; its companion the next instant following its example. So sure was their spring, both secured their victims, and began tearing off the still quivering flesh with mouth and claws; while the rest of the herd, seeing the fate of their companions, fled like the wind along the valley.

“They cannot go far,” observed Kanimapo; “and we shall always find some in this neighbourhood when we want them.”

“We must not let these savage brutes enjoy their meal at leisure,” said the doctor, dismounting, and getting his rifle ready to fire. “You take the one on the right, Barry, and I will shoot the other. We



THE PUMAS AND THE DEER

must have their skins; and the venison will not be much the worse for the way it has been killed.”

We both fired, and the pumas rolled over, struggling in the agonies of death.

“We must now secure the venison,” cried the doctor, leading the way down the precipitous side of the valley. Tim and I followed him, Candela soon afterwards joining us; and we were quickly engaged in the not over-pleasant operation of cutting up the deer and skinning the pumas. As soon as we had secured the skins of the wild beasts, and the best joints from the deer, we loaded the doctor’s mule with them,—as he volunteered to give it up for the purpose, and to proceed with us on foot.

Though game was abundant, our guide did not consider it safe for us to remain in the valley. We had still some hours of daylight; and before we could hope to rest in safety, we had, he told us, many mountain-heights and deep valleys to traverse.

Chapter Seven.

Paramos described—Suffer from want of water—Reach a stream—Encamp—Indian legends—A capybara—Enemies in the neighbourhood—Ascend a steep mountain—Descend and reach a beautiful valley—Take up our abode in a magnificent cavern—Explore the cavern—Strange birds—Kanimapo shows us another cavern—Constructs a rope-bridge—Hazardous passage—Kill a jaguar and capture two deer—Tim and Chumbo appear—Chumbo’s adventure with king-vultures—Norah and Kathleen in danger from a jaguar—Saved by Kanimapo—Good news—Preparations for our departure.

The fresh air of that elevated region—a contrast to the heavy, damp atmosphere of the plain below—so revived our spirits and strengthened our muscles, that all were eager to push on.

We were, it must be remembered, travelling over a series of mountain-heights forming a chain considerably to the eastward of the true Cordilleras, which are of much greater elevation; but even here the cold on the more lofty mountains is excessive, as it is in some of the valleys between them. These valleys are uninhabitable deserts known as paramos, in which no human being can exist without keeping in unceasing and violent motion. No artificial means appears sufficient to sustain life while a person is exposed to their chilling atmosphere; the strongest spirits have no effect—and, indeed, increase the direful consequences. They are usually long deep valleys, so shut in by neighbouring heights that scarcely a single ray of the sun sheds its genial influence through them. If a person attempts to remain in them unsheltered at night, death will certainly overtake him. Some of them, however, are so extensive that it requires two or three days to cross them. To enable this to be done, small houses have been erected at certain distances, in which cooking utensils, wood for firing, and other articles of convenience, are kept for the accommodation of travellers; as well as stabling for their mules. But to remain in a paramo during the night, even though thus protected, is often a painful ordeal. Only for two or three months of the year—November, December, and January—are they inhabitable by human beings; and it is during those months alone that the huts can be erected or the fuel stored for the remainder of the year.

The doctor described to me the way in which people suffer:—The highly rarified air at first occasions great difficulty in breathing, with a sharp piercing pain at each inspiration; in a short time the person becomes benumbed in the extremities, owing to his incapacity for continuing in motion. He is next seized with violent delirium, and in his horrible paroxysms froths at the mouth, tears the flesh from his hands and arms, pulls his hair, and beats himself violently against the ground, meanwhile uttering the most piercing cries, till, completely exhausted, he remains without motion or feeling, and death ensues. The only effectual remedy, when a person is thus seized, is to beat him violently, and to make him drink cold water from the springs found in all parts of the paramo; but this remedy must be employed immediately after the first symptoms appear.

Numberless persons have perished in this way. A short time before our journey, of a large body of troops attempting to pass through a paramo more than half died; as did some thousand horses and mules intended for the use of Bolivar's army.

After the account I had heard from the doctor, I begged of Kanimapo that he would not conduct us through a paramo.

"There is no fear of my doing that," he answered; "to-day we shall not ascend higher than our present position, and we shall remain at night in a well-watered valley."

We had been for some time traversing a narrow plateau, along the whole length of which we had to proceed, and where, though the air was pleasant, not a drop of water could be found. Most of us, therefore, were beginning to suffer greatly from thirst—the padre and the doctor had not drunk anything since the previous evening—and would have given a good deal for a cup of fresh water. The sides of the plateau were so steep that we could not descend in any part, though occasionally we heard through the trees the sound of rushing water rising from the depths below, or coming down from the mountain on the opposite side. The horses and mules, too, were beginning to exhibit every sign of thirst,—the mules sometimes showing an inclination to bolt off either on one side or the other, as though they thought they could make their way down to the spots from whence the tantalising sound arose.

Our guide cheered us on. "We shall reach a valley before sunset; and I have no fear but we shall there find water enough to quench the thirst of us all," he observed.

All this time my mother and Norah exhibited wonderful powers of endurance, and never complained of the steepness or dangerous nature of the road; nor did they now of the thirst from which they, in common with us all, were suffering. I was surprised that our guide had not warned us; but, accustomed as he was to go for hours together without eating or drinking, it had not occurred to him that we should suffer any inconvenience.

At length we came to the end of the ridge. As we began to descend by one of the most rugged of paths, the sound of a waterfall reached our ears; and in the course of a few minutes, on going to the edge of a rock, we caught sight of a magnificent cascade issuing from the mountain-side, and dashing down into a large basin in the valley below.

"Hoch! hurrah! there's the water; and I hope before long to have a gallon down my throat," cried the doctor; and, unable longer to restrain himself, he set off to run down the steep descent. The padre, excited by the same feeling, rushed after him; while I followed in a somewhat more cautious way, not without considerable fear that my friends, in their eagerness, might tumble over the precipice before they reached the bottom. My father and the rest of the men held back the horses and mules, to prevent them following the doctor's example, and maybe sending their riders over their heads. Happily, no harm occurred, and we all reached the side of a sparkling stream of considerable volume, which went bounding and foaming away amid the hills, ultimately taking an easterly course and falling into the plain we had left. A hollow in the side of the hill, only a little above the water, afforded us ample camping-ground; and from the numerous luxuriant shrubs which grew around we were able to build some comfortable huts, as well as to cut a sufficient supply of firewood.

"You may remain here without much fear of interruption, my friends," observed Kanimapo. "But, at the same time, the spot could easily be reached by those in search of you, so I wish to conduct you to a place in which no enemy can find you."

THE WATER IN SIGHT

My father at once agreed to this; indeed, the valley, though it had its attractions, was not the place we should have wished to live in for any length of time. Unless actually tracked, we were not likely to be discovered, as the opposite heights were inaccessible, and we were completely hidden, owing to the form of the rocks and the overhanging trees, from any one passing on the hills above us. We thus considered that we need not apprehend danger during the few hours it was necessary to remain encamped on the spot. There was an abundance of grass, too, for our horses and mules; and the venison we had brought with us was provision sufficient for a couple of days at least.

I have so often described our night-encampments that I need not mention the arrangements we made on the present occasion. I was much struck by the romantic beauty of the scene: the cascade in the distance; the rapid stream rushing and foaming below us; the lofty mountains rising in front, and the rich vegetation which clothed the cliffs behind; the huts nestling under the trees; the blazing fire, surrounded by our party; the animals grazing on the green turf which carpeted the ground. There was sufficient danger to create some excitement, and yet not enough to prevent us from enjoying our supper and entering into an animated conversation. The padre and the doctor chiefly engaged in it, and afforded us much amusement; Kanimapo also occasionally took a part. We were speaking of the monkeys of the country, some of which possess wonderful intelligence; and the padre described one which had learned to sit at table and use a knife and fork, and would drink wine out of a cup, and bow to the company.

“Have you ever heard of the salvaje, or wild man of the woods,—who builds a house for himself, and sometimes carries off people to dwell with him when he wants companionship, and occasionally eats them if he is hungry?” said the padre.

“Has anybody seen him?” asked the doctor; “for until I see him I shall refuse to believe in his existence.”

“I cannot say that I ever saw him,” answered the padre; “but I have known people who have found the traces of his feet, the toes of which are turned backwards; and others have caught sight of him peeping from among the boughs of a tree.”

“Who can doubt about him?” exclaimed the Indian, who had hitherto remained silent. “My people, and those who dwell on the upper waters of the Orinoco to the ocean on the north, know very well all about him. Some call him the achi, others the vasatri, or great devil; and he is exactly like a big man, only covered with dark hair.”

The doctor burst into a fit of laughter. “If you caught him you would find your man of the woods turn out to be a huge bear, whose feet somewhat resemble those of a man. I have never heard of a large monkey in this country—though, of course, such may exist in regions unexplored.”

“I am afraid, doctor, you are very sceptical,” observed the padre.

“Not at all, my friend,” he replied; “I am simply, as a philosopher, bound not to believe unless I have sufficient evidence of a fact: and in this case it appears to me that such evidence is not forthcoming. For instance, as to the fact of a great flood which once covered the earth, independent of the statement made by Scripture—”

“Ignorant as our people are, we know that such an event took place,” broke in the Indian. “Once upon a time the sea flowed over the whole of the plain, and all the people perished with the exception of a man and woman, who floated about in a boat, and at last arrived safely on a high mountain called Tamanaca. On landing they cast behind them over their heads the fruits of the mauritia palm-tree, when the seeds contained in those fruits produced men and women, who repeopled the earth. Some of you may have seen, on the lofty cliffs which rise above the Orinoco and other rivers, curious figures sculptured on their faces, at a height which no human being could now reach. How could they have been carved, unless the waters had risen up to them and thus enabled our fathers to reach them in boats?”

“The belief you entertain, my friend, exists in all parts of the world,” observed the doctor; “and I doubt not that it has its origin in truth.”

The Indian looked satisfied; and then went on to tell us of the wars which his people waged in former days—when they lived near the ocean—with the white men who first came over to their country. The most ferocious and daring of these—indeed, he appears to have been almost a madman—was Lopez de Aguirri. Descending the Amazon from Peru, he made his way along the coast across the mouth of the Orinoco and through the Gulf of Paria, till he entered the Caribbean Sea, and ultimately reached the island of Margarita. From thence he returned to the continent, and established himself in the city of Valencia, where he proclaimed the independence of the country and the deposition of Philip the Second. The native inhabitants made their escape across the lake of Tacarigua, taking with them all their boats, so that Aguirri could only exercise his cruelties on his own people. He at once began to put to death those who opposed him; and in a letter to the king he boasts of the number of officers whom he had killed. Among them was Fernando de Guzman, who had been chosen king; but De Aguirri not liking his rule, killed him and the captain of his guard, his lieutenant-general, his chaplain, a woman, a knight of the Order of Rhodes, two ensigns, and five or six of his domestics. Afterwards, having got himself named king, he appointed captains and sergeants; but these wishing to put him out of the way, they were all afterwards hanged by his orders. He especially points out to Philip the corruption of morals among the monks, whom he intends to chastise severely; he remarks that there is not an ecclesiastic who does not think himself higher than the governor of a province; that they are given up to luxury, acquiring possessions, selling sacraments,—being at once ambitious, violent, and gluttonous. Aguirri—or, as he is still called by the common people, “the tyrant”—was at length abandoned by his own men and put to death. When surrounded by foes, and conscious that his fate was inevitable, he plunged a dagger into the bosom of his only daughter, that she might not have to blush before the Spaniards at the term, “the daughter of a traitor.” The natives still believe that the soul of the tyrant wanders in the savannahs like a flame, which flies on the approach of men.

I wish that I could recollect more of the stories narrated on that evening.

We were interrupted by a rushing sound, as if some animal were breaking through the bushes. The doctor started up, exclaiming,—“An anaconda!—a boa! Be prepared, my friends,” and boldly advanced in the direction of the sound. My father, Gerald, and I, seizing our rifles, followed his example. The padre did not exhibit the same eagerness, but kept his seat, and begged my mother and Norah not to be alarmed, as he very much doubted that any large serpent could have made its way so far up the mountains; and even if it should prove to be a puma or jaguar, we were likely, he said, to give a good account of it. Having quieted their fears, he got up, and taking Tim's rifle, joined us. Jumbo had been in a state of excitement when he saw what we were about; and losing patience, boldly dashed into the wood. Presently, out there came what at the first glance I took to be a wild boar; but as it passed before us towards the water, I saw that it was an animal of a very different species. The doctor fired, and brought it to the ground; when Jumbo, rushing forward, seized it by the throat. The creature made little or no resistance; and having dragged it up to the fire, we saw that it was a capybara, or water-hog. The doctor remarked that it was the largest of all living rodents, being upwards of three feet in length, and enormously fat. It had a blunt muzzle, with the eyes set high in the head; was destitute of a tail; and its toes were so united as to enable it to swim with ease. It was of a blackish grey hue, with rather long hairs, of a yellow tinge, falling thickly over the body. The doctor exhibited its head, which contained enormous incisor teeth, and curiously-formed molars. He remarked that its webbed feet enable it to swim rapidly, and that when pursued it dives, and can remain nearly eight minutes under water; so that, if not taken unawares, it is able to escape most of its numerous foes. Among the most deadly of these is the jaguar, which preys largely on the poor tailless animal; but man is also its enemy, for its flesh is excellent, and is considered like that of the hog.

As it was important to secure a good supply of food, the capybara was forthwith cut up, and some of its flesh roasted.

"I trust that it will not cost us dear," observed Kanimapo, as we returned to our seats. "I should have warned you not to fire, unless in a case of great necessity; for should any one be wandering near at hand, it might lead them to our retreat."

Soon after this he left us, without saying a word. My mother and sister and the children then retired to their bowers, but the rest of the party still sat talking by the fire.

Some time had elapsed when Kanimapo rejoined us. "We must be very cautious," he observed. "There are strangers in the neighbourhood,—though whether friends or foes I cannot say; but we must take care not to create a bright blaze, lest the reflection on the opposite cliff should betray us. They are not likely to remain where they are, and will probably move on to a more sheltered spot for the night. What has brought them here I cannot tell; but I suspect that they are fugitives from one party or the other. At all events, it will not be safe for us to proceed till they have left the neighbourhood."

This information made us feel rather anxious; especially when the padre suggested that the strangers might find their way down to our encampment.

"There is no fear of that, as they have already passed the only point where they could descend the cliffs," answered the Indian. "All we have to do is to remain quiet."

We agreed not to tell my mother and sister what we had heard, but to keep a vigilant watch, so that should the strangers prove to be foes, and find us out, we might be prepared to resist them.

The thoughts of a possible encounter kept us awake during the greater part of the night; and towards morning the ever active Kanimapo again stole out of the camp. Just before daybreak he returned. He had got sufficiently near to the strangers' camp to hear what they were talking about; and he had discovered that they were mostly deserters from the Spanish army, who had turned robbers, and were as ready to prey on one party as the other. It would, therefore, be very dangerous to fall into their hands; and Kanimapo advised that we should remain concealed where we were till they had left the neighbourhood.

The time, as may be supposed, was an anxious one: still, it afforded us rest; and as we had plenty of food, we were gaining strength to enable us to perform the more arduous part of the journey which still lay before us.

Kanimapo was absent till the evening, tracking the banditti. He at length saw them cross a lofty ridge to the southward, and disappear; and feeling satisfied that they would no longer molest us, he returned with the intelligence.

The following morning we were again *en route*. Having reached the foot of a steep mountain, our guide called a halt, and told us that we were near the end of our journey, but that there were portions of the path which no mules or horses could traverse. We could, however, reach our destination by taking a much more circuitous path. He inquired whether we should be content to proceed on foot—in which case we might reach a place of safety in the course of three or four hours; or if we were disposed to take the circuitous path, which would occupy the whole of that day and a portion of the next—while we would also run the risk of discovery, as the high-road passed in view of the track we should have to pursue.

My father at once decided to ascend the mountain on foot; while Tim volunteered, with Chumbo, to conduct the horses and mules round by the way Kanimapo described to him.

Led by the Indian, we therefore recommenced the ascent of the mountain without delay. Fatiguing as it was, the doctor and the padre each insisted on carrying a child, while my father helped up my mother, and I aided Norah—though Kathleen and she declared they felt perfectly able to climb up by themselves. Gerald and I sometimes gave them our hands, at others pushed them from behind.

After ascending a considerable distance, we saw on our right a lofty peak. The clearness of the atmosphere made it appear much nearer than it really was. Kathleen announced her intention of climbing to the top of it, and was much surprised to find that it was some twenty or thirty miles off.

In spite of the fresh air, the heat was great; but the atmosphere was far more exhilarating than I had before found it in the plains. At last the summit was reached; when we went some distance over tolerably level ground, and then had to commence descending by one of the steepest paths I ever met with,—such as even the mules could not have slidden down without the risk of rolling over. On reaching the bottom we found a rapid stream flowing at our feet, along the brink of which Kanimapo now led us; and we continued making our way, amid the rich vegetation which grew on either side, till we saw before us a fine waterfall, and, as far as we could judge, our progress appeared completely barred.

Kanimapo did not hesitate. “Come on, my friends; we are near our resting-place at last,” he said; and turning to the right, he led the way through a thick belt of trees which lined the stream, and began to ascend an almost perpendicular cliff! The roots and branches of the trees which grew out of it, however, formed a sort of natural ladder, or series of steps, up which even my mother found no great difficulty in climbing; and we soon found ourselves on level ground, a small placid lake, out of which the rocks on the opposite side rose abruptly, appearing among the trees. By continuing along the shores of this lake we reached another waterfall, of considerable width and depth, and overhung with magnificent trees, which added greatly to its picturesque beauty.

A TOILSOME JOURNEY

We now made another ascent, very similar to the first, till we reached a higher level of the same stream. I expected that we were going to continue along it; but instead of doing so Kanimapo led us by a zigzag path till we gained a broad terrace, from whence we could look down into the valley and over the summits of numerous heights beyond. Still the air, though pure and bracing from its dryness, caused no sensation of cold. High as we were, too, there were several mountains in sight which were still higher.

We had proceeded along the terrace; one mountain rose directly in front of us, with a perpendicular face of great height. The rush of water sounded in our ears; and as we advanced we caught sight of the stream flowing across the platform, and proceeding out of the very side of the mountain, as it seemed to us. Advancing for a few hundred yards? more, we discovered that it flowed from beneath a magnificent arch forming the entrance to a vast cavern,—the rocks which surrounded it being covered with superb trees, and rich vegetation of most varied hue, nourished by the ever-flowing stream. Here were the gigantic mammee-tree, and the genipa, with large and shining leaves, raising their branches vertically towards the sky; while others, extending their boughs horizontally, formed a thick canopy of verdure over the entrance. Orchidae, and a host of plants whose names I do not know, grew out of the clefts of the rocks; while creepers waved in the wind, or formed a graceful drapery of festoons hanging from the boughs, decked with flowers of nearly all the colours of the rainbow—some of purple, others of orange colour, many of bright yellow, and numbers perfectly white, glittering like stars amid the dark green of the surrounding foliage. We all stood for a few seconds lost in astonishment at the unexpected scene.

“In the recesses of this cavern, my friends, you may remain as long as you desire, without danger of being discovered by your enemies,” observed Kanimapo. “The Gothos are unacquainted with its existence; and but few of our people, indeed, know the way to it. Abundance of wild fruit is to be found in the woods, and game of all sorts is plentiful; while the cavern itself will manage to afford us an ample supply of food, should we be prevented from going forth to search for it.”

As may be supposed, we were eager to explore the cavern; but my mother and sister, as well as my father and the padre, were too much fatigued to make the attempt. My father suggested, therefore, that we should encamp in a shady spot at the entrance and take some food; after which those who were so disposed might, under the guidance of the Indian, set off on the proposed exploration. The doctor’s eagerness however, would scarcely allow him to consent to this delay; but as he was not disposed to go alone, or accompanied only by Jumbo, he agreed to wait till Gerald and I had had some dinner—after which, we had promised, we would set off with him, provided Kanimapo would act as our guide. The Indian consented to lead the way as far as he had ever before been; but he confessed that he had never penetrated to the end. Indeed, he believed that no human being had ever done so; and he hinted that we should be wise not to make the attempt, as the place was full of the spirits of people who had departed this life, and who might resent our intrusion.

“I’ll take care to settle that matter with them,” observed the doctor, laughing. “I would sooner encounter ten thousand spirits than a single anaconda; and Jumbo has not the slightest fear of them."

Had the doctor denied the existence of the spirits, he might have offended the Indian; as it was, Kanimapo only looked upon him as a wonderfully courageous person, and treated him with even more respect than before.

We immediately collected sticks, and had a fire blazing, before which Candela exerted his culinary powers in preparing our repast; while we arranged, as usual, some huts for my mother and the rest of the family.

The Indian had, in the meantime, formed a bundle of torches of some resinous wood which he cut with his machete. "We shall require these," he observed; "for the light of day cannot penetrate beyond a quarter of the length of the cavern."

As soon as our provisions were cooked, the doctor almost bolted his share, and then proposed setting off. Gerald and I were soon ready; and the Indian, who evidently felt a pride in the cavern, said that he would lead the way. He took a couple of torches himself, and divided the rest among us; inquiring of the doctor whether he had the means of producing a light.

"I am never without these," was the answer; "lead on, my friend, and we will follow."

Our astonishment was increased when we found that the vegetation extended far away into the depths of the cavern, growing on both sides of the stream which proceeded out of it,—even palms, arums, and other plants reaching to the height of fifteen or twenty feet.

"Hark to the sound which proceeds from the inner part of the cavern," said our guide.

As he spoke, strange suppressed cries issued from the interior, but so low that we did not at first remark them, almost drowned as they were by the noise of the rushing waters. From the immense size of the entrance, and the direct course the cavern took into the interior of the mountain, daylight penetrated for a great distance, and we were accordingly able to proceed for upwards of four hundred feet before we found it diminishing to any extent. As we advanced, the sounds we had at first heard so indistinctly increased; and Kanimapo told us that they were produced by birds, which had taken up their abode in the cavern in thousands. The shrill and piercing cries of these denizens of the cavern, striking on the vaulted rock, were repeated by the subterranean echoes till they created such a wild din as is difficult to describe. Well might an ignorant native, entering for the first time, have supposed that they were the shrieks of departed souls.

The farther we went, the louder and more horrible was the noise. Entering a region of darkness, we were at length compelled to light our torches; when, holding them up, we could see birds flitting about in all directions, their long nests fixed in the roof and sides of the cavern.

We walked on slowly and cautiously, to avoid the risk of falling into any hollow which might exist in the ground; but generally it was tolerably smooth and level, covered everywhere with herbage of a pale hue,—evidently, as the doctor observed, the produce of seeds dropped by the birds.

Though not so wide as at the entrance, the magnificence of the cavern was greatly increased by the countless stalactites which hung from the roof; some reaching to the ground, and forming pillars with arches of the most delicate tracery, which often shone brilliantly as the light of our torches fell on them. The farther we got, the more fantastic were the forms they assumed,—till, with a little aid from the imagination, we might have fancied ourselves in some wonderful temple of an Eastern region. So numerous were the columns, we could with difficulty make our way between them—sometimes having to descend into the bed of the river, which was nowhere more than two feet deep, though from twenty to thirty feet wide. All this time the shrieks of the birds sounded in our ears. Occasionally, those near us were silent; and sometimes the noise around us ceased for a few minutes, when we heard at a distance the plaintive cries of the birds roosting in other ramifications of the cavern. It seemed as if different groups answered each other alternately.

At last, after continuing on for a considerable distance, a still more curious and beautiful spectacle than we had yet seen burst on our view. The ground suddenly sloped upwards at a sharp angle, thickly covered with vegetation, in the midst of which the river came rushing over a ledge of rock, forming a cascade which sparkled as the light of our torches fell on it; while the brilliantly white stalactites which descended from the roof were seen against the foliage of the trees.

Having climbed up the rise I have mentioned, we went on as before by the side of the stream, the ground being of a uniform level. As we looked back, the opening of the cavern appeared greatly contracted, the distant light of day forming a strange contrast to the darkness which here surrounded us. The roof now became lower, the sides contracted to little more, perhaps, than forty or fifty feet; while the cries of the birds became more and more shrill. Our Indian guide, though he had shown his bravery on many occasions, seemed unwilling to go much farther; but the doctor urged him to make the attempt, promising to defend him against all evil spirits which we might encounter. While he was speaking, the light attracted some of the birds, which in their eagerness flew towards us; and the doctor and I managed to knock down two, greatly to his delight.

The character of the cavern remained the same, and though our curiosity prompted us to try and reach the end, we began to consider that it would take us a long time to do so, and that our torches must shortly burn done. The same idea had occurred to Kanimapo, who again begged the doctor to return, warning him of the danger we ran in attempting to make our way in the dark over the uneven ground.

"You are right, my friend," answered the doctor. I agreed with him also, and turning our faces to the entrance we retraced our steps.

Before our eyes became dazzled by the light of day, we saw on the outside of the grotto the water of the river, sparkling amid the foliage of the trees which shaded it. It was like a picture placed in the distance, the mouth of the cavern serving as a frame.

We were welcomed by our friends, who had become somewhat anxious at our long absence; and Gerald, after expatiating on the wonders we had seen, acknowledged that he was glad to get beyond the hearing of the hoarse cries of the birds.

As we seated ourselves by the side of the rivulet in front of the cavern, the doctor examined the birds we had killed; and calling to the Indian, he made inquiries as to what he knew about them. He answered that in another part of the country, where a similar cavern exists inhabited by the same birds, they are called guacharos; that in that other cavern—the cave of Caripe, as he called it—thousands of birds exist, and that the Indians take the young birds for the sake of the oil which they contain. They enter it once a year, armed with long poles, with which they destroy all the nests they can reach; when the old ones, hovering about their heads, attempt to defend their broods, uttering the most terrible cries. The young birds which are thus killed are immediately opened; and the fat being taken out, it is melted in pots of clay over fires lighted at the entrance of the cave. During the oil harvest, as the Indians call that time, they build huts with palm-leaves, in which they live till they have melted down the fat. It is half liquid, transparent, without any smell, and so pure that it may be kept above a year without becoming rancid.

The race of birds would become extinct, were not the natives afraid of entering into the depths of the cavern; as also because there are other and smaller caverns, inaccessible to the hunters, inhabited by colonies of birds from which the larger cavern is peopled. These birds are of the size of ordinary fowls; their mouths resemble those of goat-suckers, and their appearance is somewhat that of small vultures; but, unlike the goat-suckers, they live entirely on fruits of a hard, dry character—and such fruits only were found in the crops of the birds we killed. The natives believe that the seeds found in the birds' crops are a specific against intermittent fevers, and these are therefore carefully collected and sent to the low regions where such fevers prevail.

The doctor was delighted with the information he had obtained, and declared that, for the sake of it, he would have been ready to undergo ten times as much fatigue and danger as that to which he had been subjected.

We were all well pleased with the romantic beauty of the scenery, but my father was not quite satisfied that the place was secure from attack. Should we be betrayed, there was nothing to prevent our enemies from following us; and there was no position in which we could defend ourselves against them.

Kanimapo confessed that such was the case; but he added,—"There is a spot at hand to which I can lead you, where you will be secure from a whole army of Gothos. It is separated from this by a deep valley, the cliffs above which no armed men can climb. In the side of the mountain there is a cavern, very much smaller than this, but which has the advantage of being perfectly dry, as the sun shines directly into it. There, should enemies approach, we might take refuge, and remain without fear of being reached till they have taken their departure."

"But how, if the sides are perpendicular, are we to reach it?" asked my father.

"I will find the means of gaining the top," answered the Indian. "A lofty rock on the opposite side is not more than fifty feet distant from a part of the cliff; at this place I will carry across a rope-bridge, by which you may all pass in safety; and should an enemy attempt to follow, a blow of a machete would hurl him to destruction. You can thus have your choice of either remaining in this large cavern, or taking refuge in the smaller cave I have described to you."

My father consulted the doctor and the padre—who were both of opinion that we should be perfectly safe where we were; but he thought it wisest to secure a refuge in case we should be pursued, and begged the Indian to lead him to it. Kanimapo replied that he required some time to make preparations, but that as soon as he was ready he would let us know.

Calling Candela, he led him some way down the valley towards a grove of trees, among which were a great variety of creepers. We, meantime, were employed in improving our huts and in making arrangements for a sojourn in the cave, hoping that we might not be disturbed.

After some time Kanimapo and Candela reappeared, carrying between them a coil of stout rope, and a sort of square cradle of network large enough to contain a man. It was by this time too late to commence operations, but Kanimapo undertook to conduct us to the place the first thing the next morning.

"That you may not feel insecure, my friends," he said, "I will take post at the entrance of the valley during the night, and give you due notice should any danger approach."

This offer was gladly accepted; and darkness soon coming on, we made up a blazing fire in front of our huts, and prepared to pass the first night in our strange abode.

The scene can be better pictured than described. The night passed quietly away; even the sounds of the birds from the far interior of the cavern scarcely reaching our ears. So high was the vaulted roof, that as we looked upwards it had the appearance of a clouded sky; while the light from the fire, which fell on the trunks and lower branches of the trees by the side of the stream, scarcely reached the opposite walls of the cave.

Soon after daylight Kanimapo appeared. He had climbed to a height from whence he could look far away along the only path by which the valley could be approached, and had failed to make out any fire at night or smoke in the daytime which could indicate a camp of pursuers. As my father was anxious that we should lose no time, after taking a hurried breakfast he and Gerald and I set off, Kanimapo and Candela leading the way up the hill which overhung the valley. After proceeding for some distance we reached the summit of the hill, on which grew a tree of considerable size; while opposite to it rose a perpendicular cliff, surmounted by several pointed rocks. We looked in vain, however, for the entrance to the cavern, which Kanimapo told us was to be found farther round the hill. Having left the thick rope and cradle, he begged us to remain while he descended the valley. A short time afterwards, he appeared, to our surprise, on the summit of the opposite side, with his bow in his hand and an arrow to which he had attached a long thin line.

CROSSING A ROPE-BRIDGE.

Shouting to us to stand aside, he shot it into the trunk of the tree; and then desired us to fasten the end of the rope to the line with his arrow. On this being done, he hauled the stout rope across, and fastened it to one of the pointed rocks. The other end, I should have said, had already been secured round the tree. Having told Candela to fix the cradle, he again shot the arrow with the thin line; and this being attached to the cradle, by means of the line he drew it across to him.

The desired communication was now established; so placing himself in the cradle, and standing upright, with his hands holding on to the rope, he worked himself backwards till he reached the side on which we were standing.

“But surely, my friend, you don’t expect the ladies to cross over in this conveyance!” said my father. “And I suspect that the padre, and even the doctor, would very much object to it.”

“No; but by its means we can form a bridge of any size and strength,” answered the Indian. “Should it be necessary, I will, during the day, manufacture the ropes requisite for such a bridge. In the meantime, I will leave Candela to carry across a supply of wood for firing, as well as provisions.”

To my surprise, Candela willingly undertook to do this, and, terrific as the bridge appeared, crossed without hesitation; indeed, provided a person has nerve enough, and the rope is sound, there is no difficulty in crossing by one of these aerial bridges, which exist in all parts of this mountainous region. They are formed in a variety of ways—some consisting of six or more ropes—and sometimes even mules and horses are dragged across suspended below them.

Gerald and I, having seen how to work the cradle, went across and visited the cavern; in which, could we store it with provisions, we agreed that we might set a whole host of enemies at defiance—for the mouth was not to be seen from the opposite cliff, and no bullets could reach it. A person might also be stationed, under shelter, close by the rock to which the rope was fastened, so that he could cut it without exposing himself to a shot from the opposite side.

These arrangements having been made, we rejoined our party. From the account we gave of the citadel, as we called it, the general wish was that we might not be compelled to take refuge there.

Gerald laughed at the fears the doctor and the padre expressed that they should not be able to get across.

“It is not a bit worse than taking a good swing,” he answered; “all you have to do is to haul away, keep your eyes fixed on the sky, and forget that you have got two or three hundred feet between you and the earth.”

“That is the very thing, my friend, which it is difficult to do,” observed the doctor. “Neither could I forget that the rope might possibly give way, nor that I might grow giddy and let go my grasp.”

We then explained that the Indian intended to carry over several ropes, and that, consequently, some of the contingencies could not occur.

“That one might happen, would be quite sufficient to make the passage disagreeable,” observed the doctor; “so I heartily hope that we may not have to cross.”

Our friend Kanimapo was indefatigable; he was evidently very proud of the confidence placed in him, and he showed that he was fully equal to the responsibilities he had assumed. He was employed all day—either in shooting birds or monkeys, of which there were several species in the woods, or in watching the approach to the valley of the cavern. The horses and mules could not get to the upper valley, but there was ample pasturage below the second waterfall, in a spot where they might remain concealed; the only risk being that a jaguar might find them out.

“Those brutes roam everywhere,” observed Kanimapo—“over mountains and across plains; and they often come into these higher regions in search of deer, so that we must be on our guard against them. It will be necessary, therefore, either to leave your white slave,” (Tim would have strongly disapproved of being so designated,) “or Chumbo, or Candela, to watch them.”

Another day passed, and Tim and Chumbo not appearing, we began to feel very anxious about them. In other respects, we had every reason to be contented with our lot; the woods produced various wild fruits, which were now in perfection, we had as much game as we required, and the padre and Candela caught an ample supply of fish. The doctor was engaged in botanising and studying various branches of natural history; and my father was thankful that his family were in comparative safety. Perhaps I felt our retirement from the world more than any one else, as I longed to be taking part in the task to which I had pledged myself,—of aiding in the liberation of my country.

Kanimapo at last expressed his surprise that Tim and the mules had not arrived; and assuring us that we should be perfectly safe provided we remained in the valley, he left us, saying that he would go in search of them.

Another day passed, and as neither the Indian nor Tim appeared, Gerald and I agreed to go down the valley, in case they might have missed each other, and Tim should have found his way to the spot to which he had been directed. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the vegetation on the banks of the stream, or the magnificence of the trees which here and there shot up in this oasis among the mountains; while its elevated position gave it a far more temperate and refreshing atmosphere than that to which we were accustomed even in our own district. Our scanty supply of powder made us refrain from shooting any of the numberless birds we saw fluttering amid the trees or skimming along the surface of the water. Among them were several species of beautiful humming-birds, which, as they darted here and there, glittered like gems in the air. Gerald told me that Norah and he were so delighted with the valley, that they intended to try and persuade our father to migrate to it, and build a house where we might all live in happy seclusion from the world.

“You have forgotten that it would be somewhat difficult to obtain supplies in such a sequestered home; and still more so to send the produce of our industry to market,” I observed. “It might do very well for a summer retreat, but I suspect that we should grow very tired of it were we to attempt to live here all the year round.”

We had now reached the end of the valley, and were venturing beyond the boundaries prescribed by our Indian friend, so I proposed turning back.

“Let us go on a little farther,” said Gerald. “I caught a glimpse of an animal through the trees, but we shall get a better sight of it directly.”

We went on, and in another minute saw, directly below us, two fine deer feeding in a small glade. They did not mind us, but remained quietly browsing. I signed to Gerald to aim at one while I tried to shoot the other. My finger was on the trigger, when, as I looked to the left, the head and shoulders of a huge jaguar appeared. So noiselessly did the animal steal through the brushwood, that the deer were not startled; while, intent on seizing its prey, the jaguar did not discover us. The next moment it gave a tremendous spring, crashing through the boughs, and pounced down on the nearest deer. Gerald at the same moment fired, and killed the other. I waited till I could take good aim; and, to my great satisfaction, shot the jaguar through the head.

Having put an end to the sufferings of the deer the jaguar had seized, we lost no time in dragging them both out of the thicket, and hoisting them up to the bough of a tree with some ever-serviceable sepos. We were then on the point of hastening back to obtain the assistance of the doctor and Candela to carry home our prizes, when we caught sight of some objects moving in the distance. We soon made out that they were human beings; but as they might be the banditti from whom we had before so narrowly escaped, we agreed that, till we could ascertain who they really were, it would be prudent to hide ourselves. After hunting about, we found a rock on the side of the hill surrounded by shrubs, which would afford us concealment; so we climbed up to it, and crouching down, watched the strangers. They stopped for some time, as if undecided what road to take—then

THE JAGUAR AND ITS PREY.

moving on, they came directly towards us; and before long we made out two men—one leading a couple of horses, and the other the same number of mules.

“Hurrah! they must be Tim and Chumbo,” exclaimed Gerald, jumping up.

“Stay quiet till we are certain,” I answered.

The two men approached, and to my infinite satisfaction I saw that Gerald was right. Still, I wished to see what Tim would do when he arrived at the barrier. He soon got up there, and I saw him looking about in every direction. He then turned round to his companion.

“Faith, Chumbo, I begin to think that, after all, Masther Kanimapo is deceiving us,” exclaimed Tim. “Here we are, after all our troubles and adventures, with a high wall before us, and no means that I can see to get over it. The bastes are hungry, and so am I; but they can pick up their suppers off the grass, while we must hunt about till we can find ours. So I propose that we camp where we are, and while you go and look for fruits and an opossum, or any other baste you can catch, I’ll watch the animals.”

We waited till Chumbo had gone off on his errand; then leaping down from our hiding-place, Gerald shouted out in Spanish, “Your money or your life!” Tim, like a brave fellow, grasped his shillelagh to defend himself against the supposed banditti; but just then discovering us, he threw it down, shouting out, “Erin-go-bragh! shure it’s the young masthers; and a welcome sight they are to me.”

We were soon grasping Tim’s hand, and inquiring how it was he had been so long in reaching us. He told us that he had lost his way, and had caught sight of the banditti, from whom he had been compelled to hide till they had passed to a safe distance; and then, by turning back, he had been fortunate enough to discover the path he and Chumbo ought at first to have followed. We inquired if he had seen Kanimapo; but, as we suspected, he had missed him. We then told him of the proposal that the animals should be left where they were, with Chumbo to look after them; and that should the enemy appear, Chumbo was to hide himself, and let the animals take their chance—though we believed that there was little risk of them being discovered.

Tim was eager to go back with us; indeed, he greatly required rest and food. He had been unable to ride, owing to the badness of the path, any part of the distance; while the food he and Chumbo had taken with them had been for some time exhausted, and they had been hard pressed. Chumbo, however, did not reappear, so I told Gerald and Tim to stay where they were while I went in search of him. I followed in the direction in which Tim had last seen him, and soon found myself among lofty trees growing at the bottom of a deep glen, already shrouded in the shades of evening. I shouted out Chumbo’s name; and in a short time my ears were saluted by a chorus, amid which I thought I distinguished Chumbo’s voice crying for help. I hurried on, and soon saw him before me, struggling with a large bird, which he had grasped round the neck, trying to keep it at arm’s length, while it endeavoured to attack him with its talons and beak. Numberless other birds of the same description were perched on the boughs of the neighbouring trees, apparently watching the fight. I was afraid to risk a shot at the one with which Chumbo was engaged in combat, lest I might injure him; I therefore rushed forward and dealt it a blow on the head with the butt of my rifle, which fortunately stunned it, and enabled Chumbo to cast it from him to a distance—just at the moment that one of its claws had reached his legs.

I then took aim at one of the birds perched on the boughs, which I happily brought to the ground.

“Now run, Chumbo! run! before the rest of the creatures come down upon us,” I shouted out.

“Let me get hold of this one first, Massa Barry,” he answered; and seizing his late antagonist by the neck he dragged it along, while I treated the one I had just shot after the same manner.

The report of my gun at first startled them, but on their discovering that no other bird of their community had suffered, they flew after us, uttering loud shrieks. I defended myself by using my gun as a cudgel; while Chumbo, picking up a thick stick, fought them bravely, swinging it round and round his head so that none of them ventured within its reach. So persevering were their attacks that they gave me no time to load, or I might have brought another to the ground; as it was, I had considerable difficulty in protecting my head from their sharp beaks and talons. Still, we would not let go our prey, and each time we beat them off we ran on, so as to gain a farther distance; till at length, after sweeping round our heads several times, they flew back to finish the carrion feast at which Chumbo had disturbed them, and we carried off their two dead companions in triumph.

I knew the birds, from the rich scarlet on their heads, their lemon-coloured necks, the satiny white of their backs, tinged with fawn, the black pinions of the wings, and their neck surrounded with a ruff of grey feathers, to be king-vultures. Those we had killed were full-grown, and were about the size of an ordinary goose. As I saw them perched on the branches, tearing away at huge masses of flesh, I must say that, notwithstanding their regal titles, they had a very repulsive appearance. Chumbo told me how, in despair of getting any supper, he had rushed in and attacked the vulture with which I had found him struggling. Happily, he had come off without any material injury.


CHUMBO'S BATTLE WITH THE KING-VULTURES

On our way back to where I had left Gerald and Tim, I showed him the two deer we had killed, and this reconciled him to remaining with the horses and mules. Before leaving him, however, Tim and I built him a hut and collected an ample supply of wood for a fire, so that he might pass the night in security, provided he could manage to awake at intervals and replenish his fire. We then cut up one of the deer; and leaving a portion of the flesh for Chumbo, loaded ourselves with as much of the rest as we could carry. Tim added one of the vultures to his cargo, as a present to the doctor; and without further delay we set off for our settlement, as we called the huts we had erected at the entrance of the cave.

Tim received a hearty welcome; Candela clapped his hands as he saw the venison; and the doctor was highly pleased to have the king-vulture to examine. He remarked that it was unusual to find the bird in such high regions, as it generally inhabits the low, thickly-wooded districts on the banks of the rivers; but though birds and beasts of all sorts found out our happy valley and made it their abode, it would be satisfactory to believe that no anaconda or boa-constrictor had wriggled its way over the mountains to get to it, or any vicious little peccaries. We had a proof, however, that we must be on our guard against jaguars and pumas, which have a wide range, and do not hesitate to climb mountains and ford streams in search of their prey,—especially pumas, which are met with throughout Central America, and far away in the western parts of the northern continent.

The next morning the doctor accompanied us back to skin the jaguar I had shot, and to bring home the remainder of the venison—with the exception of a portion left for Chumbo, which he cut up into strips and dried in the sun, so that it might keep good for some time.

In the course of a few days we had become quite accustomed to our mode of life, though we were somewhat anxious at the non-appearance of Kanimapo. We could not suppose, after the faithful way in which he had behaved, that he had purposely deserted us, so we began to fear that he must have been captured by the Spaniards, or had met with some accident. We believed, however, that we should have no difficulty in making our way out of our happy valley, whenever we might wish to quit it. The question was, how we should obtain information as to the state of affairs in the country, and when it might be prudent for us to return home.

At last I made up my mind to set off and learn how things were going on, and either to make my way to our village, or to try and reach the residence of Don Fernando. The doctor had no wish to quit the valley, as he observed that he could spend many months in it, with infinite satisfaction to himself and to the advantage of the scientific world; but when, one day, I mentioned my resolution, he magnanimously offered to accompany me.

“I, as a foreigner and a medical man, shall run no risk,” he observed; “and you can pass for my attendant or guide, and we shall be able to go wherever you wish.”

I thanked him for his offer, and said that I would try and obtain my father’s leave to set off; but still I waited, hoping that Kanimapo would come back before long.

In the meantime we rambled at liberty through the valley, Gerald and I often escorting Norah and Kathleen—sometimes even the children, with Margarita, the younger nurse, accompanying us. One day, not content with our ramble through the upper valley, Norah proposed that we should visit the lower one, as she wished to make a sketch of the waterfall. She forgot that, though Kanimapo considered it tolerably secure, he had advised that the ladies, at all events, should limit their walks to the upper valley.

“We will not go far,” said Norah; “and we shall be sure to see Chumbo, should he by chance come with a warning that danger is at hand.”

The baby, I should say, had remained with our mother; Kathleen and Mary had come with Margarita.

We managed, without much difficulty, to help our sisters to scramble down the cliffs. Gerald said he would go forward and learn how Chumbo was getting on; and as I wished to shoot some birds or any large game I could meet with for our larder, I left my sisters seated in the shade, at a spot from which Norah wished to make her view of the waterfall. I had brought but a small supply of powder, and having shot some birds, I loaded my gun with my last charge, resolved not to fire it except in case of necessity. I was tempted, however, to break through my resolution on seeing a deer burst from the wood and offer a shot I could not resist. But my gun, for the first time during the day, hung fire; and when I again pulled the trigger, though it went off, the deer escaped.

Vexed with my ill-luck, I turned my face up the valley, and arrived almost close to the spot where I knew my sisters were seated; but what was my horror to see a huge jaguar stealing through the brushwood, and on the point of springing towards where I had left them! I mechanically lifted my gun to my shoulder, but recollected that it was not loaded. I felt like a person in a dreadful dream, endeavouring to shriek out, but unable to utter a sound; when, just as the savage brute was about to make its spring, I caught a glimpse of the tall figure of an Indian on the opposite bank, and at the same moment an arrow, whizzing through the air, pierced the jaguar to the heart, and it fell over dead.

I rushed forward, and found Kathleen with her arms thrown round Margarita's neck, within ten paces of where the jaguar lay. They had seen the creature, when Margarita had fixed her gaze on its eyes; and by

TIMELY HELP.

thus preventing it from making the fatal spring, had given time to the Indian to shoot it.

On looking out to see what had become of my young sisters' preserver, I observed him crossing the river; and in another minute he came up to us, and I recognised our missing friend Kanimapo.

"I warned you not to descend into this valley, my friend," he observed; "and thankful am I to have preserved you from the jaws of yonder savage brute. You may have been surprised at my long absence, but it could not be avoided. I was pursued by my enemies, and compelled to fly towards the south; when I received intelligence that my own people, supposing that I had been killed, were about to elect another chief, and that unless I returned at once I should find a rival, and lose my influence over them. Instigated by Spanish priests and others, their intention was to attack the house of Don Fernando, where they expected to find a rich booty. I arrived in time to prevent them from making the attack, or electing a chief in my stead. But I must speedily return, as I fear that, under evil influence, they may endeavour to injure your friends; and, as I have sworn to you, your friends shall ever be mine. I also bring you intelligence that the Spaniards have been driven out of this part of the country, and that General Bermudez, with a large body of horsemen, occupies the señor padre's village, so that you and he may return to your homes with safety."

He gave us this information while we were hastening back through the valley, Gerald having by this time rejoined us. As may be supposed, it was received with great satisfaction by our party—especially by the padre, who was anxious to get back among his people, and to be actively engaged in forwarding the cause to which he had devoted himself.

Fortunately, our animals had not suffered from the jaguars, though Chumbo had seen the very creature which was so nearly pouncing down on Kathleen, but had driven it off with firebrands. We at once, therefore, made preparations for our departure.

"I am indeed thankful that we have suffered so little hardship," said my mother; adding, as she looked up at the mountain above us, "and especially so that we have not had to cross that terrible rope-bridge to our citadel."

Though Kanimapo did not understand her remark, he observed her gesture. "We may some day have to make use of yonder retreat," he said to me; "and before we go I will remove the bridge, that none of our enemies may discover it."

Calling to Candela, he at once descended the hill; and they returned soon after with the rope and cradle, which they hid away in the cavern.

We were busily employed for the remainder of the day in collecting fruit, killing game, and preparing for our journey.

Chapter Eight.

Return journey commenced—Norah's confession—A bamboo-bridge—Unexpectedly prevented from crossing

—Foes and friends appear—The bridge gained—A fierce struggle—I take part in it—We defeat the enemy—My family return homewards under an escort—I join General Bermudez—The doctor and the padre promise to follow us—I accompany the army, and we encamp on the plains—The doctor appears, and remains with the army—Our numerous exploits—Capture of Caracas—I am sent with despatches to Bolivar—Discovered by the enemy—A race for life—I am wounded and captured—Carried to La Guayra—Thrown into prison.

The description I have given of the mountain-scenery amid which we travelled on our flight from home, will in many respects serve for that through which we passed on our return, by a different and somewhat more easy route. Though the sides of the mountains were steep and rugged, the valleys were fertile, with streams meandering through them, and in many places we saw herds of deer, among which were two or three beautiful milk-white animals; but having exhausted nearly all our powder, we were unable to shoot them, even had we wished to do so. We saw also a number of wild turkeys: and in the woods we heard micos—a small species of monkey—whistling to each other; but the moment the rogues caught sight of us, they disappeared among the branches. The roughness of the paths we followed prevented the horses from going beyond a slow walk; and even Norah, though a good horsewoman, was glad to have me at the head of her steed. I told her how much I wished to join General Bermudez.

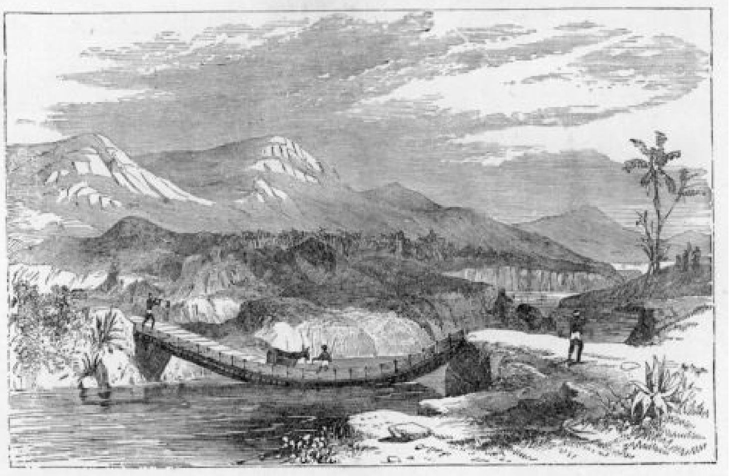
“I shall be sorry to lose you, Barry,” she rejoined; “still, I believe that it is your duty to go. I only wish that I could serve my country as you have the power of doing. Still more do I wish that the hateful Spaniards were driven from our shores, and the blessings of peace restored.”

I then told her—for I had never before done so—how much I admired Don Fernando’s young ward, Isabella Monterola. “Perhaps, if I return from the wars crowned with laurels, she’ll have me,” I said, laughing.

She sighed, and the colour, I observed, mounted to her brow.

“Don Carlos Serrano has other sons besides the one I met under the name of Colonel Acosta,” I remarked.

“Yes,” she answered; “his second son, Carlos, is as brave and devoted as his brother. Should you meet, Barry, make yourself known to him, and I am sure that he will be glad to give you his friendship. In appearance he is very like his elder brother, though perhaps handsomer, and you cannot fail to recognise him.”



THE BAMBOO-BRIDGE.

I began to suspect, from the way in which Norah spoke of the young Don Carlos, that she was deeply interested in him; and soon afterwards I had reason to know that I was not mistaken.

We stopped to rest and take our noonday meal near a small clump of trees on the borders of a wide stream, which we were afterwards to pass. Across it was thrown a curious bamboo-bridge, the lower portion of which rested on the calm water beneath it. The bamboos of which it was composed were securely lashed together by sepos, making it very elastic. The sides were so steep as to form rather a sharp angle with each other; while so great was the ascent and descent, that, to enable people and animals to pass along it without slipping, pieces of bamboo in which to fix the feet were placed at short intervals across the footway. Slight as was the bridge in appearance, owing to its yielding nature there was no danger of its breaking; and we saw two or three persons crossing it with mules, so that we had no fear about going over it ourselves.

We were about to recommence our journey, when Candela and Chumbo, who had been attending to our animals at a little distance, came hurrying up, and said that they had seen a large body of men appearing above a ridge on our side of the river; and urged that we should lose no time in moving. I ran to a slight hillock near where we had been seated, and from thence I could distinguish the men they spoke of: they were evidently infantry, and in considerable force, as I caught the gleam of their bayonets forming a long line as they surmounted the ridge.

I was assisting Norah to mount, while the doctor was putting the children into the panniers, when he cried out,—“We are in a trap! See! there are troops on the opposite side coming this way; and if we cross we may fall into their hands.”

“But they may be friends,” I said.

“Yes! they are friends,” cried the padre; “they are cavalry, the llañeros of the plain—I can make out their lances against the sky. They are dashing on at full speed; none but they could ride over that rough ground. Paez, or perchance Bermudez, is at their head.”

“You are right, friend padre; they are pushing on to gain the bridge before yonder infantry can reach it,” cried my father, his martial enthusiasm kindling. “The enemy’s object is to gain the bank of the river first, and dispute their passage before they can cross and form on this side. See! the Spaniards are advancing at the double, scrambling over all impediments; it is a question which will reach the river first. There will be some warm work anon.”

“If you will be advised by me, Mr Desmond, in that case you will retreat to a safe distance, and place the ladies and children under shelter,” observed the doctor. “Bullets make no distinction of persons; and they will be flying pretty thickly about our ears, if we venture to remain here much longer.”

“Thank you, doctor, for your advice,” answered my father; and he forthwith placed my mother on horseback. The children had been meantime tumbled into their panniers, and the nurse mounted on her mule.

Leading the animals, we hurried along the bank of the river, hoping to reach some sheltering rock which would afford protection to the helpless ones under our care. Happily, before long we found what we were in search of.

As soon as I had seen my family in safety, I sprang out again and hurried back towards the spot we had left, eager to watch what was going forward, and to take a part in the strife if I had the opportunity. As I reached it, I saw that the front rank of the Spanish infantry had got to within two or three hundred yards of the bank; while the Republican cavalry came thundering down the hill, their leader, on a powerful charger, considerably in advance. As he came nearer I recognised my proposed chief, General Bermudez. He was making directly for the bridge, lance in hand, and couched, as if he were already within reach of the foe.

Onward he dashed—the bridge was nearly won. The commander of the infantry saw that the advantage he had hoped to gain was on the point of being lost, and waving his sword, sprang forward in front of his men. But the brave Bermudez was not to be disappointed. Without pulling rein, he galloped his horse on to the fragile bridge,—which bent beneath the weight of the steed and its rider, and every instant I expected to see it give way. Soon he reached the shore on which I stood, and urged his horse up the steep bank; and one by one the llañeros came rattling after him, and formed rapidly by his side. Already a score had crossed before the infantry had got within musket-shot of them, and the Spaniards saw that the advantage they had hoped to gain was almost lost; still, by a well-directed discharge they might annihilate the small band opposed to them. As they got within range of the horsemen, therefore, they opened fire along their whole line; the shot came whistling through the air like a hail-shower, and two of the llañeros fell from their horses, dead.

Seized by an impulse I could not withstand, I caught one of the animals, and, dashing forward to where the dead man’s lance lay on the ground, I seized it and galloped up to the side of the general. As I did so, he gave me a glance of recognition; and at the same moment the order to charge burst in a loud ringing voice from his lips. Couching my lance, I gave my steed the rein, and our small but compact body advanced like an avalanche against the foe. In vain those who had fired attempted to reload; their bayonets were all they had to depend on. Had they been British troops, the case would have been different; but as they saw the bristling line of spears come down like lightning upon them, the front rank sprang up from their knees, and, seized with a panic, turned to fly. It would have been better to die like men, with their faces to the foe. Piercing them through and through, we drove them before us; and they, pressing on the rear-ranks, carried confusion into their midst. Still, the officers did their utmost to induce them to stand, and I saw them cut down several of the fugitives; but it was in vain. Our party, too, was every instant increased by fresh bands of llañeros as they crossed the bridge; while the confusion among the enemy became rapidly greater. No lives were spared. Bermudez appeared to be everywhere; now in the centre of his men, now on one flank, now on the other. The unevenness of the ground did not stop us; on we went, our lances dealing death around.

I take no delight in describing horrors, or I might vividly paint this, my first battle-field. The lance of General Bermudez pierced the Spanish commander. Not an officer escaped. A few of the men managed to scramble up some almost inaccessible heights, but of the rest every man was killed; no quarter was asked, and none was given.

I had kept close to the side of the general, and on several occasions had used my pistols when he had been almost overmatched. Having seen the last of the fugitives disappear, he turned round to me, and putting out his hand, exclaimed in a hearty voice,—“You have done good service, my friend. I remember you well; you are welcome—very welcome. We have met at length, and, I hope, not to part for many a day.”

He then, as I rode alongside of him, told me that he appointed me lieutenant in his band, and that I must accept the horse I had ridden, and the lance which I had wielded so well.

I, of course, felt highly flattered at the encomiums passed on me, and told him how glad I should be to accompany him for the future, but that I could not leave my parents without their permission.

“Go and get it at once, then,” said the general; “had I known where to find you, I should have sent for you before. You have shown that you are well able to take a part in our glorious struggle.”

The llañeros having picketed their horses in a meadow close to the bank of the river, had begun to cook their provisions in the rough fashion they usually adopt. On my telling the general where my family were, he desired me to offer them an escort for the rest of their journey, to make amends for my absence, as he wished me to continue with him.

I accordingly rode back to where I had left my party. They were much astonished to see me mounted on a strong horse, with a long lance in my hand, and to hear how I had been engaged; for they had feared that I might have been entangled among the combatants, and perhaps killed. My father did not hesitate for a moment to give me the permission I asked, and gladly accepted the general’s offer of an escort. My mother and Norah were somewhat agitated, but still they had no objections.

"Go, Barry," said my mother; "and may Heaven protect you during the dangers to which you may be exposed; for I cannot hide them from my eyes."

Norah pressed her lips to my cheek. "You will come back, Barry, crowned with laurels, and with a colonel's commission, I feel sure," she said; "and, my brother, remember the message I gave you yesterday."

The padre and the doctor expressed their intention of following me back to the general, as they both wished to offer their services. "I have vowed to support the cause of true religion—and I am sure such will never exist while the Spaniards are in the land," exclaimed the padre. "I therefore feel bound to do my best to drive them out; and having got rid of all extra flesh, I am as fit for a campaign as any of those fighting in the cause."

I replied that I would tell the general of their intentions.

Gerald kept alongside my horse for some little distance. "Do tell him that I wish he would take me too," he said; "I will ask our father's leave—and I think he will give it. If I can't handle a lance as well as a grown man, I can use a carbine and pistols, and might do duty as an ensign."

I told him that I would mention his wish to the general, but that I thought he ought to remain and assist our father in protecting the family; indeed, I had no wish, young as he was, that he should be exposed to the dangers he would inevitably have to go through. At last, wringing his hand, I told him to go back, while I galloped on.

The general was pleased with my alacrity. He immediately ordered six of his own guard to escort my father, and afterwards to rejoin him at the foot of the hills.

I set off at the head of the men. My family had in the meantime recommenced their journey, and I met them approaching the bamboo-bridge. Soon afterwards I had the satisfaction of seeing them cross it in safety, under the escort of the llañeros; for it was still entire, notwithstanding the severe strain put on it.

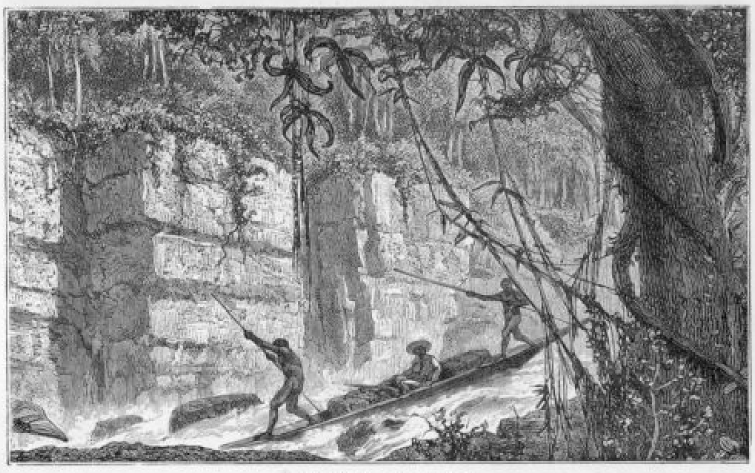
The doctor and the padre had meanwhile arrived; and having paid their respects to the general, they promised to rejoin him in the plains, and then hastened after my family. The doctor, as he was going, told me that he could not bring himself to abandon his chests, and that he hoped to find means to carry them in safety down the Orinoco to Angostura, whence he could ship them to Europe, he having learned that the whole of that part of the country was in the hands of the patriots.

For a few days I felt very strange with my wild, untutored associates, but I soon got into their ways; and by never hesitating to perform any deed however daring, by activity, and unfailing attention to my duties, I gained their respect, and found that, young as I was, they obeyed me willingly. I had the satisfaction, too, of receiving the very kind commendations of the general, which encouraged me to persevere.

By rapid marches and desperate onslaughts we beat the Spaniards wherever we encountered them; though they were better clothed and disciplined, according to military notions, and often more numerous, than we were. By a sudden dash we gained the city of Bogotà; and the Spaniards being driven to the sea-coast, the whole of the mountainous part of the country declared for the Republican cause. We then descended into the plains, and lay encamped not far from the banks of the Rio Mita,—one of the numerous streams which, having their source in the Andes, flow into the Orinoco. The region was wild in the extreme; the river made its way between lofty cliffs rising perpendicularly out of the stream, which rushed down in a succession of cataracts between them.

The troops were engaged in getting ready for the coming campaign, which, it was expected, would be a brilliant one; repairing saddles, polishing up their arms and appointments, and breaking-in fresh horses. I was fully occupied in my various duties; still, I was occasionally able to take my gun and go into the woods, with one or two companions, for a few hours. Neither the doctor nor the padre had yet made their appearance—possibly from not being able to find us—so I had not for long heard of my family, and was feeling somewhat anxious about them.

I had taken my gun, one day, and was making my way along the bank of the river, when I stopped to observe one of the curious nests hanging at the extreme end of a palm-branch. Its structure was very curious; and I observed that it had a small hole in the side, which served as a doorway to the owner, a black bird—with an orange-yellow tail—about the size of a dove. I watched one bringing food to his mate; who put out her beak to receive it, and then fed her nestlings within. These nests are equally secure from snakes or monkeys, as neither can descend the delicate boughs to which they are pendent—nor can, indeed, climb the smooth stems of the trees. Before me rose a perpendicular cliff, like a wall of cyclopean masonry, surmounted by trees and shrubs; all around hung from the wide-stretching boughs a rich tracery of sepos and creepers of all sorts; vast arums hung suspended in the air, and numberless gay-coloured flowers; while at my feet rushed, boiling and foaming, the rapid stream, amid



DESCENDING THE RAPIDS.

rocks, against which the water broke in masses of spray.

It was a place where I could scarcely have believed it possible that any boat, however strongly-built, could have ventured to descend; yet, as I looked, I saw a canoe or pongo, guided by two natives with long poles—the one in the bow and the other in the stern—while in the centre sat composedly, amidst a cargo of cases, a passenger, with his gun placed before him ready for use. In this passenger, as the canoe shot by, I recognised my friend the doctor. I shouted and waved to him, and then pointed down the stream, to let him understand that I would hurry on to the nearest landing-place and meet him. He waved in return; but the roar of the waters prevented our voices being heard by each other.

In a moment he was out of sight, so I hastened on, in the hope of finding before long some calm water where the canoe could have ventured to put in to the shore. I went on and on, but the water was still rushing as furiously as at first. In vain did I look for the canoe; nothing could I see of her, and I began to fear that she had been dashed to pieces against some of the ugly dark rocks whose tops rose above the surface.

I had gone a mile or more, when I saw a person approaching, and soon afterwards the doctor and I were shaking hands.

"I have been a long time in coming," he said; "but I could find no men to convey my chests to the river: and when, at length, I did find them, and reached the first navigable portion, no canoe was forthcoming. However, I was able at last to embark, having engaged two faithful fellows who promised to pilot me to the ocean, if I wished to go as far. So you see me here: and if General Bermudez is still willing to accept my services, I will remain with him."

I replied that, as we were about to recommence operations against the enemy, I was sure that the general would be glad that he should remain. I then eagerly inquired about my family.

"They are living in a cottage hastily put up near your old house, which your father is engaged in rebuilding," answered the doctor; "and I understand that your uncles are re-roofing and repairing Castle Concannan."

I asked him if my father had received any intelligence from Don Fernando Serrano—whether his house had escaped an attack from Aqualonga.

"Yes," he said. "The very day before I left, a messenger arrived from Don Fernando, bringing an invitation to the ladies of your family to stay with him while your house is rebuilding; and I believe it was accepted by your sister Norah, though your mother preferred remaining with the children in their present abode. The messenger told us that they had been greatly alarmed by the near approach of the bandit chief; but that, happily, he was encountered by some of the patriot troops and put to flight—though he is supposed to be still in arms in the mountains. Our friend Kanimapo has returned to his tribe, many of his people, influenced by Spanish emissaries, being in a state of insubordination."

"I trust that Norah will have a good escort, if she undertakes the journey," I observed. "I wish that I could have been at home to accompany her; for with these banditti still in arms on the one side, and the wild Indians on the other, she would run a greater risk than I should like her to be exposed to."

The doctor laughed at what he called my brotherly anxiety, and remarked that the distance was but short; that my father would certainly send Tim, and probably Gerald, with two or three trustworthy, well-armed blacks to escort her.

On reaching the pongo, the doctor directed his men to remain where they were while he accompanied me to the camp. The general was pleased to see him, and at once sent a mule to bring back his portmanteau, medicine-chest, and surgical instruments; giving him a free pass for his men, with a letter to a store-keeper at Angostura, to whom he recommended him to confide his cases till he could despatch them to Europe.

Soon after this we were on the march, and were joined by other bodies of cavalry. I was gratified to see that none surpassed those of General Bermudez, however, either in their appointments, discipline, or the appearance of the horses and men.

General Bolivar was at Angostura with most of the infantry regiments of the Republic, with General Paez and other leaders of distinction; while the Spaniards held most of the towns on the northern coast. Our object was to harass the enemy in every possible way: to cut off their supplies of provisions; to attack their foraging-parties; and prevent them from communicating with each other. For this work our llañeros were specially suited.

It was wild work in which we were engaged. Sometimes, in the darkness of night, we discovered the enemy's position by their camp-fires,—when, advancing at a slow pace, so that our horses' hoofs might not be heard till we were close upon them, at a signal from our chief we dashed forward like a whirlwind, swooping down upon our sleeping foe; and before a man had time to seize his arms, we were in their midst, cutting down all we encountered, traversing the camp from end to end, and carrying off all the horses we could capture,—then galloping off to a distance, out of the reach of their musketry.

We now heard that the Spanish generals, Morillo and La Torre, had drawn off their forces from Caracas,—the first to Valencia, and the latter to Calabozo; leaving but a small garrison in the former city. No sooner did our active general receive this information, than he resolved to attempt the capture of the chief city of the province.

Our forces were at once put in motion. Each one carried his own provisions in his haversack, and forage of some sort was always to be obtained for our hardy steeds, so that we marched across the country with incredible rapidity. As the inhabitants of the district through which we passed were in our favour, no one gave information of our movements to the enemy; and in a few days we reached the neighbourhood of the beautiful city—just at nightfall. The greater part of the night was spent in recruiting our horses and ourselves; and before dawn we were again in the saddle, pushing on at a rapid rate towards our destination. We halted but for a few moments, to form our ranks, as the city appeared in sight. Then the order to advance was given; and almost before the garrison were aware of our approach, we were rushing through the gates. But little or no opposition was offered, for the Spanish troops threw down their arms and endeavoured to conceal themselves. Those who were discovered were, I am sorry to say, slain without mercy; and in a few minutes the city was ours.

Most of the inhabitants were in our favour, so that we had no difficulty in holding it till some infantry regiments arrived to relieve us and garrison the place.

General Bermudez then led us into the plains of Apure, where the Independent army was preparing to go in search of the Spanish forces.

On the march the general sent for me, and told me that he wished to send some important despatches to Bolivar, and asked if I would undertake to convey them. "There is some danger in the undertaking, for you will have to pass near places occupied by the Spaniards; but I trust to your courage and sagacity to avoid them," he observed.

"I am ready to go wherever you desire to send me, general," I answered.

"I knew that I could count on you," he replied in a satisfied tone.

"When will the despatches be ready?" I asked.

"They are already written. Here they are!" he said, putting them into my hand.

I took them, and placed them in a leathern case slung over my back.

"I will lose no time in starting," I remarked, as I left him.

On the way to my quarters I met the doctor, and told him where I was going.

"I wish I could accompany you," he said; "for I have little or nothing to do among your fellows. They are so hardy that not one is sick in a month; and even the wounds they receive heal without my aid."

"I should like your company, my dear doctor," I replied; "but I doubt if your horse would carry you as fast as I must make mine go. And I would rather you remained behind, that you may inform my family as to what you suppose has become of me, should I not return."

"Don't talk of that, Harry," he exclaimed. "You must take care not to be captured by those bloodthirsty Spaniards; for if you are, they will certainly put you to death."

"You may depend on my doing my best to escape them," I said, laughing—not that I had any fears on the subject.

I was quickly ready, and off I set, making my horse move over the ground as llañeros are wont to do when work is before them. I had not gone far, however, before I learned from the peasantry that there were numerous parties of Spaniards stationed in all directions, to cut off the supplies of the patriot army; and that the undertaking in which I was engaged was likely to prove far more dangerous than I had expected. Accordingly, I had to use the greatest caution—galloping on only at night, and concealing myself and my horse during the day in any clump of trees I could find, or in some recess of the mountains, except when the country appeared sufficiently open to enable me to put forth the powers of my steed, and trust to his speed for escape.

I had gone on for several leagues, and, believing that I had passed the last party of Spaniards, I was proceeding rather more leisurely than at first, along a zigzag path cut in the side of a mountain, with a steep precipice below me, when I saw a strong body of men posted on a height at some distance above me. To turn back was as full of risk as to push forward. I determined on the latter course, therefore; and digging the spurs into my horse's flanks, I dashed at headlong speed along the road. I had already placed the Spaniards behind me, when they, suspecting that I was an enemy, opened fire, and their shot whizzed thickly about my ears. On I dashed; but a false step might have sent me and my horse into the abyss below, down which the stones clattered. Suddenly I heard a thud, such as a bullet produces when striking a substance; and feeling my gallant steed give a convulsive spring, I knew he was wounded. Still, he went on for nearly a hundred yards; then he began to stagger; and I had just time to clear my feet of the stirrups, and throw myself off his back, ere he rolled over into the rocky ravine. I did not stop a moment to see what became of him, but ran forward as fast as my legs could carry me; unslinging my despatch-case as I did so, and taking out the despatches, which I hid beneath my shirt. I then gave the case a whirl in the air, so that my pursuers might see it, and swung it from me into the ravine.

Having still some hopes of escaping, as it was possible my pursuers might attempt to secure the leathern case, and allow me time to distance them before they could discover that it was empty, I dashed on,—not even looking back to ascertain if they were following. At length I stopped; but what was my dismay, on taking a glance over my shoulder, to see that half-a-dozen of the most active of the party were pressing hard after me! Had the path continued down-hill, I should have succeeded in escaping; but, unhappily, I found that the only way I could follow led directly up the steep side of a mountain, where I must be exposed to the view of my pursuers. Could I, however, reach the top, so that I might once more have only to run down-hill, I might be safe; and I knew that I could climb up-hill faster than they could. I held on, therefore. Their object had probably been to take me alive, that they might obtain information from me as to the movements of the combatants; but seeing that I might escape them, they halted, and brought their muskets to their shoulders.

As I turned my head for an instant, I saw what they were about. Yet even then I did not despair, and on I bounded up the hill. The next moment I heard the bullets strike the ground round me, and at the same time felt a peculiar sensation in my leg, as if the cold end of a lance had entered it. I knew that I was hit, but that no bone or muscle worth speaking of had been injured. Though wounded, I felt capable of considerable exertion; and so, casting another look behind me, to ascertain what my enemies were about,—not dreaming of giving in,—I saw that they were reloading. Still, I might gain the top of the hill.

Once more the rattle of musketry sounded in my ears; and a very unpleasant sound it is, for the person at whom the balls are aimed. “A miss, however, is as good as a mile;” and though two or three bullets whistled close to my ears, and another went through the sleeve of my jacket, I was sure that I had escaped this second salvo.

The top of the hill appeared just above me, when I felt myself seized with faintness, against which I struggled in vain. I staggered for a few yards farther, and then sank on the ground. I must have lost consciousness; for the next moment, as it seemed to me, when I opened my eyes I saw my enemies standing round me.

“He is an Englishman,” I heard one of them say.

“We must not kill him now; he has made a brave attempt to escape,” remarked another.

“Young as he looks, he will probably know some thing our general would like to hear,” observed a third. “We must carry him with us.” And another, still more considerate, advised that my wound should be bound up, or I might bleed to death.

Thanking them for their good intentions, I produced a handkerchief, with which, the last speaker assisting me, I bound up my leg. Happily, the wound was not so serious as it might have been; for the bullet had passed through the flesh without cutting any considerable artery or blood-vessel, and gone out again—carrying with it the piece of cloth it had cut from my trousers.

The men, with more consideration than I should have expected from them, then lifted me up on their shoulders and conveyed me to the hut which had served as their guard-house. After I had been there some time an officer appeared, who asked if I was ready to give any information about the movements of the patriots; but I replied that I was merely the bearer of despatches—with the contents of which I was unacquainted—and that I had, as in duty bound, thrown away my despatch-case. I guessed, from various questions put to me, that it had not been discovered; which was, at all events, satisfactory, as they were less likely to suppose that I had the letters concealed about me. The officer then told me that, as I was strong enough to sit a mule, he would send me to General Morillo, who might possibly find means of eliciting information. I begged that I might remain a few days in quiet, to give my wound an opportunity of healing. He answered that I must consider myself fortunate in not being immediately put to death, as would have been the fate of most people; but that, as I had shown courage, and was an Englishman, he would give me a chance of saving my life and regaining my liberty: though he warned me that, should I refuse to give all the information I might possess, the general would shoot or hang me without scruple.

Of course I thanked the officer for his courtesy, and expressed my readiness to set out, and sit my mule as long as I could; not that I had the slightest intention of giving General Morillo any information, but I hoped, during the journey, to find some opportunity of escaping.

As Caracas was still held by the Republicans, I was to be taken, I found, to La Guayra, on the coast, and from thence sent to wherever the general happened to be. It occurred to me that by the time I could reach him, even should I tell him everything I knew it would be of little use, as the patriot leaders might by that time have completely changed their plans.

From an unusual oversight on their part, my captors had not thought of searching me, as they supposed all the letters I was carrying had been thrown away in the case. I determined, however, to destroy the despatches on the first opportunity.

I cannot attempt to describe my journey, for my wound pained me so much that I could think of little else. I was constantly on the watch for an opportunity of destroying the papers hidden in my bosom, and was now sorry that I had taken them out of the despatch-case. We sometimes slept in the open air; and my wound, as I lay on the hard ground, caused me so much pain that I could scarcely sleep. At other times we stopped at guard-houses, where I was devoured by fleas and other insects; for the men who escorted me were afraid of entering the villages, the inhabitants being generally favourable to the patriot cause. We of course kept at a distance from Caracas, but I heard from my guards that General Morales was marching from Valencia with a powerful force for the purpose of recapturing it; and on the very day that we reached La Guayra, I was further informed that he had entered the city and put the whole of the patriot garrison to the sword. "Such will be the fate," added my informant in a triumphant tone, "of all who oppose our rightful sovereign, the King of Spain." I thought it wise to make no reply to this remark.

Shortly afterwards we reached a strong castle, close to the sea,—to the governor of which I was delivered up. Though a Spaniard, he cast, I thought, a glance of commiseration at me; and he whispered to an officer in attendance—"Poor youth! he looks ill and weak. He has but a few days to live, I suspect."

I had, indeed, suffered much from the pain of my wound and the fatigue of the journey; the food, also, with which I had been furnished, was insufficient and coarse. I was nevertheless placed in a dungeon, but I was supplied with a bed and bedding, and a chair and table, by the compassionate governor. There was also a small window, strongly barred, through which the fresh sea-breeze blew into my cell, so that I was better off than I had expected.

All this time I had never been searched, and had still the despatches about me. Better food than I had hitherto been able to obtain was brought to me; and had I not known that the fate of most prisoners captured as I had been was to be put to death, I should have been tolerably contented, in the hope of recovering, and of some day or other regaining my liberty.

Chapter Nine.

In prison—My jailer gives me unpleasant information—Sufferings from my wound—I ask for a surgeon—The doctor appears—Plan for escaping—The doctor again comes to me—The jailer informs me that I am to be strangled—Visited by a friar, who proves to be an old friend—Escape—Reach the "Flying Fish"—Joined by the doctor and padre—Voyage up the Orinoco—Land at Angostura—Proceed on in a canoe—Scenes on the river—Adventure with peccaries—Turtle-catching at night—Hunt for turtles' eggs—Mode of obtaining oil from them—Alligators and vultures—Land and proceed to the camp.

In spite of the kindness I was receiving from the governor, I could not help recollecting that I might at any time be led out and shot, or be put to death in a more ignoble way. My wound, too, did not heal; and at last I tried to persuade the jailer to take a message to the governor, requesting that I might be attended by a surgeon. The man shrugged his shoulders,—observing that he believed no surgeons were to be found in the place, and, as far as he could judge, a father-confessor would be a more fitting visitor.

"You think, then, that I am about to die?" I asked.

"To tell you the truth, señor, I believe that if you don't die of your wound, you will, very shortly, in some other way," he replied, giving a sardonic grin. "General Morillo is expected here. He is sure to order a jail delivery, as we cannot take charge of more than a certain number of prisoners; and it is said that we shall soon have a fresh arrival of captured rebels."

This information was not very consolatory; it made me doubly anxious to get well, that I might try to effect my escape, so I again pressed the jailer to obtain the favour I asked. He consented; and next day, when he visited my cell, he told me that the commandant had sent into the town to ascertain if a surgeon was to be found, and if so that he would be allowed to visit me. The jailer, however, again urged me to see a confessor, in case I should die. I did not say that I certainly should not confess to him if he came, but merely remarked that I would prefer having a surgeon; who might at all events let me know should he think my case hopeless—and if not, try to cure me.

Some days passed by; and my wound remained in the same state as before, causing me much suffering. At last, one forenoon the door opened, and instead of my jailer, whom I had expected, I saw a tall figure, with a cloak over his shoulders, and a slouched hat, standing in the doorway.

"Here is the surgeon come to do what he can for you," said the jailer, who put his head in behind the stranger. "Take my advice, and as soon as he is gone let me bring the father-confessor to you.—He will be of most service in the end. Now, señor surgeon, you will not be long about it."

"I may take half an hour, or possibly an hour," answered the stranger, in execrably bad Spanish.

I knew the voice,—it was that of Doctor Stutterheim. I had difficulty in restraining myself from jumping up and shaking him by the hand; but I had sense enough to wait till the jailer had closed the door and retired.

"Why, Barry, my boy—Barry! it is you, then! I thought it must be, from the account I heard," said the doctor in a low voice as he approached me.

"I am indeed Barry, my kind friend," I exclaimed, stretching out my hand. "How did you manage to discover me?"

"Because I looked for you, Barry," answered the doctor. "We heard at the camp that a young officer carrying despatches had been captured; and when, after a time, you did not turn up, I resolved to endeavour to find out where you were imprisoned. 'Where there's a will there's a way,' and I soon ascertained in what direction you had gone. As it was not known that I had been with the patriots, I reassumed without difficulty my character of a travelling philosopher, and managed at length to reach this place. I at once gave out that I was ready to exercise my skill on any sick people who desired to recover from their maladies, of every sort and description; and as I demanded very small fees, I soon had numbers flocking to consult me. I made inquiries of all who came, and thus learned that a young Englishman, whom I knew must be you, was shut up in the castle. I was turning over in my mind various plans for getting access to you, when I heard that the commandant was inquiring for a surgeon. I presented myself before him, and from what he told me I had no longer any doubt that it was you he wished me to visit. He observed that I might try to heal your wound, though he believed that it was of little use, as you would probably be taken out and shot in a few days. I would not have told you this unless I had hoped, in the first place, to cure you, and then to enable you to escape—as I have determined in some way or other to do. Now let me examine your wound."

The doctor at once set to work; but I need not describe his mode of operation. Though I at first suffered some pain, I ultimately felt more comfortable than I had done for a long time. He then gave me some medicines to strengthen me, and promised that he would obtain leave from the commandant to send me some better food, without which his remedies would be of little use.

While he was dressing my wound he talked over various plans by which I might effect my escape. "I believe, Barry, that a golden key will not answer. It may be dangerous to employ it. You must endeavour to get out there," he said, pointing up to the window. "If one of those iron bars can be removed, you will have no difficulty in squeezing through. I can bring a file in my instrument-case the next time, as the cutting through those bars may prove a tedious business. But let me see! Your bedstead is of iron, and by wrenching off the side-rail you will have the means of working much more rapidly than with a file."

"But how shall I reach the window?" I observed.

"Turn your bedstead up on end, and you will have a ladder well fitted for your object," he replied. "You must begin to-night, for you may not have much time to lose. Replace it at daylight; and if you have not succeeded, go to work again directly the jailer has left you at night. You will find yourself, I hope, strong enough for that; and before I come again to-morrow, I hope to have made some arrangements to facilitate your escape after you have got out of prison. I will report unfavourably of your case, so that your guards may probably relax their watch over you, and not suspect you of endeavouring to escape."

After we had had a little more conversation the jailer appeared, and inquired whether the doctor was ready to go.

"I should be glad to remain longer with my poor young patient," he answered, shaking his head as he looked at me. "His is a desperate case; you ought to have sent for me two weeks ago."

As may be supposed, I waited with anxiety till night came. Though I was still somewhat weak, as soon as the jailer had gone his last round I rose from my couch, and managed to break off a piece of iron, as the doctor had advised. I then placed the bedstead against the wall, in a position which enabled me to stand on it so that I could work at the bars. Next I looked out to ascertain where the sentries were posted, and was thankful to see that none were opposite my cell window. By working away into the masonry, I found that I could clear one of the bars out of its socket, both above and below. The particles of stone and mortar which I dug out, I carefully brushed off into my hand and placed on the ground where my bed stood. By morning, to my great joy, I found that the bar moved, and that it could be wrenched out without much difficulty.

As dawn broke I replaced my bedstead, hiding the place where I had broken out the piece of iron with the bedclothes. I then got in, and, overcome with my exertions, was soon asleep.

When the jailer appeared, he placed a small basket of provisions, in addition to the usual prison fare, on my table.

"I thought I was right," he said, looking at me. "You are paler than yesterday. The doctor has done you no good. You had better let me send for a confessor. But, before long, he will be sure to come. Prisoners of your rank are never sent out of the world without a visit from him."

"When he comes, I will do my best to satisfy him," I answered, evasively; and the jailer, with a shake of the head, took his departure.

Later in the day the doctor appeared. "Your young prisoner requires a severe operation," he observed, as he entered. "I won't ask you to wait, as I can perform it alone; but you need not be in a hurry to return."

Without looking to see whether the jailer had gone away, he approached me, and in a rough voice told me to show him my wound. He then dressed it as he had done before, and whispered,—"It is going on favourably; but we must not let the commandant know that. I have good and bad news to give you; good if you manage to make your escape, but otherwise bad. I yesterday met an old friend of yours, who commands a schooner which has come in here under English colours. Finding him a bold, dashing fellow, I told him that a young Englishman in whom I was interested was shut up in prison, and would very likely be put to death if not rescued. When I mentioned your name, he exclaimed, —'I know him well! He came out with his uncle not long ago from England. I will run every risk to save the lad's life. With my brave fellows we might take the castle by surprise, and, before the Spaniards could collect to oppose us, carry him off.' I talked the matter over with Captain Longswill, and dissuaded him from following the plan he proposed, feeling sure that it would be much safer for you to try and effect your escape as before intended. Finally, the captain agreed to get a plan of the fort and surrounding ground, that you might be the better able to direct your course should you succeed in getting out of prison. The next day he brought it to me—and here it is;" and the doctor put a paper carefully folded up into my hand. "Study it well," he added, as I unfolded it; "on the night that you may fix, a boat will be sent in to this point, where she can lie concealed among the rocks. If you can manage to drop from the ramparts on to the sand, you may make your way to the spot without much risk of being observed. Remark this place: the sea has thrown up a bank of sand which is very soft, and will assist to break your fall. Should you by any chance be recaptured, Captain Longswill will land with his crew and storm the fort, and attempt to set you free. I have given him a plan of the interior as far as I can make it out, so that he will know where to find you. *Nil desperandum*; keep up your courage, and all will go well. Perhaps, too, I may have an opportunity of giving a narcotic to some of your guards. Several of the fellows have come to me complaining of being sick, and I will be very liberal of my medicines,—depend on that."

I thanked the doctor heartily for the interest he took in me, and told him that I was convinced it would be far better for me to try and escape secretly, than be the cause of bloodshed—as many lives would probably be sacrificed.

The doctor was at last obliged to summon the jailer to let him out. He shook his head as the man appeared.

“The poor young Englishman is in a bad way,” he whispered, pretending to wish that I should not hear what he said; “you should give him more food, to afford him a chance of recovering.”

“It matters very little,” answered the man; “a day or two hence it will probably be much the same to him whether he is well or ill.”

“It is my business to get him well,” observed the doctor; “after that, I have nothing more to say on the subject. If your general chooses to shoot or strangle him, that is no affair of mine—though I should be sorry to see so fine a youth put to death.”

Saying this, the doctor walked out, and the jailer closed the door behind him. I wished, after what I had heard, that I had arranged to try and escape that very night; and I determined that the next time the doctor came we should fix the time for making the attempt.

As soon as it was dark I set to work on the bar, and managed to get it completely out of its socket, so that I could move it in a moment without making any noise. I then put my bed to rights, and getting in, went to sleep.

So sound were my slumbers, I did not awake till I found the jailer leaning over me, and shaking me by the shoulders. I looked up, and asked him what was the matter.

“Only that I have come to tell you that you are to be put to death to-morrow—which is a very unpleasant announcement,” he answered. “However, the commandant, being a religious man, will send a padre to you, that you may confess to him, and prepare yourself for your inevitable fate.”

“Am I to be shot?” I asked, in a tone as full of alarm as I could assume.

“No,” he answered. “A new machine has just arrived from Spain, called a garotte. From what I hear, it is a very clever invention. You will only have to sit down in a chair which has a hollow in the back, and a piece of wood which is also hollowed out comes in front; then, by turning a large screw, the two are pressed together till the windpipe is stopped up. In consequence, you will cease to breathe; but do not be alarmed, you will find it very easy, if not agreeable. You will afterwards be cut up, and the portions of your body will be exposed in various parts of the town, to show our brave soldiers how traitors are treated; but that will be a matter of indifference to you, I suppose. I only mention it that you may give a full description to your friends of what is to happen, to whom I would advise you to write during the day. You will be furnished with paper and ink for the purpose. In the meantime, the padre will visit you, and you will be wise to make a clean breast to him.”

The man spoke with a sardonic grin on his countenance, which would have been very trying had I not fully expected to disappoint him. Leaving me an ample supply of provisions, he went away, chuckling at my fancied alarm.

As soon as he closed the door, I got up and made a capital breakfast, and then prepared to receive the padre whenever he should come. My chief fear was that the doctor might not be allowed again to visit me, and that I should lose the opportunity of fixing a time with Captain Longswill for making my escape. I did not wish to offend the padre; at the same time, I determined not to make a confession of any sort to him. He might prove a kind-hearted man; and if so, I would spend the time of his visit in trying to get him to intercede for me.

I had just finished my meal, when a friar with a cowl over his head entered the cell.

“I can give you half an hour, señor padre. That will be long enough to shrive the young Englishman,” observed the jailer, as he closed the door.

“You are in a bad case, my son, I fear,” said the monk as he approached me.

I knew the voice, though the cowl, in the gloom of the cell, prevented me from seeing my visitor’s features.

“What, Padre Pacheco!” I exclaimed. “My dear padre! how could you have risked your safety by coming here?”

“For your sake, Barry, I would go through much greater danger,” he answered. “I followed you to this place, being resolved to attempt your liberation; and I have heard all about you from our friend the doctor. It being reported that you and others are to be put to death to-morrow, on finding that he would not be allowed to visit you again I boldly came to the prison, letting the jailer suppose that the commandant had sent for me to shrive you. He at once admitted me; and here I am to tell you that your friend the English captain will send a boat in to-night at eleven o’clock, when all the garrison, with the exception of the guards, will be asleep. The doctor will come to visit his patients late in the day, and will then find out who is to be on guard, and will do his best to give them sleeping potions, so that you may boldly pass between them and scramble over the wall. I do not, therefore, consider that you will have to run any great risk.”

The padre talked on in a low voice. When I expressed my fears that he would compromise his own safety, he answered that as soon as he knew that I had escaped he intended to get away, if possible, on board the *Flying Fish*, and that he had engaged a boat to take him off. This much relieved my mind.

We were still conversing when we heard the jailer turn the key in the lock. On this the padre got up and went towards the door. “He has made as good a confession as I could have expected,” he observed to the jailer as he went out; “I hope, my friend, you will be as prepared to die, when your time comes, as he is.”

I was after this left alone for the greater part of the day; and towards evening the jailer brought me some more food. I was very thankful to see his back as he went out, and heartily trusted that I might never set eyes on him again.

I could only calculate the time by hearing the guards changed. At last, believing that it was nearly eleven o'clock, I prepared for my adventure. Putting up my bedstead as before, I climbed to the window, from which I noiselessly removed the bar; then getting outside, I replaced it, and dropped a height of ten feet or so into a sort of inner ditch. It was perfectly dry, and as the ground was hard I felt somewhat shaken; but recovering myself, I crawled along till I could mount the bank at a spot whence I could observe the sentries on either side. One, as he did not move, had, as I hoped, taken the doctor's potion; but the other still walked backwards and forwards, evidently wide-awake. At last he sat down, and as I watched him I saw that he was overcome with drowsiness. I at once crept across the intervening space, and gained the top of the wall without being seen. Glancing downwards, the height appeared considerable; but hesitation might prove my destruction, so throwing myself over, I dropped a height of not much under thirty feet,—happily alighting on the soft sand which the doctor had told me of.

I had still some distance to run along the beach: on I went, hoping that the two sentries would not awake till I had gained the shelter of some rocks. I then stopped an instant to ascertain whether I was taking the right direction. There was sufficient light to enable me to discern the point where the boat was to meet me. No noises proceeded from the fort. I made my way among the rocks with caution, to avoid the risk of slipping down and hurting myself; and at length, to my infinite satisfaction, I heard Captain Longswill's voice.

"All right, Barry," he said; "we are here. Give me your hand, and I will show you the boat."

Never did I more thankfully grasp a man's hand; and in a few seconds I was seated in the stern-sheets of his boat, and we were pulling off for the *Flying Fish*, which lay in the offing.

I told the captain of my anxiety about the doctor and Padre Pacheco.

"They will be all right," he answered; "I promised to burn a blue light as soon as you were safe on board, when they were immediately to shove off. It may puzzle the Spaniards somewhat to know what it means; but as they are not fond of turning out of their beds, we shall be away long before they come to look after us."

The schooner was under way, standing on and off shore, when we got on board. We afterwards ran in closer, and, to my great joy, made out a boat pulling towards us, out of which presently stepped the doctor and the padre. The boat then pulled away; and we ran to the northward, so that we might be out of sight of land before the morning.

I asked the captain where he was going.

"I have received directions to proceed up the Orinoco to Angostura," he answered. "As that city is in the hands of your friends, I conclude that you would wish to go there. If not, I will keep you on board and land you at Jamaica, or any other English island where you may desire to remain."

"By all means let me go on shore at Angostura," I said, "for I am as anxious as ever to help to drive the Spaniards out of the country."

The doctor and the padre were greatly pleased when they found that the schooner was about to proceed up the Orinoco.

"I shall thus be able to recover my chests," observed the former; "it would have broken my heart to leave them. I shall also, I hope, be able to remain till I see the patriotic cause triumphant, and you, Barry, settled happily at home. You make a very good soldier; but you are cut out for something better than shooting your fellow-creatures, and running the risk of being shot in return."

"And I shall be able to get back to my people; and, I hope, have liberty to preach the gospel to them in quiet," observed the padre.

We were soon out of the Caribbean Sea, when, the wind shifting to the north-east, we ran along the eastern shore of the beautiful island of Trinidad. The yellow water amid which we afterwards sailed showed us that we were off the mouth of the mighty Orinoco. The shores on both sides of the river were so low that we could see only the mangrove bushes rising out of the water, with tall trees farther off. Having taken a pilot on board, and the wind being from the eastward, we sailed rapidly up the stream, notwithstanding the strong current running against us. The river being in the hands of the patriots, who commanded it with strong flotillas of flecheras or gun-boats, we sailed on without molestation from the Spaniards, and at last, after a voyage of ten days or more, reached Angostura.

Hearing that General Bolivar had already left the place with his forces, and was marching towards the plains of Apure, my friends and I determined to follow him. Finding that we could perform two or three hundred miles or so of the distance by water, we engaged a canoe to take us up.

When bidding farewell to my friend Captain Longswill, he put a purse into my hand; observing,—"You are in want of funds, and you or your uncle can repay me some day if you have the opportunity. If not, you are welcome to the money; I have made a successful voyage, and can spare it."

I thanked him much for his generosity, for I was unwilling to be indebted either to the doctor or the padre,—who would, however, I am sure, have been ready to help me. I was thus able to purchase a rifle and other weapons. The doctor had preserved his; and the padre supplied himself with arms at the same time.

We set off towards the middle of the day, and had thus made some progress before sunset. Our life was very similar to that which we led when coming up the Magdalena. We landed at night on the shore, where we built some huts for shelter, lighted a fire, cooked our provisions, and then lay down to rest.

I was on foot before my companions the next morning; and rambling, gun in hand, along the bank of a small stream which ran into the main river, was much struck with the calm beauty of the scene, so different from anything I had witnessed for many months. The vegetation was rich in the extreme,—creepers with gay colours hanging from all the branches, with graceful reed-like plants springing up at the water's edge, while on the surface floated large green leaves,—on which I saw a long-footed jacana standing while engaged in fishing for her breakfast. The idea came across my mind, How much happier it would be to live amid scenes like this, instead of having to go back to the wild turmoil of the camp or engage in the heady fight; but while my country remained enslaved, it was my duty to risk life and limb, and to sacrifice everything else, to set her free,—so I quickly banished the thought, and hastened back to my friends.

Having breakfasted, we proceeded on our voyage. Our canoe was a curious craft: she was formed of a single vast trunk (hollowed out by fire and the axe), forty feet in length, and scarcely more than three in beam, with upper works added to her; and on the after part was a platform projecting over the sides, on which was erected a small low cabin or toldo. The deck, if I may so term it, was covered with jaguar-skins, on which we could stretch ourselves when we wished to escape from the heat of the sun. A dozen Indian rowers sat, two and two, in the fore part, with paddles three feet long in the form of spoons; and they kept very regular stroke by singing songs, which were of a somewhat sad and monotonous character.

MORNING SCENE ON THE ORINOCO

Our craft was so crank that one of us could not venture to lean over on one side unless we gave notice to balance the boat by inclining on the other. Still we made very good progress, considering the current that was against us.

During the excessive heat of the day, we landed to allow the crew to take some rest. The doctor on these occasions bade me remark the silence which reigned over nature. The beasts of the forest had retired to the thickets; the birds had hidden themselves beneath the foliage of the trees. Yet when we ceased speaking our ears caught a dull vibration, a continual murmur,—the hum of insects filling all the lower strata of the air, while a confused noise issued from every bush, from the decayed trunks of the trees, from the clefts of the rocks, and from the ground undermined by lizards, crickets, millipedes, and other creatures. Myriads of insects were creeping upon the soil and fluttering round the plants parched by the heat of the sun,—showing us by their countless voices that all nature was breathing, and that under a thousand different forms life was diffused throughout the cracked and dusty soil, as well as in the bosom of the waters and in the air circulating round us.

We landed one night on a sand-bank, when, finding no tree, we stuck some long poles in the ground, to which we fastened our hammocks, with blazing fires around. It was a beautiful moonlight night, calm and serene. We observed numerous alligators with their heads above the surface; others were stretched along the opposite shore, with their eyes turned towards the fire, which seemed to attract them as it does fish and other inhabitants of the water.

The first part of the evening passed away quietly enough, but an hour before midnight so terrific a noise arose in the neighbouring forest that we in vain tried to sleep. It appeared as if all the wild beasts of the continent had collected together in an endeavour to out-howl each other. We could not distinguish one from the other; but the Indians, by listening attentively, caught the voices of those which sounded for an instant at intervals while the rest ceased. Among the strange cries were those of the sapajous, the moans of the alouati monkeys, the howlings of jaguars and pumas, the shrieks and grunts of peccaries, the calls of the curassow, the paraka, and other fowls. Jumbo added his voice to the turmoil, barking furiously; but suddenly he ceased; then again began to howl, and tried to jump into his master's hammock.

"He knows that a jaguar is approaching," observed the doctor. "I only hope that the brute will show his ugly nose here."

"Take care that he does not leap into your hammock," I remarked.

"Not while I keep my weather-eye open," observed the doctor.

As a precautionary measure, however, the doctor got out of his hammock and piled wood on all the fires. These, I suppose, kept the jaguars from actually attacking us; but the next morning we found the traces of several which had come down to the river to drink.

Continuing our voyage, the men, after having paddled against a strong current, begged for a noonday rest, which we were compelled to allow them. The forest appeared tolerably open, so the doctor proposed that we should take our guns and shoot any animals we might come across. The padre, he, and I accordingly landed; and observing that the ground rose to some height inland, we pushed forward in that direction. In addition to my gun, I had armed myself with a long spear,—a useful weapon under most circumstances in that region, although it could not be employed to much effect in a thick forest.

We shot a paca and several birds, and had got some way up the hill, which was densely covered with trees to the summit, when the doctor suggested that it was time to return.

“Gladly, my friends,” answered the padre; “hill-climbing does not quite suit me, unless on the back of a stout mule; and I am, besides, very hungry. I hope our people will have prepared dinner for us. Hark! what is that noise?”

We listened, and could distinguish a confused sound of grunting and squeaking coming from a distance amid the trees.

“Pigs, I suspect,” observed the padre. “We may shoot one or two, and they will prove a welcome addition to our larder.”

“Pigs they certainly are; but of a species which I have no wish to encounter unless I am safe out of their reach,” exclaimed the doctor. “My friends, it is no joke; if they once get up to us, we are as good as dead men. They are peccaries,—terrible little brutes, with tusks as sharp as lancets, savage as jaguars, and too stupid to know fear. Were we to shoot down half-a-dozen of them, the rest would come on as fiercely as at first. Here, señor padre, let me hoist you up into the fork of this tree. Don’t hesitate, as you value your life.”

Saying this, the doctor seized the padre round the legs, and together we lifted him up till his hands could reach a branch, when by further efforts we enabled him to seat himself safely in the tree.

We were going to follow, when the doctor remarked that it would be as well to divide our foes; and observing another tree at a little distance, he ran towards it, when, giving such a spring as I scarcely believed him capable of, he caught hold of a branch and hoisted himself up.

“Quick, quick, Barry!” he cried out, stooping down and giving me his hand.

Turning one glance over my shoulder, there I saw a herd of apparently harmless little pigs tearing

AN ENCOUNTER WITH PECCARIES

through the forest, as if possessed by some uncontrollable impulse. I had barely time to get my feet off the ground, with the doctor’s help, when a dozen or more, aiming at my legs, dashed their snouts against the trunk of the tree; and others, turning round, began leaping up at me, uttering all the time the most fearful grunts and squeaks, indicative of savage rage. As they did so they opened their jaws, exhibiting the sharp, terrible little tusks of which the doctor had spoken. The herd now divided; some, having espied or smelled out the padre, surrounded the tree in which he had taken refuge, while others endeavoured to reach us. Having my lance, which had assisted me in getting on to the branch, I darted it down and transfixed one of the fierce little monsters; but this produced not the slightest effect on the rest, even though the doctor fired and killed another. The padre, meantime, was blazing away, at each shot bringing down one of the peccaries besieging him; but the rest continued as furious as before the fall of their companions. There were a hundred or more, but as they kept rushing about it was difficult to count them. It was also clear that, unless we could manage to kill every one of them, it would be unsafe for us to descend from our perches. The question was, whether our powder and shot would last out the siege. That I might husband mine, I made good use of my lance, and was thankful that I had brought it.

“How are you getting on, señor padre?” shouted the doctor.

“I have killed a dozen; and I should be glad if I could get a few slices off one of them roasted, and handed up to me, for the exercise and excitement have increased my hunger wonderfully,” answered the padre; and he again fired, and sent a peccary rolling over on its back.

It appeared, after all, that though he had killed so many, the furious herd was as numerous as ever. The matter was growing serious; our boatmen would not know what had become of us, and might possibly take it into their heads that we had been attacked and killed by Indians, jaguars, or snakes, and might return to Angostura and leave us to our fate. We had no great confidence in them, though they behaved well enough when we were present to keep them in order. The doctor’s and the padre’s ammunition was already running short, too; though I, having used my lance, had a larger supply. I calculated that I had what would kill twenty peccaries; but still there would remain several dozens to be disposed of. At last the doctor told me he had only a couple of charges left; and shouting to the padre, we ascertained that he had the same number. It would not do to expend these, as on our way back we might have to defend ourselves against other wild beasts.

The doctor now took my lance, which he used with pretty good effect, piercing five or six more of our enemies. He had pinned another to the ground through the side, but in its struggles it snapped off the head of the lance, and we had now only the charges which I had reserved for the destruction of some of the remainder. Each time I fired I killed a peccary; but we calculated that when I had fired the last shot I could venture on, there would still remain upwards of forty of our fierce little assailants—a number sufficient to kill every one of us, should we descend to the ground.

We sat still for some minutes, considering what was best to be done. Hunger, independent of the wish to continue our voyage, made us anxious to get down; but the doctor warned the padre and me on no account to make the attempt.

“I would sooner face a couple of jaguars than those little brutes,” he observed.

We were seated on our perches, disconsolate enough, it may be supposed, when we heard a sound of cracking boughs, as if some creature was making its way through the underwood, and presently we caught sight of a large tapir with a jaguar on its back, dashing at headlong speed through the forest. It attracted the attention of the peccaries, and they, for the moment forgetting us, darted off in pursuit, possibly with the hope of making both animals their prey.

“Now’s our time,” cried the doctor; “come, señor padre, descend from your tree—quick!—quick!—and we’ll make our way to the canoe.”

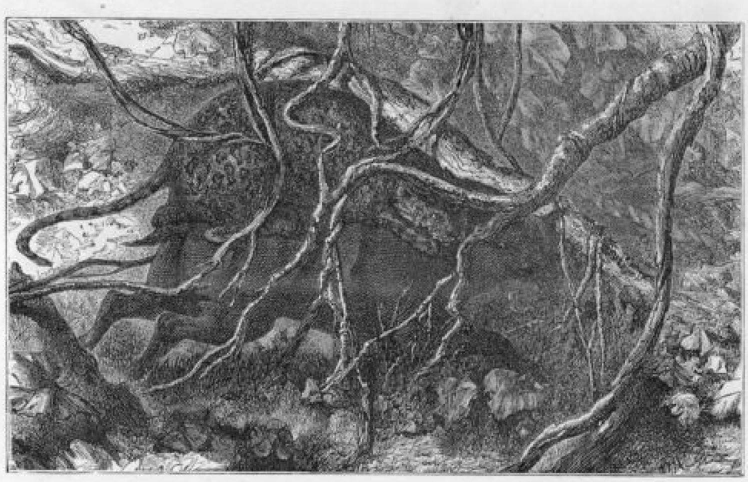
The padre eagerly obeyed the summons; and came rolling, rather than leaping, down to the ground, nearly dislocating his ankle. We each of us took hold of his hands, and together, in spite of the pain he was suffering, ran through the forest. As we did so, I looked back pretty often to ascertain whether the terrible little monsters were following us.

The padre begged us at last to stop, that he might recover breath and rub his ankle. As we rested, he fancied that he again heard the grunts and squeaks, and urged us to go on. We willingly obeyed him, and continued our night till we saw the broad river close in front of us. We shouted to our crew, but neither they nor the canoe were to be seen.

“The fellows can’t have put off already,” exclaimed the doctor; “they deserve hanging or shooting if they have.”

“Perhaps they are hidden by the bank,” observed the padre; “come on. I still hear those horrible grunts in the distance; I shall never get the sound out of my ears as long as I live.”

Presently we saw a hat rising above the bank; it was that of our captain. Another and another appeared. The fellows had been fast asleep, and had not discovered now quickly the time had gone by. When they heard of our encounter, they congratulated us, assuring us that they had known of numbers of people being killed by herds of peccaries; and they asserted that the creatures will attack and destroy a jaguar, though many of the herd may first lose their lives in the battle. Our men, on hearing of the peccaries we had killed, were eager to obtain some of the flesh, and coolly asked us to go with them, that we might defend them. This we declined doing, for even a dozen men would have been no match for the remainder of the herd, should we encounter them. Our fellows looked very sulky at our refusal, though they were afraid to go alone; so



HUNTED TO DEATH

we ordered them to shove off, and proceeded on our voyage, leaving the slain peccaries to become the food of jaguars and pumas, or armadilloes and vultures,—which, before the nest day's sun arose, would devour the whole of them.

Some days after this we reached a long, low sand-bank, which the falling waters had left dry. We were about to pass close to it, when a voice from the shore hailed us to "keep off in the middle of the stream;" and on looking in the direction from whence it came, we perceived a large encampment of Indians, and in the midst of them recognised a Franciscan monk.

To recompense our crew for the loss of the peccaries, we agreed to land, in the hope of obtaining some fresh provisions. Padre Pacheco told us not to mention who he was; and certainly no one could have discovered him by his dress.

On landing we were welcomed by the friar, who introduced himself as Padre Bobo. He had come with his people, from some place in the interior, to the harvest of eggs. The turtles, he said, had already begun laying them; and his people proposed digging them up the following morning, when they would supply us with as many as we required. We accordingly agreed to remain till then.

The padre seemed a jovial old gentleman, though he complained of his solitary life. He had got his Indians under tolerable subjection, but he appeared to me to have advanced them very slightly in the scale of civilisation; while their religion consisted chiefly in crossing themselves, and bowing to the crucifix which he held up when he performed mass. However, as Padre Pacheco observed, they had given up some of their worst customs, and that was something.

Padre Bobo gave us much information about the habits of these turtles. They invariably lay their eggs during the night. In the evening they may be seen with their heads above water, eager for the moment of the sun's setting; then, directly it is dark, they land and commence operations. The animal first digs a hole, three feet in diameter and four in depth, with its hind feet, which are very long, and furnished with crooked claws. So anxious is it to lay its eggs that it often descends into a hole that has been dug by another, still uncovered with sand, where it deposits

CATCHING TURTLE BY NIGHT.

a new layer of eggs on that which has been recently laid. Numbers of eggs are thus broken. All night long they continue working on the beach, and daylight often surprises many of them before the laying of their eggs is terminated. They now labour with double eagerness, having not only to deposit their eggs, but to close the holes they have dug, that they may not be perceived by the jaguars which are sure to be waiting in the neighbourhood; and many on these occasions are captured.

The padre gave us an ample supper, consisting of turtle dressed in a variety of ways, and several wild fruits, washed down with some of the doctor's aguadiente, which had been brought up from the canoe. He then produced a bundle of tobacco, with some long pipes, for those who smoked; after which he brought out an exceedingly greasy pack of cards, and invited us to join him in a game, observing that he was rarely visited by white gentlemen with whom he could enjoy that pleasure. As I nearly fell asleep during the game, I have not the slightest recollection of what it was; indeed, having a dislike to cards, I was utterly ignorant how the game was played.

We then turned into our hammocks, slung between the trees, and slept soundly without fear of interruption; for the Indians kept unusually quiet lest they should alarm the turtles, while they were also on the watch to guard against a surprise from jaguars.

At daybreak the next morning we went out with Padre Bobo and his chief man, who carried a long pole with which to search for the eggs. Digging it into the sand as he went along, he discovered each nest by finding no opposition to the pole as he struck it downwards, generally to about the depth of three or four feet. The Indians then followed, and, removing the sand with their hands, placed the eggs they collected in small baskets, in which they carried them to their encampment, and threw them into long wooden troughs filled with water. In these troughs the eggs, broken and stirred with shovels, remained exposed to the sun till the oily part rose to the surface. As fast as this oil collected, it was skimmed off and boiled over a quick fire.

The Indians called it turtle butter; and the padre told us that it keeps better than olive or any other oil. When well prepared, it is limpid, inodorous, and almost white; and can then be used not only for burning in lamps, but also for cooking.

Notwithstanding the vast quantity of eggs laid, in consequence of the persecution to which the poor turtles are exposed, their numbers have decreased of late years. The jaguars are their most inveterate enemies, next to man; they pounce upon them, and turn one after the other on their backs, so that they may afterwards devour them at their ease. From the suppleness of the jaguar's paw, it is able to remove the double armour of the creature, and to scrape out the flesh with the greatest neatness. It will even pursue the turtle into the water when not very deep. It also digs up its eggs; and, together with the alligator, the heron, and the gallinazo vulture, captures large numbers of the little turtles recently hatched.

MANUFACTURE OF TURTLE OIL

Our crew half-filled the boat with small live turtles, and eggs dried in the sun.

The alligators, which are among the principal persecutors of the turtles, find their own young attacked by vultures. Unlike the turtle, however, the savage little creatures attempt to defend themselves, and as soon as they perceive their enemy they raise themselves on their fore paws, bend their backs, and lift up their heads; opening their wide jaws, they turn continually, though slowly, towards their assailant, to show him their teeth, which, even when the animal has but recently issued from the egg, are very long and sharp. Often, while the attention of a small alligator is engaged by one of the vultures, another pounces down, grasps it by the neck, and bears it off to his eyrie.

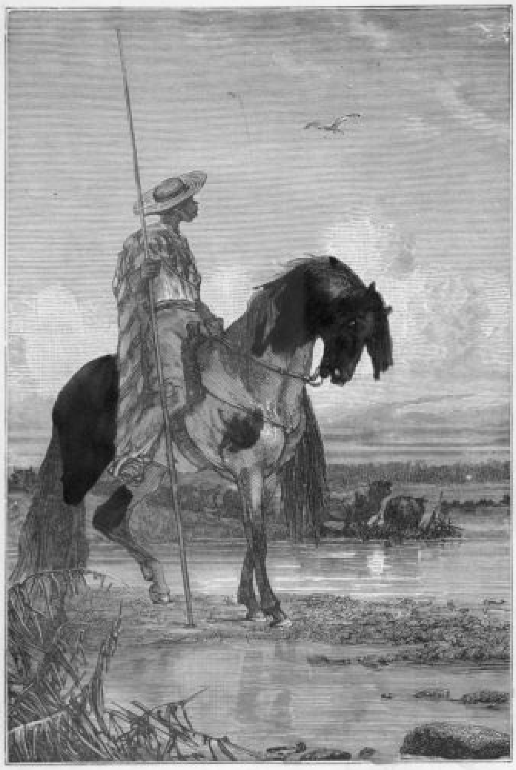
We at length reached the mouth of the Apure, and having happily escaped an overturn of our crank craft, we landed at a large village. Here obtaining horses, we pushed forward towards the camp of the Republicans, where I hoped to rejoin my brave commander, General Bermudez.

Chapter Ten.

Journey to the camp—Sleep at a cattle-farm—Obtain a guide—Mode of catching electric eels—Reach the camp—Our life in camp—Carne con Cuero—The doctor and the wild boar—Alarming news about Norah—March on Carabobo—Intelligence from Norah—Important information given by the messenger—The defile cleared—We pass through it—Battle of Carabobo—The padre does his part—Horrible slaughter—Gallantry of a Spanish officer—Death of Colonel Acosta—Glorious result of the battle—We set off in search of Norah—Meet her attended by Kanimapo—Fierce skirmish—Aqualonga captured—Norah's adventures—Continue our march to Don Fernando's—Another adventure—Meet with our friends—Arrival—Grief for the death of Colonel Acosta—Aqualonga shot—Further campaigning—Return—Friendly meeting with Kanimapo's tribe—Happy marriages—Conclusion.

After passing through a thickly-wooded region bordering the banks of the river, we emerged on an open country, the celebrated llaños of Venezuela, which extended far away beyond human ken. As the best part of the day was spent, we agreed that it would be folly to attempt pushing forward without a guide; so, as a hato, or cattle-farm, was seen in the distance, we resolved to ride towards it for the purpose of obtaining one.

With the exception of the rich grass which covered the surface of the ground, the only vegetation visible consisted of a few clumps of palm-trees, with fan-like leaves,



THE LLANERO GUIDE.

scattered here and there over the wide expanse. The farm-buildings consisted of palm-thatched huts surrounded by a fence of palm-trunks, beyond which were the corrals or cattle enclosures. Countless herds dotted the plain, even to the horizon.

On reaching the gate, the overseer, a fine-looking elderly negro, came out and inquired our business. On hearing who we were he invited us in, promising to supply all our wants. He had not much to offer in the way of accommodation, but such as it was he gladly put it at our disposal. Such luxuries as beds did not exist, but a long table and benches and chairs were found in the principal hut; also an ample supply of beef, which an old negress immediately began to prepare for us. Suffice it to say that we had a substantial supper, and could sleep secure from the attacks of foes.

The next morning, our breakfast having been a repetition of the evening meal, we prepared to start, the overseer having selected a trusty llañero as our guide. It was difficult to say to what race he belonged. He called himself a white, but his complexion and features betokened Indian and African progenitors. He was a fine, athletic-looking fellow, lithe yet muscular, and evidently capable of enduring continued and violent exercise without fatigue. A broad-brimmed hat, a shirt and trousers, and a coloured poncho over his shoulders, completed his attire; his weapons being a long lance and a large-mouthed blunderbuss. Of his steed, which he had caught and broken-in himself, he was excessively proud; and he boasted that, mounted on its back, there was not a bull on the plains, however fierce, which he could not overtake and capture with his lasso. He would conduct us without fail to the camp, though streams and marshes intervened, over a wide extent of the llaños.

We set off, therefore, without anxiety, either keeping alongside our guide or following close at his heels; now galloping along the borders of a marsh, now plunging through places where I should have expected to be smothered, had I not trusted to his experience to lead the way. I am afraid to say how many miles we covered without pulling rein. Our hardy steeds requiring no food till the end of the day’s journey, we only stopped for a few minutes by the side of a pool to allow them to drink, and then went on again.

Towards nightfall we arrived at another farm, very similar to the one we had left. The padre complained much of the fatigue of riding at a rate to which he had been so long unaccustomed. Even the doctor declared that he had no wish to travel the same distance another day. Our guide laughed at their complaints, observing that they were welcome to rest as long as they liked. He looked with more respect at me, as I had endured the fatigue better than my companions.

During the evening he told me that some of the men at the farm were going out next morning to catch fish; and, should I wish it, I might accompany them, as they would return before the time we had fixed for setting out. I gladly accepted the offer; as did the doctor, who was curious to see the mode of fishing adopted by those sons of the desert.

We accordingly rode forth, with our llañero, Pablo, as guide—the servants having set out some time before. We overtook them just as they had arrived at a large pond—or lake, rather—surrounded by reeds, with a few trees scattered here and there in the neighbourhood. They had driven before them a small herd of horses and mules, many of which appeared to be broken-down animals, such as I should not have supposed were to be found on the llaños. As we approached the pond, we saw several heads, resembling those of large serpents, just lifted above the surface; and now and then I caught sight of a huge, thick-bodied, snake-like creature gliding through the water, seven or eight feet in length.

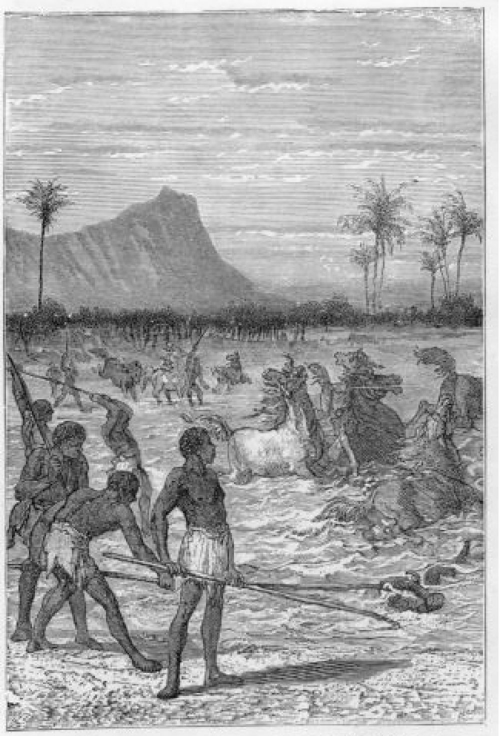
“What are they?” I asked of Pablo.

“The fish we are going to catch,” he answered.

"Fish, my friend, they really are," observed the doctor, "though known as gymnoti, or electric eels; and truly glad I am that I came to see them caught."

The men were armed with harpoons and long slender rods. They now collected the horses and mules, and with loud shouts drove them into the lake. The combined effect of the horses' hoofs and the men's shrieks was, that numbers of the hideous-looking gymnoti issued from the mud in which they lay hid and came to the surface of the water, when they simultaneously made a dash at the unfortunate animals swimming and floundering about. The scene was a most extraordinary one. Several of the horses, being struck by these electric eels, succumbed to the violence of the invisible strokes which they were receiving from all sides, and disappeared beneath the water; others, with manes erect and eyeballs wild with pain, strove to escape from their enemies, but were driven back again by the Indians with their long rods; while several of the gymnoti, approaching the shore, were harpooned and dragged to land. The livid, yellow eels, like great water-snakes, swam after the unfortunate horses which were attempting to make their way to the opposite shore. But in a short time I observed that the animals appeared less alarmed; they no longer erected their manes, while their eyes expressed less pain and terror. The eels, at the same time, instead of following them, swam slowly towards the shore, when they, like those first caught, were harpooned, and, by a line fastened to the weapon, jerked on to the bank.

The doctor observed that they had lost much of their electric force; also, that the natives took care that the lines should not get wet. I wished to try my hand in catching one of the creatures, but they warned me



INDIAN MODE OF CAPTURING ELECTRIC EELS

that should I allow the line to touch the water, I would feel a shock which would well-nigh knock me down.

The doctor then invited some of the men to join hands, which he and I did with several of them; then touching one of the eels with the point of his long knife, a shock passed through the whole of us, which made the natives jump and shriek out—one or two of them falling to the ground, overcome with astonishment at the unexpected sensation rather than by the force of the shock.

Hideous as the creatures are, the natives declared that they were very good for food, and a number of them were packed up and carried back to the farm.

So powerful is the electric force possessed by the eels, that several of the horses were killed immediately; and our companions assured us that the strongest man, if struck by one of them when crossing a river, would become so benumbed that he would certainly lose his life.

The doctor told me how the employment of their electric powers is spontaneous; and this exhausts the nervous energy, so that they need repose and an abundance of nourishment before a fresh accumulation of electricity is produced. These curious creatures have the power of making holes for themselves in the marshes and mud of watercourses which remain filled with moisture during the rainy season; and they are thus able to support existence in their usual localities until the return of rain, when they come forth and prey upon all living animals within their reach.

It took us several days after this to reach the camp. I was warmly greeted by my gallant chief, who heartily congratulated me on having escaped the dangers to which I had been exposed. My companions, also, had a kindly welcome.

"Though we have been inactive for some time, we shall soon have work for all of you," he remarked, laughing: "you, Barry, to take a part in the fighting; you, señor doctor, to attend the wounded; and you, señor padre, to shrive the dying. Each man to his trade,—though, to confess the truth, I shall be very glad when our part of the business is over, and we have driven the Gothos into the sea. That, I feel confident, will be before long."

I had received no intelligence from my family since the doctor joined me, and I was becoming very anxious to hear from them. At that time, it will be remembered, Norah was setting out to visit our relative Don Fernando; so I eagerly sought out my cousin, Don Carlos, fully expecting that he would have heard of her arrival. Greatly to my disappointment, he told me that one letter alone had reached him,—in which it was mentioned that Norah was expected, but that some time had passed since they hoped to see her, and that she had not arrived.

On talking over the matter and comparing notes, we both became greatly alarmed for her safety. I was sure, from what the doctor had told me, that she fully intended to go at the time he spoke of, and ought to have arrived before the date of this letter. Don Carlos told me that on one important account his family hoped that Norah would not have set out: the Guahibos (gained over, as they believed, by Spanish emissaries) had become more than ever threatening in their conduct. Their chief and some of the principal men, who were supposed to be friendly to the patriots, were absent, and the rest were thus left to their own devices. They were not likely to make any hostile movement without their regular leaders; but should these return and prove unable to restrain them, or be themselves gained over by the Spaniards, serious consequences, might ensue.

Had we not expected shortly to encounter the enemy, we would both have obtained leave to return home and ascertain the truth; but under the circumstances this was impossible, and we had, therefore, to restrain our impatience and hope for the best. Don Carlos became very unhappy, and a high sense of duty alone prevented him from asking permission to quit the army for a short period. We in vain endeavoured to find a trusty messenger who would convey letters to our friends and return with an answer; those we sent by the couriers—who had a circuitous route to take—might not reach their destination for a long time, and answers would be equally tardy in their transit.

As it was not in my nature to look on the dark side of things, I quickly recovered my spirits, trusting that all would turn out right.

When I told the padre what we had heard, he promised that on his return home he would visit the Guahibos and try to win them over. “I have before paid them a visit, when they received me in a friendly way,” he observed. “I know how to treat them; and though they are still heathens, they look upon me with respect, and may listen to what I say, however little inclined they are to renounce their idolatrous practices.”

I might give a graphic description of our life in the camp. Our time, however, was too much taken up with amusements,—the discipline and organisation of the troops being but little attended to. We had shooting and hunting excursions nearly every day. If we could not obtain smaller game, the llañeros with their lassos or bolas quickly captured as many head of cattle as they required. The chase of a wild bull afforded, indeed, excellent sport, though it was not without its dangers, for the savage animal, irritated by its pursuers, would often turn and attempt to gore them with its horns. These, however, the llañeros dexterously avoided; and throwing the lasso over the animal’s head, brought it with a violent jerk to the ground, when a thrust of the lance quickly finished its career.

To give an idea of the rough style in which we lived, I may describe the mode of cooking the beef thus killed. A joint was selected, which may be termed the saddle—it being formed of the two rumps, which are never divided. The hide was not stripped off, but the hair was singed by the application of a burning brand, which rendered the skin hard and nearly impenetrable. Several of these joints were placed in a large hole dug in the ground, about five feet deep, and of a length and breadth in proportion to the quantity of meat to be dressed. The inside of the hole having been previously lined with flat stones, and a brisk fire maintained in it till it had become sufficiently hot, the ashes were then raked out, and the meat was placed, with the hide downwards, on sticks fastened from side to side horizontally; and the hole being covered over with large stones to exclude the air, it was thus baked. The hide was drawn by the heat from the centre of the meat, but the sides being bent up, the juices were preserved, and the use of dishes rendered unnecessary. Joints thus prepared are termed “carne con cuero.”

Another dish on which we regaled ourselves was a sheep or goat with the skin left on,—as in the way I have described,—and with the inside filled with turkeys, fowls, ducks, wild geese, pieces of pork, plantains, yams, calvanasses, cassava, bread powdered, boiled maize, oranges, lemons, and such other ingredients as could be obtained; the whole being cut up into small pieces, and duly seasoned. The animal thus stuffed is skewered together, and baked in the same manner as the beef.

When the cook considered that the viands were sufficiently dressed, a trumpeter proclaimed the important fact to the officers, who immediately ranged themselves in a ring to enjoy the repast. One of the men, acting as waiter, used to stick his lance into the meat, and thus conveyed it to our chief, who helped himself; after which it went the rounds, on the point of the lance, to the rest of us.

The doctor’s office was a sinecure so long as no fighting was going forward, as the hardy llañeros were seldom sick, or preferred their own remedies to those he could administer. He accordingly generally joined in our hunting expeditions. I can fancy I see him now—a large handkerchief bound round his hat and fluttering in the breeze—as, lance in hand, he one day came on a herd of wild hogs, and set off after them with a shout which had often echoed in his younger days amid the forests of his fatherland. The animal he had singled out took to flight, and showing good bottom, led him a long chase amid the tangled brushwood; till, finding that running would not avail it, the creature turned at bay, and with its sharp tusks made a rush at the legs of the doctor’s steed. The animal at that moment

THE DOCTOR AND THE WILD BOAR.

gave an unexpected hound, and the doctor was thrown ignominiously to the ground,—happily, on the opposite side to that on which stood the enraged boar.

We saw the accident, but were too far off to render him assistance before the boar could reach him. Springing up, however, and shortening his lance, of which he had not let go, he stood ready to receive the savage animal; and loud shouts of applause burst from the throats of our men as he was seen to plunge his spear into the body of the boar.

"Carne con cuero!" he shouted out; "we'll have this fellow baked in his skin, and I'll eat him in revenge for the fall he has given me."

The doctor's steed being caught, he remounted; and the llañeros carrying the hog in front of him, with several others which had been killed, we returned to the camp. It was one of the last days we spent there.

On arriving at the camp Don Carlos met me, and I saw by his countenance that he was much agitated. He put into my hand a letter from my father.

"It will give you terrible news, I fear," he said, "as mine did to me. Your sister never reached our house, though she undoubtedly left her home about the time you expected she would do. Don Fernando, after waiting for some time and not seeing her, sent to your father to ascertain if she was coming, and received the intelligence that she had already set off! It was at first hoped that she might have gone to Castle Concannan; but though she called there to pay a visit to our aunts, she again left it; and after that no traces of her or her attendants could be discovered. Oh, what can have happened to her? Cannot you suggest anything to relieve the anguish of my mind?"

"I will see what my father says," I answered; but, alas! his letter only confirmed the account Don Carlos had given me.

We then told my elder cousin of the alarming intelligence we had received; but he could afford no hope: broken-hearted himself, he could only fancy that some dreadful fate had overtaken my young sister.

We had no time, however, to dwell on our anxiety, for news was received that the Spanish generals Morales and La Torre had concentrated their forces on the plains of Carabobo; and in a council of war it was decided that they should be immediately followed and attacked. Marching at a speed which hardy troops such as ours alone could have accomplished, late at night we reached the foot of a range of hills lying between us and the Spanish army—which amounted to above seven thousand men, while our forces numbered little more than five thousand. We had a British legion, commanded by the gallant Colonel McIntosh; and our llañeros, we flattered ourselves, counted for something.

The intervening ground consisted of rocky hills, densely covered with trees, through which one narrow path alone was known as leading to the plains of Carabobo. The enemy having obtained notice of our approach, had, our spies informed us, so placed their artillery as completely to command it.

I was seated in the evening round the camp-fire, with Don Carlos, his brother, the doctor, the padre, and several of my brother-officers, when I saw an Indian approaching. At first I thought he was one of those who had accompanied the army as guides across the plain, but as he made his way directly up to me I recognised him by his appearance as belonging to the tribe of our friend Kanimapo.

"I would speak to you, Señor Barry," he said—"for I know you, though you may not recollect me. I bring you a written message; here it is;" and he put a paper into my hand.

Kneeling down, I read it eagerly by the light of the fire. It was written hurriedly, in pencil, and signed "Norah."

"I have been captured by Aqualonga's band, and he himself is with them; I have twice seen him, though he has not visited me. I am treated with respect, but compelled to travel wherever they go. Their object is, I believe, to obtain a ransom. I asked them to send to my father; they replied that Señor Desmond was ruined, and could not pay the sum they require. I suspect, therefore, that they intend to deliver me up to the Spaniards. They will hold me as a hostage for you and Carlos, whom they know to be serving with the patriots. You will, I am sure, try and arrange some plan to rescue me. The bearer, who is attached to his chief, will inform him how I am situated; and he also will endeavour, I think, to help me. Aqualonga is marching to join the Spaniards; and, from the intelligence I can gain, I believe that we are not far off from where you are. Whatever plan you propose should be carried out speedily. Consult Carlos."

I instantly called my cousin aside and read the contents to him. On hearing the message, he was even more agitated and anxious than I had been. We then called up the Indian and questioned him. He had found his chief, he said, and faithfully delivered the message entrusted to him. Kanimapo had, he added, bidden him hasten on to me, saying that he himself would risk everything to rescue my sister.

"This will make me doubly anxious to defeat the Spaniards," observed Don Carlos, after he had somewhat recovered from the agitation into which this intelligence had thrown him.

We both promised the Indian a reward for his faithfulness in delivering the message.

"I require none," he answered; "my desire is to obey the wishes of my chief."

He then inquired whether we expected soon to be engaged with the enemy, of whose position he was well aware.

"Why do you wish to know?" I asked.

"Because I am acquainted with a defile through these hills, of which, perhaps, your leaders are ignorant," he replied. "It is thickly overgrown with brushwood and trees, so as to be completely concealed from view; but if these impediments were cleared away, you might descend suddenly on the enemy and take them by surprise. It was here that my people once fought a fierce battle with the Castilians; and though ages have since passed away, the memory of it still survives among us."

Carlos and I were fully satisfied, after further conversation with the Indian, that the account he gave us was correct,—the more so as he undertook to lead us to the entrance of the defile. We at once set off, therefore, discussing as we went plans for rescuing Norah, in case Kanimapo should not have succeeded in doing so. But even for her sake we could not leave the army till the battle was over; and, indeed, it would have been impossible to obtain men to accompany us.

Quitting the camp, the Indian led us some way to the right of our position, along the foot of the wooded hill; after which he struck off directly towards it. Instead of having steep rocks to climb, as would have been the case in every other part except the before-mentioned passage, we ascended a gentle slope, and then continued over tolerably level ground till we found ourselves on the top of another slope reaching down to the plain below. From the position we had gained, we could distinguish between the trees the camp-fires of the Spanish army extending for a considerable way to our left.

We at once saw the importance of this pass, and hastened back to General Bermudez with the information we had obtained. He had lain down to sleep, but on hearing what we had to say he hurried with us to General Bolivar. The commander-in-chief, after complimenting us on the intelligence we had displayed, immediately issued orders for a party of his men, with their machetes and axes, to proceed into the defile and clear it of wood, so as to allow of the passage of cavalry. They were thus employed during the whole of the night, under the command of a gallant young Englishman.

After a few hours' sleep, by the time morning broke Carlos and I were in the saddle. The blacks had nearly completed their work; and the only reward the Sambos asked was to be allowed to lead the assault. They were followed by the British legion, under Colonel McIntosh.

As the last trees were cleared away, their position was shown to the Spaniards, who opened a tremendous fire on them, through which they ran down to the attack, numbers falling as they advanced; but nothing stopped them. The British legion, six hundred strong, next rushed through the defile, with the steadiness for which they have been so long famed, and attacked the enemy; who, thus taken by surprise, had not time to bring their artillery to bear upon us. A smaller force of newly-arrived English troops, under Colonel Ferrier, was fearfully cut to pieces; their gallant commander being killed just as he had succeeded in recovering his colours taken by the Spaniards. I am sorry to say that some of the llañeros under General Paez, unable to withstand the repeated volleys of musketry which the well-formed ranks of the Spaniards poured into them, for a few minutes showed the white feather, and began to retreat; but the general, after lancing a dozen or more, succeeded in rallying them and leading them against the enemy.

We meanwhile got through, with our well-trained cavalry; and while the British, supported by the ferocious Sambos, charged with the bayonet into the thickest of the Spanish lines, we, led by Bermudez, sprang forward at headlong speed, with lances in rest; and Paez and his men again attacking the remaining part of the enemy's line, they now went down before us like chaff before the wind. The British legion, with their black supporters, had already forced the centre, bayoneting hundreds of their opponents; and now, when Paez and our party charged upon the devoted Royalists, horrible indeed was the destruction which overtook them.

Again and again we charged, each time adding to the fearful slaughter. Fresh troops now came pouring through the defile, and cut off those portions of the Spanish army which had separated from the main body,—invariably putting them to death. Several times I got glimpses of the padre leading on a band of horsemen against the ranks of the enemy, flourishing a huge sword, but never once, to my belief, striking with it; conscientiously allowing his followers to do the killing work with their lances. He seemed to bear a charmed life, for, though in the thickest of the fight, the bullets whizzed harmlessly by him.

In one hour from the time Colonel McIntosh entered the plain, five entire battalions of the enemy had laid down their arms; whilst, with one exception, the survivors of the remaining regiments had taken to flight.

I feel called upon to speak of the gallantry of one young Spanish officer, who, at the head of his regiment, remained on the field fighting to the last; then, perceiving that he had no longer a chance of contending successfully against us, he moved his men off in a cool and regular manner. So struck was General Paez with the bravery he displayed, that he would not allow him to be attacked in his retreat.

I was returning from our last charge, when I saw a wounded officer whom I recognised even at a distance as one of our party. On dismounting to ascertain what assistance I could give him, I found, to my sorrow, that it was my cousin, whom I had so long known as Colonel Acosta. He recognised me; and pressing my hand, in a faint voice he asked me to take a locket from his neck. I did as he desired; and holding it in his hand, he gazed steadfastly at it with eyes rapidly becoming dim as the chill of death stole over him.

“Paola!—Paola! I would have died to save you,” he murmured. “Let this be buried with me,” he whispered. “Take care of it, lest any sacrilegious hands should tear it from me.”

I lifted him up, meanwhile shouting to some of my men to try and find a surgeon, in case it might not be too late to save his life. But even then his spirit was departing; and ere another minute had passed I found that I held his lifeless form in my arms.

Ordering a party of men to carry the body to the camp, I next went in search of Carlos, to give him the sad information; and that night we buried the betrothed of the unfortunate Donna Paola Salabriata beneath a lofty palm-tree, with her miniature, as he had desired, placed on his breast.

That battle decided the fate of the Spanish power in Venezuela; and though in some places along the sea-coast isolated bands held out in the hope of receiving succour from Spain, ere long every Spanish soldier was driven from the land, and the cause of Liberty triumphed.

We had no difficulty in obtaining from General Bermudez a strong troop of horsemen, with which to proceed, under the guidance of the Indian, in search of the band who held Norah in captivity.

The padre and the doctor, too, on hearing of our expedition, insisted on accompanying us.

“But I fear that you, señor padre, will not be able to endure the fatigues we may have to undergo,” I observed.

“In such a cause I shall be insensible to fatigue,” answered the padre in a spirited tone. “Perhaps, too, I can be of use in influencing some of the rascals who know me, and may be willing to listen to what I say. Go I must, Barry, so say no more about it.”

The doctor was equally determined. “There are plenty of surgeons belonging to the British legion in the camp to attend to the wounded; and your fair sister may be ill, and require my aid,” he answered, “so I intend to form one of your party. If there is any fighting, you shall see that I can wield a sword or lance as well as my reverend friend here. Ah, señor padre! you did wonderful execution among the enemy yesterday.”

“Heaven forgive me for the deaths I caused!” answered the padre, with a sigh. “My blood was up, and I fought for liberty and my country. I thought of nothing else; and where the odds were so much against us, I knew that no true man could be spared.”

Carlos and I, with our two stalwart friends, set off without loss of time at the head of our brave llañeros. Caution was necessary, however. The banditti might not have heard of the defeat of the Spaniards; and should we discover and attack them, they might retaliate on my hapless sister.

We pushed forward as rapidly as we could, eager to release her; and as we proceeded we sent out scouts, to ascertain, if possible, the position of Aqualonga and his band of cut-throats. Though we took a wide range, we could nowhere hear of them, and were satisfied therefore that they had not passed us. Night and day we were on the watch, whether resting in camp or galloping forward; and relying on the hardihood of our steeds, we advanced at a rate that no ordinary cavalry could have done.

One day, about noon, we reached a slight elevation of the ground, scarcely to be called a hill, to the top of which we rode, that we might obtain a wider look-out over the country ahead of us. Near at hand was a stream, bordered by a thick copse of a height sufficient, when we dismounted, to conceal us and our horses. It was a spot well suited for an ambush. Scarcely had we gained the top of the hillock, when we saw in the far distance what appeared to us the leading files of a party of horsemen. Both the doctor and the padre declared that this must be Aqualonga’s party, and advised that we should conceal ourselves behind the brushwood, and rush out upon them as they passed by.

Supposing that the approaching strangers were enemies, the suggestion was a good one: we therefore ordered our men to ride round the foot of the mount, while we, hoping that we had not been seen, descended and joined them.

For some time we did not regain sight of the strangers; but at length we observed, instead of the large body we expected to see, two figures galloping across the savannah, while behind them came a number of Indians on foot, running at headlong speed, with a party of horsemen coming quickly up in the distance. As they drew nearer, one appeared to be a female; and from the plume of feathers in her hair, the doctor declared that she must be an Indian, as undoubtedly, from his costume, was her companion.

“An Indian! No, no! that she is not!” exclaimed Don Carlos, springing to his horse. “It is Donna Norah!”

The idea that such was the case had flashed across my mind; and, convinced that he was right, I followed his example. In another instant, breaking from our cover, we were galloping across the plain towards them, followed by our entire party. They saw us coming, and the Indian for an instant altered his course, as if to avoid us; but soon seeing who we were, he and Norah came galloping on. I then recognised our friend

IN HOT PURSUIT

Kanimapo; though, dressed as he was, in all the war-trappings of a chief, I had certainly not known him at first.

He and Norah were soon in our midst. I need scarcely describe the joy of the meeting. But there was short time for exchange of greetings.

"Those you see are our foes, from whom we have just escaped," exclaimed Kanimapo. "They will endeavour to recapture us; but your band, if you can trust your men, will be sufficient to defeat them should they venture to attack you."

As he spoke, the men on foot, who were all Indians, drew up on one side to allow the horsemen to advance—which they did, shouting loudly and flourishing their weapons. Begging the padre and the doctor to guard Norah, Carlos and I put our men in order; then, joined by Kanimapo, and with our lances couched, we dashed on to meet the foe. A swarthy man of hideous aspect was at their head, whom I recognised as Aqualonga himself. His men wavered as they saw us coming; and in vain did he endeavour to cheer them on, galloping forward at headlong speed, as if resolved to conquer or meet a soldier's death. Some of his men, inspirited by his example, continued to urge on their steeds; but the rear-ranks, panic-stricken, wheeled round, and galloped off to save their lives.

The lance of Don Carlos caught the guerilla chief in the shoulder, and forced him from his saddle. Most of those who followed him were pierced through or cut down; the rest sought safety in flight, leaving us masters of the field, and their famed leader a prisoner in our hands. Several of our men, leaping to the ground, bound him hand and foot, and placed him on horseback; but it would have been dangerous to pursue the defeated foe, as we could not leave my sister without protection.

Having already performed nearly half the distance to Don Fernando's house, we agreed to proceed thither, it being somewhat nearer than my father's—though I was anxious to inform my parents of Norah's safety. But we remembered that our arrival, though we should be welcomed by our friends, would bring sorrow to the household.

Norah, though pale and thin from the fatigue and alarm she had undergone, soon recovered her spirits; her happiness being increased by finding that Don Carlos had escaped the dangers to which he had been exposed, albeit she was grieved at hearing of the death of his brother.

She very briefly, at that time, narrated her adventures. After leaving Castle Concannan on her way to Don Fernando's house, while she was riding on ahead a party of banditti pounced out of a wood and surrounded her and her attendants, and made them all prisoners. She before long discovered that Aqualonga was the leader of the party. He was, she believed, going to carry her off across the mountains; but, from some intelligence he obtained, he changed his plan and proceeded across the savannah. He left her at a solitary rancho, under the charge of a negress, and a party of men to guard her. She received no insult, but she was coarsely fed, and no attention was paid to her comforts. She was, however, allowed to stroll about the rancho; and one day, to her surprise, she saw an Indian whom she recognised as belonging to Kanimapo's tribe. She found an opportunity of communicating with him, and persuaded him to inform his chief where she was. He promised to do so, and to return with any message she might give him.

After some time Aqualonga and his band returned, whereupon they set out to the north-west, carrying her with them; so her hopes of being rescued vanished.

One evening, however, Kanimapo fearlessly entered the camp, and introduced himself to Aqualonga, succeeding by the account he gave in winning his confidence. He soon found means of communicating with Norah; when he told her that he had a disguise ready for her, and a couple of fleet horses, and that if she would agree to escape with him he would conduct her to the patriot camp. Feeling confidence in his honour, she consented; and the following night, accompanied by her faithful attendant, she stole out unperceived by any one, dressed as an Indian girl, with a plume of feathers in her hair, and a cloak of skins over her shoulders. The horses were found behind a clump of trees; and mounting, they first took a westerly direction,—then circling round, they finally, giving the reins to their horses, galloped at full speed to the eastward, and happily met with us in the way I have described.

Norah was a good horsewoman, and declared herself well able to move on without further delay. We accordingly proceeded eastward, till the approach of night warned us to encamp. We of course took every precaution against surprise; for though the Spaniards had been so signally defeated, some roving bands of Indians attached to their cause might possibly discover and attack us. We had not only sentries placed round the camp, but we sent out vedettes to patrol the neighbourhood, and thus give due notice of the approach of an enemy. A hut was built for Norah; and Don Carlos and I lay down outside, that, in case of any sudden surprise, we might be at hand to protect her.

The first watch of the night had passed by, when a shot was heard, and one of the vedettes came galloping in with the announcement that he had descried a body of men approaching the camp, and that, as he galloped off, he had been pursued by several horsemen. We of course ordered the men to be ready to leap into their saddles for the attack which we fully expected to be made; and Norah's horse was brought up, that she might be able to mount, if necessary, at a moment's notice. She took the announcement very calmly, as if it was quite a matter of course.

While these preparations were being made, the padre rode up and offered to go forth in the direction in which the strangers had been seen, and ascertain who they were.

"They may be enemies, but they may possibly be friends; and unless we learn the truth, we may be knocking our heads together before we discover it," he observed. "I have had so many bullets flying about my ears of late, and have got off scot-free, that I am not afraid of any they may fire at me."

Though we were unwilling to expose the padre to danger, his offer was of too much value to be refused. We accordingly begged him to do as he proposed; and bidding us not to be anxious about him, he rode off in the direction from which the vedette had come.

We waited, fearing every instant to hear the sound of a shot; but the silence of night remained unbroken. I had directed my men not to fire till they received my order to do so, to prevent the risk of the padre being shot at on his return to the camp.

Some time had passed away, when a horseman was seen coming over the plain, and the padre's voice was heard shouting,—"All right! They are friends, and will be here anon!"

In another minute he had reached us. "Who do you think they are?" he exclaimed. "The labourers of your father and Señor Concannan, with a number of villagers and blacks; and some of my people, headed by Señor Denis, your young brother, and your Irish servant. They knew my voice, which I took care to let them hear before I approached; and I told them that I would ride back and inform you, lest you should begin peppering at them as they marched here to embrace you. They have come in search of Aqualonga and his band, whom they had traced in this direction, having ascertained that he it was who had carried off Donna Norah."

My uncle and the whole party were thankful to have recovered her without having to fight, as they had expected; though Gerald declared that he was sorry not to be able to break a lance in her service, against the renowned tawny-skinned chieftain Aqualonga.

"Faith, Masther Gerald, it's much betther as it is," observed Tim, "as the savage might have managed to run his lance into you; and Miss Norah, depend on it, is a mighty deal more pleased to have no blood spilt in her cause."

We were now—our two parties forming one camp—capable of setting at defiance any enemies likely to approach us.

The next morning we continued our journey; and at length, after a somewhat fatiguing march over the wide-extended plain,—having to cross several rivers and swamps, sometimes fording them, and at others passing over in hide-formed canoes, while the horses swam behind us,—we reached Don Fernando's. Our welcome was such as might have been expected: Norah was received as a daughter, and Don Carlos and I were treated as heroes; and by none more so than by Isabella Monterola,—who has since, to my great happiness, become my wife. My cousin, Colonel Acosta, as I will still call him, was truly mourned for. "Poor fellow!" said Don Fernando; "the loss is ours. He would never have recovered the death of Donna Paola."

The next day the bandit chief, whose safe-keeping cost us much anxiety, was sent off under a strong escort to Popayan; where he was, soon after, ordered to be shot. An immense crowd collected to gaze on an Indian who had been the terror of the country for so many years; and one man, as he observed his short figure and coarse and ugly features, exclaimed,—"Is that the hideous little fellow who has alarmed us so long?"

"Yes," replied Aqualonga, darting a fierce look at him from his black eyes; "in this small body is the heart of a giant."

At his request he was allowed to die in his colonel's uniform; and just before he was shot, he declared that had he twenty lives, he would have been ready to sacrifice them all for the king he served.

But to return to the time I was describing. We all of us endeavoured, by every means in our power, to express our gratitude to Kanimapo for the service he had rendered us.

"I have but done my duty," he answered, "and tried to prove that I am grateful for the kindness I received at your hands. I wish to render you still further service. I must now go back to my people, who have so long shown enmity to you and your family; and I hope to teach them that it is their duty, as it is assuredly to their interests, to be on friendly terms with those who truly wish to benefit them."

"And I, my friend," said the padre, "will accompany you. I may be able to counteract the evil effects produced on their minds by the Spanish emissaries, and tell them of a purer faith than any they have hitherto heard of."

"And I will go also," exclaimed the doctor. "I should like to study their habits and customs; and I may be able, by healing them of their complaints, to support my friend the padre in his endeavours to enlighten the minds of the poor savages, and thus show practically that our wish is to benefit them."

Kanimapo accordingly set off, accompanied by the padre and the doctor; the former having resumed his clerical robes, while the latter was attended by his faithful dog Jumbo.

We had, of course, immediately on our arrival, despatched a messenger to my father to announce the recovery of Norah, and my safety. The next day Uncle Denis, with Gerald and Tim, went home with their followers.

After spending a few days with my friends, I was compelled to conduct my llañeros back to rejoin the army.

I need not mention the other events of the campaign. At the end of a couple of months, Don Carlos and I again got leave to return home; and I accompanied him to his father's house, where Norah had since been staying, and where the whole of my family—who had been invited to pay a long visit—were assembled. It was to be terminated, I found, by my sister's marriage.

The day after our arrival had been fixed, Don Fernando informed me, for a meeting with Kanimapo and his tribe; which was to take place in a beautiful spot at the foot of the mountains. They set off at daybreak,—Don Fernando, with his sons and grandsons habited in full Spanish costume to do honour to the occasion. My father, uncles, and I, with some others, accompanied them,—making in all a party of about twenty.

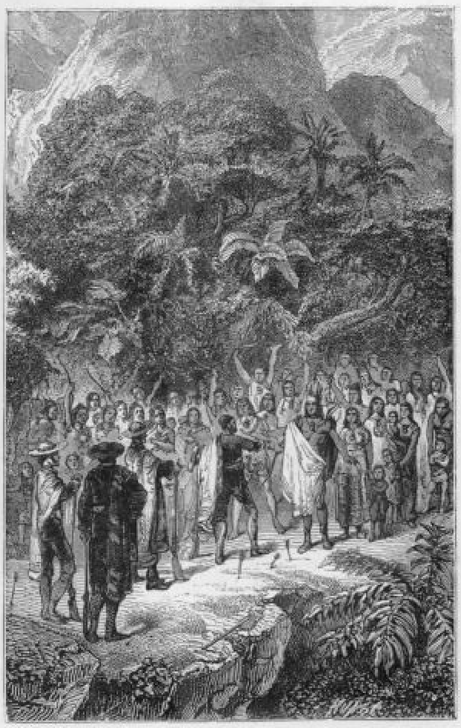
Although our meeting was to be of a pacific character, we went armed as usual, no one moving about in that region without weapons. As we approached the spot, Don Fernando and his immediate relatives dismounted and advanced on foot towards a circle formed by a number of arrows stuck in the ground, beyond which stood Kanimapo and his tribe. He approached, and putting out his hand, grasped that of Don Fernando.

"My people," he said, "have hitherto been enemies to you, who desired to do them good; but henceforth, as the points of yonder arrows are concealed in the ground, so let all enmity be buried."

On this the Indians waved their hands, and uttered loud shouts, indicative of approval of what had been said. The speech, by-the-by, was much longer than I have reported it. Don Fernando replied in appropriate language; and the Indians again shouted, and held up their children to gaze at the white men who had now become their friends.

I must not dwell longer on the scene. It appeared to afford infinite satisfaction to all parties; and after other speeches had been made by inferior chiefs, and replied to by our friends, we returned home, while the Indians retired to their camp.

Kanimapo paid us a private visit soon afterwards, and assured me that the padre and the doctor had been mainly instrumental in bringing about the change of sentiment in his people.



A TREATY OF PEACE.

After my sister's marriage with Don Carlos, we returned to my father's house, which had been substantially rebuilt.

The padre, in the meantime, had been engaged in further instructing the Indians, and in establishing a school; having also procured an enlightened young Creole and his wife to act as master and mistress. He had begun, also, to translate portions of the Bible; which he was convinced, he said, was the only book by which their heathen darkness could be dispelled. He afterwards became one of the warmest advocates for its dissemination throughout the Republic, where a Bible Society soon after that period was established and flourished.

The doctor, who had been adding greatly to his knowledge of the natural history of the country, returned home with us; and, to his infinite satisfaction, found his boxes uninjured. At length he departed, with the fruits of his labours, to his beloved fatherland. He wrote me word of his safe arrival, and promised some day or other to pay us another visit.

The independence of Columbia being at length acknowledged by Spain, peace was established; and those who keep free of the political disputes which have so frequently broken out, impeding the moral and material progress of the country, have enjoyed, as we and our friends have done, as much happiness as frail mortals can expect to find here below.

On the cessation of hostilities I sheathed my sword, which I have never since drawn; and though I have given some brief descriptions of the battles and skirmishes in which I was engaged during the most eventful period of the history of Venezuela, I wish to impress on the minds of all the readers of my narrative that War is a terrible thing,—which Satan for his own ends encourages, but which wise men, and Christians especially, should endeavour by every means in their power to avoid.
